



December 2019

Naturalists

ONE STEP AT A TIME

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In the Native Plant Garden

The naturalist's native plant garden is continuing to surprise with flowers in winter. It is now a joint project with the Washington Native Plant Society.

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. On your next visit to the Mountaineers club take a moment to visit the garden and connect with the natural world and memories of your hikes through it.

There will be occasional work parties through the winter. Working alongside native plant society members is an opportunity for us to learn more about native plant habitats and care. Those of you that are interested in participating can e-mail George Macomber (georgems@98115.net). He will put you on the mailing list for work parties.

Check out the garden. It is just by the climbing rocks on the north end of the Seattle clubhouse. Good place for a picnic or a walk or biking destination or a quick fix of nature before a meeting at the mountaineers. Try it, you'll like it.

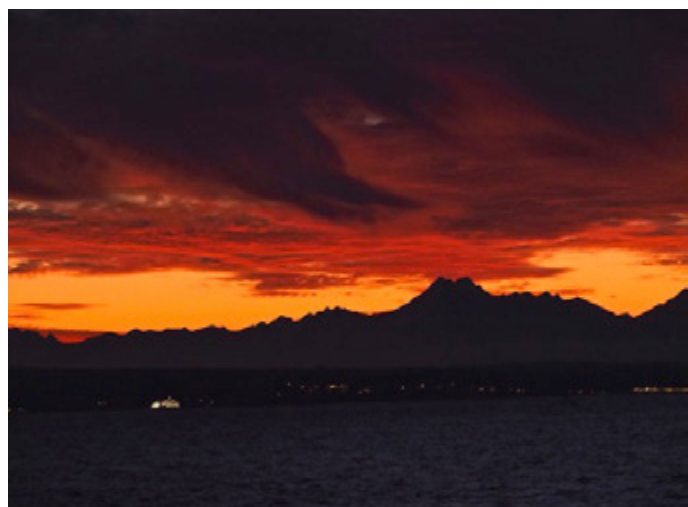
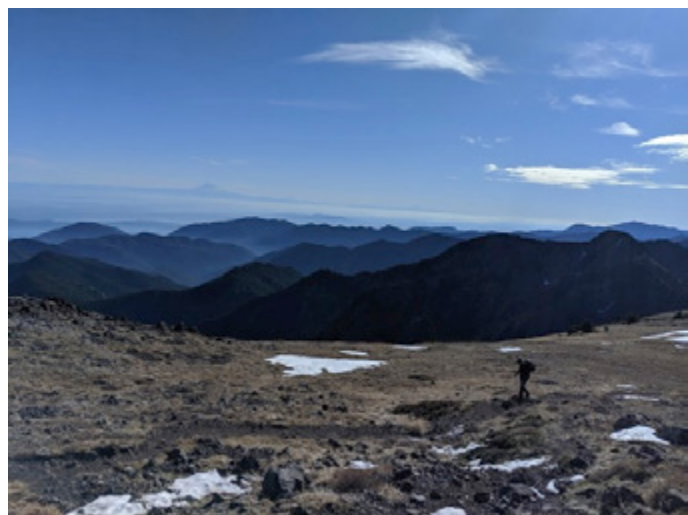
November Naturalist Hikes

NOVEMBER 1 – MT. TOWNSEND WITH GARY BRILL.

A clear day – we could see Mt. Adams and St. Helens from the top. Adams was 130+ miles away.



Columbia lewisia – many plants surviving and hugging the ground up top.



Ferry landing view on the way home

November Hikes (Continued)

NOVEMBER 11 – UNION BAY NATURAL AREA AND YESLER SWAMP WITH GORDIE AND STEWART

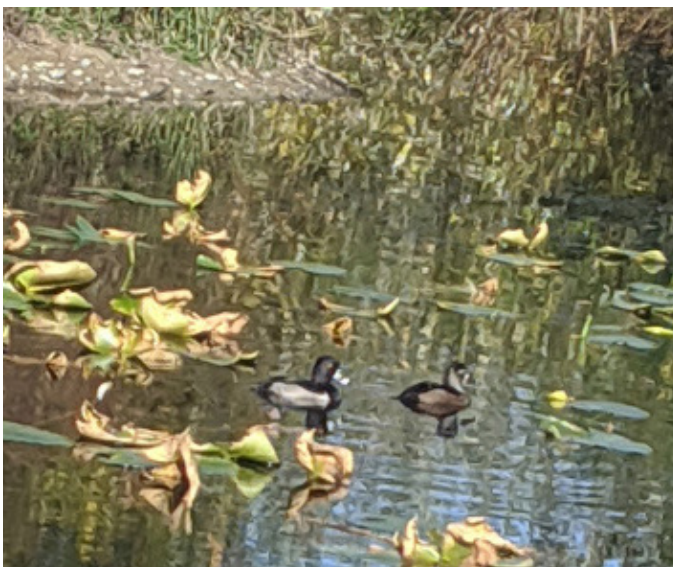
Birds galore! A gaggle of mountaineer birders (16) gloried in unexpected sun and bird heaven.



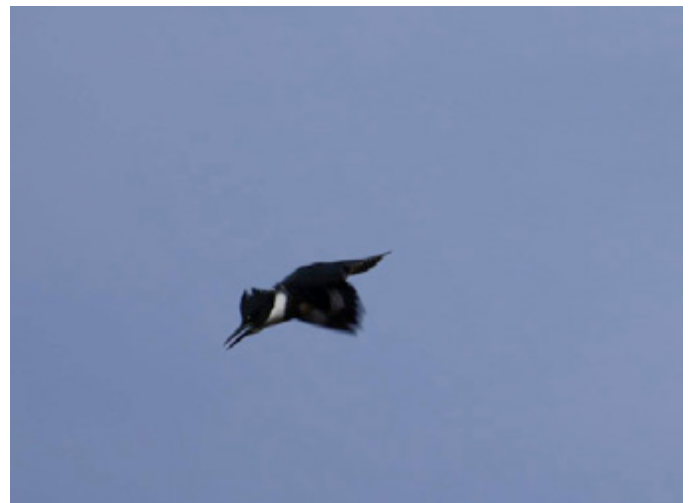
Western grebe



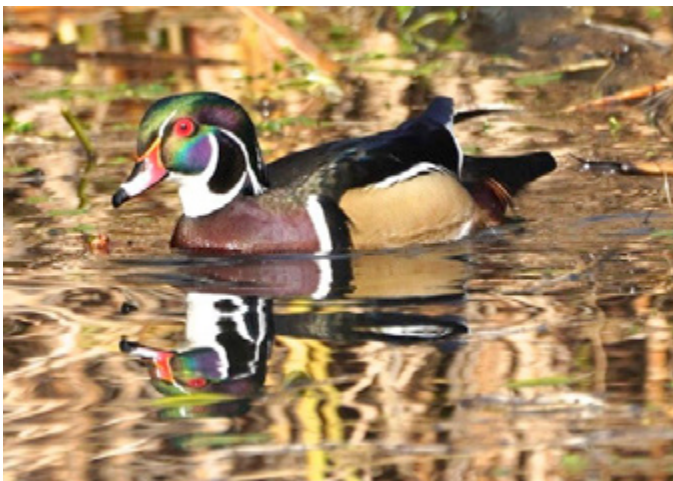
Hooded mergansers



Ring necked ducks



Kingfisher to the hunt



Wood duck looking good!



November Hikes (Continued)

NOVEMBER 16 – LINCOLN PARK AND WEST SEATTLE

Visits to Jack Block Park, Constellation Park, Mi Kwa Mooks Park and Lincoln park on a mercifully rainless day produced many fine bird sightings and a chance to learn about mosses, lichens and native trees. Wonderful sightings of goldeneye, common loons, harlequin ducks, black turnstones and surfbirds and a brave band of golden crowned kinglets shining in light rain – reflecting our own joy!



Golden crowned kinglets displaying



Entire-leaved Gumweed, *Grindelia stricta* blooming in Lincoln Park

Upcoming Hikes

Sign up online under *Explore, Find Activities and check exploring nature (or Activity Listings button below)*.

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

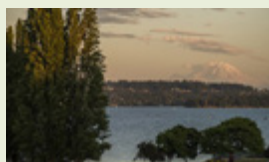
[Activity Listings - Click for Full List](#)



Vashon Island

DECEMBER 7 – STEWART HOUGEN

Birding Vashon and Maury islands we will visit marine, lake and woods hot spots.

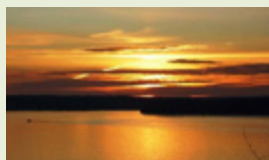


Magnuson Park

DECEMBER 14 – GORDIE SWARTZMAN & STEWART HOUGEN

Magnuson park has many trails and a surprising bird population diversity. Also, along term planting effort for natives has given us many types of trees. We'll look for moth as well as mosses and lichens.

Gordie leads this trip for bird sightings, mosses and trees. Seabirds are showing up now and lets begin the season right with a good chance to relearn (or learn) these species.



Edmonds Marsh

DECEMBER 18 – GORDIE SWARTZMAN & STEWART HOUGEN

Birding trip to Edmonds including Edmonds Marsh, Edmonds fishing pier and underwater park north of Edmonds ferry terminal. Led by Gordie and Stewart and part of our winter park visit series of field trips. Many diving birds are being reported on eBird, so now is a good time to see them.

Save The Date

The following are not open for registration until January, but save the date now. Both include car camping and/or ferries and reservations will need to be made several months before the actual activity.



Coulee Corridor Birding Trail

MARCH 27-29 – ANITA ELDER

Love birds? Grab your camera and join us on this 3-day road trip with car camping along the birding trail where we could see migrating sandhill cranes, raptors, and hundreds of other birds.

[More Info](#)



Vancouver Island

JUNE 8-12 – ANITA ELDER

Naturalist and photography-oriented road trip on Vancouver Island that includes car camping, short hikes and a full day cruise on a merchant vessel to view, identify and photograph wildlife and landscapes.

[More Info](#)

Naturalists Fall-Winter Lecture Series

SEATTLE PROGRAM CENTER, 7 PM

Free to Naturalist Study Group members, public welcome – donation

DECEMBER 11, 2019 | JENNIFER HAHN, ADJUNCT, FAIRHAVEN COLLEGE, WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Wild Foods

Jennifer is the author of three books: *Spirited Waters: Soloing South Through the Inside Passage* (Mountaineers Books, 2009), about her 750-mile solo kayak trip from Alaska to Washington; *Pacific Coast Foraging Guide, 40 Wild Foods from Beach, Field and Forest*, Mountaineers Books/Skipstone, 2010), and *Pacific Feast: A Cook's Guide to West Coast Foraging and Cuisine*.

FEBRUARY 12, 2020 (WED) | PATTI HAPPE, WILDLIFE BRANCH CHIEF, OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

Relocation of Mountain Goats From Olympic National Park

This project is an effort to remove the goats from the Olympics, where they are not native, and reestablish goats in the Cascades, where they once roamed. She previously spoke to The Mountaineers about reestablishment of fisher populations in Olympic National Park (a successful program that has since been expanded to the Cascades).

MARCH 11, 2020 (WED) | DAVID GIBLIN, COLLECTIONS MANAGER, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON HERBARIUM, BURKE MUSEUM

Burke Museum Web Resources and Apps

David will give a talk on the various web resources and apps that are available through the Burke Museum Image Collection and affiliated resources and the many ways amateur naturalists might be able to benefit from these resources.

Moss Workshop

JANUARY 30 | 7:00 PM | GARY BRILL

Moss workshop with Gary Brill and Stewart Hougen – lecture January 30 and field trip the following weekend. **Registration opens December 30.**

[More Info](#)



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.)

Poetry

WINTER MORNING POEM

By Ogden Nash

Winter is the king of showmen,
Turning tree stumps into snow men
And houses into birthday cakes
And spreading sugar over lakes.
Smooth and clean and frosty white,
The world looks good enough to bite.
That's the season to be young,
Catching snowflakes on your tongue!
Snow is snowy when it's snowing.
I'm sorry it's slushy when it's going.

TODAY, RUNNING ALONG THE RIVER

By Jimmy Santiago Baca

Today, running along the river,
dead leaves cling
to cathedral cottonwood branches,
snap in the gusty breeze,
give a crisp hiss . . .

A wafer thin wind spades up
loose dust from the path,

and above me,
gray leaves clash soft in
towering boughs;
sounds that might be
heard in the silent yard of a
monastery like the sandaled
steps of monks praying,
walking over the swept yard,
walking and praying.

I run, beneath the winter
leaves when right ahead of
me at the turn,
a plump pheasant white
ring neck, gray-black
mottled feathers, green
phosphorescent head
scurries into the dry brush,
clashing like rosaries in the
sleeves of nuns hurrying to
the chapel for evening mass.

I jog on. A hawk swoops
out and vanishes into the
tree tops toward the river.
Black crows. Clean swept
dirt. Then at the end of the
path, turning, heading north,
I worry over the love I have
for this woman. Then I see
seven pairs of mallards
burst up in fright at my
sudden appearance, and I
think how they mate for life
and beyond them, poised
on the ditch bank, with such
regal bearing, a blue heron...

It's then I hear a voice,
a crystal shining icicle
clear voice, cold water
but made of sound, tells
me, keep my connection
to the spirits strong, keep
my work spiritual, stay
connected to the Creator,
and all my worries will be
answered in time.

Ah, it is a good run...

THE BROOK

By Alfred Tennyson

I come from haunts of coot
and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among
the fern,

Toicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorpes, a
little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and
men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my
banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed
and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and
men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a
lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a
foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a
silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along,
and flow
To join the brimming river
For men may come and
men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and
grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-
me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,

Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

WHITE-EYES

By Mary Oliver

In winter
all the singing is in
the tops of the trees
where the wind-bird

with its white eyes
shoves and pushes
among the branches.
Like any of us

he wants to go to sleep,
but he's restless—
he has an idea,
and slowly it unfolds

from under his beating wings
as long as he stays awake.
But his big, round music, after all,
is too breathy to last.

So, it's over.
In the pine-crown
he makes his nest,
he's done all he can.

I don't know the name of this bird,
I only imagine his glittering beak
tucked in a white wing
while the clouds—

which he has summoned
from the north—
which he has taught
to be mild, and silent—

thicken, and begin to fall
into the world below
like stars, or the feathers
of some unimaginable bird

that loves us,
that is asleep now, and silent—
that has turned itself
into snow.

WINTER TREES

By William Carlos Williams

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.



The Butcher Watchman

Movement caught my eye, and I glanced up through the windshield. The flight seemed labored, heavy, something a little different, unusual in this robin-sized bird. The individual was 15 feet above the ground and flew across the grass field along Rawlins Road. It came right over the car. Maybe, it was headed for a large bush behind me. I stopped in the middle of this dead-end road on Fir Island, jumping out.

Sitting on a top of the bare bush was the unmistakable silhouette of a Northern Shrike, a plump body, a big head, upward stance. It glared out across the fields, moving its head back and forth. Last week, my birding group had found a juvenile individual along the dikes, not a quarter-mile from this location. I moseyed back along the road, keeping my eyes averted.

Sure enough, dark eye mask, the bill with a stout hook and a large tooth, black wings, scalloped cream breast feather, this was a perfect plumage juvenile. It was alert, hunting, but seemed to be ignoring me. This was my fifth trip to the Skagit in two weeks, and on each trip, we had spotted a Northern Shrike. On one trip, it was at Wiley Slough, on another at Hayton Reserve, once in the Samish Flats, and then here. These were probably four different individuals, and all had been juvenile birds. Possibly, this was turning into an irruptive year for shrikes.

Odds & Ends (Continued)

These birds nest across Northern Canada and Alaska, coming south in winter. Most winters a few can be found in Washington, but in some years, vast numbers will come south. Perhaps, this happens when they have had an exceptionally successful nesting year or when northern winters become particularly hard, or food supplies low.



These are voracious predators, capable of taking small birds and mammals. They store prey by sticking it on thorns or barbwire, coming back later to eat more of it. Often, they sit and wait for a prey item to show itself before darting off the perch. This species occurs in Europe and Asia, too.

The bird bolted from the branch, dropping down to just above the field and flying rapidly away from me. I couldn't tell if it was chasing something or just heading to another hunting spot. It probably makes the rounds of a series of good lookouts. Their scientific name is *Lanius excubitor*, which translates as "Butcher Watchman."



This was seen at Jack Block Park in west Seattle by Gail Winer



Steller's Sea Eagle on the Zhupanova River in Kamchatka by Gail Winer



Cladonia Chlorophaea by Anita Elder



Scouting the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area – Stillwater Unit for spring field trip by Anita Elder

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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).