

Echo

June 2024
Olympia, Washington



BHAS ANNUAL PICNIC

SUNDAY JUNE 23RD 3:30 – 6:00 PM

SQUAXIN PARK ROSE GARDEN PICNIC SHELTER

OLYMPIA

IT'S PICNIC TIME! We will gather at our usual spot—The Squaxin Park Rose Garden picnic shelter—to visit, dine and play. This year Black Hills Audubon will supply the food, drink and desserts. You supply the camaraderie and, if you can, your plate and utensils. We will have disposable utensils available.

We will honor our award winners for BHAS Volunteers of the Year – Sally Nole and Bonnie Wood, the Jack Davis Conservationist of the Year – Helen Wheatley, and the Dave McNett Environmental Educator of the Year – Matthew Landers. These are amazing people who truly embody the spirit of environmental conservation and it will be a pleasure to celebrate them.

We will also sponsor a used bird book table (be gathering bird books you no longer need) and play a rousing game of Bird Bingo. Here is the schedule:

- 3:30 – 4:30 Gather and visit with BHAS members and friends
- 4:30 – 5:00 Dinner (provided by BHAS)
- 5:00 – 5:30 Dessert and program honoring our awardees
- 5:30 – 6:00 Bird Bingo and a surprise competition
- 6:00 Bird walk in Squaxin Park

REMEMBER: Bring bird books to swap!

And, if you have flowers in your garden you can share, please bring a vase with them for our table decorations.

Questions can go to Kathleen Snyder ksnyder75@gmail.com.

You won't want to miss this fun afternoon with fellow Auduboners.

Armchair Birding: The American Dipper, or Water Ouzel

~ Anne Kilgannon

While it's true that I depend on reading about birds as much as observing them in the field, those habits are often twined: seeing a new bird will send me to my bookshelf for reference and, in turn, reading sharpens my search for birds outside. Adding the *Merlin* app has opened a whole other dimension to my efforts to discover birds in my world. Recently I was delighted to learn that warblers, kinglets, wrens, and goldfinches were having a party far above my head in some Douglas firs. I could hear thin-sounding whistles, chirps and calls but only the vivid flash of yellow revealed the finches. Just to know that the others were there was enough for me. Actually seeing a bird and observing its way of life is sweet icing on my cake.

I was given that deep pleasure last week. My friend Kathryn has been reporting sightings of Dippers to me for (can it be?) years and I have tried to follow up to see one for myself but either failed to find one or didn't recognize one if I was seeing it. After all, they are members of that ubiquitous tribe of LBBs! But that's no excuse; their behavior clearly sets them apart. You can't confuse them with anything else but they do require patience, luck and the right setting: a fast running stream with handy rocks for perching. Tumwater Falls is the place to go. Kathryn took me in hand.

We scoured the various rocks and the swirling water in likely spots all along the river shore as we progressed down the trail. No....no....should be, could be....not here or there. Finally, we came to the end of the trail, past the foaming falls where the water spreads out a bit and begins to slow down. A family of Canada geese floated by with a line of goslings in tow. The exuberant spray from the falls was behind us but the roar still filled our ears. Though disappointment loomed, we still searched.

We gazed at the water, locating protruding perch rocks....and there was a dark flash. Movement. A bird there and then not there. And then, a little further, it popped up again! A bird no bigger than a robin, maybe slightly smaller, dark with no discernable markings, but a very characteristic bobbing at the knees and submerging itself under water to quickly

probe for insect prey. It plunged in and out of the river, bobbing and picking its way quite comfortably under water. And then it suddenly zipped past us, flying in a beeline up the river and disappearing—so it looked—right into the falls. It repeated this several times, as we watched, going into the river for a dip and then shooting into the mist of the water plunging down the rock face. We followed to see where it might be headed. It was worth the misty shower to see the bird land on a ledge jutting from the falls where two lighter colored baby birds waited. The feeding took only seconds and then the parent was off again for more bugs.

We were jubilant! At some point we realized there were two parent birds as well as two baby birds. Our persistence and patience were rewarded. Once you've seen a Dipper, unlike so many other LBBs, you know what it is, and no second-guessing is required. Still, I wanted to know more. I pulled my Sibley books off the shelf and another great resource, *The Birder's Handbook*, by Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye. Their commentary is cryptic but fascinating. They note that the Dipper can "fly" under water as deeply as twenty feet! They have special adaptations, such as "much larger oil glands" to keep their feathers waterproof and "scales that close nostrils when underwater." They are also helped by plumage that "is very soft, dense and difficult to saturate" and possess "a white nictitating membrane (third eyelid) that can be drawn across the eye to help keep it clear of dirt suspended in the water." In their discussion of bird species that swim underwater, the authors single out Dippers as ones that simply walk instead of diving, swimming or paddling, although they employ "powerful beats of their wings" to propel themselves in fast-moving water. Sometimes just their heads are submerged, searching for prey. "The young can climb, dive and swim on departing the nest," ready for everything their river environment presents. That nest is often a ball of moss that befits such a drippy-wet territory.

My *Sibley Guide to Birds* shows the Dipper's relative size beside some of their relatives and gives you a chance to see their slate-gray coloring and finer features in rare stand-still poses: their stubby upraised tails, strong-looking long legs, and probing pointed beak. Sibley calls them "unique, the only songbird that regularly swims." It has no close relatives in North America but there are different versions on other continents according to the *Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. That guide also speculates that the rapid dipping motion helps them see underwater from different angles while also communicating strength in a noisy environment. Sibley adds that: "the oxygen capacity of the blood is much higher than that of nonaquatic songbirds, allowing them to remain submerged for up to 30 seconds while foraging." And he explains this impressive adaptation: "Their vision is facilitated by the iris sphincter muscles, which are more developed in dippers than in most birds, allowing the curvature of the lens to adapt to seeing both above and below the water." There is more information but that was a lot of food for thought for one day. The intricacies of adaptation and evolution fill me with awe.

There was only one more piece of information I craved. The rushing waters of the waterfall and river had filled the air with their own music, but I wanted to know what the call of the Dipper was in the unlikely event I should ever hear one away from the water tumult. I turned to the *Cornell Lab* website for that and was rewarded with a lovely close-up photograph of the bird with a long recording of its intriguing song. Look here: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_dipper

Dippers retain their mystery as beings from a different world and way of life, but learning something about them only adds to my sense of wonder as I may watch them in their river environment next time I'm lucky enough to see them. Thank you, Kathryn!

FEATHER FLURRY WAS MAGICAL

One of the Events and Adventures offered at the Annual Dinner was the chance to visit Chris Maynard, local artist and bird lover, at his home where he has "trained" swallows to gather feathers for their nests. Chris collects feathers throughout the year and then puts them into the top of a ten foot tube. He will then blow through the bottom of the tube which shoots the feathers into the air. The swallows swoop down to catch them and then carry them away to their nests. Attendees saw Barn, Tree, and Violet-green Swallows compete for these treasures and folks who wanted could try doing it as well. Everyone was enchanted. The morning included breakfast and a tour of Chris' art studio where he works a different kind of magic on feathers.

SPRING BRINGS EVENT OUTREACH

With the advent of spring and good weather, Black Hills Audubon gets involved in staffing tables at different events being held in our area. Charlotte Persons, current BHAS Board member, and Stevie Morris, past Board member, are seen above at the Bayshore Preserve family event that highlighted a StoryTrail installation on the Capitol Land Trust property outside of Shelton on May 18th. We began the season with a table at the Tenino Earth Day Event on April 20th. On May 11th, our organization staffed an information table at Prairie Appreciation Day (see photo below with Bob Wadsworth and Doug Rogers) and on May 19th, we were at the Wolf Haven Prairie Celebration event. As you see, we have been busy.

Black Hills Audubon thanks the following volunteers for their help in sharing our organization with the wider public community: Charlotte Persons, retiring Outreach Chair, Stevie Morris, incoming Outreach Chair, Deb Johnson, Dewey Fuller, Doug Rogers, Bruce Jacobs, Juanita Kelly, Sally Nole, Elizabeth Rodrick, Nancy Hubley, and Bob Wadsworth.

My “Spark Bird”... or Lack Thereof

By Rachel Hudson

When I first heard about “spark birds” many years ago, I was very surprised to hear that such a thing existed... for I do not have one. I have been a “birder” since birth; birds (and animals in general) were the first things I was drawn to as a baby, and I never lost that passion. (See tiny 2-year-old me gleefully petting one of my grandma’s baby chickens, and later trying to get closer to their neighbors’ adult chicken and turkey.)

I was able to read chapter books by age 3, and my very supportive family gave me many, many books about birds and all the other creatures that inhabit the Earth. I still have my first two bird-specific books, which I likely received somewhere between my 3rd and 5th birthdays. I adored them both, spending hours carefully learning all I could from them. The white Nature Club book features birds from all over the world, and describes much about their biology and characteristics. The small blue Golden Guide was my first field guide, originally published in 1949 and revised in 1987, with which I dutifully identified all the birds at my family’s very active feeders in Texas. Though some of the information in it is dated now, the pictures in it are beautiful, and it has detailed information in the back of the book regarding each bird’s migration times, clutch size, nest type/location, and food consumed.

Throughout my childhood, my bond with birds grew, from the chickens and Helmeted Guineafowl my dad and I started raising as free-range pets when I was 8 years old, to the wild American and Fish Crows I learned to communicate with in my preteen years, to the Eastern Phoebes who always sang and nested in the eaves by my bedroom window year after year... Birds have never *not* been a part of my life, and I hope I can continue to share my life with them in whatever ways I can.

This concludes the wonderful Spark Birds series created by Stevie Morris, with thoughtful and inspiring input from many of our “sparked” BHAS birders. We hope you all enjoyed reading these nostalgic stories, and perhaps you learned some new things along the way!

LOOKING FOR GOOD NATURE BOOKS?

Birds & Brew members have some thoughts for you....

"The Birds of America" by John James Audubon and David Sibley

"Origin of Species" by Charles Darwin

"Cosmos" by Carl Sagan

"Every Penguin in the World" by Charles Bergman

"Alfie and Me: What Owls Know, What Humans Believe" by Carl Safina

"Owls of the Eastern Ice" by Jonathan Slaght

"The Final Forest" by William Dietrich

"A Sand County Almanac" by Aldo Leopold

"The Bird Way" and *"What an Owl Knows"* by Jennifer Ackerman

"Eruption: The Untold Story of Mount St. Helens" by Steve Olson

"The Immense Journey" by Loren Eiseley

"The Golden Spruce" and *"Fire Weather"* by John Vaillant

"The Invention of Nature" by Andrea Wulf

"An Immense World" by Ed Yong

"Finding the Mother Tree" by Suzanne Simard

BIRDERS NEEDED!

The Puget Sound Seabird Survey is looking for birders in Thurston County to join this established Community Science program. We'd be delighted with any volunteers, but especially those living in the Olympia, Lacey, and Boston Harbor areas. Volunteers are asked to conduct 7 surveys with a small team of fellow surveyors at specific coastal locations. All surveys are synchronized to take place once per month on the first Saturday, October – April. You will be provided training in the survey technique, and ideally will have good seabird identification skills. However, there are roles on the survey team for birders of all levels. Now in its 16th season, you'll be contributing to valuable science that monitors wintering seabirds across Puget Sound and informs important management decisions. This year we

started working with the University of Washington on a major research study focusing on seabird distribution and population trends. We're also planning to collaborate with Birds Canada on a project that will examine the status of seabirds across the entire Salish Sea ecosystem. More information on PSSS can be found on the PSBO [website](#) along with a fun [Seabird ID quiz](#). If you're interested in taking part, please complete this [application form](#) or reach out to Program Manager Toby Ross t_ross@pugetsoundbirds.org

**LET'S
GO
BIRDING
TOGETHER**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 6:30-8:30 P.M
BILLY FRANK JR. NISQUALLY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Come take an evening stroll through the Nisqually Refuge with friends and family of the LGBTQ+ community!

Next Book for the BHAS Book Club

For the BHAS Book Club's next meeting in June, we will be discussing the New York Times Bestseller, *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us*, by Ed Yong.

And this time, we will be meeting in person!

Our meeting will be on Tuesday, June 25th at The ONE Center, 7400 Gallagher Cove Road NW, Olympia, at 6:00 PM. Our meetings typically last about 2 hours. To be notified of more details closer to the meeting date, as well as to be on the list of recipients for our discussion questions, please email Rachel Hudson at lightningdash09@yahoo.com .

Here is an excerpt from the publisher regarding Ed Yong's book: "In *An Immense World*, Ed Yong coaxes us beyond the confines of our own senses, allowing us to perceive the skeins of scent, waves of electromagnetism, and pulses of pressure that surround us. We encounter beetles that are drawn to fires, turtles that can track the Earth's magnetic fields, fish that fill rivers with electrical messages, and even humans who wield sonar like bats. We discover that a crocodile's scaly face is as sensitive as a lover's fingertips, that the eyes of a giant squid evolved to see sparkling whales, that plants thrum with the inaudible songs of courting bugs, and that even simple scallops have complex vision. We learn what bees see in flowers, what songbirds hear in their tunes, and what dogs smell on the street. We listen to stories of pivotal discoveries in the field, while looking ahead at the many mysteries that remain unsolved."

We hope to see you there!

BHAS Election Results

The following were elected at the Black Hills Audubon Society May 2024 meeting:

President: Kathleen Snyder

Vice-President: Kim Adelson

Treasurer: Nancy Hubly

Secretary; Bruce Jacobs

At-large Directors: Rachel Hudson

Bob Wadsworth

Charlotte Persons

Janet DeLapp

Sheila Rodriguez

Sam Muril

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

All chapter work is done by volunteers for whom we are very grateful. If you are interested in volunteering in something other than the opportunities listed below, please contact Kathleen Snyder ksnyder75@gmail.com.

COMMITTEES THAT NEED NEW MEMBERS: Without committees, our impact on environmental education and advocacy would cease. All of our committees now meet via Zoom so where you live does not exclude you from attending. These committees are filled with dedicated volunteers who would love to welcome you into their midst:

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
Education Committee
Finance Committee
Outreach Committee

For more information, contact Kathleen at ksnyder75@gmail.com

PHOTOGRAPHERS: BHAS has a photo gallery on our website and an Instagram account (Blackhills352). We would love to add new bird photographs to these platforms. Please contact Quentin Phillips at gmp932@hotmail.com. He will give you the parameters for what we can use.

FIELD TRIPS AND OUTINGS

BIRDS AND BREW

MONDAY JUNE 17TH 4:30 – 6:30 PM

BOSTON HARBOR MARINA
312 73RD AVE NE
OLYMPIA

NOTE LOCATION CHANGE

It's time to move our gathering outside and enjoy the gorgeous scenery from Boston Harbor. Birds and Brew is a social time for folks to gather and talk all things avian. This is open to Black Hills members and non-members alike. Although it starts at 4:30 pm, it is a drop-in anytime event. The topic for this meeting is, "What bird do you most want to see but haven't yet?"

Our hosts are Craig and Vicki Merkel. Questions can go to Craig at quetsal48@comcast.net.

In May, the topic was on new places to go bird. Some of the answers were:

- Mission Creek Nature Park in Olympia
- West Rocky Prairie in Thurston County
- Woodland Creek Community Park, Lacey Senior Center
- McLane Creek Nature Trail, off Delphi Road SW
- Frye Cove State Park, Steamboat Island
- Eagles Pride Golf Course, Dupont
- Woodard Bay Conservation Area, Olympia
- Cowlitz Trout Hatchery, Toledo
- Theler Wetlands Nature Preserve, Belfair
- Chehalis Western Trail (Woodard Bay to Ranier)
- Bowerman Basin, Gray's Harbor near Aberdeen
- Bayshore Preserve, Shelton
- Hawks Prairie Ponds & Recharge Basins, Lacey
- Skagit County for Snow Geese

Bird Outing to Bayshore Preserve

Saturday, June 8

Register for this event at the bottom of Capitol Land Trust's announcement here:

<https://capitolandtrust.org/bird-outing-to-bayshore-preserve/>

Join Capitol Land Trust and Black Hills Audubon Society on a bird outing to Bayshore Preserve. Participants will get to witness Bayshore Preserve's transformation from golf course to nature preserve. Bayshore Preserve is a 78-acre nature preserve conserved by Capitol Land Trust on Oakland Bay in Shelton.

This preserve protects a variety of habitats like Puget Sound shoreline, saltmarsh, oak prairie, and streamside forest along Johns Creek. We will be looking and listening for spring migrants and year-round residents. No prior bird experience is necessary. This is a family friendly event.

Saturday, June 8, 2024

8:00 am – 11:00 am

Bayshore Preserve, Shelton

Trail information: The trail system is about 1.5 miles total. The Main Loop Trail is mostly flat and a mixture of dirt and gravel. The birding route will travel along trails with short inclines/declines. A portion of the trail could be soggy/muddy. There is a portable toilet available for use. The trails are not wheelchair accessible. [Learn more about the trails.](#)

Please wear weather appropriate clothing for a slow pace, sturdy, closed-toed shoes, and bring water and a snack. Bring your favorite birding tools (binoculars, scopes, camera, field guide, etc.)