

Echo

February 2025
Olympia, Washington



February 2025 Speaker Program

Featuring Author & Photographer Peter Cavanagh

Thursday February 13th 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

Social gathering and viewing at 6:30

Temple Beth Hatfiloh

201 8th Ave SE, Olympia, WA

Peter Cavanagh is a Pacific Northwest wildlife photographer and author who can usually be found pointing his lens towards flying birds. He has been taking photographs since he was a boy of five growing up in England. He was inspired and instructed by his mother who left school when she was 15 years old to coax portraits from dishes of pungent chemicals in her job as a photographer's darkroom assistant. His own camera collection includes examples from the era of mahogany glass-plate cameras, but he feels more at home behind the long lens of a Sony Alpha 1.

Peter's images have been frequently included in the Audubon Society's Top Bird Photographs of the Year. His book *100 FLYING BIRDS Photographing the Mechanics of Flight* published by Firefly Books in 2021 was described as "...a marvelous, landmark contribution". His latest book, *HOW BIRDS FLY, The Art and Science of Avian Flight*, Fall 2024, uses his photographs to explain many aspects of flight mechanics to an audience of people who love birds.

Peter feels most at home in wild places and has travelled widely to all seven continents in search of interesting birds. He lectures on bird flight and bird photography and lives in the San Juan Islands of Washington State, USA.

To register for Zoom link, go to

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/c2fXB4I9T5OAxTAMv5qWEA>

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 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th. 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: You can pay online via our website at <https://blackhills-audubon.org/beginning-birding-classes-this-march/> 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 1st, 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 can be done on our website at <https://blackhills-audubon.org/event/2025-annual-dinner-features-our-own-maria-mudd-ruth/>

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.

NAME ELECTION COMING – VOTERS’ GUIDE AVAILABLE

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. A Voters’ Guide is now posted on our website and can be accessed here: <https://blackhills-audubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/VOTERS-GUIDE.pdf>

The Guide goes over the details of this on-line process as well as providing a synopsis of the issues involved. A postcard was mailed out in January to our members which also explained the basics. If you didn’t receive it, please contact our Membership Chair at membership@blackhills-audubon.org.

This is an important issue and we hope to have as much participation as possible. If you have any questions, please call 360-352-7299 or email 4info@blackhills-audubon.org.

Armchair Birding: The Wise Hours: A Journey Into The Wild and Secret World of Owls, by Miriam Darlington

~ **Anne Kilgannon**

One of the most magical moments is awakening in the night to the sound—sometimes tantalizingly near but mostly distantly faint, from no discernible direction at all—to an owl hooting into the darkness. Calling to a mate or just expressing—what? I have never seen an owl in any nearby tree, although I suppose they could be there without my knowledge. But I just thrill to the idea that one may be present, or passing through, “out there.” Owls, hooting or silent, are the essence of wild nature; it doesn’t matter if I don’t see them. Miriam Darlington would agree with everything just said, except she would insist that finding and seeing owls is essential and too wonderful to not pursue with determination and aided by a deep knowledge of their ways. She’d be pulling on her wellies* and slipping

outside in a flash, black night, rain or whatever, if an owl let itself be known within her range of hearing. And she'd probably find it, already familiar with its habits and preferences.

*wellies are Wellington boots, named presumably for the great English general who defeated Napoleon, what we would call rubber boots here.

As she recounts, Darlington became more and more obsessed with owls, with learning as much as she could about each species in her English homeland, but also in finding ways to experience being with owls, seeing their haunts, their nests, their flight and hunting techniques. Volunteering for owl research projects, visiting sanctuaries, waiting patiently near roosting sites, she could hold one for banding, feeling its surprising weightlessness in her own hands, examine its complex ear structure that could pick up and triangulate the sound of a vole munching withered grass under deep snow, and marvel at the lethal power of talons and beak. And most of all, to look into its fathomless golden eyes.

Mostly golden, but also orange eyes! And some brown eyes. Darlington began her study quest with barn owls, not too far distant from her Devon home and, at first, intended to learn all she could about owl species resident in Great Britain, but when opportunities arose to explore owls in other territories, well, she couldn't resist! As she discovered various international branches of owl study and networks of owl lovers she went as far afield as Serbia, Finland, the French Alps, and Spain. Each place was a destination to experience a new kind of being and discover, as well, compatriots as enthralled as she with these almost-mystical birds. Each new habitat explored, each search for a new species, came with its own layer of local cultural associations and mythologies embroidering the science, enriching the encounters with both owls and humans. It gave me great hope to learn there is a vibrant worldwide network researching and working to save owls and the places they inhabit, a narrative thread that developed as a major theme of Darlington's book.

Conservation science and the work of its community of practitioners formed the substantive core of her book but there is so much more. Her writing combines three threads, all woven together and supporting each other. *The Wise Hours* is catalogued as a memoir, which at first surprised me, but as I read I could see why that was so: she describes how her intrigue with owls slowly and then absolutely took over her life, pushing her to travel broadly and arrange other responsibilities to fit around owl study. (At times I worried about her marriage surviving this competition! Owls are very compelling.) Another thread, also eye-opening, was a kind of travelogue, an adventure story as she discovered places she had never expected to see. Reading about her experiences in Serbia was a revelation, learning how the French bird culture was so different from the Brits, and plunging into the boreal forests of Finland was a vicarious thrill. And, of course, braided through every story were the owls, tiny elfin ones, giant eagle-size ones and everything in between; soft feathered but sharp taloned, sweeping into the night sky, calling and screaming, hooting or silent. Each of the eight chapters is devoted to a species. There is so much to learn, to experience.

Besides actively stoking your own desire to experience owls, now I'll leave you with one of her apt terms that applies to all bird study: "earsight." We regularly sharpen our bird-watching eye-sight with binoculars and spotting scopes, but Darlington reminds us that listening—developing our earsight—is just as, if not more, crucial for studying nocturnal species. And it brings us such joy! Hearing a string of twittering song emanating from a bare-branched street tree, just the other day, I finally spied a finch on a high branch expressing his opinion of the weather. His cheer lifted the fog and my mood. Just as hearing an owl in the night gives me a thrill, a sense of mystery and hope, as a good as a vision of possibility.

MOTUS TOWER INSTALLED

Black Hills Audubon has completed the installation of a Motus tower in Hoodspport. A Motus tower has a set of antennas that can pick up signals emitted from geo-locator tags that have been attached to birds, bats and bugs. The BHAS tower is part of a shorebird migration project sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife Department under the supervision of Vanessa Loverti. It is sitting on a platform at the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife's Hoodspport Fish Hatchery. In the photo above, BHAS volunteer, Brian Keener (left), and hatchery manager, Mark Cylwik, finish hooking up the computer station to the tower which has four antennas.

This tower is part of an international collaborative research network that studies the ecology of migratory animals. The data collected is available to anyone – researcher or general public. If you visit their website, <https://motus.org/>, you can see the breadth of their efforts. If you drill down into their map, you can locate the yellow dot that represents our tower. Click on that and you will get the technical information about the tower. It has not detected a tag yet but it is not migration season. Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge has a tower too. It has detected 25 tags since it was activated in June of 2022.

Next Book for BHAS Book Club!

After enjoying an amazing, heart-pounding adventure of a book by Dorian Anderson, *Birding Under the Influence*, it is time for us to embark on a new adventure through all of human history... with ***Ten Birds That Changed the World*, by Stephen Moss.**

From the publisher:

For the whole of human history, we have lived alongside birds. We have hunted and domesticated them for food; venerated them in our mythologies, religions, and rituals; exploited them for their natural resources; and been inspired by them for our music, art, and poetry.

In *Ten Birds That Changed the World*, naturalist and author Stephen Moss tells the gripping story of this long and intimate relationship through key species from all seven of the world's continents. From Odin's faithful raven companions to Darwin's finches, and from the wild turkey of the Americas to the emperor penguin as potent symbol of the climate crisis, this is a fascinating, eye-opening, and endlessly engaging work of natural history.

The meeting date and time are TBD, but will likely be via Zoom in mid-March. To know more details and receive the discussion questions for *Ten Birds That Changed the World* prior to the meeting, please join the Book Club mailing list by contacting Rachel at lightningdash09@yahoo.com.

BHAS Partnership with TESC in Sponsoring a Scholarship

By Nancy Hubly, BHAS Treasurer

The Black Hills Audubon Board recently had the opportunity to work with The Evergreen State College Foundation to fund a one-time scholarship for \$5,000. This scholarship will be awarded to a student who is a full-time undergraduate with a financial need, pursuing a course of study in Environmental Studies, Climate and Environmental Justice, or related fields in the sciences. Preference will be given to students with a passion for Ornithology, or the world of birds, and those who identify as a person of color. TESC Foundation will vet candidates and choose the recipient. We will have the opportunity to continue funding this scholarship annually if we choose.

Board member Charlotte Persons attended TESC previously and worked in the scholarship office. She made an initial presentation for our involvement in the Board's 2024 planning session and I worked with TESC Foundation to communicate our desires for the award and make financial arrangements. It is gratifying to know that our scholarship will help one local student ease the financial burden of college, and exciting to think that it could also be a catalyst for local environmental changes that could have a much larger impact. We expect our first scholarship recipient will be announced in fall 2025. Charlotte will help that student connect with our organization.

We consider this program to be an investment in our community. We are grateful that the generosity of our membership enables us to fund this and other larger-scale programs that recently included the publication of an illustrated bird book in Spanish for children, and the purchase and installation of a Motus tracking tower along Hood Canal.

The Board is interested in ideas from our membership for other community projects we could tackle that are consistent with our organization's mission. Please see [Operating Documents – Black Hills Audubon Society](#) on our website for additional information about major project guidelines and a checklist. Ideal projects are those that involve a limited amount of volunteer time to accomplish. While we are fortunate to have passionate, caring and generous members, we are typically constrained by having enough people to carry out some of the good ideas we generate.

The Board thanks all our members who work tirelessly to make our local environment a better place for the birds and other living things with whom we co-exist.

Great Backyard Bird Count February 2025

Every winter we see more of certain birds at our feeders, while others disappear. Each February, for four days, the world comes together to celebrate birds, and to help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations. It's that time again, time for the 2025 Great Backyard Bird Count. This year, the counting will be done between February 14 and 17.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an inter-organizational effort between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. I joined in 2024. It's easy and fun to join and participate. Just decide on a location, then watch birds for at least 15 minutes, at least once over the four-day period, and finally report the birds you see to eBird.

To become a backyard bird counter, go to the Great Backyard Bird Count website at <https://www.birdcount.org/> . There you'll learn how to join, find a short video on this fantastic citizen science program, and explore tools that will help you identify birds in your area and learn about reporting your bird count sightings to eBird.

Tom Reynolds

Nominations Requested for the Jack Davis Conservationist of the Year Award

BHAS is soliciting nominations for the Jack Davis Conservationist of the Year Award. The award will be presented at the BHAS picnic on June 22, 2025. The deadline for nominations is **April 15, 2025**.

The purpose of the Award is to recognize local citizens or teams that have taken on difficult environmental issues and have, as a result, made a significant difference within the past year or recent years. The award is intended for persons who have not previously received it. When submitting a nomination, please be guided by the following set of criteria:

- Work has generally been within the BHAS geographical base (Thurston, Mason, and Lewis counties);
- Nominees may be members of BHAS but are not required to be;
- Work was a volunteer initiative relying heavily on volunteer time;
- Nominees worked collaboratively with others, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, to help resolve an environmental issue;
- Nominees used objective sources of information and reliable data and demonstrated professionalism throughout;
- Nominees worked consistently on the issue and persevered, proving resourceful under difficult challenges;
- Results of the work made a significant difference either in real environmental benefits or improved awareness by the public or governmental agencies on an environmental issue.

Submit the name(s) and a brief description of the effort made by the individual(s) or teams and their progress and successes as they relate to the criteria above. Please provide the contact information for the nominee, or if you are nominating a team, please list the key individuals who led the team and their contact information. Please email your nominations to ConservationChair@blackhills-audubon.org or mail them to the Black Hills Audubon Society, PO Box 2524, Olympia WA 98507. Questions can be addressed to the Conservation Chair, Sam Merrill, at the address above. The Conservation Committee will review the nominations received and will make a recommendation to the BHAS board for final selection and approval.

Nominations Requested for the 2025 Dave McNett Environmental Educator of the Year Award

BHAS is proud to continue recognizing environmental education efforts by area residents who are making a positive difference for birds through their teaching, and so we are soliciting nominations for the 2025 Dave McNett Environmental Educator of the Year Award. The award will be presented at the BHAS Annual Picnic in June 2025. The deadline for nominations is April 15, 2025.

The nomination criteria for this award are:

- Nominees collaborated with others toward the educational goals of informing the public about an aspect of our natural world pertaining to bird habitat or conservation
- Their work has been inspirational to those they have worked or taught with
- Work need not have been done on a volunteer basis, but did involve volunteers or one's own volunteer time
- Nominees can be professional environmental educators, but need not be
- Nominees have worked in the field for at least two years
- Work has generally been within the BHAS geographical base (Thurston, Mason, and Lewis counties)
- Nominees may be members of BHAS, but don't have to be

The award is intended for persons who have not previously received it.

Your nomination should include a brief narrative that addresses the above criteria. You can either email your completed nomination to education@blackhills-audubon.org or send it through regular mail to: The Black Hills Audubon Society, PO Box 2524, Olympia WA 98507. Please remember that members of the Education Committee will begin our review process on April 15, 2025.

We look forward to hearing from you!

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR BHAS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Black Hills Audubon honors one of our volunteers every year with the Volunteer of the Year Award. This person needs to be an Audubon member, not on our Board of Directors, who contributes to the organization along these guidelines:

ELIGIBILITY FOR AWARD:

1. The volunteer contributes outstanding long-term service through work that addresses BHAS's strategic priorities.

AND ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

2. Performs intensive work on one project/activity or extensive involvement on several projects/activities.
3. Work demonstrates special creativity or efficiency and has a lasting impact on the functioning of the organization.
4. Work increases volunteer participation that continues beyond the involvement of the individual volunteer (even when s/he moves on to other projects).

Nominations are requested from chapter members. Submittals should not exceed 500 words; bullet points detailing the nominee's efforts are appropriate. The Board of Directors will approve the award recipient.

Please send submittals to Deb Nickerson at debranick@gmail.com by April 30th, 2025.

FIELD TRIPS AND OUTINGS

BIRDS AND BREW

MONDAY FEBRUARY 17TH 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 is the most interesting bird you’ve seen in your yard so far this year?”**.

Our regular hosts are Craig and Vicki Merkel. Questions can go to Craig at quetsal48@comcast.net. For February, our guest hosts are Bobby and Paul Moody at moodyand@aol.com.

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.

Black Hills Audubon Field Trip to Frye Cove

Title: Winter Birding at Frye Cove County Park - 4000 NW 61st Ave., Olympia, WA 98502

When:

Saturday, February 15, 2025 – 9-Noon

Trip leader:

Laurie Gneiding

Description:

Frye Cove County Park is 86 acres with 2 miles of wooded trails and 1400 feet of saltwater beach along the west side of the Eld Inlet. There is a magnificent view of Mt. Rainier. The walk will be leisurely along the well-maintained hiking trails that are hilly in some spots. There is one short steep hill (~110 ft) leading to the beach from the parking lot (or vice versa). Benches are located along the trail.

Past Christmas bird counts have observed all 3 scoters, Bufflehead, mergansers, grebes, cormorants, loons, and goldeneye along with Pileated Woodpecker, sapsuckers, flickers, creepers, kinglets, and sparrows.

Restrooms:

Flush toilet restrooms with running water are located at the picnic area down the hill below the parking area.

What to bring: Binoculars. Spotting scope. Water and snacks. Dress for the January weather. Waterproof boots as trails may be muddy if it's rained lately. Hiking pole if needed.

Directions:

From I-5 in Olympia, north or southbound, take Exit 104 (US 101 north, Aberdeen). Stay on US 101 toward Shelton. Take the Steamboat Island Rd Exit. Go north on Steamboat Island Rd NW about 5.8 miles and turn right onto Young Rd NW. Proceed about 2 miles, turn left on 61st Ave NW into Frye Cove Park.

Registration:

Registration is not required.

Parking:

Adequate parking available for up to 30 cars.

Field Trip to Burfoot Park

Date: Saturday, February 22. Meet at 9 AM and plan around two hours for the walk.

Trip leader: Lin "Caspian" Stern

Description and Targets: Burfoot Park covers 65 acres of property with 1,100 feet of saltwater beach frontage on Budd Inlet. This will be a beginner-friendly outing. We will be looking for songbirds and woodpeckers in the forested areas, waterfowl, alcids, grebes, cormorants, and gulls from the saltwater beach.

Meeting place: Burfoot Park, 6927 Boston Harbor Road NE, Olympia, WA. Gather at parking area at west side of park. Look for people with binoculars.

Trail information: The trails are well-maintained but steep. Round-trip distance is about one-mile.

Bathroom: There is a bathroom near the parking area.

Bring: Binoculars, a scope if you have one, and a field guide if you want one. Merlin Bird ID is a great phone app for identifying birds. Dress for the conditions and for a slow walking pace; dull natural fabrics are more bird-friendly than bright synthetics. Layers are your friend!

Please contact Lin Stern at lindseysarahstern@gmail.com for more information.

Birding with Breakfast

Date: Saturday, March 1

Time: 7:30 a.m. – 10:30

Leader: Bob Wadsworth

Description: Birding at Woodard Bay. Walk on a pedestrian-only road through beautiful woods for woodland species and to overlooks of Woodard Bay and Henderson

Inlet for marine birds. Birding with Breakfast walks are especially appropriate for beginning and intermediate birders.

Meeting location: Meet at 7:30 a.m. From Olympia: take Boston Harbor Road north, then right on Woodard Bay Road, crossing Libby Road. Just before crossing the bridge over Woodard Bay, there is a small parking area on the left (at intersection with Whitham Rd.) requiring a Discover Pass; or drive across the bridge and up the hill to a County parking lot that does not require a Discover Pass -- a short walk down to the lower parking lot. Location: 7000 Whitham Rd NE. Olympia, WA 98506. Provide your own breakfast because of the location.

No registration needed.

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Auto Tour

Sunday, March 2, 2025

Meet at Grand Mound Park and Ride at 9 AM, return to Grand Mound around 5 PM.

Description:

Kick back and enjoy a day of birding by car along Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge's auto tour route. Located along the Columbia River, the diverse wetland and riparian habitat hosts numerous species of birds in winter, including various waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds. This is a great opportunity for birders of all ability levels.

This trip will require minimal walking and ADA accessible bathrooms are located at the start and midpoint of the route. The roads are flat and well-maintained for vehicle-use. We will stop for a quick lunch, bathroom, and leg stretch break at the halfway point. Walkie Talkies will be provided to each vehicle for communication.

What to Bring: Binoculars, water, lunch, snacks, warm jacket, camera (optional), spotting scope (optional but recommended)

The trip is limited to 16 people in 4 cars. Please contact Lin "Caspian" Stern to register for the trip at lindseysarahstern@gmail.com

Meeting place for carpools – Grand Mound park and ride – East side of I-5, Exit 88