



March 2019

Naturalists

ONE STEP AT A TIME

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In the Native Plant Garden

The native plant garden is now enjoying much needed care and rejuvenation thanks to the Washington Native Plant Society local chapter, who are providing leadership in the garden in terms of care, planting and a vision of the garden. With leadership from George Macomber. The garden is benefitting from their experience in native plant care and propagation.

The Native Plant Society is having work parties and we will be invited to participate. Their hand is already showing in the careful pruning, cleaning and clearing and many of our plantings will benefit. Check out the garden. It is just by the climbing rocks on the north end of the Seattle clubhouse.



Red flowering current



Pruning work at the garden

JOIN US ON:

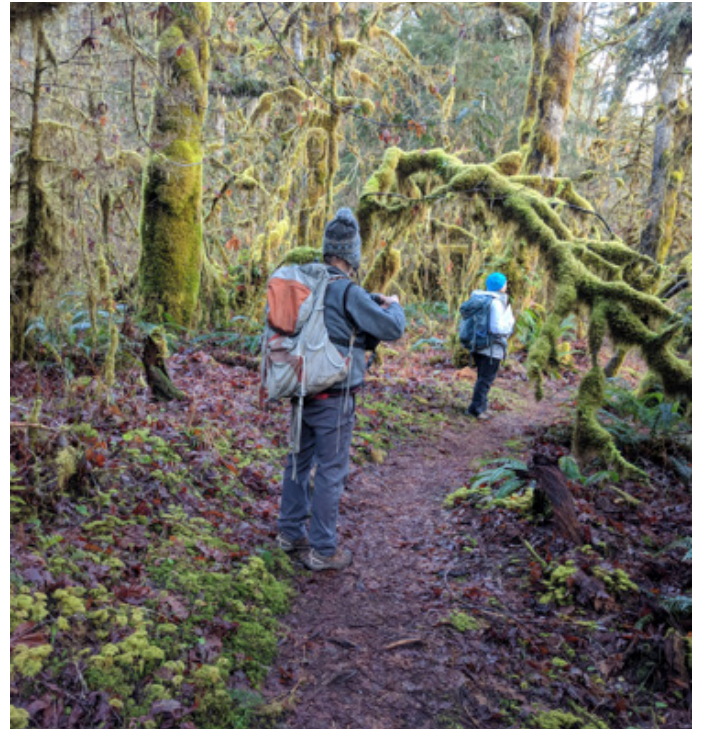


February Naturalist Hikes

MOSS WORKSHOP FIELD TRIP – REDMOND WATER PRESERVE



Mossbacks

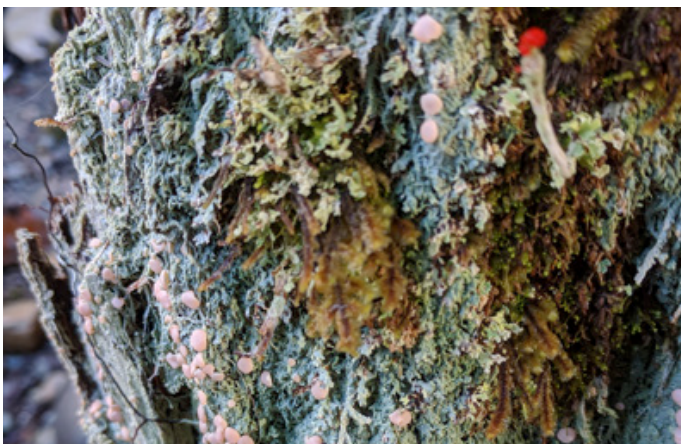


OLD SAUK RIVER TRAIL – FEB 2

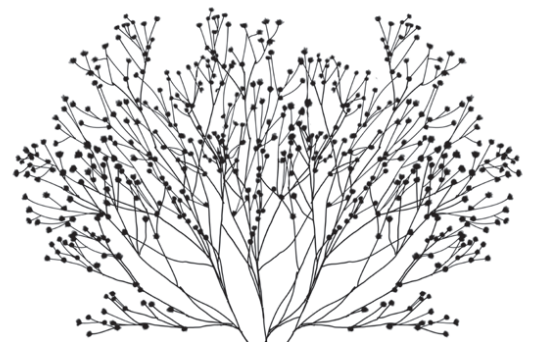
As we discovered this is arguably the best moss laden trail we've ever been on. It was covered with stairstep moss, even growing over snags and the variety of mosses and liverworts was astounding. Nice weather too – unexpected and rare for this February when so many activities were cancelled.



Douglas neckera



Liverworts and lichens plus a bonus moss

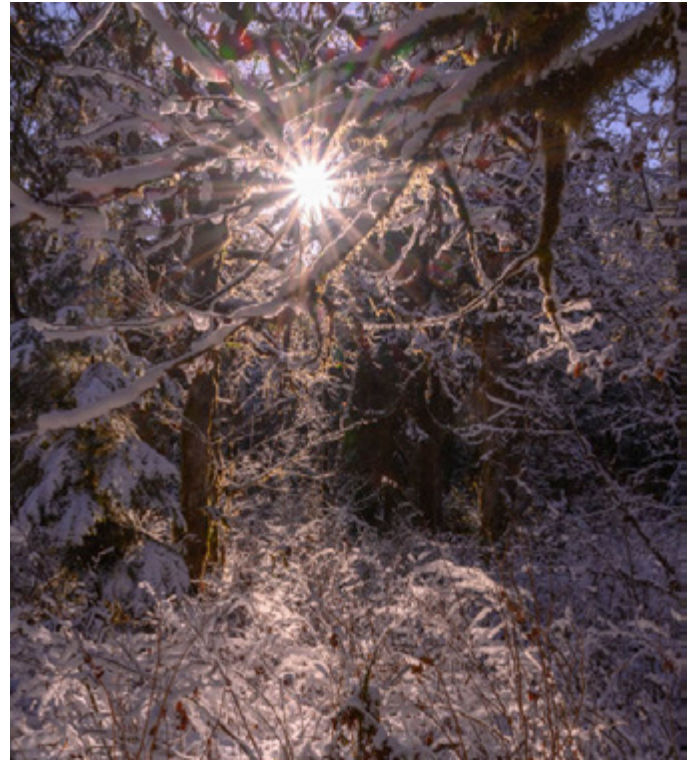


February Hikes (Continued)



OLD SAUK – FEBRUARY 6; 4 DAYS LATER

Photos by Tom Bancroft



Stairstep moss



February Hikes (Continued)

WHIDBEY ISLAND DOUBLE BLUFFS – FEB 20

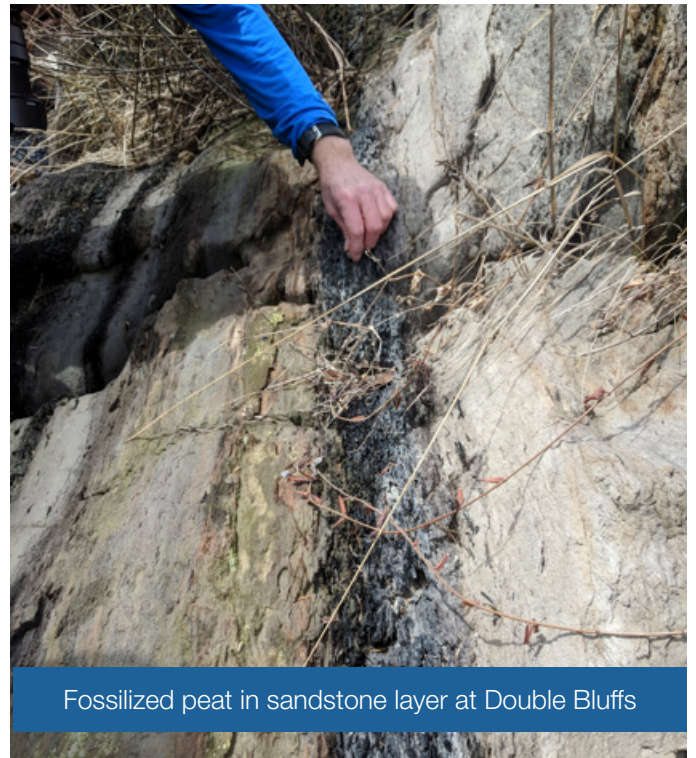
Geology was the focus but birding was also great.



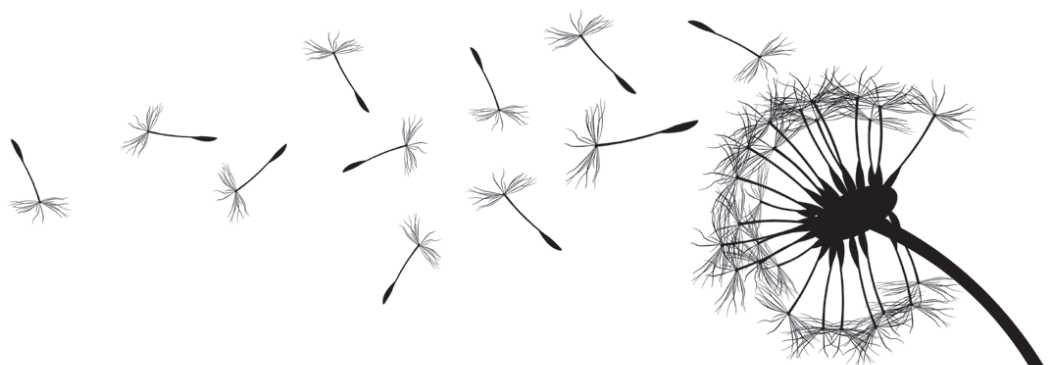
Coltsfoot blooming in clay sloughed off from above



Fossilized palm frond in an erratic boulder



Fossilized peat in sandstone layer at Double Bluffs



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.

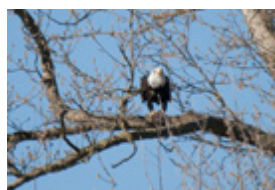


Hansville Reach hike plus Point No Point Birding

MARCH 2 - GORDIE SWARTZMAN

Combine walking through winter woods with birding, moss identification and big trees. We will walk the Hansville reach natural area, a nature conservancy site going to Hood Canal and end with a visit to Point No Point, one of the best birding hotspots in our area. Take Edmonds-Kington ferry, but then drive is short.

[Register Here](#)



The Stilly, Skagit & Samish

MARCH 9 - TOM BANCROFT

This is a birding trip that will be primarily done from cars. We plan to do stops in the Skagit and Samish valley, looking for geese, swans, and raptors. We might hike up to 2 miles but it will all be on fairly level ground.

[Register Here](#)



Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

MARCH 9 - ANITA ELDER

Walk at the refuge to see wildlife, waterfowl and bald eagles...maybe even a great horned owl.

[Register Here](#)



Guillemot Cove – Kitsap Peninsula

MARCH 17 - SUE LABRIE

This Kitsap County Nature Preserve is a hidden gem. An easy 1/2 mile hike downhill through forest to where Boycee Creek meets the Hood Canal, with additional trails to explore around the creek. Great view of the Olympic Mountains from the beach area (if the weather cooperates), and a rustic old house carved out of a cedar stump.

[Register Here](#)

2018-19 Naturalists Lecture Series

SEATTLE PROGRAM CENTER (CASCADE ROOM), 7 PM

Free to Naturalists Study Group members. \$5 cash donation for all others.



MARCH 13, 2019 (WED) | GOVINDA ROSLING

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

Prepare to be wowed as Govinda Rosling shares her rich account of the Pigeon Guillemot's life cycle, behavioral habits, quirks, and antics here in the Puget Sound. She will also explain the Pigeon Guillemot Research Group's 15-year study and why it's important. Open to public.

Central Puget Sound Chapter/Washington Native Plant Society Program

The Flora of Seattle in 1850: Major Species and Landscapes Prior to Urban Development

TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2019, 7:00PM,
RAY LARSON

Seattle Program Center

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



Ray Larson will offer a glimpse into the historic flora and landscapes of the Seattle area just before Euro-American settlers arrived. This talk, based on his Master's thesis, will draw from sources such as herbarium specimens, settlers accounts, survey maps and photographs to discuss the plants and scenery that made up the local landscape before Seattle was changed forever. This research offers the most complete view yet of the historic flora of the Seattle area, and is being used both as a tool for local restoration efforts and model for reconstructing historic floras and landscapes from the pre-settlement period in other parts of the United States.

Upcoming Programs:

- 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

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.)

UW sponsored Washington Biological Symposium

MARCH 6, 2019

An extensive network of professional, academic, and amateur botanists are actively engaged in the conservation, management, and study of Washington's diverse flora. Their

expertise ranges from how best to manage biodiversity, to understanding climate change impacts on plant communities, to naming and classifying the flora's rare, common, and invasive elements. Invited speakers and poster presentations will share new insights and discoveries about these topics and more.

[Register Here](#)

From Gary Brill an article on insect population collapses worldwide:

[Read Article](#)

Edible Plants Workshop

Many of us aware of the edibility of a small number of plants. Yet so many plants are edible and tasty. Join Stewart Hougen for a workshop on edible plants, this coming April April 18th with a field trip to Eastern Washington somewhere on Saturday April 20. There will be two additional field trips throughout the summer. Priority will be given to workshop participants. You will be amazed at all the common plants that are edible and Stewart will provide tips on how to prepare these. Save the dates.

Poetry

AFTER THE WINTER

By Claude McKay

Some day, when trees have shed their leaves
And against the morning's white
The shivering birds beneath the eaves
Have sheltered for the night,
We'll turn our faces southward, love,
Toward the summer isle

Where bamboos spire the shafted grove
And wide-mouthed orchids smile.

And we will seek the quiet hill
Where towers the cotton tree,
And leaps the laughing crystal rill,
And works the droning bee.
And we will build a cottage there
Beside an open glade,
With black-ribbed blue-bells blowing near,
And ferns that never fade.

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SPRING

By William Blake

Sound the flute!
Now it's mute!
Bird's delight,
Day and night,
Nightingale,
In the dale,
Lark in sky,—
Merrily,
Merrily merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little boy,
Full of joy;
Little girl,
Sweet and small;
Cock does crow,
So do you;
Merry voice,
Infant noise;
Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little lamb,
Here I am;
Come and lick
My white neck;
Let me pull
Your soft wool;
Let me kiss
Your soft face;
Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

ASSURANCE

By William Stafford

You will never be alone, you hear so deep
a sound when autumn comes. Yellow
pulls across the hills and thrums,
or the silence after lightening before it says
its names- and then the clouds' wide-mouthed
apologies. You were aimed from birth:
you will never be alone. Rain
will come, a gutter filled, an Amazon,
long aisles- you never heard so deep a sound,
moss on rock, and years. You turn your head-
that's what the silence meant: you're not alone.
The whole wide world pours down.

SIWASHING IT OUT ONCE IN SUISLAW FOREST

By Gary Snyder

I slept under rhododendron
All nightblossoms fell
Shivering on a sheet of cardboard
Feet stuck in my pack
Hands deep in my pockets
Barely able to sleep.
I remembered when we were in school

Sleeping together in a big warm bed
We were the youngest lovers
When we broke up we were still nineteen
Now our friends are married
You teach school back east
I don't mind living this way
Green hills the long blue beach
But sometimes sleeping in the open
I think back when I had you.

A SPRING NIGHT IN SHOKOKU-JI

By Gary Snyder

Eight years ago this May
We walked under cherry blossoms
At night in an orchard in Oregon.
All that I wanted then
Is forgotten now, but you.
Here in the night
In a garden of the old capital
I feel the trembling ghost of Yugao
I remember your cool body
Naked under a summer cotton dress.

AN AUTUMN MORNING IN SHOKOKU-JI

By Gary Snyder

Last night watching the Pleiades,
Breath smoking in the moonlight,
Bitter memory like vomit
Choked my throat.
I unrolled a sleeping bag
On mats on the porch
Under thick autumn stars.
In dream you appeared
(Three times in nine years)
Wild, cold, and accusing.
I woke shamed and angry:
The pointless wars of the heart.
Almost dawn. Venus and Jupiter.
The first time I have
Ever seen them close.

DECEMBER AT YASE

By Gary Snyder

You said, that October,
In the tall dry grass by the orchard
When you chose to be free,
"Again someday, maybe ten years."

After college I saw you
One time. You were strange.
And I was obsessed with a plan.

Now ten years and more have
Gone by: I've always known
where you were—
I might have gone to you

Hoping to win your love back.
You still are single.

I didn't.
I thought I must make it alone. I
Have done that.

Only in dream, like this dawn,
Does the grave, awed intensity
Of our young love
Return to my mind, to my flesh.

We had what the others
All crave and seek for;
We left it behind at nineteen.

I feel ancient, as though I had
Lived many lives.
And may never now know
If I am a fool
Or have done what my
karma demands.

The Aspen Grove

BY THOMAS BANCROFT

Rustling sounds filled the meadow while millions of small silvery flashes came from the copse. It was just a gentle breeze that morning but enough to make the leaves flutter. A pale green then green-silver would sparkle, and waves of these flickerings would transverse back and forth, like ripples moving across a small pond. No wonder these trees are called quaking aspens.

A loud commotion came from my left. Just 20 feet away, a 6-foot high post had a birdhouse. Six chattering Tree Swallows were doing acrobatics within a few feet of the box. A pair had a nest there, and perhaps these others were trying to usurp the space. The birds never touched but they came within inches as each twisted and turned. Their long pointed wings and broad tails providing precise control. Finally, one bird settled onto the roof, chattering lightly, and the others dispersed. At that point, I suspected this was some kind of social interaction, a morning greeting.

My attention turned to the aspen grove, and the bird I had come to find. The "chebec, chebec, chebec," drifted from deep in the trees. The Least Flycatcher was singing. This species is in the genus *Empidonax*, a group of small, drab birds, which look virtually identical and can be reliably separated only by their songs. This individual, less than six inches long, was probably sitting on a branch four or five feet off the ground, scanning for flying insects, and giving its incessant territorial chant. The remarkable thing was that he was well outside his normal breeding range.

I first saw this species in Western Pennsylvania when I was in high school. It breeds north from the central

Appalachians through Canada and west to the Rockies. A few breed in northeastern Washington, but this site at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge in south-central Washington is hundreds of miles out of its normal range.

I was curious to find this bird for I had a strange feeling of connection to it, almost like this little guy was a brother. Except for undergraduate school, I'd spent my first 60 years living in Eastern United States before moving west to Seattle. Since settling here, I've felt both out of place and yet extremely content. The flycatcher, also, didn't seem to care if it was far from its regular haunts. Several dozen birders had heard his song over the last week. He was apparently here for the breeding season.

My left hand clutched the parabolic microphone pointing toward the sound, while my right hand held my binoculars in the ready position. The digital recorder was running while I searched the understory for this elusive bird. No one was allowed anywhere beyond these trails, and if I didn't want human-made sounds in my soundtrack, I couldn't move. My best chance to see this individual was if it flew and landed on a visible branch.

Other birds were also singing on this early June morning. The elaborate warbles of a house wren came from the understory to my left, and a warbling vireo's slurry notes drifted through the quaking leaves above me. White-breasted Nuthatches, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Western Bluebirds, and Western Wood-Pewees also made their presence known. Headsets covered my ears, giving me a stereo concert of this forest patch at the edge of the wet savanna that covered most of this Refuge.

Suddenly, I realized a second Least Flycatcher was calling off to my left, so I turned the parabolic reflector in that direction to see if the sound would become more distinct. Yes, it definitely was a second individual. Both sexes sing in this species. The first part of the female's "chebec" is slightly lower in pitch, but the second part is virtually identical. Males, though, are not evenly dispersed through suitable habitat but rather form clumps of small territories. It is like a classical lek system where the males all compete for females on a stage rather than be spread throughout the theater. My ears weren't discerning enough to decide if this was a pair or two separate males.

They have an exciting display, but I was there at the wrong time of day. For a short period after sunset, the male will climb up through the branches to the top of the canopy offering warbles, whits, and chebecs as he goes. He then performs a "flight song" in which he flies up from the treetops for 30 seconds, singing non-stop, and then tumbles back down, much the way a butterfly might flutter. Of course, ornithologists think it has something to do with mating, but we don't know the actual function of this flight song. In my imagination, I can only assume that

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the male goes high to become visible to a distant female who might be wandering through looking for a mate.

A flash of brown zipped behind an aspen trunk and then landed on a dead branch a few feet off the ground. The Least Flycatcher looked off to my right, gazing up and down into the small opening under the aspens. A second later he was gone, but a surge of energy stayed with me. This bird was living life wherever he was.

<https://soundcloud.com/tom-bancroft-2/aspen-grove>



Spring Is Coming

PHOTOS BY GRACE WINER



Red Alder
Alnus rubra

Female catkins

Male catkins



Osoberry or Indian Plum – look for it now!

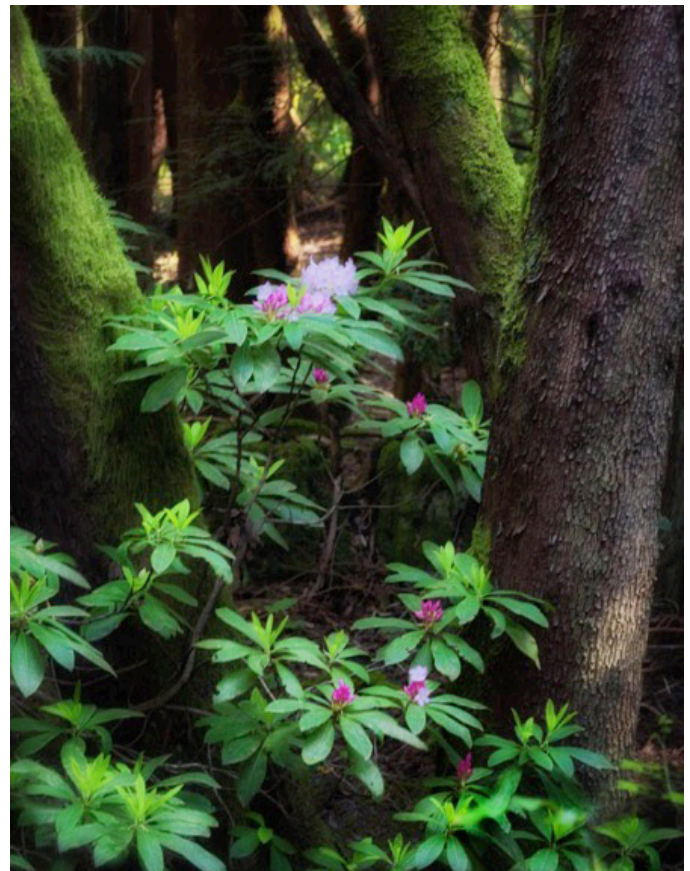
Photos

The eye of Heidi Walker

Heidi is our featured nature photographer of the month.



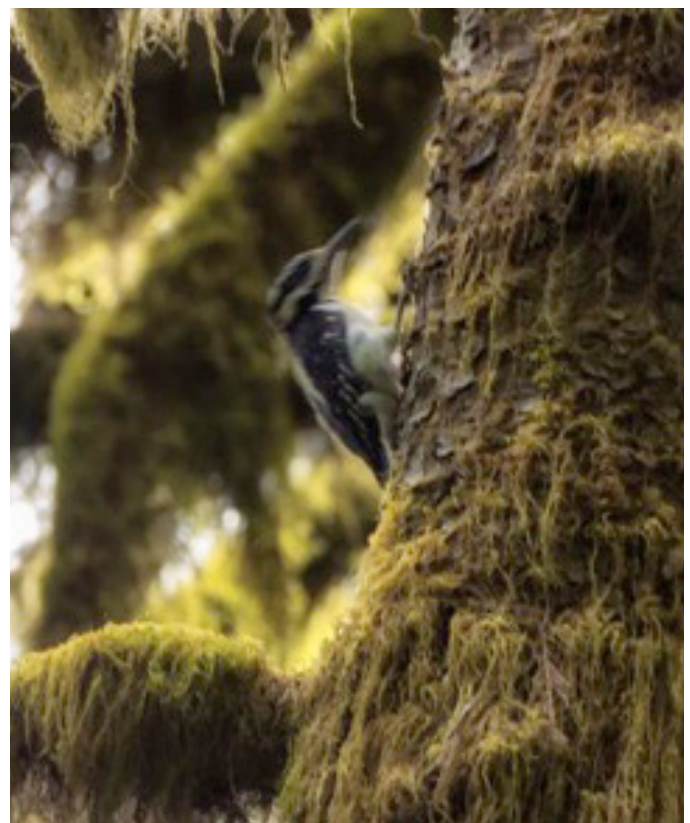
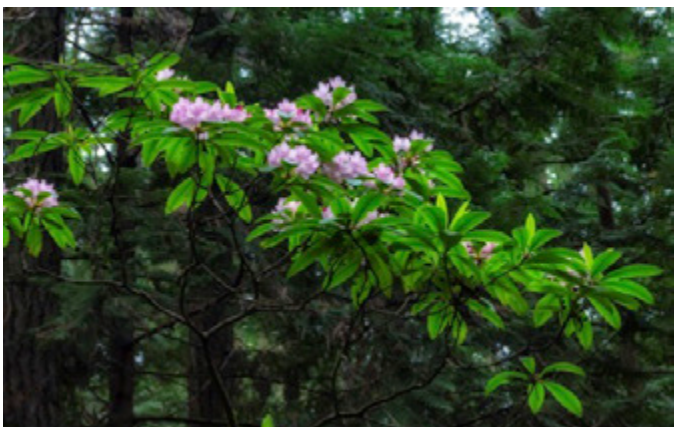
Dunlin on the wing...



Rhododendron mucronulatum

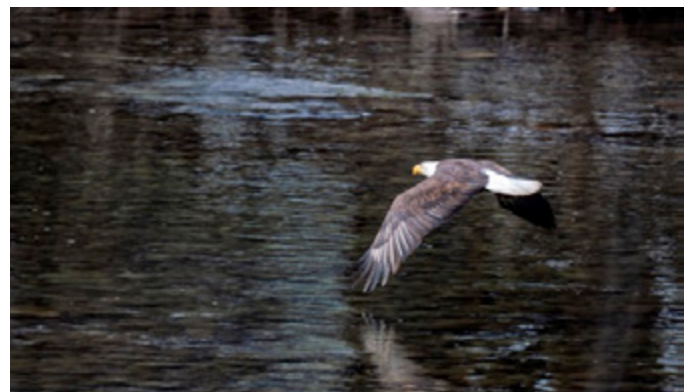
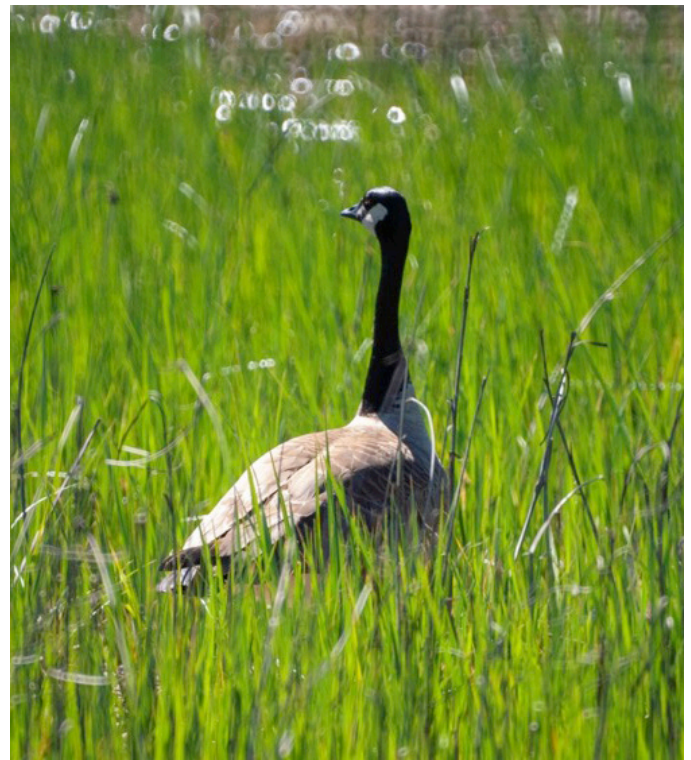


... and in the water



Hairy woodpecker

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Introduction to the Natural World Course Begins in April

Tell your friends about this course. The course is filling pretty fast this year (a pattern in recent years it seems). Register early to preserve a place in the course. And remember, study group members can attend the course lectures for free.

[More Info](#)





Photo by Anita Elder

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