



December 2018

Naturalists

EXPLORE. LEARN. CONSERVE.

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In the Native Plant Garden

The garden was spruced up by a killer group of stewardship volunteers and has some new plantings thanks to Rob. We now have a (tentative) list of all plants in the garden, which will be posted on the Nats web page when it is checked over. The trees planted are doing very well. There is fall color in unexpected places. Our warmer than usual (or is this the new usual?) weather has produced good foliage and some unexpected blooms like this anemone below. Look for some upcoming changes in the garden as we are working out a collaborative agreement with the Washington Native Plant Society.



Anemone – November surprise



Wandering daisy

 [Facebook](#)

 [Flickr](#)

November Naturalist Hikes

OLYMPICS NORTH BIRDING TRIP OCTOBER 26



Common loons acting out



Dunlin balancing



Belted kingfisher hovering off Dungeness

STILLAGUAMISH, SAMISH AND SKAGIT FLATS
NOVEMBER 7



Snow geese with rare blue goose varietal



Short eared owl coursing near dusk



Dunlin on the wing at Hayden preserve

Upcoming Workshop



Mosses

JANUARY 2019

We will learn about moss and lichen identification using visual keys for common mosses and lichens in our area, followed by a field trip to identify them together. Lecture on Thursday January 24 and field trips Saturday January 26 – organized by Stewart Hougen and Gary Brill.

[Register Here](#)

2018-19 Naturalists Lecture Series

SEATTLE PROGRAM CENTER, 7 PM

Free to Naturalist Study Group members, public welcome – donation

JANUARY 9, 2019 (WED) | JULIA K PARRISH

Marine Birds and a Warming Ocean: The Power of Citizen Science

Julia is Executive Director of Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) and a professor of ocean fishery sciences at the UW. The COASST effort is helping scientists see patterns about the effects of climate change and other factors on seabirds.

FEBRUARY 13, 2019 (WED) | CHRISTIAN A SIDOR, PH.D.

Fossils From the Bottom of The World: Paleontology at the Shackleton Glacier Camp

Chris is Associate Director of Research and Collections Burke Museum and Professor of Biology UW. He will take us on a visual journey to the spectacular landscapes of the Trans-antarctic mountains where the Triassic rocks he's studying are exposed, as we learn what it's like to do fieldwork in Antarctica.

MARCH 13, 2019 (WED) | GOVINDA ROSLING

Pigeon Guillemots: A Seabird That Measures The Health of The Salish Sea

Govinda's photo rich account of their life cycle, behavioral habits, quirks and antics will entertain as she explains the Pigeon Guillemot Research Group's 15 year study and why it's important.

Central Puget Sound Chapter/Washington Native Plant Society Program

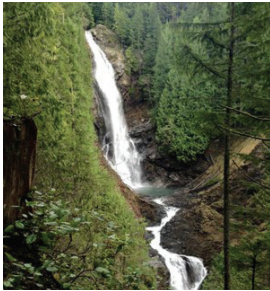
Upcoming Programs:

- 12-6-18 Holiday Party!
The Mountaineers, Goodman Room
- 1-3-19 Tim Billo Update on Seattle area fern die-off
The Mountaineers, Goodman Room
- 2-7-19 Joe Rocchio On peatlands
The Mountaineers, Cascade Room
- 2-12-19 Lauren Danner Crown Jewel Wilderness:
Creating North Cascades National Park
Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center
- 3-7-19 Ray Larson "The Flora of Seattle in 1850: Major Species and Landscapes Prior to Urban Development
- 4-4-19 Jon Bakker On prairies
The Mountaineers, Cascade Room
- 4-9-19 Donovan Tracy "The Alpine Flowers of Mount Rainier"
Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center
- 5-2-19 Andy MacKinnon On the role of endophytic fungi in the production of plant chemicals
The Mountaineers, Goodman Room

Upcoming Hikes

Sign up online under *Explore, Find Activities* and check exploring nature (or click the register buttons below).

The mountain hiking season is nigh upon us, and we nats have many offerings to enjoy.



Wallace Falls Loop

NOVEMBER 30 - GORDIE SWARTZMAN & STEWART HOUGEN

Wallace Falls is crowded in the summer, but in the winter it is much less crowded and the falls and river are at their best. Join Stewart and Gordie on this loop trail to the falls and beyond. Mosses and lichens abound and there may still be mushrooms to identify in this warmer than usual fall.

[Register Here](#)



Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

DECEMBER 2 - TOM BANCROFT

Tom will lead a hike on the Boardwalk, first looking for shorebirds and others, then work back through the forested area. The tide should be coming in during the morning and birding can be good when it is between mid and high tide.

[Register Here](#)



Discovery Park

DECEMBER 8 - GARY BRILL

Moss identification, seabirds and strolling in this gem of a park in Magnolia. Gary is enthusiastic about mosses and has learned a lot he wants to share. This could be a prequel to our moss identification workshop, which will be in January.

[Register Here](#)



Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

JANUARY 12 - ANITA ELDER

Join Anita on this family-oriented walk through one of our local national treasures.

[Register Here](#)

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.)

Odds & Ends



See a Spotted Skunk or Snowy Plover? How Hikers Can Contribute to Wildlife Research

BY BY STEPHANIE KUHNS, CITIZEN SCIENCE COORDINATOR, WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Earlier this summer, a man spotted a female wolverine with her kit. It was an incredibly rare and special sighting, one of only a few times in our agency's history that a wolverine kit has been seen in the wild here in Washington. He snapped a photo and shared his sighting with us here at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

[Read More](#)



Upland to Bay to Skagit Flats: Winter Birds with Libby Mills

Our hardy resident birds are busy with winter foraging, while migrants from the north are filling the fields and bays. Come explore the uplands, farmland, and waters around Padilla Bay with Libby Mills. Bring warm layers and a snack.

[Register](#)

Poetry

The Darkling Thrush

BY THOMAS HARDY

I leant upon a coppice gate,
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to me
The Century's corpse outleant,
Its crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind its death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,

And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead,
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited.
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
With blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for Carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew,
And I was unaware.

Desert Places

BY ROBERT FROST

Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it - it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is, that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less -
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars - on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

Stopping by a Woods on a Snowy Evening

BY ROBERT FROST

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

THE HERON

BY THEODORE ROETHKE (1908-1963)

The heron stands in water where the swamp
Has deepened to the blackness of a pool,
Or balances with one leg on a hump
Of marsh grass heaped above a musk-rat hole.

He walks the shallow with an antic grace.
The great feet break the ridges of the sand,
The long eye notes the minnow's hiding place.
His beak is quicker than a human hand.

He jerks a frog across his bony lip,
Then points his heavy bill above the wood.
The wide wings flap but once to lift him up.
A single ripple starts from where he stood.

To Be A Bird

BY TIM GRAHAM

The Eagle soars, then comes to rest,
atop an impossible tower.
The Eagle soars from the seat of Power.
The Owl watches, patiently perched,
atop a moonlit roof.
The Owl watches from the seat of Truth.
The Lark sings, a melody made,
atop the clouds above.
The Lark sings from the seat of Love.
To be a bird!
To be all three!!!
With enough Love,
to find the Truth and Power in me.

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.

WINTER ADVICE

Stay active, get out, and keep looking and listening. As Yogi Berra said "You see a lot when you look."



Hooded mergansers at Magnuson Park

The Rufous Hummingbird

BY THOMAS BANCROFT

A flash of reddish-orange zipped by and dashed into the bushes at the trail's edge. A dozen birders had come to Stillwater Wildlife Area on a beautiful early May morning. Red-winged Blackbirds, Marsh Wrens, and Black-capped Chickadees sang all around, Song Sparrows hopped along the trail, Gadwalls floated in the water, but the group's concentration right then was on this flitting glimpse.

"Look, there it's sitting on top of that branch," Stewart pointed through a small opening, "a male Rufous Hummingbird."

The motionless bird stared across the marsh; it's back to the group. It then looked one way and the other, totally ignoring all the goggling eyes. Quickly, two spotting scopes focused on the hummer who appeared to be searching for possible intruders. His orangey back glistened in the morning sun.

"That's my first Rufous of the year," Gordie said. They had only just arrived in the Puget Sound Basin, and this one had chosen Stillwater for its breeding territory.

Recently, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has started to use data collected by birders to understand the distribution and movements of birds throughout the year. The eBird program has been running for more than a decade and now covers the entire globe. Sufficient data

have been recorded in North America to allow some fascinating analyses for many species.

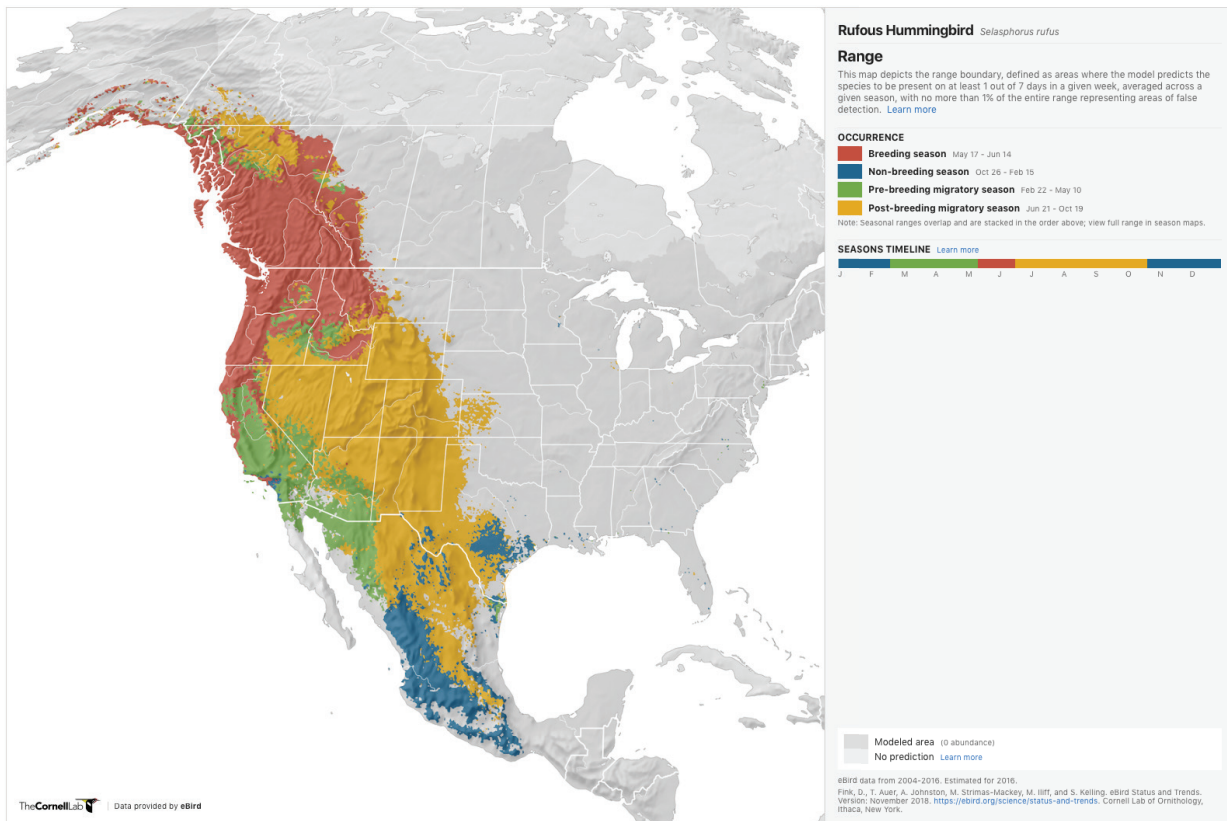
Rufous Hummingbirds take a clockwise migration path on their annual trek. In the spring, they head north from southern Mexico along the western side of Mexico, through California, and into their breeding range. After nesting, they move south in the summer and fall through the Rocky Mountains, some stopping in Texas and most heading to southern Mexico for the winter. The distribution map Cornell has produced now provides a finer resolution of this species range than previously available.

Also, Cornell created an animation of this hummingbird's distribution. The video shows where these little birds are during each week of the year. Imagine, an organism that weighs a little more than a half-teaspoon of table salt can make this monumental loop.

<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/rufhum/abundance-map-weekly>

Keep birding and keep entering your sightings into eBird. We have much to learn about the natural world and its fascinating inhabitants.

Notice the paler gray areas on the animation and the distribution map. These are where data were insufficient for the researcher to model this species. We need more field trips and birders!



Photos

BY TOM BANCROFT



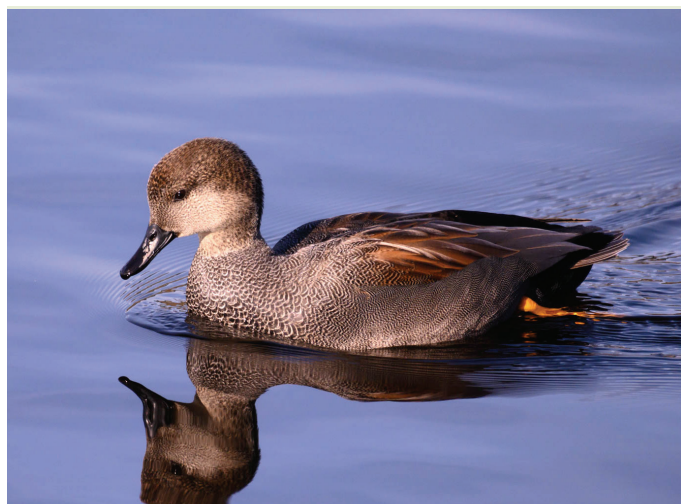
American Wigeon Male



Bufflehead Males



Gadwall Female



Gadwall Male



Song Sparrow



American Wigeon Pair



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We welcome comments, ideas, information to share, original short articles, and photos. If you have information you'd like to have appear in the newsletter, please send it to Gordie (g.swartzman@gmail.com).