

Echo blue



Lower Sammamish Commons: Birds & Native Plants Walk

by Linda Shepherd

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In 2008, Sammamish Native Plant Stewards spearheaded a project to convert ~20,000 sf of land in the Lower Commons to a native plant sanctuary as an educational benefit for the public <https://www.sammamish.us/media/55447/native-plant-garden-detailed-info.pdf>. This project also honors the Snoqualmie Tribe who stewarded this land from time immemorial.

Many birds eat berries produced by native plants in the fall, and they also need soft, high protein food for their nestlings in spring. For them, caterpillars are the perfect baby food. It takes 6000–9000 caterpillars to raise a chickadee family! Below are some native plants at the Lower Commons that act as host plants for caterpillars. Such larvae are baby birds' breakfast sausages.

Oceanspray: Insects attracted to it provide winter and spring food for birds such as bushtits. Seeds are eaten by songbirds. Provides nesting habitat and cover. Is a host plant for echo blue, brown elfin, pale swallowtail, and Lorquin's admiral butterfly larvae who eat their leaves.

<https://kingcd.org/2020/12/14/oceanspray-native-plant-spotlight/>

Lorquin's admiral

Spring azure

Brown elfin



Serviceberry: Flowers supply pollen and nectar for large numbers of bees, as well as hummingbirds and spring azure butterflies. Fruit is relished by many birds, including waxwings, chickadees, woodpeckers, and tanagers. Host plant for pale swallowtail, brown elfin, Lorquin's admiral, and California hairstreak butterfly larvae. Provides dense cover for birds.

<https://www.wnps.org/blog/plant-profile-serviceberry>

Pale swallowtail

California hairstreak

Zephyr aka hoary comma



Red-flowering currant: Flowers provide nectar for bees, hummingbirds and occasionally bushtits. Leaves provide food for zephyr and other butterfly larvae. Birds eat its berries. Proof our native plants are desirable: When David Douglas, PNW plant explorer, sent seeds of red-flowering currant to London in 1825, the plant became all the rage. The Royal Horticultural Society recouped its investment in Douglas's 3-year expedition from this plant introduction alone. <https://www.wnps.org/blog/red-flowering-currant>

Red-twigged dogwood: Fruits consumed by birds, including flickers, grosbeaks, crows, thrushes, waxwings, and tree swallows. Some birds, such as band-tailed pigeons and wild turkeys, eat both fruit and buds. Provides cover and nesting habitat for songbirds. It is a host species for echo blue butterfly larvae. <https://www.wnps.org/blog/plant-profile-red-osier-dogwood-1>

Salal: Flowers provide nectar for hummingbirds. Host plant for brown elfin butterfly larvae. Berries are eaten by birds including towhees, robins, grouse, and band-tailed pigeons. Provides year-round shelter for birds. <http://nativeplantspnw.com/salal-gaultheria-shallon/>

Snowberry: Forms dense thickets that provide shelter or nesting sites for many small birds. Fruit eaten by grouse, pheasants, quail and other birds. Host plant for snowberry checkerspot butterfly larvae. Lewis and Clark collected this plant and brought it back to Thomas Jefferson. It was sent to England in 1817 and became a popular garden novelty among plant collectors there. <https://www.wnps.org/blog/an-appreciation-of-snowberry>



Snowberry checkerspot

Ceanothus silkmoth



Kinnikinnick: Flowers provide nectar for hummingbirds. Fruit supplies food for many bird species. Larval host for echo blue and brown elfin butterfly and ceanothus silkmoth. <https://www.wnps.org/blog/plant-profile-kinnikinnick>

Maple (bigleaf, vine, Douglas): Seeds eaten by birds including grosbeaks, nuthatches, finches, and woodpeckers. Host plant for western tiger swallowtail, pale tiger swallowtail, and mourning cloak butterfly larvae. <https://www.wnps.org/blog/plant-profile-vine-maple-acer-circinatum>

Western tiger swallowtail

Mourning cloak



Oregon grape: Flowers attract hummingbirds, bees, and painted lady butterflies. Berries are eaten by birds such as towhees, robins, sparrows, and waxwings. Provides cover for small birds. <https://www.wnps.org/blog/tall-oregon-grape-mahonia-aquifolium>

Garry oak: Flowers attract native bees. Host plant for gray hairstreak, California sister, & propertius duskywing butterfly larvae. Acorns sustain many birds. Provides cover, perching, & nesting habitat for birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, & vireos. Oaks support more insect herbivores than any other plant genus. <https://www.wnps.org/native-plant-directory/232-quercus-garryana-var-garryana>

Resources:

- *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* by Doug Tallamy. Also see <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/tallamys-hub-1> for videos
- *Real Gardens Grow Natives* by Eileen M. Stark
- Sammamish Stewards <https://sammamish.galaxydigital.com/stewardship-programs/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sammamishsteward/>
- Washington Native Plant Society <https://www.wnps.org>
- Wildflowers Northwest—native plant nursery in Maple Valley <https://www.wildflowersnw.com>
- Tadpole Haven Native Plants in Woodinville <https://tadpolehaven.com/>
- KCD Native Plant Nurseries <https://kingcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/KCD-Native-Plant-Nurseries-List-2020.pdf>
- Watch for plant sales by WNPS <https://www.wnps.org/cps-programs/plant-sale>
- King Conservation District <https://kingcd.org/publications/native-plants/>
- *Pacific Northwest Insects* by Merrill Peterson
- Common Butterflies of the Puget Sound Region and Their Food Plants <http://www.greenseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ButterflyHabitat.pdf>
- Some Washington Caterpillars <https://www.wnps.org/blog/some-washington-caterpillars>
- “How to Support Your Local Caterpillars” (fall/winter 2020, p. 21) by Regina Johnson https://www.wnps.org/index.php?preview=1&option=com_dropfiles&format=&task=frontfile.download&catid=188&id=913&Itemid=1000000000000