



January 2020

Naturalists

ONE STEP AT A TIME

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In the Native Plant Garden

No flowers to show, but flowers in waiting and lots of labels. If you want a real challenge, try identifying plants by stems only, or stems and leaves. The garden 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. No watering needed right now! The garden is a spot of pseudo nature in the midst of a concrete accretion. It is a sign of promises to come as its flowering precedes most natural blooming times.

December Naturalist Hikes

DECEMBER 7 – VASHON ISLAND BIRDING TRIP

Some rain, some sun, lots of fun.



Marbled murrelet in the scope. Rain on birders.



Fox sparrow



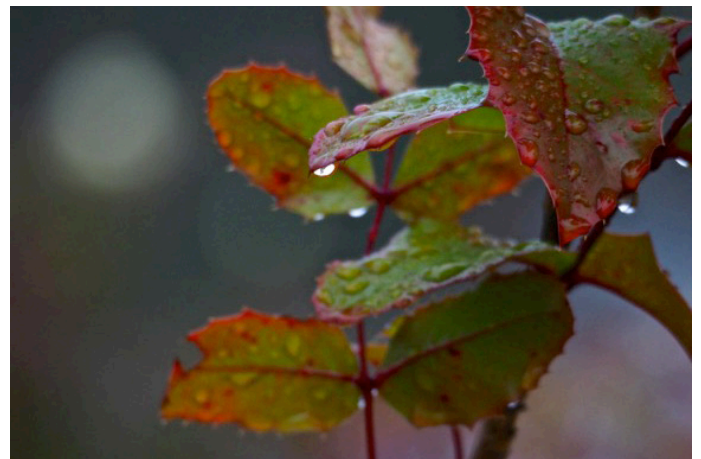
Golden crowned kinglet flashing



Black scoter (front of raft) and surf scoter in Quartermaster Harbor



Barrow's goldeneye



Oregon Grape

December Hikes (Continued)

DECEMBER 15 – MAGNUSON PARK BIRDING



Male shoveler



Juvenile cooper's hawk



Brown creeper



Pied billed grebes

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](#)



Hansville Greenway and Pt. No Point

JANUARY 11 –

STEWART HOUGEN & GORDIE SWARTZMAN

Combine birding and moss, lichen and tree identification through a variety of habitats just across Puget Sound in Hansville.



Nisqually Wildlife Refuge

JANUARY 18 – GORDIE SWARTZMAN &

STEWART HOUGEN

Birds, birds, birds and maybe more birds. Waterfowl abound and we love to see them through the magnificent Nisqually River delta.



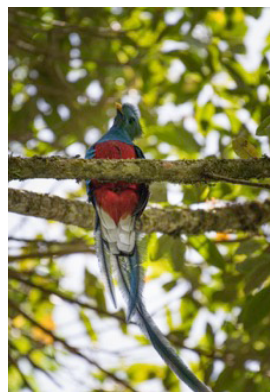
Nisqually Wildlife Refuge

JANUARY 26 – MANDI MAYCOMER

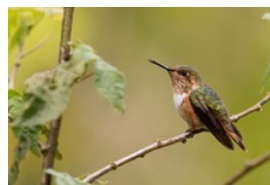
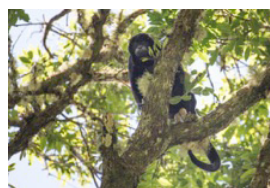
Another visit to Nisqually led by the Olympia naturalists.

Bird and Hike the Cloud Forests of Western Panama

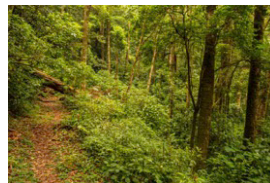
APRIL 15-26, 2020 | THOMAS BANCROFT



Join Thomas Bancroft, a professional ornithologist and naturalist, on an exciting 11-day trip through the cloud forests of Western Panama. The trip is part of the Global Adventures program at the Mountaineers. We should see or hear more than 100 bird species, maybe even 150, and three species of monkeys. Numerous orchids will be blooming, and the epiphyte community is dynamic. The trip will be in late April, a time of transition from the dry season to the wet. The drifting clouds should be marvelous and the forest lush. We likely will experience a few tropical showers.



A local naturalist will take early morning and late afternoon hikes through the forests of the Cordillera de Talamanca. Eight nights will be at a stunning lodge high in the mountains and three in a cabin on a coffee plantation near Volcan. Daily hikes will be 4-6 miles on well-maintained trails with elevation gains of



under 1,000 feet. An optional, more strenuous hike will take us to the top of a volcanic cinder cone covered in lush vegetation and higher elevation species. Around Volcan, we will use vehicles to search natural habitats as well as a shade coffee plantation.

The adventure starts and ends in the airport in David, Panama, where we will meet after our connecting flight from Panama City. This is a naturalist-oriented trip, and the pace will be slow with a focus on finding birds, wildlife, and natural things. The leader will share information on the ecology and geology of the area, and local naturalists will add much about what we see. More information is available at

<https://www.mountaineers.org/activities/activities/global-adventure-bird-and-hike-the-cloud-forests-of-western-panama>

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](#)

Naturalists Fall-Winter Lecture Series

SEATTLE PROGRAM CENTER, 7 PM

Free to Naturalist Study Group members, public welcome – donation

FEBRUARY 12, 2020 (WED) | PATTI HAPPE

Relocation of Mountain Goats From Olympic National Park

Patti Happe, Wildlife Branch Chief, Olympic National Park, will speak about the relocation of mountain goats from Olympic National Park to the North Cascades. 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

Burke Museum Web Resources and Apps

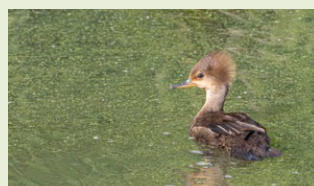
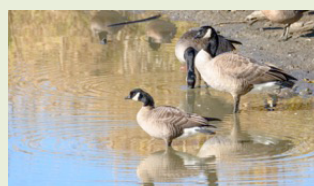
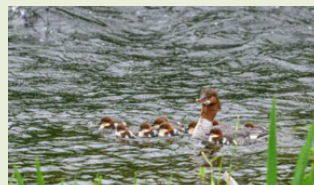


David Giblin, Collections Manager, University of Washington Herbarium, Burke Museum, will give a talk on the various web resources and apps that are available through the

Burke Museum Image Collection and affiliated resources and the many ways amateur naturalists might be able to benefit from these resources

A Course on the Waterfowl of North America

JANUARY 14, 2020 | THOMAS BANCROFT, PH.D. AND EASTSIDE AUDUBON



North America is blessed with a diversity of waterfowl. They range in size from the massive Trumpeter Swan to Buffleheads. Many are easily seen, but often they are surprisingly confusing to identify. This group includes swans, geese, dabbling ducks, diving ducks, sea ducks, mergansers, and a few others. The course will help you become familiar with them all, learning the key characteristics and behaviors that allow easy identification. We will also consider a few species that look like ducks, swim like ducks, but aren't ducks.

This course will cover the most common and regularly occurring species in the United States and Canada. Techniques will focus on using a combination of size and shape, behaviors, color patterns, habitat and distribution, and calls to learn these species. Classroom work will emphasize using all these techniques, and field trips will provide practice. The focus will be on more than just field marks. We will frequently review the information to help you solidify your knowledge and help you feel comfortable with your newfound skills.

The first lecture is on January 14th. More information and registration is available at:

<https://www.eastsideaudubon.org/classes>

Central Puget Sound Chapter/Washington Native Plant Society Program

Birds in Our Midst, Creating Gardens Filled with Life

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2020, 7:00PM,

JULIE O'DONALD

Sammamish Library, 825 228th Ave SE, Sammamish, WA

Refreshments, Public Invited, Admission is free.

Donations are appreciated!

Doors open at 6:00 PM for the Native Plant Identification Workshop



Backyard Wildlife Habitat Steward and Master Gardener, Julie O'Donald will give an overview of the elements that create beautiful gardens for birds and people, emphasizing best native plants for birds and design features that create habitat. Photos of birds with their food plants will show how to bring nature home to any property. Julie's personal certified wildlife habitat contains over 200 species of native plants and attracts birds, butterflies, pollinators and beneficial insects.

Julie O'Donald has over 30 years' experience creating wildlife-friendly gardens.

She has focused on the use of native plants integrated with ornamentals to attract butterflies and pollinators. Julie's garden has been featured in Pacific Horticulture and The Butterfly Gardener magazines, as well as the book, Butterfly Gardening: The North American Butterfly Association Guide, 2018. Active in educational community outreach, Julie volunteers for the Washington Native Plant Society, the Washington Butterfly Association, Kruckeberg Botanic Garden, and the National Wildlife Federation.

Chelsea and Beyond: Looking at Pacific Northwest Plants in Great Britain

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020, 7:00PM,

DAVID DOUGLAS

Seattle Program Center, Goodman C, 7700 Sand Point Way N.E., Seattle

Refreshments, Public Invited, Admission is free.



Donations are appreciated!

Doors open at 6:00 PM for the Native Plant Identification Workshop

Many Pacific Northwest plants found a welcome reception in British horticulture when Archibald Menzies, David Douglas, and other plant collectors started transporting them "across the pond." Sarah will share observations of Northwest species seen during visits to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and travels in England, Scotland, and Wales.

Some of our native plants have become beloved garden subjects in Great Britain—selected and hybridized into numerous cultivars. Some have become invasive, while many of our locally problematic invasives are treasured natives in the hedgerows and fields of the British countryside. Vanquish any February doldrums with pictures and tales of flowers, gardens, and scones.

Sarah Gage, M.S., M.F.A., past president of WNPS (1995-96), managed the University of Washington Herbarium for thirteen years (1988–2001), co-authoring A

Centenary Survey of Plant Life in Washington State, and participating in the International Kuril Island Project (1995–2000). From 2005 to 2019 she worked on biodiversity conservation and salmon recovery at the Recreation and Conservation Office in Olympia. She serves on several WNPS committees: Communications Committee, Editorial Board for Douglasia, Financial Advisory Committee, and Fundraising Committee. She has curated the Botanical Rambles blog for WNPS since the blog began in 2012.

Native Plant Society continued

Upcoming Programs:

2-12-20 KEVIN ZOBRIST | CURRENT FOREST AND TREE HEALTH ISSUES IN WESTERN WASHINGTON

Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center

3-5-20 PETER DUNWIDDIE | SAN JUAN ISLAND SURVEY

The Mountaineers, Goodman C

4-2-20 WALTER FERTIG | STALKING THE WILY YETI PHLOX: ADVENTURES IN RARE PLANT HUNTING IN WASHINGTON

The Mountaineers, Goodman C

4-14-20 DONOVAN TRACY | EXPANDING OUR INTEREST IN NATIVE PLANTS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center

5-7-20 PROGRAM TO BE DETERMINED

Center for Urban Horticulture

6-23-20 RAY IZUMI | SNOQUALMIE SEEPS"

Bellevue Botanical Garden, Aaron Education Center

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

STARLINGS IN WINTER

by Mary Oliver

Chunky and noisy,
but with stars in their black feathers,
they spring from the telephone wire
and instantly
they are acrobats
in the freezing wind.
And now, in the theater of air,
they swing over buildings,
dipping and rising;
they float like one stippled star
that opens,
becomes for a moment fragmented,
then closes again;
and you watch
and you try
but you simply can't imagine
how they do it
with no articulated instruction, no pause,
only the silent confirmation
that they are this notable thing,
this wheel of many parts, that can rise and spin
over and over again,
full of gorgeous life.
Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,
even in the leafless winter,
even in the ashy city.
I am thinking now
of grief, and of getting past it;
I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want
to think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome.
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

BLUE WINTER

by Robert Francis

Winter uses all the blues there are.
One shade of blue for water, one for ice,
Another blue for shadows over snow.
The clear or cloudy sky uses blue twice-
Both different blues. And hills row after row
Are colored blue according to how far.
You know the bluejay's double-blur device
Shows best when there are no green leaves to show.
And Sirius is a winterbluegreen star.

Odds & Ends (Continued)

BIRDS AT WINTER NIGHTFALL (TRIOLET)

by Thomas Hardy

Around the house the flakes fly faster,
And all the berries now are gone
From holly and cotoneaster
Around the house. The flakes fly!—faster
Shutting indoors that crumb-outcaster
We used to see upon the lawn
Around the house. The flakes fly faster,
And all the berries now are gone!

WINTER IS GOOD – HIS HOAR DELIGHTS

by Emily Dickinson

Winter is good – his Hoar Delights
Italic flavor yield
To Intellects inebriate
With Summer, or the World –

Generic as a Quarry
And hearty – as a Rose –
Invited with Asperity
But welcome when he goes.

TO FLOWERS FROM ITALY IN WINTER

by Thomas Hardy

Sunned in the South, and here to-day;
–If all organic things
Be sentient, Flowers, as some men say,
What are your ponderings?

How can you stay, nor vanish quite
From this bleak spot of thorn,
And birch, and fir, and frozen white
Expanse of the forlorn?

Frail luckless exiles hither brought!
Your dust will not regain
Old sunny haunts of Classic thought
When you shall waste and wane;

But mix with alien earth, be lit
With frigid Boreal flame,
And not a sign remain in it
To tell men whence you came.

FROM SPRING DAYS TO WINTER (FOR MUSIC)

by Oscar Wilde

In the glad springtime when leaves were green,
O merrily the throstle sings!
I sought, amid the tangled sheen,
Love whom mine eyes had never seen,
O the glad dove has golden wings!

Between the blossoms red and white,
O merrily the throstle sings!
My love first came into my sight,

O perfect vision of delight,
O the glad dove has golden wings!

The yellow apples glowed like fire,
O merrily the throstle sings!
O Love too great for lip or lyre,
Blown rose of love and of desire,
O the glad dove has golden wings!

But now with snow the tree is grey,
Ah, sadly now the throstle sings!
My love is dead: ah! well-a-day,
See at her silent feet I lay
A dove with broken wings!
Ah, Love! ah, Love! that thou wert slain -
Fond Dove, fond Dove return again!

Birding in Seattle Parks

BY GORDIE SWARTZMAN

Particularly in winter I find my need to be outdoors is well met by tramping, binoculars in hand, through our city's many parks. Living in the North End near Lake Washington I am most familiar with Union Bay, Magnuson Park, the Arboretum, and Matthews Beach and Green Lake. However, often parks on the west side beckon and I roam out to West Seattle (Jack Block, Constellation and Lincoln Parks), to Carkeek Park, Golden Gardens, Discovery Park, Waterfront Park on Eliot Bay and parks in Edmonds and Richmond Beach. They are always an adventure and often a surprise.



Juvenile snow goose at Green Lake

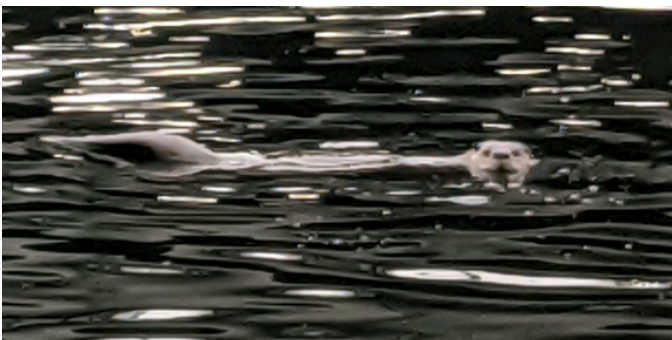
We've been visiting many of these parks on Mountaineer field trips and there is always more to see in groups because there are more eyes to see them. I often get the benefit of younger eyes (and ears).

What I propose to do in this (hopefully short) missive is give a feel for some of the parks, and share some of the surprises I've had. I'll focus on autumn-winter because that is now (welcome to winter).



Eurasian widgeon with Canada Geese and American widgeon at green lake.

I'll start by saying that a visit to any park for birding should start with a visit to E-bird online. The park can be located as a hotspot (most of our parks are identified as hotspots) and recent sightings can be examined. One added benefit of using ebird in this way is to see who is reporting. For parks I visit frequently I often run into these birders and can parley their skill into increased confidence in my own identification. Also, like the native plant society plant list does for plants, it gives me a heads up on what I'm likely to see, which I think improves my identification accuracy. I might have a look before I go at some of the birds sighted I'm unsure of. Often for rarer birds there is a note where in the park the sighting was made, especially useful for large parks.



Curious river otter by Union Bay waterfront park near Arboretum.

Magnuson Park is a jewel on a peninsula into Lake Washington. It was a military airfield for many years and reconstruction of the park involved runway removal and development of ponds on the south end (Promontory Ponds). There has been a determined program to plant native trees and shrubs in the park, especially in the wooded areas. As such, there are many natives you may not find elsewhere (like ponderosa pine and gambels oak; we even found an incense cedar). The habitats include ponds (great spring peeper chorus in early spring), lakefront, woods, marshy habitat and urban sprawl park (generally not great birding there, except near our Mountaineers native plant garden). There is a large bird list for this park, but it is a huge park and sometimes not

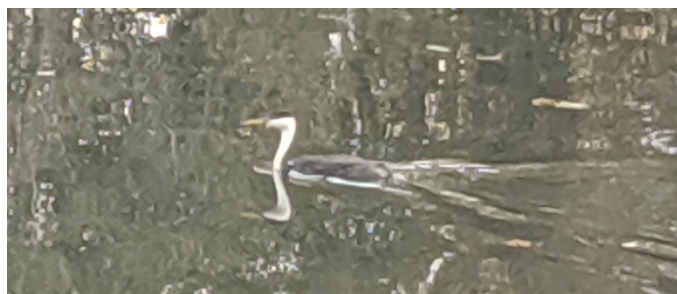
too productive for birds. But there are often surprises. On rambles I've seen many raptors including merlin, peregrine falcon and kestrel. I've seen white fronted geese feeding on the lawns like they were domesticated. Beaver and river otter are frequent visitors. The ponds reliably have ring-necked ducks, bufflehead, and all sorts of dabbling ducks, plus pied billed grebe that breed there in summer. The lake reliably has a flock of common goldeneye, bufflehead and scaup (lesser and greater), and common mergansers are often seen as well as large flocks of western grebes (more in the middle of the lake bobbing around like a Maginot line). There have been canvasback and redhead and often flocks of coots and widgeon. There are ring billed and glaucous winged gulls and often surprise gulls as well. In the woods encountering a feeding flock is always a delight. There is then surround sound activity with chickadees, nuthatches, creepers, bushtits and often golden crowned and ruby crowned kinglets. Marsh, Bewicks and Pacific wrens are commonly seen as are yellow rumped warblers and towhees. Large flocks of waxwings are around as are flickers, downy woodpeckers, and redwing blackbirds. Because there are so many birders there rare birds are often seen. Peg and I even saw a mink a couple of weeks ago.



Trumpeter swans in Union Bay

Union Bay is a natural area that runs between the University Stadium and Yesler Swamp and the Center for Urban Horticulture, along Union Bay of Lake Washington. It is a common birding destination and birders are almost always encountered and can share what they've seen. The area has been long studied by Connie Sidles, who reports unusual sightings on a board near Urban Hort. Of course, this is a fill sight and has undergone a significant replanting with a watering system as part of mitigation for the new 520 connecting ramps. The long-term impact of these is hard to ascertain. The area has had a major field habitat and this may lessen with the plantings. In any case it is now, and probably will remain a major birding hotspot. Visiting there affords many good pond and lake overlooks and the protection of Union Bay makes it productive of bird life even in windy times. There is a large marshy area and can be birded from canoe or kayak. There is not much woods, but this is 'corrected' by Yesler Swamp, which is a mostly wooded walkway with a protected embayment as well. Union bay is great from sparrows and small birds. Recently I've seen fox sparrows, song

sparrows, goldfinches, house finch, Lincoln Sparrow, white crowned and golden crowned sparrows. It is also great for large bird flocks, especially coot and widgeon. These band together to protect themselves from marauding groups of eagles that often feed in concert (I saw an eagle take a coot this past week). It was so heavy the eagle was barely able to take off. Other birds, such as bufflehead, ring-necked ducks, canvasback and redhead often flit in and out of these masses. When the eagles are out the ducks are flying all over the place and it feels like a celebration of flight. Otter and beaver are commonly seen. There are resident herons, including great blue and green and bitterns (not easy to see). It is a good place to see raptors and I've often seen raptors take prey here because it's so exposed (e.g. red tailed hawk on snake). Cooper's hawks are commonly seen, as are wrens, bushtits, chickadees, and warblers. There are reliable sightings of hooded mergansers (close up) and many dabbling ducks. Ruddy ducks, pintail, western grebes all visit. Especially vivid are the many wood ducks that abound in the ponds and bays. It's easy to see kingfisher and there are many redwing blackbirds. One surprise was the lack of common mergansers. Last week it turned out there were a group of over 80 of them just east of the Montlake Bridge in the ship canal.



Western Grebe in Union Bay

Green Lake Arguably the most heavily used of our city parks Green Lake Park was created by the Olmstead Brothers, who designed so many of our parks (they also did Central Park in New York City). There is information about this in the Volunteer Park water tower (after the climb the view is great and there is all this info). The Olmsteads even designed connections between their parks, so Ravenna Boulevard is part of the connection and ends at green lake. Given all the use, Green Lake is surprisingly birdy. There are large flocks of widgeon, Canada geese, gulls and coots. There are many common mergansers. On a recent walk we've seen ruddy ducks, gadwall, bufflehead, and mew, ring billed and glaucous-winged gulls. Green lake seems like one habitat – lake front, but it does have many trees planted (mostly non native), large lawn spaces and some small woody areas (often with feeding flocks of sparrows, chickadees, kinglets and woodpeckers). Raptors are often there and the crows, which are quite numerous, let us know where the raptors are since they hassle them so mercilessly and raucously. The large flocks in the water and on land bear

checking. The other day there was a snow goose in with the Canada geese, and a Eurasian widgeon amidst the American widgeon.

I've shown you a few delights and surprises below. I've already waxed eloquent (or blabbed) for too long. I will return to the topic (if there is interest) with my take on some of the other parks, in hopes that it stimulates you to get out and have a peek with a bit more informed view or decide to write something to share your knowledge about other parks.



West Panama Cloud Forest by Thomas Bancroft

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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).