



WEST SEATTLE, HERE WE COME!

Red-breasted Nuthatch by Steve Byland.

BY HANAE BETTENCOURT

"I never knew I could be good at science," says Emilie, aged nine.

Crouched near the ground with a hand lens in one hand and a pencil in the other, Emilie takes a close look at a millipede, intent on getting the details correct in her scientific drawing of her new friend. Other kids around her are doing the same thing, lenses close to their faces as they observe all the bugs they can find in piles of decaying leaves.

Is this scene happening at school or at summer camp? For those who are familiar with Seattle

Audubon's two longest-running education programs, Nature Camp and Finding Urban Nature (FUN), this could very well be happening at either. Launched in 1982 and 1989, respectively, the approach for both programs is the same: to allow school-age children a safe space to explore their urban habitats in a fun, engaging, educational setting, while instilling a love for the environment.

Over the decades, Seattle Audubon has taught thousands of students as well as parent and community volunteers in West Seattle neighborhood

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A letter from the Executive Director

Early spring greetings to the Seattle Audubon community!

I've been looking forward to writing this letter and sharing so much good news about our local work. Seattle Audubon is extending our reach and impact across our service area, so there is simply a lot to squawk about!

We ended 2017 on a high note. The Nature Shop had its best holiday sales season in five years. More than twice as many people made membership contributions in December and our individual contributions were up over 15%, relative to our Centennial year. All this has bolstered an exciting momentum around the office and provides a sound foundation for our work appreciating, understanding, and protecting local birds in 2018. Thank you for shopping local and giving generously!

In 2018, the Education staff have been busy planning and promoting the launch of our new, second Nature Camp location in West Seattle. Having a second site for our long-running summer program is one way we're reducing barriers to nature-based education. We're also making a big push to ensure that Seattle Audubon's scholarship funds help even more local kids experience those iconic summertime memories of Nature Camp.

Years of preparation in our Science program are now coming to life with the expansion of the Puget Sound Seabird Survey north to the Canadian border and the San Juan Islands. Over the next two years, we will bring our 10-year-old citizen science work to these areas and establish a broader baseline of data for tracking seabird populations across nearly the entirety of Puget Sound. This work is funded by a recent grant of over \$100,000 from the National Estuary Program.

In Conservation, we began the year with a

continued focus on collaboration. We brought together our Neighborhood Flyways and Urban Bird Treaty City program partners to set our respective 2018 priorities. We are also partnering with the Tilth Alliance to learn more about conserving biodiversity in cities. Our organizations will co-host Dr. Mark Hostetler from the University of Florida, on April 10 at Rainier Beach Urban Farm, to share his research on bird-friendly building approaches and discuss how we can better conserve urban wildlife areas. Read our eNews and website for more information about this event.

It's been a great joy to help fledge our Community Engagement program and increase local awareness about Seattle Audubon and our work for birds. This year, we wanted to hear what's on peoples' minds across our entire service area. So far, we've conducted what we call "listening sessions" with groups on Mercer Island, in Georgetown, and in West Seattle. The sessions have helped us better understand how people view Seattle Audubon and how we can establish more meaningful connections across our region.

And at the heart of all that work is you, our dedicated and passionate community of avian advocates. Without your offers of volunteer time, financial support, and cheerleading, our work would not be as successful. Thank you for all you do to support this organization and the Seattle region's birds.

Onward to strengthening our flock in 2018,



John Brosnan
Executive Director

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MORE FUN, MORE ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION, AND MORE OPPORTUNITIES
TO EXPLORE AND CONNECT WITH THE
OUTDOORS.

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schools how to connect with their neighborhood habitats. We have always been greeted with enthusiasm. Recently, West Seattle has shown a veritable “thirst” for more. More FUN, more environmental education, and more opportunities to explore and connect with the outdoors.

We’re thrilled to finally be answering this call for more by opening a new Nature Camp location in West Seattle this summer. Beginning July 23, we will offer our Nature Camp programming to first through sixth grade students for three weeklong sessions at **Explorer West Middle School**. This new camp program is a pilot and its size next year

is dependent on this year's demand, though the programming and format will be much the same as our Magnuson Park camps, with highly trained adult Naturalists leading the campers in exploration, fun, and discovery.

Oh, and Emilie is a FUN student, and can be a Nature Camper now, too.

For more information on Nature Camp in West Seattle, visit our website at seattleaudubon.org/sas/naturecamp.

Hanae Bettencourt is Seattle Audubon's Education Associate.

IT'S THE YEAR OF THE BIRD!

BY MEGAN FRIESEN

Our conservation program focuses on making urban habitat safe and productive for our migrating and resident bird species. Seattle Audubon is joining people and organizations across the globe in designating 2018 as the **Year of the Bird**, a campaign hosted by National Audubon and National Geographic. The Year of the Bird celebrates the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and marks a renewed worldwide commitment to the protection of birds. To bring bird conservation into focus, the campaign designates each month with a conservation theme that addresses some of the most damaging threats to birds.

This month, the campaign focuses on native plants and how they can create a sanctuary for birds, so it's the perfect time to reflect on how our urban community and backyard habitats can also provide Seattle's resident and migratory birds with safe refuge, food, and habitat.

We have been making strides in incorporating native plants for birds in our programming and making plans to incorporate them in neighborhoods throughout the city, and have also been working with our partners at Seattle Public Utilities to improve tree care and provide education on how plants can help birds.

Another important aspect of urban sanctuary creation is the impact of our own pets on visiting birds. Outdoor cats kill several billion birds every year in the U.S., in addition to being subject to threats from cars, predators, and disease. We have partnered with PAWS and the Humane Society to discuss how to keep your beloved cats happy indoors and birds safe. One method to keep cats entertained is to install a Catio (an endearing portmanteau of cat and patio), where your feline companion can engage with nature without the dangers of being outside.

There's a lot more in store for the Year of the Bird, so stay tuned for future work on creating urban safe havens for our migrating and residential birds — and opportunities to get involved!

Megan Friesen is Seattle Audubon's Conservation Manager.

To showcase Seattle Catos, we will be co-sponsoring the Seattle Catio Tour on **July 28, 2018**. Please visit the Seattle Catio Tour webpage for more information (cattiotourseattle.com) and email Megan Friesen at meganf@seattleaudubon.org if you would like to volunteer at this event.

Rufous Hummingbird and Flowering Currant by Minette Layne.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

MARTHA NESTER

BY CARYN SCHUTZLER
EDITED BY NICOLE NA

It's our Finding Urban Nature (FUN) program's 30-year anniversary this year. For nearly all that time, one dedicated volunteer has helped introduce Seattle third- and fourth-graders to their schoolyard habitats: Martha Nester.

If you ask Martha why she's stuck with the program for so long, she'll tell you that she's always loved teaching kids that there's a lot of nature just beneath their feet. "Few children these days have the opportunity to play outdoors or experience nature in a real, personal way. They have not felt the dirt under their fingernails while searching for animals in leaf litter or discovering different roots on plants," says Martha. "FUN has brought young children the thrill of discovery, the feel of a worm, the experience of watching a spider wrap an insect in its web and eat it or cut a stray leaf out of its web."

Martha's introduction to the early days of FUN was fortuitous. In 1990, both of her children had graduated college and Martha, no longer teaching, was looking for volunteer work. Once Martha, with a degree in biology and M.A. in education, caught a glimpse of Seattle Audubon's FUN ad in *Earthcare Northwest*, she — and we! — knew she was a perfect fit to help shape our new efforts in youth environmental education.

Since then, Martha has been involved in all aspects of FUN training, planning, and program development. Currently, most of her time is spent in the office helping tweak and update the FUN curriculum. But, while her work in the office is productive, her experience with the students is what she continues to find most gratifying. "One of the most fun things for me were the times that I was able to watch young children make a discovery or puzzle out an explanation about a particular phe-



Martha at the Seattle Audubon office.

nomenon," Martha says. With Martha's desire to help kids discover nature right in their schoolyard, the FUN program has flourished, and Martha's insights have helped keep lessons fresh, engaging, and transformative for thousands of students over the years.

"Our children are our environmental stewards of the future, and I hope that this is the legacy that I will leave," says Martha. But, after three decades teaching children about the wonders of their natural surroundings, Martha has already left a legacy for generations of Seattle kids.

Caryn Schutzler is a freelance writer and Seattle Audubon volunteer.

Nicole Na is Seattle Audubon's Communications & Marketing Coordinator.

A DAY OF FESTIVE SCIENCE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2017 RESULTS

BY TOBY ROSS

Common Redpoll by Flickr user seabirum



Mountain Chickadee by David A Mitchell



Overview

The 2017 Seattle Christmas Bird Count came in strong. After several years with lower than usual counts, this year, with over 51,000 birds tallied, was the highest since 2009! With 129 species on count day itself, we tied our previous records in 2006 and 2011 for count-day species reported. Our count day and count week total of 132 species was only one below the highest total ever recorded in our circle.

CBC Highlights

Once again, participation was high with over 300 people taking part for only the second time ever. Feeder watching continues to be a growing and important part of our circle, with 75 Feeder Watch participants tallying 2,476 birds. On the bird front, we had one species new to the count this year: the Seattle Rose-breasted Grosbeak, which was accompanied by two Mountain Chickadees. There was also a third Mountain Chickadee seen in West Seattle, great for a species seen only three times previously in the last 40 years.

Another highlight was two shearwaters — Sooty or Short-tailed — only the third time they've appeared for the count. A Townsend's Solitaire and a Wilson's Warbler rounded out the most notable species. Finally, Common Redpolls were a star for many, with a record 140 tallied across six different sectors.

Read the full report, including the species list, at seattleaudubon.org. Thank you to everyone who took part in CBC 2017. We hope to see you again this December!

This report was compiled by Matt Bartels.

Toby Ross is Seattle Audubon's Science Manager.



Short-tailed Shearwater by David Cook.



Wilson's Warbler by Mick Thompson.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak by Johnathan Nightingale.

TOTAL SPECIES TALLIED
132

COUNT DAY
129 species

COUNT WEEK
3 additional species

INDIVIDUAL BIRDS
51,683

PARTICIPANTS
311

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NEW CONNECTIONS

BY WENDY WALKER

We think a lot about the importance of healthy flyways, and we work to ensure that habitats exist within our urban environments that support birds. Since taking on coordination of the Washington State Federal Junior Duck Stamp program in August, we've made new connections with partners who invest in and advocate for healthy wetland habitats state-wide, including several National Wildlife Refuges. One such partner, Washington Waterfowler Association (WWA), teaches people about waterfowl and waterfowl conservation, and works with state agencies to ensure smart policies for habitat improvement on our public lands. The all-volunteer group also commits time and money to duck nest box programs, hunter safety programs, and an annual youth Conservation Camp on Orcas Island.

WWA also manages Washington's Duck Stamp Program and annually commissions a wildlife artist to design the Washington State Migratory Bird Stamp. With our new partnership, WWA has chosen to commit some of the proceeds from sale of this collector's stamp to support prizes for the winners of the Washington Junior Duck Stamp art contest. Their support will help us reach youth around the state. Partnering with WWA also allows us to communicate with conservation-minded hunters. With our shared goals of conserving and improving habitats for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent birds, and a common interest in maintaining access to public lands, we're looking forward to working with WWA and their members.

Judging for the 2018 Junior Duck Stamp art contest will take place at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, March 21, at the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR Visitor Center. Judging is open to the public. Plan a trip to view the art and spend the afternoon birdwatching!



Wendy Walker is Seattle Audubon's Community Engagement Manager.