



Island Wings

- to enjoy, learn about, & preserve the diverse natural habitats of these islands & beyond

Volume 17 Number 6

May-June 2007

PROGRAM

Moria Robinson

Butterfly/Nature Photography

Vashon Island to Paraguay, Guatemala, and Alaska

7pm, Thursday, May 17, 2007
Land Trust Building 10014 SW Bank Rd
Contact: Laura Bienen 567-4613

Vashon High School senior Moria Robinson presents her slides and narrative of a most remarkable life. She has earned the reputation of being a gifted young naturalist and photographer. She has traveled in Alaska, Central and South America in pursuit of butterflies and other natural wonders.



Vashon's Moria Robinson

Moria Robinson writes this introduction to her work:

"As a tool to evoke emotion and a feeling of connection with a subject, photography is unrivaled. I have pursued nature photography since middle school, having found it to be a perfect complement to my love for nature, the environment, and conservation. Locally, photography has become a wonderful way for me to document and share the butterfly species of Vashon Island. A slide show of my photography will explore these

species, with accompanying anecdotes and information. In addition, I will show images of the flora and fauna of Alaska, the Southwest United States, and Central and South America. The goal of these images is to inspire others to take a closer look at nature, and to take the time to notice the personality and subtle beauty of the creatures with which we share the planet."

Last year, Moria was one of only ten student photographers internationally and nationally selected for the North American Nature Photography Association's National High School Scholarship Program.

State Creosote-Piling Project Requests Island Input

State DNR Natural Resource Specialist for South Puget Sound, Monica Durkin, invites Islanders to talk with her about environmental concerns, especially the State plans to pull creosote pilings from Puget Sound. She will be at the State's booth at the Low Tide Celebration, Pt. Robinson, May 19 (see insert for Celebration details). She welcomes any questions and comments about the program's effects on Purple Martin nest boxes as well as effects on sea life, perching and preening birds such as king fishers and cormorants, and marine habitat.

Durkin invites tidal-land owners to discuss with her the possibility of State removal of creosoted pilings and beached creosoted drift from privately owned shores.

In response to the 2006-7 piling-pulling program, the Puget Sound SCUBA diving community reacted negatively when the program targeted recreational diving sites where pilings are rich habitat for crustaceans and forage food for fish. Locally, diver Karlista Rickerson protested the now-accomplished piling removal at the King County Regional Park on Maury Island.

David Roberts, DNR's piling- project lead, said in a phone interview that the permits obtained were the State Hydrologic [HPA] permits. This permit requires DNR to engage in the SEPA process which determines the level of public notification and comments.

DNR fulfilled its SEPA obligations on the programmatic level (that is, the program in general), not on the site level. Therefore, local notification and request for local comments on individual sites were not required. He added that the programmatic-review type allows quick and money-saving actions to carry out a program. The US Army Corps of Engineers regards the pile pulling as maintenance so no Federal permits were required.

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However, DNR works with local governments to determine if the pile pulling requires demolition, shoreline, or exemption permits.

Roberts added, that for next year's removals, the agency wants "to figure out how to engage the public" and "to filter projects more carefully in the future." DNR has "a commitment to do it right." He pointed out that DNR did phone the State Audubon in four attempts to get input into the 2006-7 program, but got no response. Roberts envisions that at the time when DNR has its heavy machinery on the beach to pull pilings, structures to hold the Martin nest boxes can be replaced.

In an email on the replacement of pilings in Seattle's Elliott Bay, Kristina Baker tells of successful replacement: "When Kevin Li [Puget Sound martin box crusader] was alive, the surveys that the EPA took didn't even count the Purple Martins at the Jack Block Park Superfund site. Kevin notified the people in charge, and the Martins were able to finish their nesting that year. The next year the Port put up posts in concrete bases on the shoreline, and the Martins successfully chose the shoreline gourds, and nested there again. The whole colony moved."

In a phone conversation, Fran McNair, DNR Aquatic Steward, insisted that no money in the \$4 million fund is slated for restoration because the money is dedicated to toxins cleanup. However, DNR's Durkin offers that other State monies and grants may be able to fund box replacement as part of restoration efforts.

Does the removal of the pilings and wooden structures housing Purple Martin nest violate the Migratory Bird treaties and acts? In the treaties and legislation, the purple martin is listed as a migratory bird. Roberts, prompted by inquiries from Vashon Audubon members, reports that DNR is starting to examine this issue.

On Vashon, a bird box program was initiated by the Island's Rich Seigrist, similar to the Kevin Li's efforts. Local Audubon President Ed Swan reports that the Island has 70 pairs of Purple Martins returning each year, using the boxes on pilings and the natural rotted niches of marine structures. (see Swan's *Birds of Vashon* and April 18, 2007 *Beachcomber* article for the history of the remarkable restoration of Puget Sound's Purple Martins.

The State legislature recently funded the removal program for \$4 million for 2007-8. Left over from 2006-7 is an additional \$800,000. In the 2006-7 program, preliminary numbers estimate that 1500 tons of pilings were pulled from three sites: Maury Island Park, Port Townsend, and the largest pull, Bellingham (1,200 tons). Among other locales, Bainbridge Island's waters are scheduled for piling removal in 2007-8.

VOLUNTEER TODAY

Audubon Booth Staff

Saturday, May 19, 11am-4 pm, Pt. Robinson

Volunteer for a 2-hour shift at Vashon Audubon's booth at the Low Tide Celebration. Michelle Ramsden 463-1312 or mramdsen_11@yahoo.com.

Low Tide Celebration Clean Up

Saturday, May 19, 4 pm, Pt. Robinson

Help clean up the beach and park after the event. The more people, the more fun, and the faster the job gets done. Michelle Ramsden at 463-1312 or e-mail mramdsen_11@yahoo.com.

Be a Docent at the Heritage Museum

Wednesdays, 1-3pm, Saturdays, 10 am-1 pm

A docent spends a regular shift. If you haven't visited the museum, you'll be amazed at the displays. Yvonne Kuperberg, 567-4005.

Fourth Grade Program Grows Young Birders

One hundred kids, four teachers, eight volunteers and a record number of parent chaperones scanned the waters of Tramp Harbor, KVI marsh and Puget Sound for avian wonders March 22—the field trip highlight of the Island Audubon's annual fourth-grade beginning-birding program. The five teaching sessions culminated with this beach visit, where children get to practice their spotting skills and see the birds they've been studying "up close" through



4th -grade birders visit the beach to practice bird-ID skill

scopes and binoculars, as well as learn about the animals and plants that live in the estuary and along the shoreline. After participating in the series, students have learned the common Vashon birds, how to use binoculars and field guides, and have gained confidence in their bird identification skills.

Defying Doppler predictions, the rain held back until the last child boarded the bus home, making for perfect weather to watch Bald Eagles play, Brant eat, Common Loons fish, and Green-wild winged Teals dabble. Just as fun as a new species sighting for the day was hearing the kids' amazed voices when they saw a Barrow's Goldeneye through the scope for the first time, and listening to the pride in their voices when they "met" a bird in the that they'd personally researched in the classroom: "That's my bird! That's my bird!"

Submitted by Kathryn True
Sue Trevathan and Kathryn True co-facilitated this program and would like to express a huge thank you to volunteers Laura Bienen, Karen Fevold, Bob Furstenberg, Frances O'Reilly, Gary Shugart and Ed Swan for making it an especially memorable field trip—and for help in the classroom. If you'd like to help with Audubon youth programs, please contact Sue (463-1484) or Kathryn (567-5389).

SWAN'S NOTABLE SIGHTINGS

March and April migrations had some species passing through and others returning to the island. There were some unusual sightings as well. Return dates and Highlights follow, compiled from Ed Swan's emails.

March 1: Jim Bazemore found a **Dipper** along Judd Creek. This is the first Judd Creek sighting and the first Dipper sighting at all for a few years. Previous records were on Shinglemill Creek. This is the breeding season for Dippers, so it's even possible this one is nesting along the creek somewhere.

March 13: Steve Caldwell saw **Violet-green Swallows** over his place on Tramp Harbor. Joy Nelsen, Nancy Silver and Ellie Friars also have reported them from various locations around the island at about this same date. Carole Elder heard **White-crowned Sparrows** at the dump today.

March 21: Larry Huggins found a **Western Meadowlark** at Lisabeula today. In recent years, all observations of this species have been of single birds at locations along the shoreline such as the beach grasses and logs at Lisabeula or KVI Beach. Just one sighting has occurred in the last decade. Sightings range from mid-March to the end of the first week in May. Dan Willsie and John Friars can remember this bird as a breeding bird back in the 1940's when appropriate habitat of farm fields was available.

March 25: An **American Coot** was diving for vegetation today at Mukai Pond. While not rare regionally, only one or two are seen on Vashon each year. Pete Murray says he has seen coots at Mukai from time to time in winter. He saw one there last weekend.

March 26: Today I found a **Savannah Sparrow** at KVI Beach in the driftwood along the beach by the pond. This is about a week earlier than normal though I have at least one other March record for this week. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was singing and moving through the trees at the Portage marsh. That's the first I've seen or heard this year, but I bet Carole Elder did hear one before today.

March 31: Rick Sanders had a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** and Rich Siegrist had a **Tree Swallow**.

April 2: Joy Nelsen saw an **Osprey** over Vashon today. Ospreys were at the golf course nest April 3 and the 188th nest on April 4.

April 6: Sherry Bottoms heard a **Virginia Rail** in the evening on 107th between Cemetery Rd and 204th where the low wet area and skunk cabbage are.

April 7: This morning on a walk I heard my first **Common Yellowthroat** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** in Paradise Valley. Carole Elder had a **Barn Swallow** over her house, which is about on time.

April 10: Carole Elder reports the description of two **Mountain Bluebirds**. Several Mountain Bluebirds have been seen recently around the Puget Sound area. The birds on the island are in fields on the west side of Wax Orchard Rd. Last week Rick Sanders and Joy Nelsen had **Black-throated Gray Warblers**, which seems early. Today I saw a BTG Warbler at Singer Pond.

April 11: This morning I saw and heard a **Cassin's Vireo** just north of Vashon town, which is several days earlier than previous records.

April 14: The EOB class saw the first migrating **Western Sandpipers** of the season on a field trip at KVI. They also saw **Swainson's Thrush** at Pt. Robinson.

April 16: A lot of both **Audubon's** and **Myrtle Warblers** are moving through.

April 17: **Two Greater Yellowlegs** were on the QHarbor side of Portage today at low tide. (April 20: Jean and Gilbert Findley had two Greater Yellowlegs on the shore. They also saw two **Caspian Terns** near the mouth of Judd Creek.) Gary Shugart saw several thousand **Bonaparte's Gulls** at low tide at Tahlequah the other day. In the past, a big flock has gathered at this time of year on QHarbor at low tide. This year I haven't seen many there. At KVI Beach, a flock of **Sanderling** was present on the spit and an unknown number of **American Pipits** were flying overhead. (April 20: Today the **Sanderling** flock included two **Dunlin** moving into breeding plumage.) At the pond at the end of Monument Rd were 7-8 **N. Rough-winged Swallows**. This is a couple of weeks late, so they probably have been around unnoticed for a while. Ron Simons saw a **Warbling Vireo**, and Allen Huggins heard a **Black-headed Grosbeak** at his place.

April 19: Just before noon I found a **Townsend's Solitaire** towards Gold Beach. It might stay around for a few days; one did in previous years. They are being seen all over the Puget Sound area right now.

April 20: Joy Nelsen and Richard Rogers saw the Townsend's Solitaire at Pt. Robinson today. There were also **Kingfishers** and NRW Swallows nesting in the bluff there.

April 25: This evening Susan Bublitz spotted a pair of **Purple Martins** over Tramp Harbor.

April 27 Sue Trevathan in Paradise Valley and Alan Huggins at the north end both report **Wilson's Warblers** back today. I found a pair of Mallards with five young swimming around in the tiny pond at Reddings Beach today.

www.vashonaudubon.org

Vashon-Maury Island Audubon Board

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Ebb Tides, and Vashon-Maury
Islands' Best Birding Spots.



May/June 2007

Saturday, May 12

Yakima River Raft Field Trip. *Sherry Bottoms, 463-1312 or sleebottoms@yahoo.com.*

Saturday, May 12, 8-10am -- Ober Park 'n' Ride

ISLAND AUDUBON FIELD TRIP -- *Monthly Second Saturday.* Bring binoculars/scope if you have them! *Sherry Bottoms 463-1312.*

Thursday, May 17, 7pm -- Land Trust Building, 10014 SW Bank Road

VASHON AUDUBON PROGRAM -- Vashon Island to Paraguay, Guatemala, and Alaska: Butterfly/Nature Photography. Slides and presentation by Moria Robinson. *Laura Bienen 567-4613.*

Saturday, May 19, 11am-4pm -- Pt. Robinson

LOW TIDE CELEBRATION -- Beach walk with naturals and birders; many activities for all. *Rayna Holtz, 463-3153.*

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, May 25-28 -- SW of Ellensburg

WENAS CAMPOUT -- Camp with other Audubon families at Wenas Creek Campground (an "Important Bird Area"). The free primitive campground has birding and botany with top birders, WNPS botanists, entomologists, etc. *Helen Engle, 253-564-3112 or hengle@iinet.com.*

Thursday, June 7, 7 pm -- First Thursday every even-numbered month

VMIAS BOARD MEETING -- Phone Ed Swan for confirmation, 463-7976.

Saturday, June 9, 8-10am -- Ober Park 'n' Ride

ISLAND AUDUBON FIELD TRIP -- *Monthly Second Saturday.* Bring binoculars/scope if you have them! *Sherry Bottoms 463-1312.*

Saturday, June 16, 11am-1pm, Fern Cove

EBB TIDE ECOLOGY WALK -- Close-up look at the eelgrass forests with Barbara Gustafson. *Rayna Holtz, 463-3153.*