November 2026

THE HOOTER

Web: https://www.kittitasaudubon.org

Email: boardmembers@kittitasaudubon.org

MONTHLY PROGRAM MEETING

NOVEMBER 19TH: 7:00 PM @ HAL HOLMES

SOLVING THE MIGRATION MYSTERIES OF MONARCHS ONE BUTTERFLY AT A TIME

Presented by David G. James

The study of insect migration and movement is currently being revolutionized by electronic tagging. The migration of the Monarch Butterfly in the western US is at the center of this revolution and our understanding of this phenomenon has grown by leaps and bounds this fall. I will report on the WSU-WingsRising electronic tagging of PNW butterflies during August-September 2026, with a glimpse at preliminary results. Our research is entirely funded by Citizen Scientists who can see their support produce data in real time on their cell phones. Learn how you can be part of this unique research in 2027!



David developed a passion for entomology at the age of 8 in England by rearing caterpillars in his bedroom. He obtained his undergraduate degree in Zoology at the University of Salford in the UK, then migrated to Australia for a PhD and to work for the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in Sydney researching agricultural pests and their management using non-chemical methods like biological control, pheromones and habitat restoration. A 50-year career as a biocontrol, IPM, pollinator and conservation biology scientist in Australia and the Pacific Northwest, followed. David has published almost 300 peer-reviewed scientific papers and extension articles and has authored a number of books on butterflies and moths,

including his most recent "The Lives of Butterflies" and the "Life Histories of Cascadia Butterflies" which David Attenborough called "Magisterial".

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.

November 7 ~ First Saturday Birdwalk, Irene Rinehart Park. Fall for real. Juncos and kinglets are back in the woods, or maybe a Creeper tripping up a tree trunk. Come for a sample of cool autumn air at the Irene Rinehart riverside parking lot off of Umptanum Road at 8 AM.

48TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 19th, 2026, will be the Ellensburg Christmas Bird Count. Team leaders will contact former members for verification of participation. Feeder and backyard counters are also welcomed. If you have never counted in a prior year but like to do so this year, please email Judy Hallisey at hydrojude@gmail.com and she will put you on a team. A full article with more details will appear in the December Hooter. Fun Times!

OPTIMISM FOR BEATING BIRD FLU

By Judy Hallisey

In recent years, HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) has caused numerous mass die-offs of wild birds and spread to mammals like red foxes in North America. About 20,000 HPAI cases in birds and mammals have been confirmed in the US since 2022, although more unconfirmed cases have surely occurred.

However, new research suggests more wild raptors may be surviving the disease than previously thought. A February 2025 study in the journal Scientific Reports found that 23% of tested raptors in Minnesota carried antibodies against HPAI. Of those birds, 70% had antibodies specific to the H5N1 strain that has ravaged North American birds in recent years. The presence of antibodies indicate that the bird had caught the disease in the past and survived, boosting its immune system against reinfection.

The study was led by staff at The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota, who collected blood samples from Center patients and from a selection of wild raptors

briefly captured for research and banding. Surprisingly, a large proportion of Bald Eagles had antibodies, with 54% of tested eagles showing antibodies specific to H5N1. These numbers suggest many raptors were surviving the disease.

The 2022 North American HPAI outbreak was particularly nasty, causing high levels of morbidity and mortality. This strain has unique staying power, hanging around for multiple years. H5N1 may be on its way to becoming an endemic virus, like the common cold in humans, only more deadly. Although since 2022, HPAI-related mortality in Rough-legged Hawks has dramatically fallen. This may be due to the virus itself growing weaker. Researchers don't exactly know why some individuals survive infection and some don't.

The Raptor Center is continuing to collect blood samples and test for antibodies. While holding out hope for the future, they caution that "this virus could change in a way where it makes birds sick again."

Let's hope for a future where birds survive!

This brief note is taken from the article "Evidence of Antibodies Yields Optimism Among Raptor Scientists Working on the Frontlines of HPAI", by Angelina Tang, in the Spring 2026 issue of Living Bird.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

You are invited to *Wild Bird Fest* on Feb 19-21, 2027 in Cathlamet, WA. The goal is to bring lovers of birds and nature to Wahkiakum county, WA for a weekend to enjoy the amazing numbers and diversity of waterfowl and other birds that winter on the Columbia River Estuary and nearby wetlands.

The festival will include field trips (guided as well as self-guided), workshops, and live music. For more information, please visit https://www.wildbirdfest.org.

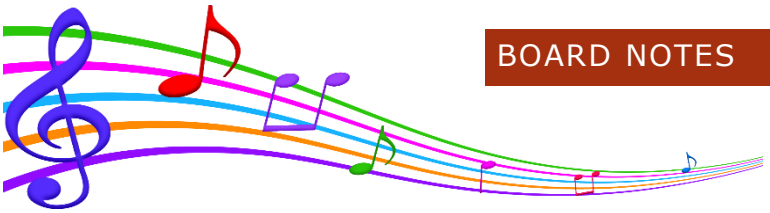
MEMBERSHIP

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Karen Young
Andrew Willis
Julie

THANKS FOR RENEWING!

Norman Peck



BOARD NOTES

Compiled by Lesley McGalliard
Condensed by Gloria Baldi

The budget for July 2026 through June 2027 was accepted.

To expand the opportunity for birding field trips, it was mentioned that members are always welcome to join the Yakima trips. Check their website: Yakima Valley Audubon Society for trips and meetings.

Kris Ernest mentioned that two events are scheduled which involve KAS working with children. One is Kittitas County Early Learning Coalition involving very young children with a 'bug' theme. The second is Nature of Night at CWU attended by young children through junior high age. She would appreciate help on these functions. (Please give her a call.)

Conservation Chair Norm Peck sent an extensive letter for KAS regarding the USDA/USFS roadless decision asking that it repeal the law involving Forest Service lands. The date for submitting was in early October, but a few facts mentioned in his letter explained "that retaining the roadless restriction keeps more habitat for birds, animals, and plants, while restricting fragmentation by development and forest fires. Thinning to assist fire reduction is already allowed, while most fires are within a half mile of roads, often sparked by cigarette butts or a hot vehicle exhaust system". Norm also noted a letter regarding a WA House bill on preparing for climate change. (More details as they occur.)

Barry Brunson, Conservation Chair, reported via email a pioneering agrivoltaic farm and the (now renamed and repurposed) National Renewable Energy Laboratory, both in Colorado. It also mentioned the recent weakening of federal fuel economy standards.

Vice-president Judy Hallisey is a member of the WA State Audubon Conservation Committee. She reported that Seth Hulett (State Audubon staff member) mentioned that two ranchers plan to sign an agreement for "Audubon Conservation Ranching'. (This relates to last month's program at KAS.)

After the Board meeting we learned that Judy recently received the Washington Wild Karen M. Fant Award, describing her as a "tireless conservation advocate and volunteer whose leadership with KAS has strengthened grassroots efforts to protect Washington's wild places". The presentation recounted some of her multiple efforts and achievements, including most recently her emphasis on the importance of public comments in support of preserving the 2021 Roadless Rule. Congratulations, Judy!!

We have no Board meeting in December, but feel free to join us on January 7th at 4:30 at the Methodist Church across from the Ellensburg Public Library.

KITTITAS AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

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