



# Padilla Bay Newsletter

A Joint Publication of the Padilla Bay Foundation and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Winter 2005-2006



**Padilla Bay**

National Estuarine Research Reserve

Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is managed by the Washington State Department of Ecology under the National Estuarine Research Reserve System established by NOAA.

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(360) 428-1558



The Padilla Bay Foundation is a membership-based non-profit organization formed in 1987. Its mission is to help preserve the Padilla Bay estuary in Skagit County, Washington, through support of Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Padilla Bay Foundation  
PO Box 1305  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
(360) 757-3234

## Inside

- Foundation and Volunteers .....p. 2
- Presentations for Winter.....p. 3
- Youth Classes .....p. 4
- When Green is Black.....p. 5
- Storming the Sound.....p. 6

Publication No. 05-06-004

## 25 Years and a Beautiful New Facility

The sun shone on an enthusiastic crowd of well-wishers and long-time Padilla Bay supporters for Padilla Bay's Facility Dedication and 25th Anniversary Open House October 1. The Reserve was honored by the presence of many supporters, including US Senator Patty Murray, the director of Department of Ecology, Jay Manning, and Eldon Hout, the director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

Visitors included former staff, local elected officials, researchers, Ecology support staff from Olympia, and many people who have enjoyed programs at the reserve over the years. They toured the new facilities, talked with staff and Padilla Bay Foundation members, and enjoyed wonderful food.



Jay Manning, director of the Washington Department of Ecology; Eldon Hout, head of NOAA's Office of Coastal Resource Management; Terry Stevens, Reserve Manager; and US Senator, Patty Murray cut the eelgrass ribbon with a hefty pair of lopping shears.

## Padilla Bay Foundation News



### Thanks to Our Generous Donors!

One of Richard Treston's (right) first jobs as Foundation President was to present Department of Ecology director, Jay Manning with a check for \$138,000.16. The money came from donations to the "Benefactors for the Bay" capital campaign. Gifts ranged from major donations by foundations and businesses to 16 cents taped to a hand made card, offered by a student who attended a school program at the reserve. Thanks to the Foundation board members who worked so hard to solicit donations, and to the many supporters who donated. This money was matched by federal dollars and helped complete the project in the face of rising construction costs.

### New merchandise for sale

When you check out the newly remodeled interpretive center lobby, you'll notice new display cases filled with Padilla Bay merchandise. We've just added children's sweat-shirts, larger tote bags, and a brand new crab design for shirts and sweatshirts. We also have mugs, note cards, and posters. As you think about holiday giving, stop and have a look at the new selection. Your gift will support research and education programs at Padilla Bay.



### A Home for Brass Critters

The patio outside the new conference/meeting room is now dotted with brass plaques recognizing major donors to the capital campaign. We have more critters on the way, and it's never too late to add to the collection.



Padilla Bay Foundation

### How You Can Help

Grassroots involvement is the core of Padilla Bay Foundation's commitment to protect Padilla Bay and support the Padilla Bay Reserve.

Membership in the Foundation means you are contributing directly to environmental education and research right here in Western Washington.

Categories of membership are:

Senior/Student	\$20
Individual	\$30
Family	\$40
School/Organization	\$50+
Supporting	\$60
Sustaining	\$100+
Small Business	\$100+
Sponsor	\$250
Patron	\$500
Steward	\$1000

Send your contribution to:  
 Padilla Bay Foundation  
 PO Box 1305  
 Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
 (360) 757-3234  
 a 501 (c) 3 organization

### Foundation Board Members

President: Richard Treston  
 Vice-president: Gail Smith  
 Secretary: Tom Smith  
 Treasurer: Deb Canon  
 Past-President: Kraig Kemper

Lyn Bishop  
 Steve Bluhm  
 Paul Dinnel  
 Ed Gastellum  
 Brian Hanson  
 Bobbi Krebs-McMullen  
 Cort Liddell  
 Patsy Martin  
 Ralph Munro  
 Charlie O'Hara  
 Dave Reed  
 Terry Stevens - Advisory Member  
 Kay Reinhardt - Administrator



# Winter Events

## Presentations for December, January, and February

### Raptor Class

The Skagit Flats are nationally recognized for their hundreds of wintering birds of prey. This class will teach about different kinds of raptors, emphasizing field identification and the particularly fascinating element of winter behavior. Instructor Bud Anderson has studied raptors for over 35 years, with a special interest in local populations and peregrine falcons. The class meets five Thursday nights, **February 2- March 2, from 7:00-9:00**, with a Saturday field trip. The class fee is \$135 per person. To register, send check or money order to the Falcon Research Group, PO Box 248, Bow, WA 98232. Class size is limited, so register early.



### Pacific Gray Whales

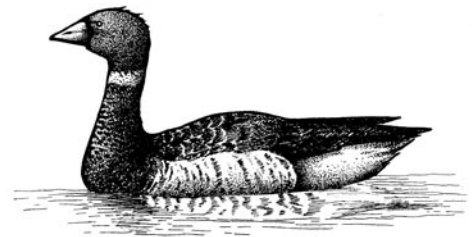
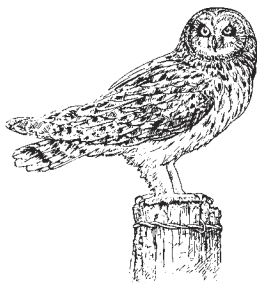
No migrating land-mammal can rival the journey of the gray whale. These 40 ton gentle giants make a 6,000 mile journey from their birthing grounds in Baja California to the Arctic Sea to feed on crustaceans. Migrating gray whales swim close to shore, giving whale watchers a good chance of spotting them. As winter ends here we begin to witness these amazing creatures going about their business of survival. Hear about their lives and learn where they come to feed in Puget Sound. Presenter and naturalist, Dodie Markey is an Island County WSU Beach Watcher. **Saturday, February 4, 1:00-2:00**. Call to register, or register online.

### Listening and Watching for Winter Birds

Join naturalist, Libby Mills, using sight and sound to find winter birds. This excursion will include walking around the reserve uplands as well as car-pooling to nearby flats to look for raptors. Pack warm clothes, binoculars, field guides, and warm drink or lunch. Meet in the Padilla Bay parking lot. Each class limited to 15 participants. **Friday, February 10 and Sunday, February 12, 8:00-12:00**. Call to register, or register online.

### Winter Hawks of the Skagit Flats

The Skagit Valley is an incredible area for observing wintering hawks and falcons. Learn to recognize the most common species in our area with raptor biologist, Bud Anderson. A slide presentation from 9:00-11:00 will introduce you to raptor biology, field characteristics, and common behaviors. The afternoon field trip runs until around 2:00 and is limited to 15 participants. **Saturday January 28**. Please call or register online.



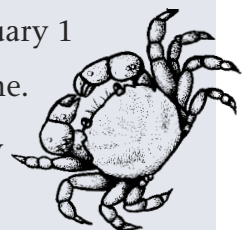
The Breazeale Interpretive Center is open  
Wednesday-Sunday, 10:00-5:00.

Closed December 25 and January 1

Register online or by phone.

[www.padillabay.gov](http://www.padillabay.gov)

(360) 428-1558



### Estuary Class for Home School Students

This winter Padilla Bay will be offering a five week class to home school students grades 3 through 6. Through hands-on learning, writing, art and science, students will explore the many facets of the Padilla Bay estuary and how we can ensure its health. Classes will be held Fridays, January 13 and 27, February 3, 10, and 17, from 10AM-12PM. Call or register online.



### Films and Videos:

#### Sundays at 1:00 & 4:00

December	4	Life on the Edge (27 min)
	11	Wild Northwest (45 min)
	18	The Living Sea (40 min)
	25	closed
January	1	closed
	8	Birds of Prey (20 min)
	15	Life at the Edge of the Sea (60 min)
	22	A Puget Sound Fish Story (25 min)
	29	Orcas in the Balance (40 min)
February	5	Eagles (40 min)
	12	Salmon of the Skagit and Life Cycle of the Salmon (20 min)
	19	The Worlds Below (40 min)
	26	Estuary! (15 min)



### For Teachers: Storming the Sound

Environmental Educators from the North Puget Sound region will be gathering for a day of workshops, networking, and information sharing. **Friday, January 20, 9:00-4:00** at Maple Hall in LaConner. Padilla Bay NERR is helping to organize and sponsor this event for classroom teachers, agency staff, and educators from non-profit groups. Teachers—there is money available for substitutes. Call the Reserve at 428-1558 or check our website at [www.padillabay.gov](http://www.padillabay.gov) for more information.

## Monthly Youth Programs Offer Fun Learning

**Mini Explorers** are the 3-5 year old learners. We look at a new topic each month, with stories, games, hands-on observations, art projects, and plenty of action. Call no more than 2 weeks ahead to register.

December 14 & 15, 10:00 & 1:00  
*Wrack and Wreath— We'll create decorations and food for wildlife with natural treasures from the beach.*

January 11 & 12, 10:00 & 1:00  
*High Tide-Low Tide— When the tide goes out, plants and animals have lots of tricks for staying wet.*

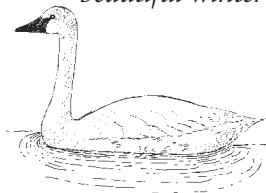
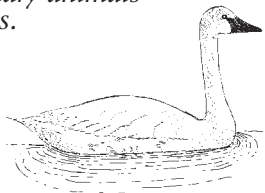
February 8 & 9, 10:00 & 1:00  
*Why Animals Don't Wear Clothes— Feathers, shells, scales, and slime: estuary animals have all sorts of ways to dress.*

**Junior Ecologists** are 6-9 year olds who have fun exploring the estuary. Excursions to the beach, science experiments, games, art projects, and studying life in the bay -- this program is guaranteed fun! Call the Interpretive Center to register.

December 16 & 17, 1:00-1:30  
*Wrack and Wreath— We'll create decorations and food for wildlife with natural treasures from the beach.*

January 13 & 14, 1:00-2:30  
*Field Journal— Through drawing, writing and observing, this class will help you see and experience the natural world in a new way.*

February 17 & 18, 1:00-2:30  
*Swans— Learn all about the lives and stories of these beautiful winter visitors.*



### For More Information on Healthy Lawn Alternatives:

Washington State University Cooperative Extension resources: <http://gardening.wsu.edu/nwnative/>

Eco-Lawns--More Than Just Grass, <http://gardening.wsu.edu/library/lawn006/lawn006.htm>

Natural Lawn and Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224 or [lawn&gardenhotline@seattletilt.h.org](mailto:lawn&gardenhotline@seattletilt.h.org)

There are many books available on gardening with native plants. These are well suited to our region:

Kruckeberg, Arthur R. 1989. *Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest: An Illustrated Guide*

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 1993. *Naturescaping: a Place for Wildlife*

Washington Department of Wildlife. 1993. *Landscape Design for Wildlife*.



### When Green is Black

Lush, green, healthy. The image of a lawn as a vibrant green living oasis is part of modern American culture. But the truth is that lawns are a major contributor to the nation's most problematic water quality issue of polluted runoff. On top of this, lawns today are often coated with a mix of chemicals that are toxic to everything from soil microbes to humans.

There are an estimated 30 million acres of lawn in the United States, and Americans spend over \$40 billion (!) annually seeding, weeding, feeding, mowing, and watering our nation's largest crop, which is all too often picked up curb side in plastic bags for disposal. On top of this, the average lawn uses 10,000 gallons of freshwater a year, which can be 40-60% of an average household's water budget. During the dry hot summer months, the use of all this freshwater for lawns literally drains our streams and rivers dry. 30% of the water used on the East Coast is used to water lawns!

Recent estimates say homeowners use over 70 million pounds of pesticide active ingredients on their lawns. To put this in perspective, check out the ratio of 'active' ingredients on that bag of pesticide versus "inert" ingredients. Chances are it is about 5% active and 95% inert. The average suburban lawn receives 10 times as much chemical pesticide per acre as farmland. One favorite herbicide that is promoted as safe and easy to use is toxic to earthworms, beneficial insects, birds, and mammals; and was the most commonly reported cause of pesticide illness in landscape workers. Pesticides have been linked to birth defects, cancer, and immune system disorders in humans as well as to cancer in pets.

Each weekend, about 54 million Americans mow their lawns. They use 800 million gallons of gas per year and produce tons of air pollutants. One old gas powered lawn mower running for an hour emits as much pollution as driving 650 miles in a 1992 model automobile

Considering the costs of a green lawn in terms of water use, toxics in the environment, and air quality, it may be wise for us to look at alternatives for our yards. Replacing sod with native plants and shrubs creates habitat for wildlife and reduces the need to water. Native plants are often more resistant to pests and disease than non-natives and ornamental plants, eliminating the need for pesticides. For that comfy lawn chair or a place to set up for a game of croquet, there are alternatives to Kentucky blue grass. "Ecoturf" or "ecolawn" refers to newly developed mixes of plants that are low-growing, mowable, and grow well without watering, fertilizer, or pesticides. They include some grasses, but also broadleaf plants such as clover, yarrow, and English daisy.

The great American lawn should be a real environmental oasis of health and vitality. Winter is a great time to research and plan healthy alternatives for your yard. See the resources listed at the left for inspiration and more information.

*Adapted from an article by Steve Miller from the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in New Hampshire.*



New Padilla Bay staff from left to right: Katie Gell, Annie Horner, Jon Hough, Aaron Root, Leslie Hill, and Andrew Windham.

## Welcome to New Padilla Bay Staff

The Padilla Bay Reserve is pleased to welcome six new AmeriCorps members to help with a wide variety of tasks. Andrew Windham will be assisting with the research program, including water quality monitoring, boat handling, and data management. Leslie Hill will be dividing her time between research and resource stewardship. You might find her in the blackberry patch with a shovel this winter. Jon Hough and Aaron Root will be working on operations and facilities maintenance, including caring for the salt water aquariums. Annie Horner and Katie Gell are environmental educators, teaching classes, creating learning materials, and working on a variety of special projects. The AmeriCorps program is a federal program for 18-25 year olds that offers work experience and a tuition award in exchange for public service.

## Check Inside for the Winter Activity Schedule:

- Presentations
- Mini Explorers
- Junior Ecologists
- Films



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