

**July Program Meeting**  
**2020 Birdathon Summary and Photography Contest Slideshow**

with  
**Brian Zinke**

Pre-recorded video will be posted on the PAS website on July 10

**J**oin Executive Director Brian Zinke as he provides a summary of this year's Birdathon. Brian will recap some of the changes we went through this year to both comply with COVID-19 safety precautions as well as improve the event

Additionally, we'll announce the Top 3 places for the Adult and Youth categories in this year's Birdathon Photography contest. We'll then round out the night by finishing up with a slideshow of all the photos entered into this year's contest. The variety of birds and photographs submitted this year were breathtaking, and it's sure to bring a smile to your face!

Since this will be a pre-recorded video, you won't need to use Zoom and you don't have to watch it at normal meeting time. You can watch it at your leisure over the next few weeks.



Pileated Woodpecker. Photo: Mandy Weger

overall, introduce the teams, and announce the teams with the most species seen and most donations collected.

***In this issue***

AOS 2020 Changes .....	5	People's Choice Award.....	5
Backyard Birding Report.....	8	Program Meeting.....	1
Birdathon Photo Contest.3-5		Red-winged Blackbirds.....	7
Birding by Ear .....	6	Volunteers: Birding Book ..	2

***How to watch the video***

A link to the video will be posted on the [Monthly Programs](#) page on the PAS website on July 10. To watch, simply go to the webpage and click on the link listed under the July Program. ✍

# Volunteers Needed: Updating our Local Birding Book

Pilchuck Audubon's book, *Birding in Snohomish County*, is currently being revised and edited for an updated edition.

Originally published in 2001, *Birding in Snohomish County* is an essential guide to all of the birding hotspots throughout the county, and we are looking for volunteers to help us compile research on a number of parks in the area. The research can be completed from home using online resources, and we also welcome inputs based on your experiences at your favorite local parks.

If you are interested in lending a hand as a researcher, writer, editor, or illustrator, please reach out to Mandy at [communications@pilchuckaudubon.org](mailto:communications@pilchuckaudubon.org).



## TRIP CALENDAR

Check our website, [www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org), for the latest information



No Birding Trips in July

## About Pilchuck Audubon Society

The Pilchuck Audubon Profile, official newsletter of Pilchuck Audubon Society, is published monthly.

Pilchuck Audubon Society (PAS) is a grass-roots environmental organization with members throughout Snohomish County and Camano Island, Washington.

Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife, for the benefit of the earth's biological diversity.

Through education, advocacy, and community activism, PAS is committed to bringing people closer to wildlife in order to build a deeper understanding of the powerful links between healthy ecosystems and human beings, and to encourage the involvement of our members in efforts to protect the habitat this wildlife depends upon for survival.

We serve as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society.

PAS is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization incorporated in the state of Washington.

### Newsletter Submissions

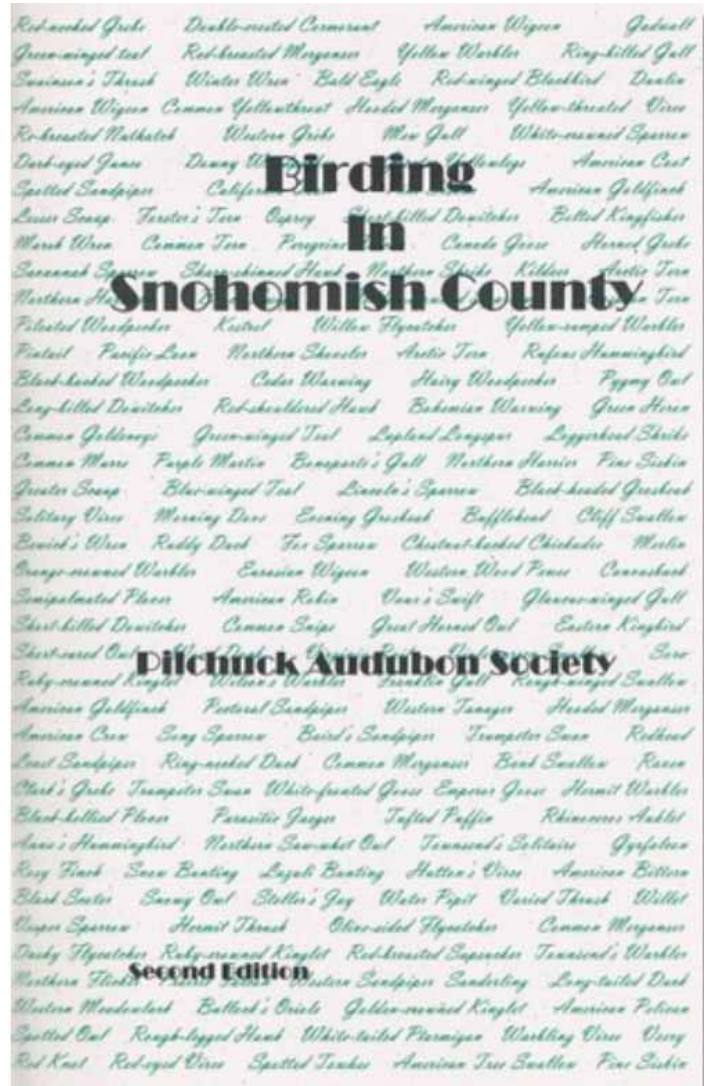
Submit articles to [newsletter@pilchuckaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@pilchuckaudubon.org) or mail to 1429 Avenue D, PMB 198, Snohomish, WA 98290. Submissions must be received by the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month preceding publication. We reserve the right to edit.

To contact Pilchuck Audubon Society, call 425.610.8027.

The monthly Profile is available online at

[www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org)

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# 2020 Birdathon Photography Contest Winners Announced!

With more than 70 beautiful photographs entered in our contest this year, the judging was more difficult than ever! Photographs were judged on the categories of technical quality, originality, and artistic merit. Our judges panel this year included a Board member from Pilchuck Audubon, a representative from our event sponsor [Nature Together](#), and a representative from the [Snohomish County Arts Commission](#). The judges were beyond impressed with the talent of our members and local photographers.

The photographs entered this year represented a wide range of species found in western Washington, ranging from Dunlins and Wilson's Warblers, to Short-eared Owls and Downy Woodpeckers. So without further ado, congratulations to our 2020 Birdathon Photography Contest winners!



**1<sup>st</sup> Place – Great Horned Owl by Tashi Schorr**

**Right: 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Pheasant Face by Joey McCracken**



**Below: 3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Morning Star by Oliver Reed**



Youth  
Category

## 2020 Birdathon Photography Contest Winners, continued



**1<sup>st</sup> Place - Anna's Hummingbird with Two Nestlings by Kathy McCulloch Wade**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Obscured by David Reddish**



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Rufous Hummingbird by Rex Guichard**

Adult  
Category

## 2020 Birdathon Photography Contest Winners, continued

### People's Choice Award

We need your help deciding who wins this award! The People's Choice Award is just that – an award decided on by the people. We will be posting one photo per day on our Facebook and Instagram pages **during the week of July 6-13**. To cast your vote for a photo, simply 'like' the photo. And yes – you can vote on both Facebook and Instagram to give your favorite photo the best shot possible to win! But don't hesitate! To keep things fair, **votes will only count during the first 7 days after each photo is posted**. Be sure to share this with your friends and family so we can get the whole community involved in the selection!

As each photographer can win only one prize, eligible photos are those that did place in Adult and Youth Categories and were not taken by one of the photographers who placed in those categories.

### Want to See All of this Year's Contest Entries?

In lieu of a live program meeting on July 10, we will be posting a pre-recorded presentation on the website that will provide an update of how this year's Birdathon event and fundraiser went overall, followed by a slideshow of all of this year's contest entries. So, sit back and relax as you get to enjoy an evening of beauty, color, and local talent! 🦋

## Goodbye Northwestern Crow, Hello Mexican Duck

### Updates to the official list of North and Central American bird species



In the latest supplement to the American Ornithological Society's *Checklist of North and Middle American Birds*, the Northwestern Crow has officially been removed.

The latest supplement to the American Ornithological Society's *Checklist of North and Middle American Birds*, published in *The Auk: Ornithological Advances*, includes several major updates to the organization of the continent's bird species, including the addition of the Mexican Duck and the removal of the Northwestern Crow. The official authority on the names and classification of the region's birds, the checklist is consulted by birdwatchers and professional scientists alike and has been published since 1886.

The Northwestern Crow has long been considered a close cousin of the more familiar and widespread American Crow, with a range limited to the Pacific Northwest. However, a recent study on the genetics of the two species prompted AOS's North American Classification Committee to conclude that the two species are actually one and the same. "People have speculated that the Northwestern Crow and the American Crow should be lumped for a long time, so this won't be a surprise to a lot of people," says the U.S. Geological Survey's Terry Chesser, chair of the committee. "Northwestern Crows were originally described based on size, being smaller than the American Crow, and behavior, but over the years the people who've looked at specimens or observed birds in the field have mostly come to the conclusion that the differences are inconsistent. Now the genomic data have

indicated that this is really variation within a species, rather than two distinct species."

However, birdwatchers disappointed to lose the Northwestern Crow from their life lists can take solace in the addition of a new species to the official checklist: the Mexican Duck. "The checklist recognized Mexican Duck until 1973, when it was lumped with Mallard," says Chesser. "But the Mexican Duck is part of a whole complex of Mallard-like species, including Mottled Duck, American Black Duck, and Hawaiian Duck, and all of those are considered distinct species except for, until recently, the Mexican Duck. Now genomic data have been published on the complex and on the Mexican Duck and Mallard in particular, and they show that gene flow between them is limited, which was enough to convince the committee to vote for the split."

Additional changes introduced in this year's checklist supplement include a massive reorganization of a group of Central American hummingbirds known as the emeralds — adding nine genera, deleting six others, and transferring seven additional species between already-recognized genera — as well as an update to the criteria for adding introduced, non-native species to the list that raises the bar for introduced species to officially be considered established. The full checklist supplement is available at <https://academic.oup.com/auk/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/auk/ukaa030>.

Reprinted from <https://americanornithology.org/goodbye-northwestern-crow-hello-mexican-duck/>, 30 June 2020. 🦋



## See, Me, Pretty Pretty Me

Is the White-crowned Sparrow really that vain? I suppose we'll never know. But for those who attended Pilchuck Audubon's first ever online class, Birding By Ear, it's a useful way to remember the song of that little bird with the Oreo cookie hairstyle.

This past month, we hosted a three-part Birding By Ear class to help birders learn how to begin or improve their skills in identifying birds by their sounds. Topics of the class included:

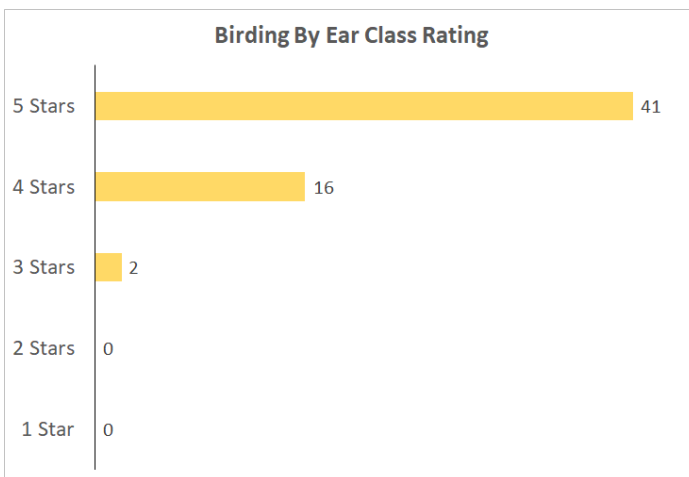
- Identifying the characteristics of birdsongs
- Picking out the different types of sounds you might hear (buzz, chirp, trill, etc.)
- How you would describe those sounds (metallic, whistle-like, burry, etc.)
- What's a sonogram and how to use one for birdsong
- Learning variation within a single species

This was a class originally scheduled for April, but we had to postpone it due to COVID-19. Luckily, our fantastic instructor, Whitney Neufeld-Kaiser, was ready and willing to take it to an online format for us. And the response from the birding community was amazing!

Over the course of the three weeks, we had 278 participants in the class! We had folk from all over the state, plus a few from Oregon and California, even Montana and Arizona!

The class was a lot of fun largely because Whitney, a Seattle Audubon Master Birder, was such a knowledgeable and enthusiastic instructor. But don't just take our word for it. Participants were surveyed after the class and of the 59 responses, 57 gave it 4 stars or higher, and many commented that they were sad the series was already over!

With the success of our first online class, we feel the possibilities are limitless. We are working to schedule more online classes and would love to hear what topics you'd be interested in. If you have suggestions for class topics, or if you'd be interested in teaching one, please email Brian at [director@pilchuckaudubon.org](mailto:director@pilchuckaudubon.org).



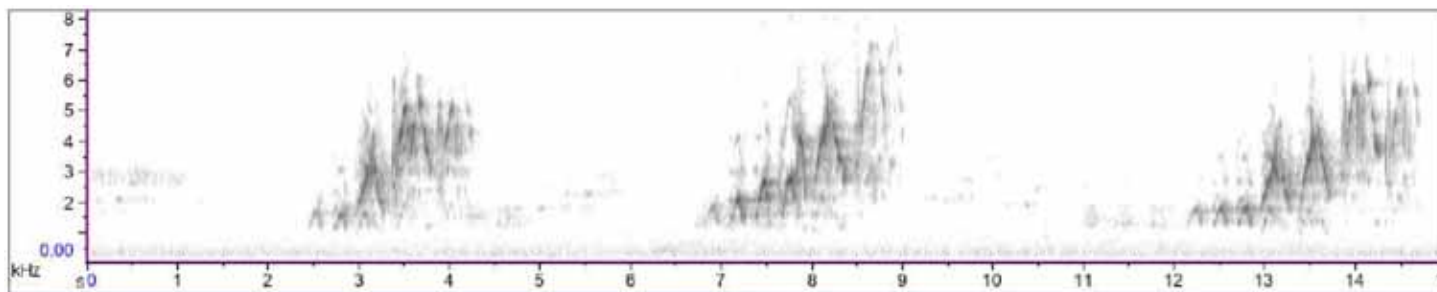
For those of you who missed out on the live Birding By Ear sessions, you can still register and watch the whole series! We recorded all three sessions of the class and will have those recordings available to watch until the end of August.

### **To register**

Email Brian, [director@pilchuckaudubon.org](mailto:director@pilchuckaudubon.org), and let him know which sessions you'd like the recordings for and he'll then provide you information on how to submit payment based on your membership status.

### **Pricing**

1 session: \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members  
2 sessions: \$20 for members, \$30 for non-members  
3 sessions: \$30 for members, \$45 for non-members  
*Scholarships may be available for those in need, inquire at email above.* ✎



*Sonogram of Swainson's Thrush*

# Hope and a Red-winged Blackbird

by Thomas Bancroft

The black eyes glared right at me, a penetrating stare that seemed to pierce my flesh. He then opened his mouth while flexing up his shoulders and leaning toward me. His red epaulets glowed in the sun as his song rang out, a sharp two whistles followed by a trill that lasted about a half-second and then another whistle. At the same time, he expanded his tail and flared his wings slightly, all the while those eyes scowled.



*Red-winged Blackbird singing, Union Bay at UW Seattle, WA | Photo Credit: Thomas Bancroft*

I stood only twenty feet from him, amazed that this male Red-winged Blackbird seemed to be threatening me as if I were an intruder into his world. He sat on the top of a cattail, his feet gripping the brown cylindrical spike that had been the plant's flowers. It was early June and one of my first trips to a suburban park since the Governor asked folk in March to stay at home. The COVID-19 pandemic had gripped the country. It had been ten minutes since I walked over to this marsh at Union Bay in Seattle, and he initially paid me no heed. By now, his females would have produced their first brood, and he might be courting ones for a second attempt.

He looked over his right shoulder and back across his marsh. Males defend a territory, and if their area has good nesting sites and suitable food sources, they may attract more than one female. Scientists have found males with as many as fifteen females in their harem, but two to five seems much more common. Females' reproductive success doesn't seem to be hurt by joining a harem, and anyway, they may go elsewhere to fertilize their eggs. What appears critical in their choice is that it's a good place to build their nest, one that is protected from predation and disturbance.



*Red-winged Blackbird, female | Photo Credit: Thomas Bancroft*

The male's primary job is to defend a patch of cattails from other male blackbirds, from predators, from critters like me that might disturb the nesting females. The word "defend" ran through my mind. It seemed appropriate right then. Washington state had begun to open back up from the coronavirus lockdown. I needed a plan to start moving outside my house without catching the virus. But countering the despair that had filled me seemed equally important. The lockdown had meant isolation, no face to face with friends, no plans to see family, canceled dreams for the coming months. The seclusion had zapped my motivation, my enthusiasm for much of anything. Much of my time had been spent staring out the window or watching the same movie over and over again.

This red-wing stood tall on the cattail, looking one way and then another. He was exposed to the open and yet didn't seem afraid. Not a quarter-mile away was an active Cooper's Hawk nest. These hawks specialize in capturing birds, and this blackbird would make the perfect meal. The red-wing must protect himself but also keep an eye out for his females. Male blackbirds in an area work together in watching for predators. Ornithologists have discovered that they change their calls when they see danger, and then all the males will take up that new call. It is the change that signals the threat and not the call itself.

Males will mob an American Crow or Red-tailed Hawk until they chase it out of the area and attack Great Blue Herons. All these birds represent threats to adults, nestlings, or eggs. It is a joint effort that helps each be successful. He left his perch and flew a low circle over his marsh. The blackbird landed on a far cattail, and there, he let out his *conk-la-ree* song while looking over his wetland. Content and assured was what he appeared to me.



*Red-winged Blackbird, fledgling, Stillwater Wildlife Area; Carnation, WA | Photo Credit: Thomas Bancroft*

A sense of hope welled up in me. This male looked confident about the future. Perhaps if he can beat the odds, so can I. With some diligence and help from others, we can defend ourselves from the virus and the despair that it has brought to our lives. 🦅

## BACKYARD BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

March 26, 2020 to April 25, 2020

by Mara Price, Sightings Coordinator

This month I saw 4 Western Tanagers, 3 males and 1 female. Quite a sight. There is still one hanging around to make my day. Hope everyone is well and staying safe.

Carole and Larry Beason, reporting from Lake Bosworth, counted the most Wood Ducks than they have ever seen on the lake. Their total species count of 44 included 3 American Goldfinch, 15 American Robin, 3 Anna's Hummingbird, a Belted Kingfisher flying over, 3 Barn Swallow, 8 Black-headed Grosbeak, 6 Brewer's Blackbird, 9 Band-tailed Pigeon, 2 Common Raven, 2 Downy Woodpecker, 2 Evening Grosbeak, 2 Golden-crowned Sparrow, 3 Hairy Woodpecker, 2 Osprey, a Pileated Woodpecker, 8 Purple Finch, 24 Red-winged Blackbird, 4 Rufous Hummingbird, 2 Swainson's Thrush, a Turkey Vulture, 3 Bald Eagle over the lake, 9 Wood Duck on the lake and in the yard, and on the lake: 8 Canada Goose, 2 Double-crested Cormorant, and 2 Mallard Duck.

Reporting from Mukilteo, Hilka Egtvedt listed a juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk sitting on the deck railing preying on the birds, 3 Anna's Hummingbird, 2 Rufous Hummingbird, 2 Hairy Woodpecker, a Pileated Woodpecker, 3 Steller's Jay, 2 Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, a Bewick's Wren, 3 European Starling, 4 Western Tanager, 2 Black-headed Grosbeak, 2 Song Sparrow, 3 Spotted Towhee, 2 Golden-crowned Sparrow, 2 White-crowned Sparrow, 4 Dark-eyed Junco, 4 Purple Finch, 6 Pine Siskin, and 3 American Goldfinch, for a total species count of 28.

Kriss Erickson's report from Everett listed 12 Dark-eyed Junco, 9 American Robin, 2 Bewick's Wren, 31 Bushtit, 13 Northwestern Crow, 8 Western Gull, 14 Black-capped Chickadee, 4 Anna's Hummingbird, 4 Spotted Towhee, 2 Downy Woodpecker, 5 Northern Flicker, a Black-headed Grosbeak, 3 Song Sparrow, 2 Wilson's Warbler, 7 Mallard Duck, a Common Raven, 2 Band-tailed Pigeon and 32 Canada Goose flying over, for a total species count of 22.

Mary Sinker has been very busy working and will try to do a report for next month. She did report 4 Red-breasted Sapsucker with one of the males banging on the exterior vent of the living room fireplace. She also saw a warbler.

Walter Zandi's report from Monroe listed 5 Dark-Eyed Junco, 2 Downy Woodpecker, 6 American Goldfinch, 9 Black-headed Grosbeak, 2 Steller's Jay, 2 Northern Flicker, 4 Bushtit, a Cooper's Hawk flying around the yard, 2 Anna's Hummingbird, 2 Rufous Hummingbird, a Red-

tailed Hawk soaring overhead, a Pileated Woodpecker, 2 Mourning Dove, 2 Bald Eagle overhead, and 15 male and 8 female Evening Grosbeak, for a total species count of 22.

My report from Marysville include 5 American Robin, 2 Anna's Hummingbird, 6 Black-headed Grosbeak, 4 Black-capped Chickadee, 3 Dark-eyed Junco, 4 House Finch, 2 Downy Woodpecker, 2 Hairy Woodpecker, 3 Mourning Dove, 2 Red-tailed Hawk, 2 Purple Finch, Spotted Towhee, 4 Steller's Jay, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, 2 White-crowned Sparrow, 4 Western Tanager, and a Yellow Warbler, for a total species count of 23.

If you are interested in participating in the Backyard Birding count, please email me at [pricemara1@gmail.com](mailto:pricemara1@gmail.com) or leave a message on my cell phone at 425-750-8125. 📧



Western Tanagers (male left, female right) | Photo Credit: Mick Thompson

### Pilchuck Audubon Society Membership Information

Support your local Audubon chapter by becoming a member. PAS dues are tax deductible (consult your tax professional for details). The PAS tax ID number is 91-6183664.

- New Member ..... \$28
- Renewal ..... \$28
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