



2026 Audubon Council of Washington
Flight Plan: A Stopover
Bellingham Cruise Terminal Dome Room
355 Harris Ave, Bellingham, WA 98225

ACOW 2026 is hosted by Audubon Washington and North Cascades Audubon Society. The event is a gathering of Audubon chapter leaders and enthusiasts from across the state to network, exchange ideas, and collaborate on bird conservation.

Friday, October 9, 2026

1:30 PM	Meet & Greet	
2:00 PM	Welcome	Amanda Kaplan, VP-Washington
2:10 PM	Conservation Impact Audubon Washington works to protect birds and the places they need through science, education, advocacy, and on-the-ground conservation. We focus our conservation work on Puget Sound, the Columbia Plateau, natural resource policy, and renewable energy.	Audubon Washington staff
3:40 PM	Coffee break	
4:00 PM	Washington State Audubon Conservation Council (WSACC) Review of active WSACC resolutions: • Lights Out Washington • Wildlife Connectivity to Sustain Species Populations and Enhance Biodiversity	Patty Giffin, Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society; Sam Merrill, South Sound Bird Alliance
4:45 PM	Pizza dinner	
5:30 PM	Public Proclamation North Cascades Audubon Society will welcome attendees and share an official proclamation regarding Bellingham Bird Week and the first official City Bird of Bellingham.	North Cascades Audubon Society
6:00PM	Public Keynote <i>Why Birds Matter: Celebrating Migratory Bird Day</i> This public keynote celebrates World Migratory Bird Day. Through the story of bird migration, we'll explore why birds matter, the challenges they face, and how local communities can make a difference. Whether you're a lifelong birder or just discovering the joy of birds, this keynote is an invitation to connect your passion for birds with meaningful conservation action through Audubon and your local chapter.	Dr. Jill Deppe, Senior Director, Migratory Bird Initiative

Saturday, October 10, 2026

7:30 AM	<i>Optional Morning Field Trip</i>	
9:00 AM	Check-in	
9:30 AM	Welcome Welcome and <i>Sense of Place</i> presentation.	Amanda Kaplan, Pam Borso
10:00 AM	Keynote <i>Flight Plan: A Stopover</i> As Audubon reaches the midpoint of its Flight Plan, join Kim Brand for a look at where we've been, what we've accomplished, and where we're headed next. Through stories of impact and a shared vision for the future, we'll explore how chapters across Washington are advancing Audubon's strategic goals, and how each of us can help carry Flight Plan forward through 2028.	Kim Brand, Managing Director for Community Building
10:45AM	Coffee break	
11:00AM	Helen Engle Volunteer of the Year Award presentation	
11:15 AM	Session 1: <i>Lights Out Washington: From Resolution to Results</i> One year after Washington chapters adopted the Lights Out Washington resolution, we'll celebrate our progress and explore what's next. From local proclamations and university partnerships to creative outreach that reaches new audiences, hear from a panel of chapter leaders about success stories, lessons learned, and practical ideas for expanding <i>Lights Out Washington</i> in Year 2.	Chapter leader panelists
12:00PM	Group photo and catered lunch	
1:00 PM	Session 2: <i>Your Board and Building the Next Generation of Audubon Leaders</i> Inspired by sessions from the Audubon Leadership Conference and shaped by feedback from Washington chapters, these breakout sessions will explore practical strategies for strengthening your board and building the next generation of conservation leaders.	Kim Brand
2:00 PM	Coffee break	
2:20 PM	Session 3: <i>Sneak Peek: Audubon's Diplomatic Approach for Conservation</i> Be among the first in the country to experience Audubon's new advocacy training framework, designed to help advance conservation priorities through one of our most powerful tools, policy. Through interactive exercises and real-world examples, you'll develop skills you can immediately apply to upcoming policy priorities like Lights Out Washington, Lobby Day, and local conservation efforts.	Csenka Favorini- Csorba, Senior Policy Manager
4:00 PM	Closing: <i>A Rising Tide Lifts All Ducks</i> As the day comes to a close, we'll come together to look ahead at the next steps of "Flight Plan" and how we'll land ambitious conservation goals together.	Amanda Kaplan, Jill Deppe, Kim Brand
4:30 PM	Field Trip announcements and invitation to Birds & Brews Trivia Night	Amanda Kaplan

Sunday, October 11, 2026
Field Trips

Drayton Harbor/Semiahmoo

9261 Semiahmoo Parkway, Blaine, WA

Meet at Semiahmoo Park at 9:00am

Drayton Harbor is a sheltered bay in Whatcom County partially enclosed by Semiahmoo Spit on the west. The site also includes the channel connecting Drayton Harbor and Semiahmoo Bay, the associated mudflats, and shallow marine waters of the channel. Drayton Harbor/Semiahmoo is the only designated Important Bird Area in Whatcom County.

The sheltered nature of Drayton Harbor, with its proximity to food sources both within the Harbor and Semiahmoo Bay, make it a major wintering and migration staging area for aquatic birds. The extensive intertidal mudflats and shallow waters provide foraging habitat for large numbers of shorebirds and dabbling ducks. Expect to see gulls, cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Bald Eagles, a few loons and grebes, ducks and other waterfowl, hopefully a few shorebirds, as well as songbirds.



Fir Island Farm (Hayton) and Wylie Slough Field Trip

Sunday, October 11, 2026 9:00am to 12:00pm

Skagit Audubon members would like to show you two of their favorite birding locations. On Fir Island near Conway, two units of Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's Skagit Wildlife Area offer excellent birding near the mouth of the Skagit River. In addition to supporting young salmon, restored tidal wetlands at Fir Island Farms (aka Hayton) and Wylie Slough host a variety of migrating and wintering shorebirds and waterfowl. Mid-October isn't peak season, but possibilities include Western and least sandpipers, dowitchers, yellowlegs and killdeer; black-bellied and semipalmated plover; perhaps pectoral, spotted or semipalmated sandpiper; and, with luck, rarities like red knot or either golden plover. We'll see waterfowl, too, and a few passerines. After Fir Island Farm, we'll drive the few miles to Wylie Slough for potentially some different species.

Meet at WDFW's Fir Island Farm Unit off Fir Island Road. Directions:

Take I-5 south to exit 221. From the exit, turn right, then second right off the round-about for Fir Island Road/La Conner. Drive west on Fir Island Road for 3.25 miles, crossing the Skagit River, and turn left at the Fish & Wildlife Service sign. (N 48.3363 W -122.4132)

Bring binoculars and a spotting scope, if you have one. Discover Pass required for parking. Birdability rates Fir Island Farms and Wylie Slough as handicapped-accessible.



Guest Speakers



Dr. Jill Deppe is Audubon's Senior Director for the Migratory Bird Initiative. In 2018, Dr. Jill Deppe joined the National Audubon Society to launch its Migratory Bird Initiative. As its Senior Director, Jill leads efforts to synthesize spatial science from across the Western Hemisphere and full annual cycle, with an emphasis on the migratory period. The Initiative's mission: use science to shape conservation actions at scale, engage bird enthusiasts and mobilize them to promote the safety of birds in their communities, and support bird- and environment-friendly public policy.



Kim Brand is Audubon's first Managing Director for Community Building. Kim's 17-year journey with Audubon began as a volunteer for her local chapter, driven by a deep commitment to bringing people together to create meaningful impact. During her nine years with Audubon in North Carolina, she held key roles including Bird-Friendly Communities Coordinator, Climate Field Organizer, and Engagement Director. Kim holds a bachelor's degree in public relations from the University of Florida. She wrote a thesis on the Florida Scrub-Jay for her master's degree in zoology from the University of South Florida.