



April 2020

# Naturalists

ONE STEP AT A TIME

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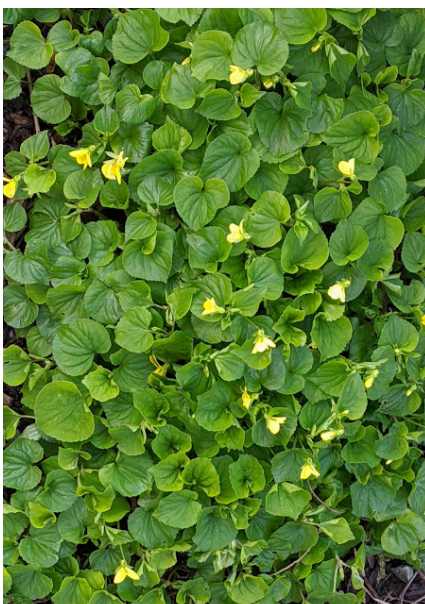
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## In the Native Plant Garden

Flowers line our garden paths, and labels abound. You can see blooms here that you can't get to any other way these days. This is because the garden is now a joint project with the Washington Native Plant Society. The native plant society has brought regular work on the garden, copious labeling and a catalog of our garden plants (provide link).

A visit there will provide peeks of birds, lot of examples of our native trees and shrubs labeled for easy identification. It is an oasis in an exposed, parking-lot-like part of Magnuson park.

Work parties are currently on hold, but anyone is free to go down there to look, pull a weed and enjoy the ambiance.



Wood or streamside violet



Trillium ovatum



White fawn lily

# March Trips in Review

FEBRUARY 28 – ST. EDWARDS PARK AND JUANITA BAY WITH GORDIE AND STEWART



Stewart getting the aura of the shrooms



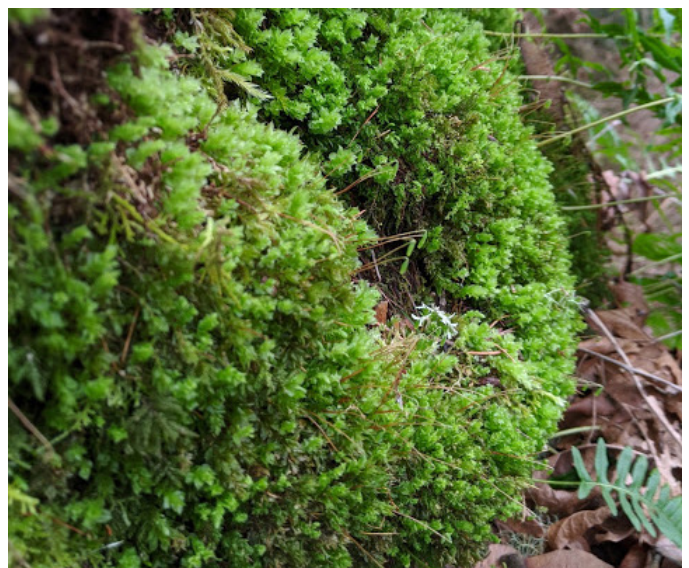
Pacific waterleaf



Menzie's neckera



Early Siberian miner's lettuce in bloom



Magnificent moss

## Upcoming Hikes

*April hikes (sign up early and sign up often).*

### April 1

Join Gordie as he hikes down to his mailbox

### April 1

Join Gary as he identifies mosses on his back

### April 1

Join Tom as he teaches us how to sex rock doves (coo)

### April 1

Join Danielle as she visualizes rock climbing around the world

### April 1

Help John and Tracy Bell in Manitoba to move into a screech owl nest hole (a stewardship project).

### April 1

Join Anita Elder in a workshop on how to develop film using chemicals

### April 1

Join Stewart as he walks in his garden identifying pest insects.

### April 1

Join Lynn Graf in Germany where she will identify wildflowers. Book flights now for best seats!

**NO OTHER HIKES ARE PLANNED FOR APRIL**



Basalt columns in eastern Washington by Anita Elder



A raccoon asleep in the hollow of a tree by Anita Elder

## IN THESE HARD TIMES A NATURALIST'S APPROACH TO SURVIVAL

### 1. Escape and Explore

#### An Abbreviated Trip to the Coulee Corridor Birding Trail

BY ANITA ELDER

The origin plan was to lead a 3-day road trip to eastern Washington with a total of 16 photographers and naturalists, plus two leaders. But, thanks to spread of Covid-19 and our Governor's proclamation, this trip had to be canceled with the hopes to offer it again next year. Even the Sandhill Crane Festival in Othello was canceled this year.

With a light workload and sunny days, I decided to do a shorter, solo day trip to the Othello area. I was hoping to see flocks of Sandhill cranes since this is usually when they migrate north.

To practice social distancing and good hygiene, I used disposable gloves when I pumped gas or used public restrooms. When I was done and back in the car, I had antibacterial wipes that I used to wipe down the steering wheel, gear shift, door handle, and anything else I touched after car & personal "maintenance," including the debit card I used at the pump. I also made sure I stayed more than six feet any time another person approached.



When I was planning the Mountaineers field trip, I researched and put together a [Google map](#) with coordinates to the various locations along the birding trail and eastern Washington. I knew I couldn't hit every spot in one day, so I concentrated on just the Othello & Royal City areas.

About 10 miles west of Royal City, I saw several large flocks of Sandhill cranes swirling in the air,



Northern Pintail Ducks

but they were too far away to bother to stop and take photos.

My first stop was at the County Line Ponds. There's no parking lot here, forcing one to park along the highway and be overly cautious.

The ponds were loaded with waterfowl! There were hundreds of Canada geese and northern pintail ducks on the water and more Sandhill cranes in the air.

I didn't want to stay parked long the busy highway for too long, so I moved on to my second destination, Royal Lake Overlook. There were Canada Geese and mallards that numbered in the tens of thousands! Off in the distance, more Sandhill cranes were cruising the sky.

Close to Othello and north of the produce packing & refrigeration plants is Para Ponds. I could see more waterfowl in the ponds, but there was only a very narrow shoulder and I didn't want to risk an accident.

At Marsh Unit 3, I only saw a few red-winged blackbirds, but I made a note to go back some evening at dusk after reading a sign that talked about the bats who lived in the basalt columns at that location.



Sandhill Cranes in Flight

I made a stop at Drumheller Channels Overlook, but even with my binoculars, I didn't see any quail, pheasants or snipes that are known to scurry around the sage brush.

Marsh Unit 2 has a beautiful scenic view, but things are fenced off or posted very far from the water (to preserve habitat) and I didn't have a long enough lens to capture the hundreds of Sandhill cranes and snow geese in the distance.



Red-Winged Blackbird



Ring-necked Ducks

I didn't see any birds at the Crab Creek trail, but I did see a small flock of ring-necked ducks on Soda Lake.



Red-Winged Blackbird

Lind Coulee and Perch Point were both a bust, so I decided to drive across the O'Sullivan Dam and along Potholes Reservoir. I was fortunate that there was a place to pull over and park when I spotted thousands of snow geese on the water. Something spooked them and most of the geese took flight – they didn't get the memo about social distancing!

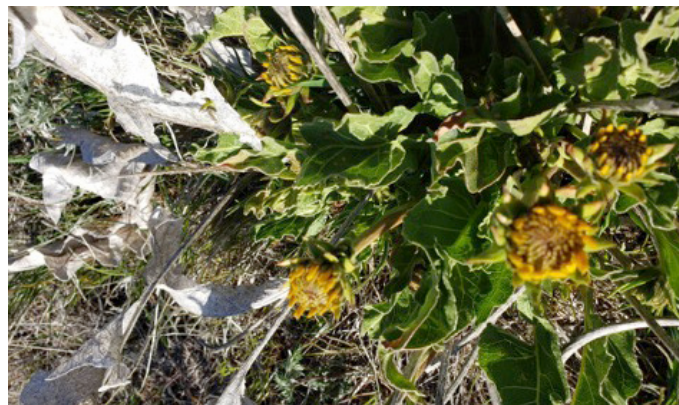


Red-Winged Blackbird

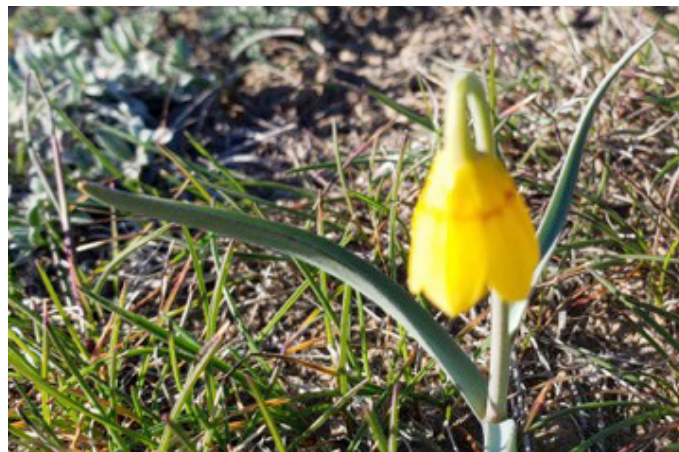
My last birding stop was at Birding Corner. The last time I was there, I saw a lot of stilts and a harrier. This time, only two red-winged blackbirds. I did see a muskrat swimming in the water, but it ducked into the reeds before I could get a good photo.

On my way home, I stopped at the Wild Horse Monument near Vantage. At the bottom of the trail, I noticed that the balsamroot and yellowbells were starting to bloom. The Rainier violets (??) had bloomed a bit earlier and were starting to wilt.

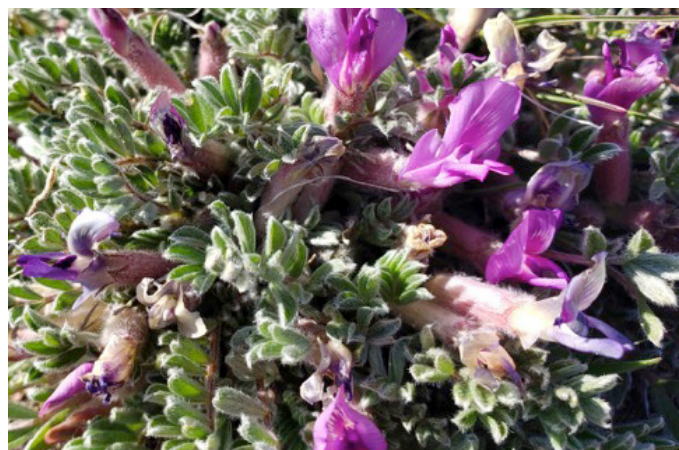
My trip was short, but it felt so good to get out of the house and enjoy nature – I didn't even mind the 550 miles I put on my car!



Balsamroot starting to bloom



Red-Winged Blackbird



Rainier Violet

## Germany in flower

BY LYNN GRAF

Just last week I was able to hike in the woods and open meadows of southwestern Germany, enjoying the early flowers often related to those we see here in the Pacific Northwest. My favorite, of course, was the local Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*), found on an open sunny slope. These meadows also had patches of native cowslips (*Primula veris*). The nearby beech forest was carpeted with wood anemones (*Anemonoides nemorosa*), with violets sprinkled in. Rarer sightings were a Hart's tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) and, for fun, an emu grazing along with the sheep! The scientific names, as usual, are courtesy of the identifiers of iNaturalist as well as my daughter.





Similar but Different. ....early spring flowers of the Black Forest and Kaiserstuhl



## Eastern Washington Trip

BY SHERYL LAMBERSON

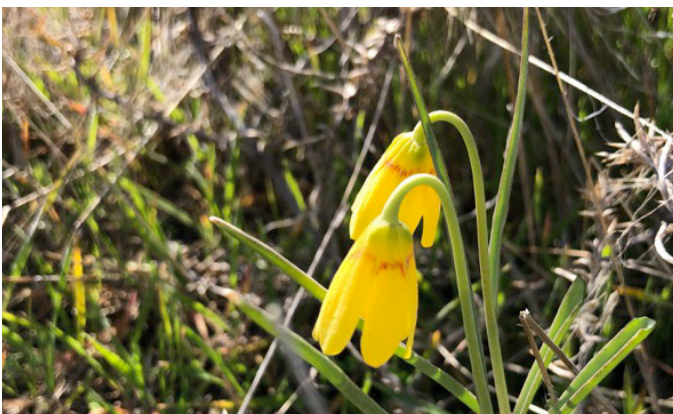
I still will get out and go to some trail heads not far away. I am so glad I got in my trip to Othello after the sandhill festival got cancelled. My sister and I had a fabulous 3 days there. Saw LOTS of birds and a few wildflowers coming out and revisited sights of the ice age floods in the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge/Drumheller Channels area. Saw an amazing snow geese raft on the Potholes Reservoir form, disperse and reform day by day. My trip there 3 years ago gave me ideas for places to look. I enjoyed seeing sandhill cranes from a distance in sky or fields and their social talking back and forth. We saw lots of different blackbirds (including tricolored blackbirds) at a grain elevator and waterfowl on the many lakes. We hiked some trails at the refuge but did a lot of off trail as well, scaring up a great horned owl at one point. Here are a few pictures.



## Collecting But Not Bagging Owls

BY JOHN BELL

Tracy Bell and I have been travelling in WA, OR, and Manitoba in search of owls. We are working on trying to ID all of the owls in North America. The small ones are hard to find! Here are a few pics, Western Screech Owl.



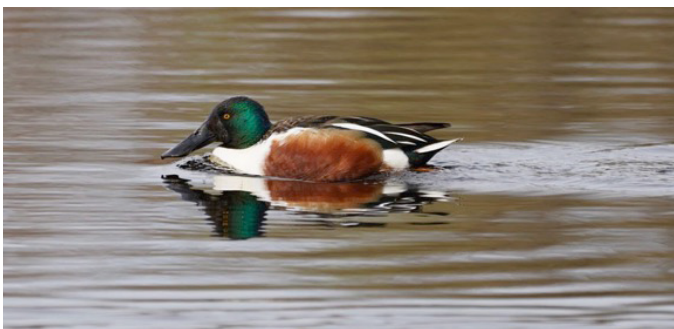


## 2. Cultivate Our Gardens Near Home and Revel in Spring

PICTURES BY DONNA HAHN WHO SAYS “BIRDING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING ARE COMPATIBLE”



Anna's Hummingbird. Her nest is made of lichen, moss and cattail 'cotton'. Not far from here, I saw a male Anna's Hummingbird collecting the 'cotton' from the cattails.



Northern Shoveler



Spotted Towhee



3 kinds of turtle (painted, pond and red-eared slider) and one kind of wood duck (*Aix sponsa*)

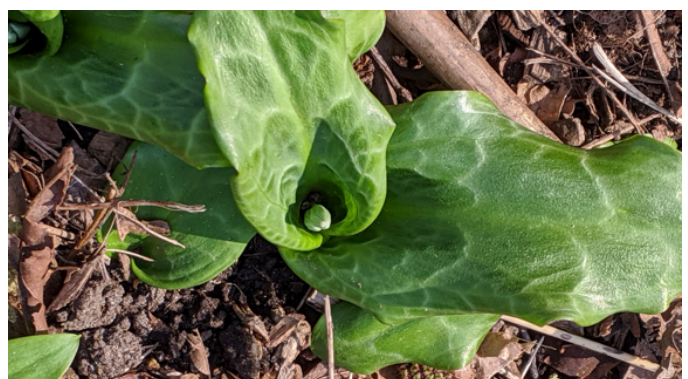
## Nature Walking Around Seattle

BY GORDIE

If you can get to a park, birding is good there. Nesting activity is in full spate and lovely singers like varied thrushes, ruby crowned kinglets and Pacific wrens can be heard brightening the way.



Hairy woodpecker in Discovery Park



Pink fawn lily in bud (almost there)



Skunk cabbage



Salmonberry glows in the sun



The way of willows



Green-winged teals

## Odds & Ends

### Naturalist facebook group:



The Facebook Group is a group of Mountaineers who have a passion for the natural world and want to learn more about it.

It is called The Mountaineers Naturalist Group. It is open to Mountaineers Members who are affiliated with the Naturalist Program, either as a current or past student of the Intro to the Natural World course or as a member of the Naturalist Study Group. It provides a place for members to share photos of their hikes and trips, as well as to help with identification of species.

People can search for it on Facebook and ask to join. If they are a current member of The Mountaineers and affiliated with the Naturalist Program, they will be added.

The group is open only to Mountaineers Members as it helps us build camaraderie among our members. (There are many other Facebook groups open to all such as the Washington Native Plant Society and Western Washington Birders.)

## Recommended Purchases From the Bookstore

### FROM DANIELLE

Northwest Trees. I have a copy of this book on my night table, and I read a short chapter every evening. The drawings are lovely, and the historical details of ethnobotanical uses by indigenous people and early settlers is enchanting. <https://www.mountaineers.org/books/books/northwest-trees-2nd-edition>

Pacific Northwest Nature Coloring Book, Coloring for Calm and Mindful Observation. This is my go-to when I feel like I need to relax. I keep this book and a set of colored pencils in my bag, and I am ready to color anywhere and anytime. <https://www.mountaineers.org/books/books/pacific-northwest-nature-coloring-for-calm-and-mindful-observation>

Douglas Fir, The Story of the West's Most Remarkable Tree. This one is a pre-order to look forward to reading in the fall. I can't wait to learn more about our "Doug Fir". <https://www.mountaineers.org/books/books/douglas-fir-the-story-of-the-west2019s-most-remarkable-tree>

Birdsongs of the Pacific Northwest: A Fieldguide and Audio CD. Now would be a great time to work on birding by ear, sitting on your front steps or back deck.

## Poetry

### HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

By Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

### THE SUN WAS WARM

By Robert Frost

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.  
You know how it is with an April day  
When the sun is out and the wind is still,  
You're one month on in the middle of May.  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,  
A wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you're two months back in the middle of March.

### (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE)

O! how this spring of love resembleth  
The uncertain glory of an April day!

### (MATSUO BASH )

April's air stirs in  
Willow-leaves...a butterfly  
Floats and balances

### (ROBERT BROWNING)

The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hillside's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in His heaven -  
All's right with the world!

### LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

By William Wordsworth

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,

## *Odds & Ends (Continued)*

In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it grieved my heart to think  
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,  
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—  
But the least motion which they made  
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

## **I WATCHED A BLACKBIRD**

By Thomas Hardy

I watched a blackbird on a budding sycamore  
One Easter Day, when sap was stirring twigs to the core;  
I saw his tongue, and crocus-coloured bill  
Parting and closing as he turned his trill;  
Then he flew down, seized on a stem of hay,  
And upped to where his building scheme was under way,  
As if so sure a nest was never shaped on spray.

## **SPRING**

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

To what purpose, April, do you return again?  
Beauty is not enough.  
You can no longer quiet me with the redness  
Of little leaves opening stickily.  
I know what I know.  
The sun is hot on my neck as I observe  
The spikes of the crocus.  
The smell of the earth is good.  
It is apparent that there is no death.  
But what does that signify?  
Not only under ground are the brains of men  
Eaten by maggots.  
Life in itself  
Is nothing,  
An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.

It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,  
April  
Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

## **Photos From Past Trips by Nats**

**WILDLIFE SEEN IN TASMANIA BY ANITA ELDER**



Grazing Wombat



Silver Gull

Odds & Ends (Continued)



Pied Oyster Catcher



Pademelon



Bennett's Wallaby



Wedged-Tail Eagle - Australia's largest raptor





Red Currant in Bloom

## Seattle Naturalists Committee Officers and Subcommittee Chairs

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