

# *Echo*

January 2025  
Olympia, Washington



January 2025 Speaker Program

Beautiful, Remarkable Bird Songs

Kim Adelson

Thursday January 9<sup>th</sup> at Temple Beth Hatfiloh  
201 8<sup>th</sup> Ave SE Olympia and via Zoom

Throughout the ages, bird song has inspired poets, essayists, and composers. During this talk, you'll get to hear examples of some of the world's most beautiful bird songs as well as snippets of some of the poems and concertos they have inspired; you'll also have the opportunity to learn about the birds that produce those songs. (What kind of a bird is a lark, anyway? Where does it live? What does it eat?) In addition, you'll be able to take a listen to some of the most extreme bird songs: the loudest, the lowest pitched, the most complex, etc., and we'll also take a little dive into the vocal apparatus that allows such wondrous melodies to be created. We should have a harmonious evening!

Kim Adelson is the current Vice President and Education Committee Chair of the Black Hills Audubon Society and she is the Southwest Regional Representative to the Audubon Washington Advisory Board. She was a professor of psychology for almost 30 years. Before she switched fields in order to better study behavioral evolution, she earned a master's degree M.A. in evolutionary biology. She has given numerous talks about birds to BHAS as well as other Audubon chapters about topics such as bird evolution, climate change's effects on birds, and bird cognition.

Social time at the Temple begins at 6:30 pm. The program starts at 7:00 pm. Registration is required to view the program via Zoom; use this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctdu6spzIqHd2vOfSzJpgpGQK8ENgH29f7>

## Beginning Birding - What is *that* Bird?

### A Course for Beginners this March

Do you want to know what kind of birds you keep seeing in your yard or on neighborhood walks? Do you wonder about what they eat? Where they go in the winter? What makes them unique? Do you want to learn how to go about identifying birds?

We at Black Hills Audubon Society (BHAS) offer you an opportunity to learn about the birds you are most likely to see in Western Washington. (Dr.) Kim Adelson will host a series of four 90-minute classes, each a standalone presentation. The course will cover a total of roughly 40 bird species, ranging from kinglets to doves to sparrows to woodpeckers. The intent is to teach you how to identify these birds by sight and to learn where they are found and what their typical behaviors are (also good clues to identification!). In many cases you will learn to identify them by ear. **If you are intimidated by “little brown birds” and think that they all look alike, this is the class for you!**

**Dates:** March 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. These are all Wednesdays.

**Location:** Lacey Community Center, 6729 Pacific Avenue SE

**Time:** 6:30pm – 8pm

**Cost:** \$50.00. Pre-registration and prepayment are required.

**About the Instructor:** Kim Adelson is Vice President and Education Committee Chair of Black Hills Audubon. She regularly gives presentations on birds, the effects that climate change is having on them, bird evolution, and ways to attract them to one's yard. She was a college professor for more than 30 years in Minnesota, Ohio, and New Zealand. Kim is passionate about teaching others about birds, with the hope that it will encourage an interest in preserving our beloved Washington habitat and the wildlife it contains.

**To register:** Use the link (coming soon) to pay online via our website or send a check to: BHAS, P.O. Box 2524, Olympia, Washington 98507

**Note:** The class is structured so that there will be no content overlap from week to week. Below is an *approximate* list of the birds we will discuss each week.

#### Class 1: Building confidence

The “How To-s” of bird identification

Large and Noisy: Doves & Pigeons

Big Black and Blue Birds: The Corvids

(Grosbeaks, if we have time)

Class 2: A Pastiche of Common Neighborhood Birds

The Tree Huggers: Woodpeckers, Brown Creepers and Nuthatch  
Thrushes  
Towhees and Juncos  
Cedar Waxwing  
Grosbeaks, if we didn't get to them last time

Class 3: The Little Guys

Kinglets  
Hummingbirds  
Two or Three Warblers  
Our Two Chickadees  
Bushtit

Class 4: Those Intimidating LBBs (Little Brown Birds)

The most common LBBs: Sparrows and Finches  
Wrens  
A few easy ways to attract more birds to your yard

## 2025 Annual Dinner features our own Maria Mudd Ruth!

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 our annual gathering will again be held at South Puget Sound Community College's Student Union Building beginning at 4:30 PM. The evening includes: a catered dinner, opportunities to purchase exciting "Events and Adventures", socializing with friends, hearing about our chapter's work and accomplishments this past year, and a talk from our featured speaker, author Maria Ruth, about her work with Pigeon Guillemots in Puget Sound. It will be an unforgettable evening. Her presentation, "My Big Decade: One Seabird, One Place, One Community" will enlighten and educate us on the amazing behaviors and traits of this captivating bird. Her book on this subject is slated to be published in the Spring of 2026.

Registration is \$45/person and will open January 5<sup>th</sup> on our website:

<https://blackhills-audubon.org> Checks are also accepted and can be sent to us at:

BHAS

P.O. Box 2524

Olympia, WA 98507

\*Note on the check that it is for the Annual Dinner.

Mark your calendars now so you reserve the date for a special evening with your Audubon friends.

## Identifying Northwest Gulls:

Lecture and Field Study: 2 class sessions and 2 field study sessions with Scott Mills, Bill Shelmerdine and Bill Tweit

Living in the region where gulls hybridize can make the identification of some rather difficult. However, we have several species of gull that have marks which help key them out more easily. Let these experts dazzle you with their knowledge while helping make it doable to know many of our local gulls.

Two in-person sessions for \$45 and two optional field study sessions for an additional \$15 each. Optional Field Study sessions for a separate fee of \$15 each, will be discussed and organized during the first class.

Lectures on January 18th and 25th from 9-11am at the Norm Dicks Visitor Center Room at Billy Frank National Wildlife Refuge.

Cost is \$45 for lecture series. Registration is required to reserve seat. Contact Deb Nickerson at [debranick@gmail.com](mailto:debranick@gmail.com) to register. Payment can be made online (<https://blackhills-audubon.org/> via the donation button) or via check (BHAS, P.O. Box 2524, Olympia, WA, 98507)

Instructors are recognized leaders in Gull identification and behavior. We are grateful for their leadership in this offering to our chapter.

### **Should we change our name?**

Kathleen Snyder, BHAS President

The members of Black Hills Audubon have an important decision to make. Should we rename ourselves, leaving out "Audubon"? There will be an election to make this decision from March 15 – April 15, 2025. For an article that lists the pros and cons of the issue, please see the article in last month's *Echo*.

Our Board has voted (not unanimously) that this change is right and necessary. This was not a decision arrived at quickly. In fact, the process took over a year and it was one that started with the opposite conclusion. However, after much soul searching, research, and conversations with fellow Auduboners, friends and family, it became more untenable to maintain the status quo. In August of 2024, the Board voted that we recommend to our membership that we remove “Audubon” from our name.

I’ve heard it said that we should not judge prior generations by the mores that we accept in this age; that owning slaves was acceptable in Audubon’s life. Let’s look at some important dates regarding that argument. The abolitionist movement started in England in 1787. Our northern states abolished slavery in 1804 and the importation of enslaved persons into the United States was officially prohibited in 1807. John James Audubon owned slaves in the 1810s and also in the 1820s. He was educated and well-traveled so he must have been aware of the anti-slavery movement and laws.

I have no idea how the name change vote will go. There are passionate feelings on both sides. Be assured, though, that “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”. William Shakespeare points out in Romeo and Juliet that a name does not change the essence of a person or thing. Black Hills Audubon Society will remain an organization dedicated to environmental education, conservation, and action no matter what our name is. We are proud of our past achievements and look forward to remaining a strong, effective, and welcoming organization.

## Climate Watch January 2025

Climate change is impacting many animals, and for some the impact may be devastating. Two-thirds of North American birds are vulnerable to extinction due to climate change. Audubon members and others asked how they could help protect birds from the impact of a warming planet, and in 2016 Audubon responded by launching the innovative community-science program, Climate Watch.

Each year Climate Watch volunteers during both the winter (January 15 to February 15) and the summer (May 15 to June 15) conduct a series of five-minute counts in designated areas to document the presence or absence of target species, like nuthatches and towhees. Their data helps Audubon scientists better understand how bird ranges are shifting as an adaptation to climate change, and which species are most in danger from a warming world.

For more information on the Climate Watch program, check out Audubon’s Climate Watch website: <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/climate-watch>

If you are interested in participating in the next Climate Watch survey beginning on January 15, 2025, contact the Climate Watch coordinator for Black Hills Audubon, Austin Gray, at [austinirisgray1897@gmail.com](mailto:austinirisgray1897@gmail.com)

Tom Reynolds

## OLYMPIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2024—THANK YOU

Although we don't yet have the results of the two Black Hills Audubon Christmas Bird Counts that occurred in December, we are filled with memories and appreciation of those who did the work to make this a success. Above is Jen DeSelle's NE Olympia team at a local bakery before heading out, in the rain, to count all the birds seen and heard. All counts must be done within a 15 mile diameter circle that cannot be moved once established. Many teams were needed to cover these areas and we thank all the volunteers who participated. A huge thank you goes to Bill Shelmerdine (Olympia) and Rachel Hudson (Lewis County) for the massive amount of work that is involved in coordinating the teams and compiling the results of the day's count.

The post count tradition of a Chili Feed resumed this year for the Olympia CBC. A terrific crew of volunteers made the chili on Saturday and another incredible crew prepped, served, and cleaned up on Sunday. Counters entered the Gull Harbor Lutheran Church Hall at dusk and enjoyed hot cider, homemade chili, cornbread, salad and desserts. Diane Coulter ushered the teams through the process again and it was appreciated by all who attended. The volunteers who cut and cooked veggies and stirred the pots on Saturday were: Diane Coulter, Suzanne Wilson, Martha Isbister, Peter Dederich, Marinka Major, Kathy Prosser and Deb Nickerson. Then on Sunday the team was composed of: Diane Coulter, Debby Johnson, Martha Isbister, Carla Miller, Abby Salmon and Alaina Salmon. Cornbread and desserts were provided by: Laurie Dils, Bruce Jacobs, Cori Halverson, Carla Miller, Diane Coulter, Martha Isbister, Abby and Alaina Salmon. Thank you to each of these individuals; we could not have done this without you!!

## BHAS Book Club's Next Book

Birding Under the Influence, by Dorian Anderson

Meeting Time: 6:00 PM, Tuesday January 21<sup>st</sup> via Zoom

Now that we have learned almost everything we wanted to know and more about the discoveries and science surrounding avian migration, it is time for us to dive into a more personal story!

Our next book will be ***Birding Under the Influence: Cycling Across America in Search of Birds and Recovery***, by Dorian Anderson.

In this exciting memoir, Anderson reflects on his life, his past struggles with addiction, and his current reignited passion for birds as he travels via bicycle across America for a Big Year, experiencing not only the amazing birds of his adventure, but many unique people and cultures along the way.

From the publisher:

“As Dorian pedals across the country, describing the birds he sees, he confronts the challenges of long-distance cycling: treacherous weather, punctured tires, speeding cars, and injury. He encounters eccentric characters, blistering blacktop, dreary hotel rooms, snarling dogs, and an endless sea of smoking tailpipes. He also confronts his past struggles with alcohol, drugs, and risky behaviors that began in high school and followed him into adulthood.

*Birding Under the Influence* is a candid, honest look at Dorian’s double life of academic accomplishment and addiction. While his journey to recovery is simultaneously poignant and inspiring, it is ultimately his love of birds and nature that provides the scaffolding to build a new and radically different life.”

We will be meeting **on Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 PM via Zoom**. The link to the meeting will be emailed to those on our mailing list. To receive future updates and questions for this book, and if you haven’t already joined the BHAS Book Club mailing list, please email Rachel Hudson at [lightningdash09@yahoo.com](mailto:lightningdash09@yahoo.com) to sign up!

Happy Reading, and Happy Holidays!

## TEENS ENJOY BHAS FIELD TRIP TO NISQUALLY

Led by Lin Stern and Kameron Lantor, a group of teens enjoyed a morning of birding at Billy Frank, Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge in November. This was organized by Grant Connor, a student at Olympia High School, as a community service project. The weather was perfect and the birds were cooperative. The highlight conclusion was a Short-eared Owl seen from the dike before the estuary boardwalk. Some of the comments from the participants:

“I had a great time! It was great to see friends and be outside and see wildlife.”

“I really enjoyed the time there and was impressed by the number of birds.”

“I had a good time and would definitely do it again.”

We hope to repeat the field trip sometime in the spring.

## Lewis County Christmas Bird Count 2024—Thank You!

With an uncertain weather forecast and an unknown number of hidden birds to search for, more than 29 intrepid field birders and 4 dedicated feeder watchers worked hard on Saturday December 21<sup>st</sup> to carefully document every single bird they encountered here in our Lewis County Count Circle. Some teams had challenging weather, with rain showers and steady drizzles slowing avian activity, while others were able to enjoy multiple breaks in the precipitation. Through it all, our volunteers persevered, and we were happy to find the rainbows in our journeys throughout the day.

We had a total of 19 separate teams (including some solo birders) in the field, covering 25 sections/subsections in the Count Circle, which includes all of Centralia and Chehalis. Though the data is still incomplete, I can say right now that we did very, very well, despite the rain and mild temperatures so far this season. We were lucky to have many section leaders repeat their same survey areas from last year, and we also welcomed multiple new team members to the count, some of whom had never participated in a CBC before. To all the volunteers, both at home and in the field, I thank you, most sincerely and deeply. This count could not continue without birders like you to be out there, be observant, and put in an often-challenging day of work, to find as many birds as you can. You braved the roadsides and neighborhoods, the parks and ponds, the dark forests and winding trails, and dutifully kept watch at your own homes here... You all deserve a massive standing ovation for your efforts. Thank you, CBC volunteers, one and all!!

~Rachel Hudson

## **Lessons (Not) Learned from Snowy Plovers**

By Rachel Hudson

As most of my friends know, shorebirds are my favorite group of birds. Many people in my life also know that I love to spend quality time with each species of bird that I encounter... I want to personally witness and learn something fun about the birds I get to see and enjoy.

After a long, trying few months over this fall, I decided that I just had to go and find my shorebirds, not only to learn something new about them, but to help clear my mind and regain my footing on the solid, healing ground I knew as the Great Outdoors. I checked recent reports for various coastal birds, and quickly settled on Snowy Plovers as my target. I've seen Snowies on multiple occasions over the past 8 years, but I had never gotten to spend much one-on-one time, so to speak, with the species.

This time, my morning-only day trip would take me to Fort Stevens in Oregon, a place I go to bird quite often, especially for shorebirds. There, on Social Security Beach, a large flock of Snowy Plovers had been hanging around, as they typically do there in the wintertime. Though I hadn't actually been to Social Security Beach itself (the years-long jetty construction work has always intimidated me too much to try to take the same entrance as the work vehicles), I was confident this time, arriving not long after sunrise on a Sunday morning. All quiet... no workers. Perfect.

I saw almost nothing on my near-2-mile-walk along the beach, just 2 Black-bellied Plovers, a small handful of Sanderlings and Dunlin, and a few gulls that I never even bothered to look at. The sun was bright, the wind was stiff, and the temps in the low 30's. When I reached the jetty



rocks at the end of the beach, I found around 1,000 Dunlin resting there, but nothing else. I watched them for a short while, but the sand where I was had created a vortex around me in the heavy wind, so that no matter where I was facing, I was getting sand in my eyes.

I turned around and started to head back, disappointed that my Snowies weren't there, but still hopeful that I would find them nearer the dune grass on the return trip. And sure enough, not much later, I saw two fluttering objects in the wind that were flying against it, and thus weren't trash or leaves... my Snowies! There were twenty-six of them, in a somewhat close group around a few very small pieces of driftwood and debris. I got as close to them as I felt comfortable with, plenty far enough away to avoid disturbing them, then sat down just off the sand on a small plank-like piece of driftwood.

I watched them for a long time, laughing when they did cute and funny things such as preening at awkward angles and floofing out their feathers, but for the most part, they just rested. After a while with no activity, I decided that I would try to "meditate" with them... I wanted to try my best to clear my mind and de-stress a bit. After all, that was part of why I was there. So, I mimicked what they were doing... they were bundled up in fluffy orb forms, beaks to the wind, dear little eyes closed in the sunshine. I, too, turned to sit facing the wind, tucked my hands deep in my coat pockets, curled up tightly, and closed my eyes, letting the sun warm my wind-seared face. I tried my very best to be calm and still... "Become one with the Snowy Plovers," I thought. "Do as they do... Feel what they feel..."

However, as someone whose mind cannot be still, as well as someone who is highly sensitive to sound, I could only last half a minute at a time before I would open my eyes to investigate a possible bird sound nearby. Once, though, while my eyes were closed, I could hear, almost within my body, the rush of hundreds of wings and the pleasant chirps of Dunlin as they soared right over me. I had over 2,000 Dunlin in that resting flock by this point.

I gave up on meditating amongst the Snowies after an uncertain amount of time, maybe 5 minutes, maybe 10, and went back to watching them. It seemed like more birds were becoming active now, and I wanted to see what they would do. Soon, I learned my special "Something New" about these cute, fluffy, innocent little creatures... and I could hardly contain my laughter when I realized what was happening.

Here is what I learned...

Every time a Snowy Plover wakes up... it chooses violence.

It was the most hilarious and baffling thing. They would all be peacefully snoozing away, then a few birds would stir, and one would get up, flatten its body in a threatening posture, and dart toward another Snowy, aggressively chasing it away... then they would all go back to sleep. Rinse and repeat with different individuals a few yards away. Over and over again! I could tell from a distance when one was being chased because it would jump up into the air like a brilliant white piece of popcorn, there would be a brief scuffle, then all would be quiet once more.

"Become one with the Snowies, huh?" I thought. "Do as they do? So... does that mean I also have to wake up each day and choose violence?" I couldn't help but chuckle. I doubt that's true for all Snowies, but it sure was true for this flock!

Eventually, when the crowds and cars on the beach reached my personal tipping point, I had to leave my aggressive little shorebird companions behind and head for home. Even though I hadn't really succeeded in my attempt at calm, peaceful meditation among the Snowies, at least my spirits were lifted, and I have had great fun retelling this story; it will be a memory I will always cherish.

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## FIELD TRIPS AND OUTINGS

### **Birding With Breakfast**

**Date:** Saturday, January 4

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Leader:** Jennifer DeSelle

**Description:** **Birding with Breakfast starting at Marathon Park near Capitol Lake.** Participants will view birds on the water on both the North and South Pools, and related areas. Birding with Breakfast walks are especially appropriate for beginning and intermediate birders. Breakfast location TBD.

**Meeting location:** Meet at 8:00 a.m, at Marathon Park, 1011 Deschutes Pkwy SW, Olympia 98501.

No registration needed.

## **Birding at Capitol Lake, North Pool**

**Date:** Sunday, 19 January 2025

**Start/End:** Meet at 9 AM and plan around two hours for the walk.

**Trip Leader:** Kyle Leader

**Description:** The walk is around the North Pool of Capitol Lake, focusing on waterfowl.

**Location:** Meet at Marathon Park, Olympia. Look for people with scopes and binoculars. Restrooms are available at Marathon Park.

**Bring:** Binoculars and a field guide if you want one. Dress appropriately for the day's weather.

Please contact Kyle Leader at [kchuckles11@yahoo.com](mailto:kchuckles11@yahoo.com) for more information.

### **BIRDS AND BREW**

**MONDAY    JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>    4:30 – 6:00ish**

**EQUAL LATIN RESTAURANT & BAR**

**2752 PACIFIC AVE SE**

**OLYMPIA**

Birds and Brew is a social time for folks to gather and talk about birds and birding. 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 tools or resources do you recommend for birding? Show and tell! Bring gear, books, whatever.”**

The topic in December was “What are your favorite nature documentaries or environmental movies?” Here are some of the responses:

1. Nature, PBS TV series
2. My Octopus Teacher, both the documentary and the book.
3. The Life of Birds, documentary by David Attenborough
4. 100 Birds of India, You Tube
5. The Birds of Winter, documentary
6. Hummingbirds, Nat-Geographic
7. Lewis and Clark, Ken Burns documentary
8. Attenborough Life Journey, PBS
9. Plant Earth, BBC series
10. Our National Parks, Ken Burns documentary

Our hosts are Craig and Vicki Merkel. Questions can go to Craig at [quetsal48@comcast.net](mailto:quetsal48@comcast.net).

## TAHUYA FIELD TRIP

TUESDAY - JANUARY 21 - 7:30 am

One of the most beautiful places in Mason County is the Tahuya area which is the east side of the Hood Canal. If you haven't been there, we invite you to join a field trip this January. If you have been there, you know you want to go again. This will be an all day trip involving carpools. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** Please email Kathleen Snyder [ksnyder75@gmail.com](mailto:ksnyder75@gmail.com) to sign up.

This is a driving trip where we stop to take quick walks to view birdy habitat. We will enjoy the leadership of Mary Hrudkaj who lives in the area and knows it well. We will go with if it is "drizzly" but will postpone if another atmospheric river comes through that day.

Meet at Mud Bay Park and Ride at 7:30 a.m. where we will start carpooling. Let Kathleen know if you could drive and have a vehicle that seats four plus gear comfortably. Riders will reimburse their driver for the gas expense. We will drive to Theler Wetlands to meet Mary and then go into the Tahuya area. We plan to get back to the Park and Ride between 4 and 5 p.m.

Bring your rain gear, lunch, water, snacks, and optics. We will be one month past the winter solstice that day so we should notice the longer daylight hours!

### **Birding With Breakfast**

**Date:** Saturday, February 1

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. – 11:00

**Leader:** Deb Nickerson

**Description:** Meet at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge at 8:00 a.m. for a walk through freshwater wetlands and woods, and along the estuary. Birding with Breakfast walks are especially appropriate for beginning and intermediate birders.

**Meeting location:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the visitor center at the Billy Frank, Jr., Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge overlook (100 Brown Farm Rd. N.E., Olympia). Breakfast location TBD.

No registration needed.