

One Step at a Time

Newsletter of the Mountaineers Naturalist Group
March 2016



lunch on nook trail, merlin at Skagit flats, moss madness, tree ruffle
liverwort. Look moss and hands!

Photos from our February hikes to Skagit Flats, Nook trail on Tiger Mountain (hike of the month).

In the Garden

Walking in our species garden, I notice spring in the air, reflected in the blooms of red flowering current, shiny oregon grape, henbit, bittercress, and of course (Gary Brill's



favorite) dandelion. Photos: oregon grape, henbit and red flowering current (*Ribes sanguineum*).

March Field Trips for Mountaineers' Naturalists

We have several field trips for the month of March, including the hike of the month, which is the last Saturday, March 26 to Deception Pass State Park, where we will combine bird watching and flower finding through the undulating meadows, woods and rock outcroppings. Sign up for this by going to LEARN, check the exploring Nature box and Click on Naturalists Study Group and you should see the listing for Tiger Mountain. Now click on Manage Registration, and the next page should allow you to check the hike

you want (listed as Bowman Bay) and add yourself as a participant. If we oversubscribe, do not worry. We will figure out a way to accommodate everyone.

Other hikes this month are directly accessible by clicking on Find activities (under the heading EXPLORE) and check Exploring Nature. There is a hike to Ebey's landing on Thursday March 3, led by Gordie. Ebey's landing is on Whidbey Island and is a state park. It combines prairie hiking with beach and seabird observation. Mosses will be the focus of a hike led by Lynn Graf and Stewart Hougen to Squak mountain on Saturday March 12. Several of our members are taking a moss identification course and hope to share what they learned with others of us. This is the first of these. Look for others on the website. These hikes are open to the general mountaineers so sign up early. You access them by clicking on EXPLORE and the Activities, click on the Exploring Nature box and the hikes will turn up.

We will also have a couple of educational hikes, devoted to the identification of mosses and lichens. The moss hike will be on March 12 at Sauk mountain and will be led by Lynn Graf and Stewart Hougen. The lichen hike will be on March 19 at the Hazel Wolf trail in Bellevue. Led by Stewart, it will begin with a slide presentation about lichen identification. Check for Activities under EXPLORE on the web page and check the nature box and sign up. Space is limited on these hikes.

There are a series of hikes in Oregon in April, led by the indomitable Linda Moore. Linda is famous for organizing hikes to cool places not often or easy to visit. She does all the legwork beforehand and she often provides a lot of ancillary information. The hikes listed run day to day, so, if you can get free for several days you can do a series of them. They are listed for mid-April.

Finally, set aside the first weekend in April for hikes in the Columbia Gorge region. These hikes, led by Gordie and others are best if you stay overnight and we will try to coordinate stays at a nearby hotel in White Salmon that has bunk style accommodations. They will include a waterfall hike and two flower laden meadow hikes in this lovely area. We will leave Seattle early Saturday morning and enjoy the first fully spring flower experience in our area. We did this last year as part of the leadership training course and it was splendid. I will list these hikes with leader permission required. Study group members can assume they have my permission and sign up early. This can be a family experience as well as long as kids are at least 9 years old. Contact Gordie if you are interested in bringing family

members.

Lectures:

Our winter lecture series concludes with

The Impact of Returning Wolves by Carolyn Shores

March 10, 2016, 7-9 p.m. Seattle Program Center, Goodman A

Carolyn Shores of the UW's Predator Ecology Lab focuses her research on predator/prey relationships, particularly the impact of returning wolf packs on coyotes and their prey.

As wolves return to areas they once roamed, their presence changes the behavior of resident coyote populations. This in turn changes the rate of coyote predation on mule deer fawns. Mule deer are declining throughout the American west. Carolyn's research will aid mule deer conservation and management, as well as our understanding of the affects predators have on the behavior of other animals.

More here:

<https://www.mountaineers.org/about/branches-committees/seattle-branch/committees/seattle-naturalists-committee/course-templates/naturalist-lecture-series/naturalist-lecture-series-2016-impact-of-returning-wolves>



[Mike Harrell](#), who was our guest speaker last month, has offered to give us a hiking geologic tour of Mount Rainier this summer. This should be a special trip, if it is anything like the breadth, humor and clarity that Mike showed in his lecture

Washington Native Plant Society talk:

BIRDS AND PLANTS

Everyone knows that birds come to feeders full of seeds. There are a lot of seed-eating birds! But birds relate to our native plants in many more ways than that, both positive and negative, and Dennis Paulson will tell you about this in an illustrated lecture.

Dr. Paulson, recently retired as Director of the Slater Museum of Natural History, University of Puget Sound, and has been a professional biologist and naturalist all of his adult life. He began studying natural history as a boy and is a world expert on dragonflies and shorebirds, in addition to teaching master birder classes for the Audubon Society. He is the author of nine books, including *Shorebirds of North America* and *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West*, and 90 scientific papers on birds and dragonflies.

**Thursday March 3th, 2016, 7:30pm,
UW Center for Urban Horticulture, 3501 NE 41st St, Seattle
(Doors Open at 6:00 PM for the Native Plant Identification Workshop; Program begins**

at 7:30 PM.)

Seattle Audubon Society field trips:

Registration is open for all Field Trips listed below. Sign up by calling 206-523-4483, Monday through Saturday from 10am - 5pm. For more information about field trips and registration procedures, [click here](#). To [download](#) a [PDF](#) of the current field trips and classes click [here](#).

Sunday, March 6, 2016 - Limit 8

Carkeek Park

Leader: Jen McKeirnan

8:30 AM - Use park [main entrance](#) and meet at the far west parking area overlooking the water

Explore the North Seattle waterfront and the woodlands in search of wintering and resident species. Expect to walk up to 4 leisurely paced miles with some hills. Bring binoculars, and scope if you own one. Dress to stay warm and dry. Restrooms will be available. Bring water and snacks. Over by 11:30am.

Saturday, March 12, 2016 – Limit 11 (3 cars)

Northeast Olympic Peninsula

Leader: Lee Barnes

6:30 AM, Green Lake (Ravenna) P&R - leave PROMPTLY at 6:30 to catch the 7:10 ferry

Take a ride on the West Side! Explore the Northeast corner of the Olympic Peninsula. Visit birding hot spots like Salsbury Point County Park, Oak Bay, Mystery Bay, and Ft Flagler State Park. See historic Nordland and Pt Wilson. Expect a diversity of bird families, raptors, shorebirds, alcids, water fowl, and passerines. We'll catch the 7:10 AM Edmonds-Kingston Ferry, bird the day away, and return in the late afternoon. Dress for inclement weather, hope for sun, expect a good time. Bring a lunch, binoculars, scopes, money for the ferry and carpool costs, and a spirit of adventure. Drivers need a current Discover Pass. Carpool cost: \$30 + cost of ferry per car shared equally by riders.

Sunday, March 13, 2016 – Limit 11

Whidbey Island

Leader: Neil Zimmerman (cell # day of trip 206-200-6700)

7:00 AM, Green Lake (Ravenna) P&R

We'll be exploring Whidbey for shorebirds, waterfowl and land birds. We will drive up I-5 to the north end of Whidbey Island first and then work our way south to the Clinton ferry at the end of the day. We will be driving to different locations and taking short walks. Bring lunch and plenty of fluids. Scopes are very helpful. We will return early evening. Bring money for carpooling and ferry. Carpool cost: \$50 shared equally by riders, plus the cost of the ferry.

Make sure you turn your clock ahead for Daylight Savings.

Sunday, March 13, 2016 - Limit 8

Discovery Park

Leaders: Evan Houston and Jen Kunitsugu (cell # day of trip: 206-327-5352)

8:00 AM, Discovery Park SOUTH parking lot (access from W Emerson St)

This is a trip to an urban oasis, for birders who are strong walkers. We'll aim to sample Discovery Park's diverse habitats, from mixed forest to open fields to saltwater. This should yield a variety of species, with the possibility of a surprise or two. Expect to walk up to 5 miles with moderate elevation change. Bring binoculars, water and snacks. Dress to stay warm, dry and protected from the wind, anticipating exposure to the elements. Scopes useful if you're willing to tote (leaders will have them).

Over by noon.

Make sure you turn your clock ahead for Daylight Savings.

Saturday, March 19, 2016

Circumnavigation of Bainbridge Island

Leader: George Gerdts

9:45 AM, Winslow City Dock. Boat leaves at 10:00 AM

See below for sign up and travel directions

Aboard the 80-foot "Admiral Pete" with George Gerdts, long-time SAS Member, as leader/naturalist. Expect great looks at three species of cormorants; sea ducks; rocky-shore sandpipers; a Bald Eagle or two; great scenery; and a unique, close-up view of the Bainbridge Island shoreline. The trip leaves the Winslow City Dock at 10:00 am, and will return by 1:30 p.m. If coming from Seattle, plan to take the 8:45 ferry to Bainbridge Island as a walk-on. George will meet the group at the Bainbridge Ferry Terminal at 9:20 for the short walk to the "Admiral Pete". If you plan to drive on, parking is available near the City Dock. Call George at 206- 842-8138 for further details. To reserve a space call the Bainbridge Island Parks and Recreation Department at 206-842-2306 ext. 118. (Ask about Class # 131850-01.) Credit card payment is accepted. Leave your e-mail address when signing up, and directions and a map of Bainbridge Island, including where to park if driving, will be sent to you via e-mail. Price is \$78, but SAS members will have 20% of the cost of the trip (\$15.00) donated to SAS. Be sure to tell the BI Parks, when you sign up, that you are a member of SAS, so that the donation can be made. If a participant does not live on Bainbridge Island, a \$5.00 "off-Island" fee is added to the cost of the trip.

Saturday, March 26, 2016 Limit 10 (3 Cars)

Kittitas County - Cle Elum to Vantage

Leaders: Jean Olson (360-220-5735) and Blair Bernson

6:20 AM Greenlake (Ravenna) P&R or 7:00 AM Tibbits P&R Issaquah

(Please indicate if you will meet at Ravenna or Issaquah when you sign up)

We will start in Cle Elum and work our way towards Ellensburg. We will bird the Railroad Ponds, Swauk Prairie, Old Vantage Highway and areas in between. We will look for sage birds, raptors, early migrants and whatever else we can find. Bring lunch, scope, beverages, coffee mug and dress for variable weather and bring sturdy shoes - we may do a little walking. Drivers will need a Discover Pass. Carpool cost \$70 per car shared by riders.

Saturday March 26, 2016 - Limit 12

Green Lake

Leaders: Louis Kreemer & Martin Muller (cell for day of trip only 206-525-5575)

8:00 AM Bathhouse Theater, West Beach (between water and bathhouse)

Green Lake is an excellent place to observe birds up close after they've spent the winter getting acclimatized to people circumnavigating the lake. This time of year most winter ducks are still around

and some migrant water birds start passing through. The local eagles (up the hill) should be on eggs, leaving one of them free to scour the lake for edibles, encourage visiting eagles of the same sex to “move on through” and those of the opposite sex to “stay awhile.” We should observe courtship in some of the waterfowl (let’s hope for breeding plumage Ruddy Duck males “frothing at the breast”), as well as coots and pied-billed grebes practicing their freshly developed flight muscles prior to departure for breeding grounds (although perhaps some pied-bills will stick around like they used to, to try breeding amongst the water lilies). We should encounter some warblers, as well as lingering goldfinches and kinglets. With luck we’ll find Bushtits, nuthatches, and chickadees working on nest sites. And who knows what else. Besides bird identification and bird behavior, Green Lake history and ecology are also be on the menu. Dress for standing still. Layers are advised. ’Tis better to shed than to shiver! If you have a scope please bring it. Over by noon or whenever we’ve worn out the hardiest of you!

Odds and Ends

Lines Written in Early Spring

By [William Wordsworth](#)

I heard a thousand [blended](#) notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its [wreaths](#);
And ’tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To [catch](#) the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

Another Salvage opportunity

Note: There was also one of these last month and 4 of us were there. I think it is at the same location and is close to town – rare for these events. We worked (not too hard) for a few hours and then got to glean for our own plants. We got plants for the species garden, including sword and licorice ferns as well as blackcap raspberry and baldhip rose. There is an educational component. If you do get plants you can drop them off at the species garden site (bring large pots to pot the plants or burlap bags to fill with soil to keep them. Also, a flat sled is good for hauling things out over rough terrain. Volunteers there know the plants. Other volunteers know nothing and you can feel knowledgeable. It is a fun thing to do. If you are interested in carpooling let me know (g.swartzman@gmail.com). I might be persuaded to go again. The location is quite close to Issaquah and is the site of a future Bellevue College campus.

<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/stewardship/1603-issaquah-maple-valley-salvage-flyer.pdf>

We're digging up native plants and need your help!

Join other volunteers digging up trees and shrubs from this future college site in the morning and then dig free plants for yourself! In the afternoon, we'll pot-up the salvaged plants at the nursery where free potted plants are given away! The plants will be installed on King County environmental restoration projects, where they will help reduce erosion, shade streams and provide habitat. Special thanks to Bellevue College for providing the salvage site and the City of Issaquah for their valuable assistance.

When: Saturday, March 5, 2016

Time:

9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m: Salvage plants for King County.

12:00 to 2:00 p.m: Salvage plants for yourself **if** you salvaged for the County from 9:00 to 12:00.

1:00 to 4:30 p.m: Potting at Nursery (Free plants are offered to potters).

Where: Issaquah for salvaging

Maple Valley for potting (**Note new nursery location**)

Directions to the Salvage site:

From eastbound or westbound I-90, take exit 18 (Highlands Dr. NE) in Issaquah. Continue uphill onto Highlands Dr. NE and turn right onto NE Federal Dr. Go slight right onto NE Park Dr. Turn right onto 15th Ave NE and left onto NE College Way and park as directed.

Volunteers who dig for King County from 9:00 to 12:00 are eligible to dig plants for themselves from 12:00 to 2:00. Please arrive on time for instructions and to be eligible to dig plants for yourself.

Not a morning person? Volunteers are needed at the Nursery from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. to help pot up the salvaged plants. Volunteers who help with potting are eligible for a free native plant for every half hour of work.

Directions to the Nursery (NEW LOCATION!):

From I-90, take the Front Street exit in Issaquah. Go south on Front Street. Front Street becomes Issaquah-Hobart Rd SE. In about 4.5 miles turn right onto the Cedar Grove Road SE. In about 1.7 miles turn right onto 228th Ave SE and in .25 miles turn right onto 227th Ave SE. The nursery is in .5 miles on the right.

From Highway 169, go north on Cedar Grove Rd SE. In about 1.6 miles turn left onto 228th Ave SE and in .25 miles turn right onto 227th Ave SE. The nursery is in .5 miles on the right.

Notes: A parent or guardian must accompany volunteers under 16 years old. Dress for the weather and be prepared to get dirty. Sturdy shoes or boots are recommended. The site can be muddy. We'll provide gloves, tools and light refreshments.

Participation in at least one event per season will get you invited to an all-day-Salvage-For-Yourself event in late March!

Please contact [Cindy Young](#) or call [206-477-4859](tel:206-477-4859) if you plan to participate.

An article by Kay English on her ornithological peregrinations in the Southeast.

Southwest Louisiana travels

Kay English

22 February 2016

This winter I became a snowbird and after three weeks of travel through the national parks in the Southwest, spent October through March in the Cajun capitol of Louisiana, Lafayette, home of the indigenous Cajun Mardi Gras bead tree.



In addition to enjoying the music and dancing here, and the nearly constant "visiting", dances, parties, potlucks, jams, and general revelry, and the specific revelry of Cajun Mardi Gras, (and amazing food!) I wanted to naturalize in this area, which is about as different from the Cascade Mountains and Puget Sound as it is possible to be. The City of Lafayette has a wonderful Nature Center, where I frequently bird, and has a Master Naturalist program (see Facebook page: Acadiana Master Naturalists. (Notice the rubber boots. We are barely above the water table here always).



I have had limited success in finding other nearby naturalizers, but I was lucky enough to become acquainted with members of Louisiana Birders Anonymous, formed after the Lafayette chapter of Audubon folded, and to get on LaBird listserve where ebird reports and observations of various birds are reported. There are some very serious and skilled birders here! Yesterday I went to the Bluebonnet Swamp in Baton Rouge to bird with them, and was able to watch the capture and banding of small birds. This is a Northern Cardinal, very ubiquitous here, and very lovely.



We also saw a black-chinned hummingbird, too fast for my camera. Spring migration has not yet begun in earnest, and winter birding is quiet here for a few more weeks, as elsewhere. The Great Egrets, however, are now in their breeding plumage resistant to rot and is highly prized for building, much like our PNW cedar. They are easy to see fussing with their nests from the levee road at the wonderful Cypress Island Preserve, a Nature Conservancy area at Lake Martin outside of Breau Bridge. It is a cypress and tupelo swamp with plenty of alligators and snakes, not to mention a roseate spoonbill and great egret rookery. Alas, there is no more old growth bald cypress, although the harvesting of old "sinker" logs from the swamps is active. Bald (swamp) cypress (family Cupressaceae) is resistant to rot and disease and highly prized for building, not unlike our PNW western red cedar (family Cupressaceae).

Great Egret



Cypress and tupelo swamp at Lake Martin



Lafayette is on the western edge of the Atchafalaya Basin, America's largest swamp,(a swamp is defined by Wikipedia as "a wetland partially or intermittently covered with water, especially one dominated by woody vegetation.") Everything here seems to be intermittently covered by water. Lafayette' s elevation is 36 feet, and the highest point in Louisiana is Driskill Mountain at 535 feet. This area is subtropical with short but very intense thunderstorms that roll in from the Gulf of Mexico dropping 4-6 inches of warm rain in a short hour with lightning, wind, and the occasional tornado. Oddly, it gets hot right before a storm, then cools after the system passes through. A system of concrete "coulees" runs through the city emptying into the Bayou Vermilion and Bayou Teche, quickly draining this huge amount of water, although not always fast enough to prevent flooding in low lying areas.

This is a coulee along my city walking circuit. It can fill nearly to the top during a good storm.



This area is far enough from the Gulf of Mexico that hurricanes are rare, but not impossible. Houses here are built a foot or more off the ground and there are no basements (they would be swimming pools). And as in New Orleans, tombs are made of concrete and rest above the ground. The boundary between water and land here is ever-changing and uncertain. The very flat farm fields are either growing sugar cane or rice, and rice fields, once harvested, are flooded and become crawfish (mudbug) nurseries. The season is in full swing now in late February and is short, but not to be missed.



The Atchafalaya River, a large distributary of the Mississippi, which was once on a course to capture the Mississippi (aborted by the Army Corps of Engineers – read the 1987 New Yorker article by John McPhee: The Control of Nature: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1987/02/23/atchafalaya>), has been somewhat tamed, but has a rapidly growing river delta that stretches far out into the Gulf of Mexico. There are wetlands and marshes galore as you head down that way to the Gulf. Areas are periodically inundated, and much habitat has been lost with the intermixing of salt and fresh water and rising sea levels

.In January I visited Gainesville, Florida, stopping briefly (it was cold and windy) to walk on stunning white beaches in the Florida panhandle. The sparkling white sand is glacial outwash carried down the Mississippi. It was too windy for birding, although I was lucky enough to see a brown pelican along the Gulf Island National Seashore.

Brown pelican (picture taken in Louisiana)



Shining white sand beach in Ft. Walton, Florida



Payne's Prairie outside Gainesville, Florida, with a large, spring fed sinkhole . Bison have been reintroduced into the prairie and it is a wonderful birding area.



Alligators sunning. It was warm and sunny and they were basking on the banks of the sinkhole.



Florida is everywhere underlain by limestone, with caverns and rivers and springs run underground through it. Acidic water filtering down through vegetation to the limestone has produced underground caverns whose roofs frequently collapse creating sinkholes capable of swallowing houses and cars. This is a picture of a sinkhole filled from an underground spring in an area called Paynes Prairie outside Gainesville, where I saw the largest gathering of alligators I have ever seen. Sinkholes are interesting because, when not filled with water, they can be deep and shaded enough to have unusual microclimates at the bottom (not a place you are encouraged to go....). I am sure a lichenologist would love it.

My first stopping point on my trip back to Seattle in April is High Island on the Texas Gulf Coast. Spring migration will just be starting, and birds migrating from Mexico and Central and South America often "drop out" there as they arrive at the Texas coast, exhausted, hungry, and easy to see in great numbers. Birders flock there too. After a few days watching birds and birders, I will wander through west Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and up the east side of the Sierras and onward to Oregon and Washington with my hiking buddy, Lola Kemp, who will meet me in Tucson. On this trip I am trying to visit national parks I've never seen, and some, like Guadalupe Mountains NP in far west Texas are not so easy to reach. But always worth it. This trip has taught me how incredible our national parks are, underlined for me by the many international travelers I met visiting and camping in all of the wonderful national parks in Utah and Arizona on my way out here in September. This has been an amazing trip, and I find that each time I go to a new area, I see 10 more places where I'd like to return to explore. There are more beautiful and interesting places than I ever imagined. Life is short – put on those hiking boots and GO! You never know what you will see.

Anole lizard checking it all out



Keep on dancing, cher.