



March 2025

THE HOOTER

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[KAS Membership Form](#)

General Meeting

Thursday March 20th: 7:00 PM @ Hal Holmes

Tufted Puffin a Dynamic Seascape

Presented by Dr. Scott Pearson

The Tufted Puffin is an iconic seabird that nests on offshore islands along Washington's outer coast and on two islands in the Salish Sea. Recent analyses suggest that the puffin is declining from the Gulf of Alaska south to California, with more dramatic declines at the southern end of its breeding range. Our speaker this month, Dr. Scott Pearson, will describe the species' natural history and provide information on its status in Washington and beyond and on research and conservation efforts to benefit the species locally.

Dr. Scott Pearson is a senior research scientist at Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington and his B.S. and M.S. from the University of Michigan. His research is focused on assessing wildlife population status and trends and the underlying mechanisms driving declines to help inform conservation management. His current work is focused on gaining a better understanding of marine bird and mammal diets, habitat use and quality, and the effectiveness of conservation efforts with a focus on several species of conservation concern. Scott also supervises the west side research team for the Wildlife Program.

Hear this interesting program on a very special seabird at Hal Holmes on Thursday March 20th at 7PM. Dr. Pearson will come "live" to us via zoom on big screen, and refreshments will be provided. See you there!




Photo by Dr. Scott Pearson

First Saturday Bird Walks

Since October of 2002 KAS has offered the monthly First Saturday Bird Walk in rain, wind, snow, and sunshine. One need not know anything about birds or nature. Trip leaders and participants will provide some guidance and help with bird ID.

All you need is a pair of binoculars and garb for the weather, and kids are welcome. Walking on park paths (pavement to dirt) usually takes about three hours.



March 1 ~ First Saturday Birdwalk, Irene Rinehart Park. Celebrate World Wildlife Day (March 3) with a walk in the park and maybe a hint of spring. Opportunities to see eagles, waterfowl, geese pairing up, and a few green shoots emerging. For a 3 hour walk around the park, meet at 8 AM at the riverside parking lot. For info: Steve at fieldtrips@kittitasaudubon.org

March 21-23, Friday through Sunday: Othello Crane Festival

This long-running local fest includes a huge selection of tours, hikes, bike trips, boat trips, field trips and lectures by experts, raptor display, and sociability, centered around the migrating cranes. A great time learning, observing and participating. To Register: [Festival | Othello Sandhill Crane Festival | United States](#)

March 29, Saturday: Cranes & Waterfowl trip. An outing of our own to spot the cranes and large groups of migrating ducks and geese in the basin. The route via Crab Creek Rd, Corfu Road, Othello area ponds, and Columbia NWR takes most of a day; bring a lunch, binocs & suitable clothing. Please RSVP with Steve at fieldtrips@kittitasaudubon.org

April 5 ~ First Saturday Birdwalk, Irene Rinehart Park. Join the walkers at Rinehart Park for a welcome to spring. Budding blooms, growing grass, soaring swallows, roaring river, preening passerines, searing sunshine (oh, come off it.)



Basic Birding Class in Ellensburg

Coming in the Spring of 2025

Kevin O'Malley will be teaching a birding basics class for beginning & advancing birders wanting to further their knowledge about birding. Class will focus on bird language, behavior, habitats, nests, skulls & bird tracks. You will learn to talk about what birds you are seeing and hearing. Binoculars are not mandatory. Small class size of 8 April 19th Saturday 8:30 am- 11:30 am
More Info & Registration online at:

www.southsoundnatureschool.org

Birds! Dinosaurs!

By Barry Brunson

About 66 million years ago, a cataclysmic event led to the extinction of a majority of the species then living on Earth—including almost all dinosaurs! That event was the asteroid whose impact created the Chicxulub crater at the Yucatán Peninsula. The crater is over 100 miles in diameter, over half a mile deep, and the asteroid that caused it is thought to have been about six miles in diameter.

It's "almost all" dinosaurs, because **birds** survived. The Nov 2024 KAS presentation was "The Dinosaurs Among Us", given via Zoom by Dr Kim Adelson of the Black Hills Audubon Society. Whether or not you were fortunate enough to have been in that audience, I think you will be fascinated by "Dino Bids" (NOVA Season 52 Episode 3) on Public Broadcasting Service. It premiered 5 Feb 2025. Here's part of a promo for the episode:



"How? How did birds manage not only to live through the apocalypse, but also to go on to diversify and populate every corner of our planet? Now, rare fossil discoveries are revealing the secrets of bird evolution going back more than 100 million years, telling the story of how some resilient feathered dinos persevered and transformed into the vast array of colorful bird species that fill our skies today."

This Nova episode provides some answers, crediting research by paleontologists, geochemists, and evolutionary biologists. Essential tools they used include DNA analysis and CT scans on fossilized remains. The evidence tells us that modern birds coexisted with their much larger dinosaur cousins for millions of years.

An internet search for "Nova: Dino Birds" should work, but one link is: [Dino Birds | NOVA | PBS](#)

Riflebird Wrists

By Barry Brunson



The song *Pinball Wizard* was a 1969 hit by The Who. Among the attributes of the title character was that he has "such a supple wrist". Musician James Brown has been described as promoting the idea that every musical instrument—including the human voice—can be a form of *percussion*. (His and Alfred Ellis' 1967 version of "Cold Sweat", an influential step in the evolution of Funk, illustrates this.)

So what do supple wrists and percussion have to do with Victoria's Riflebirds? They long have been known for courtship that includes males repeatedly fanning their wings into a curved arc, while he "sways his head rhythmically and opens his mouth to a soundtrack of short, sharp thwacking sounds," as described by Susan Milius in the January 2025 issue of *Science News*. Their extremely supple wrists, evidently unique among birds, enable the striking wing displays. The source of those thwacking sounds had been quite a mystery, with some thinking that the birds were clapping their wings together, which observations made plausible. However, recent research—including more detailed video evidence—reveals that the birds are not vocalizing or clapping, but are *using their beaks to play their feathers* like a musical instrument, "like a stick dragged along a picket fence."

The Milius article is at [Science has finally cracked male riflebirds' flirty secrets](#). In addition to a delightful video/audio clip, it includes a link to the original peer-reviewed research, which appeared in the September issue of the *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*.

A Bit of Good News Regarding Climate Change

By Judy Hallisey

Thinking about climate change can be depressing these days: Our country was pulled out of the Paris Agreement; funding for renewable energy has been slashed at the federal level; and “drill baby drill” is the current mantra. We must remember the health of our environment is foundational to the health of our society, and we can’t give up. Without clean air, clean water, a healthy climate, and thriving ecosystems, we and birds all suffer.

I was refreshed and rejuvenated with some good news on Washington State levels, however! After a battle hard fought by Audubon and others, Initiative 2117 was sent down the toilet in November’s election. The Climate Commitment Act will continue to reduce our carbon footprints and provide funds for needed actions to help our environment.

A Department of Ecology News Release issued Dec. 11, 2024, claims more than 200 electric school buses will be on Washington roads by early 2026! “Today, there are 86 electric school buses in the State, spread across 40 school districts. However, the number of electric buses in school fleets is poised to take a big jump in 2025. Earlier the month, the Washington Department of Ecology was awarded \$31.5 million in State funding from the **Climate Commitment Act** and other sources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded Ecology an additional \$3.9 million for zero emission school bus grants from the Inflation Reduction Act. These funds will provide an additional 124 zero-emission buses! These electric buses have demonstrated that they can deliver the same level of service that school districts get from diesel buses - without the noise or pollution.” For further reading: [Electric school buses - Washington State Department of Ecology](#)

Hopefully Kittitas County school districts will follow suit soon.

More good news came from a Department of Ecology News Release January 6, 2025: Washington met 2020 greenhouse gas emissions limit! 2021 emission rose but remained lower than 2019 as a promising clean energy trend took hold. Most of [Washington’s major climate policies](#), including the Climate Commitment Act, took effect after 2021. The collective impact of these policies will show up in future inventories.

At a glance, here is the 2024 greenhouse gas inventory:

- Statewide emissions totaled 88.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO₂e) in 2020—a decrease of 13.8% from 2019 and 6% below the 2020 limit.
- Statewide emissions totaled 96.1 MMT CO₂e in 2021—an increase of 8.8% from 2020 and 2.3% above the 2020 limit.
- 2021 statewide emissions were 14% below their historical peak, which occurred in 2000.
- Since 1990, per capita emissions have declined by 35.9% and emissions per dollar of gross domestic product have declined by 64.2%.
- Transportation emissions rose 21.3% from 2020 to 2021, the steepest increase of any sector during that timeframe.
- Aviation, marine and rail accounted for 78.9% of the rise in transportation emissions from 2020 to 2021.
- Emissions from passenger cars and trucks dropped 19.9% in 2020 and only rebounded by 6.3% in 2021
- Electricity emissions dropped 14.6% from 2019 to 2021, the biggest decrease of any sector during that timeframe.
- Electricity emissions from coal dropped by 46.7% from 2019 to 2020 and rose by 8.6% in 2021. In 2022, they went down again by 5.7%.
- Electricity emissions from natural gas (methane) dropped by 32.3% from 2019 to 2020 and rose by 11.9% in 2021. In 2022, they went down again by 19.1%.

For more info see: [Washington State Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 1990-2021](#)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Returning to Ellensburg in 1998, I do not have copies of the Hooter from the first ten years, although they are preserved at the Ellensburg Public Library archives. The Hooters are the source of the Archive articles selected. I tend to 'pick and choose' articles that I think one will enjoy, but please feel free to give me suggestions. February's Hooter had an article from the September 2018 Hooter marking the 30th anniversary of Kittitas Audubon, with recollections from an original KAS member. This month will feature a former member and his local introduction to birding from the March 2003 Hooter. Gloria Baldi

Getting Hooked on Bird Watching

By Joe Meuchel



Some time ago the Queen of Spades garden club rewarded me with a bird feeder and a sack of birdseed as an appreciation gift for a dissertation on mushrooms. I had described myself as an amateur naturalist, one who knows a little bit about a lot of things but really not much about any one thing.

As in all pursuits of knowledge, tools must be acquired. In the case of birds, field guides, and binoculars are essential. I already had those. In addition, gathering dust in my library were, low and behold, background books on birds. You know, the kind of "round-to-it" books would-be naturalists gather, hoping that some day, time will allow further perusal.

At any rate, observation is a must. This "must" led to purchase of a metal feeder pole to be planted on the lawn just outside my study window, yet in close proximity to trees. Since the "feeder pole" is more ornamental than utilitarian, it necessitated an addition of sapling or two to act as a, "wait your turn" station. A chickadee was the first prospector, (Black-capped, *Parus atricapillus*, my references divulged). This black-bibbed, ebony headed resident revealed itself as a cavity nester, and its voice gave it its name, plus an amazing amount of other interesting things about itself. (My botanical background triggered an interest in name origins.)



The chickadee's claim was jumped by *Carpodacus mexicanus*, which translates into House Finch, (mexicanus--probably first collected and described in Mexico). The first one brought reinforcements with a reserve battalion in a nearby tree. However, an alert chickadee occasionally slipped through their defenses, grabbed a seed and flew off or prospected the refuse pile of seed coats on the ground.

It wasn't long before a visit to birding friends gave me some identification tips plus assorted birding helps. This led to purchase of a thistle seed feeder to entice American Goldfinches. Of course that led to researching Nyger thistle seed, its origin and possibility of introducing another noxious weed. Benign, it turns out. An interesting thing about these finches is that most delay nesting until assured of a supply of high protein thistle seeds.



These are the kind of things that trigger a naturalist's interest. What ecological niche does each species exploit, and what are their habits? How can we manipulate habitats to maintain and encourage bird populations? What actions of ours destroy habitat?

Thanks Queen of Spades, and Audubon members for an added interest. I attend local chapter meetings as much for their interesting and diversified programs as for anything I may pick up on birding. Also it may behoove the local Audubon Society to reward new members with a bird feeder, some seeds, or a book, or even a free local membership. Perhaps someone else will get hooked on bird watching.

BOARD NOTES

Compiled by Barry Brunson
Condensed by Gloria Baldi

At the February Board meeting the following items were announced and/or discussed.

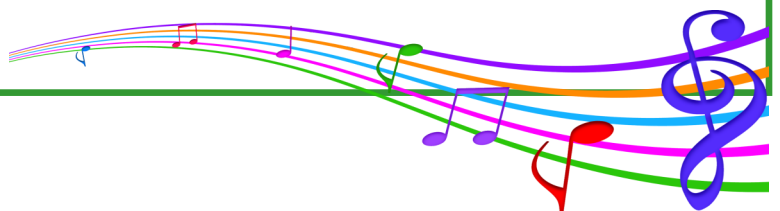
Judy Hallisey participated in the Audubon WA Shrub Steppe Conservation Committee, which includes representatives of each Eastern Washington chapter. The main focus was on large-scale renewable energy projects, including mitigation efforts. Early research indicates that such mitigation should require between 2-to-1, up to 4-to-1 ratio when existing shrub steppe areas are degraded. *(Sagebrush disperses naturally by seed via the wind. When huge areas of shrub-steppe are destroyed by hot fire, or for purposes such as agriculture or large-scale renewable energy projects, there are no plants left to disperse seeds. To complicate the rejuvenation of the habitat is that sagebrush is very slow growing. Cuttings and seed collection definitely help, but human help is limited.)*

Judy has also been appointed Chair for the Conservation Committee for Audubon WA. *(Thank you, Judy!!)*

Additional topics discussed were:

- a. KAS website
- b. Updating terms of the KAS/CWU scholarship agreement
- c. Defining KAS advocacy terms for KAS support
- d. KAS Business cards
- e. The required annual report by National Audubon. This included deciding which projects that KAS has been involved the past year need be included.

All KAS members are invited to attend Board meetings. March 6th at 4:30 at the Methodist Church across from the Ellensburg Public Library is the next meeting.



Membership Form

Please Print

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

_____ **NEW** Membership _____ **RENEWING** Membership

Regular Memberships (per year):

___ Individual \$20 ___ Family \$30 ___ Student \$10

Premium Memberships (per year):

___ Bluebird \$50 ___ Kestrel \$75 ___ Hawk \$100

Lifetime Memberships:

___ Lifetime Individual \$300 ___ Lifetime Family \$500

Charitable Donation: (please enter dollar amount)

Scholarship Fund \$ _____ Nest Boxes \$ _____

Education \$ _____ General \$ _____

Your generous donation to a specific project is symbolic. Kittitas Audubon is a chapter of Nation Audubon Society serving the communities of Kittitas County, Washington. Go to kittitasaudubon.org for more information. KAS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation

May we print your name in the Hooter to acknowledge your membership/donation? ___ Yes ___ No

GIVE THE GIFT OF KITTITAS AUDUBON!

Please send gift recipients name, address, email, and phone to address below.



Please make checks payable to:

Kittitas Audubon Society PO Box 1443

Ellensburg WA 98926

THANK YOU!

Download Application: [Click Here](#)

Membership Renewals

Meghan Miller

Gia and Gary Cummisk

Karen Jenison

Meghan Anderson

Steve Moore and Janet Demorest

Dick and Terry Carkner

Judy Hallisey

Barry Brunson

Mickey Parker

John Crowley

Gerard Hogan

Janet Nelson

Marte Fallshore

New Member

Eric and Mihoko Cheney

Thank You! For your support!

We like March, his shoes are purple,
He is new and high;
Makes he mud for dog and peddler,
Makes he forest dry;
Knows the adder's tongue his coming,
And begets her spot.
Stands the sun so close and mighty
That our minds are hot.
News is he of all the others;
Bold it were to die
With the blue-birds bucca-
neering
On his British sky.

~Emily Dickinson

The mission of Kittitas Audubon Society is to develop an appreciation of nature through education and conservation, with a focus on birds. The goal of KAS is to be a vibrant active organization recognized in Kittitas County.

KAS Board Members

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VICE PRESIDENT

Open Position

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