

La Conner birders will make Christmas count

By Anne Basye

No matter how cold it is this Sunday, Rosi Jansen will be outside with binoculars and a note pad.

The owner of Fine Feathered Friends Nature Store will be participating in the all-day, rain-or-shine annual Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count – the 122nd such count since the first one on Christmas Day 1900.

Each December thousands of birders create a “snapshot” of North American birds by counting them inside “circles” with a 15-mile diameter. While the pandemic depressed 2020 participation, last year 72,815 volunteers still turned in results for 1,842 such circles in the U.S., 451 in Canada and 166 in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.

La Conner is within the Padilla Bay Circle, centered on March Point. For 30 years, the Skagit chapter of the Audubon Society has organized teams to count birds from the Samish Flats to Deception Pass, Guemes Island, the Swinomish Reservation and the greater La Conner area. Jensen and other bird enthusiasts also turn in “feeder counts” of backyard birds.

La Conner resident Steve Phil-

lips will lead Jensen, John Farnsworth and other team members in Area 8, a large triangle bounded by the Hole in the Wall, Channel Drive and a point just east of the McLean Road traffic circle. Shelter Bay, Swinomish Village and southern Fidalgo Island are in Area 10. Area 9 covers the Swinomish Reservation north of Wilbur Road.

The Area 8 team will count at the marina and, with permission, on some private trails and farmland. “We’ll walk through town and Pioneer Park,” said Jensen, “probably in the early evening in order to possibly see an owl!”

They will also count from cars. “You can look across a potato field and see 40 acres,” Phillips noted.

Powerful spotting scopes will make it easier to identify birds from a distance. Besides bird species and numbers, the team will log time, mileage and weather on their data sheets.

“If you have a windy, rainy day it’s much harder to spot birds,” said Skagit Audubon board member Tim Manns. “In forests, a lot of birding is done by ear and if it’s windy, birds might be quieter and harder to hear, so the count will be lower.”

Results from the country’s longest-running community science

project help document long-term trends in the ranges and populations of avian species.

“Audubon has used Christmas count data to explore how climate change will affect the range of birds and the ability of many birds to survive,” said Manns.

Anna’s hummingbirds now spend the winter in this area, for example. “It might be climate change, but it could just be that people are keeping feeders and water out so they can survive.”

Using the one-day count to say whether there are more or fewer birds in the county in a given year is not a good use of data, says Mann. That information is kept by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, which counts specific species like trumpeter swans using aerial photography.

“When the weather is good, it’s fun to collect usable data that scientists can apply to their work,” said Manns.

Phillips agrees. “I like contributing to the body of knowledge that helps guide conservation decisions as we change the world we live in.”

Summaries of past Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, including Padilla Bay results, are at www.audubon.org.

History museum closed in January

The Skagit County Historical Museum will be closed to the public beginning Jan. 1. It reopens Feb. 11 with the new exhibit “1968: The Year That Rocked Washington.”

The closure is for much-needed building maintenance: painting the

east wing gallery and recarpeting the lobby and east wing.

The project is funded from donor investment accounts.

The Hugo Helmer exhibit closes Dec. 31.

—Source: History Museum

Donate clothes to Afghan refugees

Support Afghani refugees by donating clothes to the Afghan Refugee Winter Clothing Drive. There is a dire need for warm winter clothing for more than 4,000 Afghan refugee children at New Jersey’s Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. They escaped Afghanistan on U.S. cargo planes in August with only the clothes on their backs – and they need everyone’s help. They supported the U.S. military during the war and risked everything for our servicemembers – it is now time to step up for them.

The first shipment of cloth-

ing included 352 jackets, coats, sweaters, and shirts; 80 pairs of pants; 180 blankets, scarves, earmuffs and mittens; and 13 pairs of shoes and boots.

Items can be dropped off at the Whidbey Veterans Resource Center (in Langley) on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Call to have items picked up by Clyde Shavers, the drive’s organizer: 425-394-6765.

Cash donations are needed for shipment. Over \$4,000 has been raised; the goal is \$5,000. Donate via gofund.me/fba4cd13

—Source: Clyde Shavers

Christmas Eve at La Conner Methodist Church

The La Conner United Methodist Church holds its Christmas Eve worship service 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 24. It includes a children’s pageant, special music and, lastly, a lighting of candles as the song “Silent Night” is sung.

Guest musicians will include Shae Wirth, French horn; Drew Shipman, flute; Beverly Haywood, piano; Lynette McCormack and Judy Robinson, vocalists.

Children are invited to come dressed for the pageant, wearing a costume of a Biblical charac-

ter or animal at the stable. A few costumes will be available at the church.

The story of Jesus’ birth will be read followed by a song for each reading and re-enactment. This “build your own pageant” does not require a rehearsal. Please come a few minutes before 5 p.m..

The 20 minute pageant will be followed by the service.

Masks will be required for everyone in attendance.

—Source: La Conner United Methodist Church

Gifts piled around Kiwanis giving tree

Thank you, La Conner! You have come through again this year. The Giving Tree at the Edward Jones office in La Conner was piled high with gifts this month. There were 11 families and a total of 24 kids who had tags on the tree. The hope was that each child would receive two gifts, but as usual the La Conner community went well above that with each child getting at least four. Gifts went

from the practical of a warm coat to the fun of a Lego set.

Those were just for the local families. A second huge batch of collected gifts went to the Forgotten Children’s Fund to be distributed to families farther; many were taken to Sumas to brighten the Christmas of the people who lost their homes during the November flood.

—Source: La Conner Kiwanis

Holiday concert held in Maple Hall

The Skagit Community Band was in the holiday spirit Dec. 11, playing a short concert of holiday songs to an appreciative full house in Maple Hall.

Director Vince Fejeran led the 40 piece band through six jazz-oriented favorites. They then gave the hall over to the A’Town Big Band, a 17-piece jazz band from Anacortes, with Fejeran joining them. They played 10 Christmas season tunes after a short intermission.

This was the Skagit Community Band’s second concert in two months. Admission was by free will donation. Proof of vaccination was necessary.

Friends make turning 65 a very sweet deal

By Olivia Cornwell

Merrymakers gathered to wish Jimmy Cornwell a happy birthday and helped the Cornwells fill their La Conner neighbors’ plates for Christmas at The Rex on Sunday, Dec. 19.

Friends snacked on crispy tacos with fried jalapeños, cheeseburgers piled high with grilled onions then fresh baked carrot cake. The antique push cart at The Rex overflowed with pantry donations and checkbooks were opened wide with Skagit Valley generosity.

Jimmy’s birthday present was a \$500 donation to the Sunrise Food Bank. His friends then topped the donation with an additional \$1,815 which includes a matching donation from Thrivent Financial Services. The entire \$2,305 raised, plus a lot of needed food for the food bank’s clients, was donated.

Consider the Sunrise Food

Bank in your year-end giving. “While many of us are blessed with very comfortable lives in our community there are also a lot of families that are food insecure. Our friends’ kindness last night made this my best birthday ever,” said Dr. Cornwell.

“Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.” – The Dalai Lama XIV.

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Our family wishes yours the gifts of good health, shared laughter and much love in the New Year!
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