

To help you find the best viewing areas, we have enclosed an area map. The Skagit Wildlife Area on the Skagit River and the Padilla Bay Reserve to the north provide great public access.

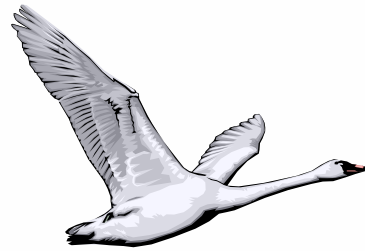
To view the Snow Geese and Trumpeter Swans, take Conway Exit 221 to La Conner, crossing over the river's south fork. From Exit 221 proceed 3.4 miles to your first stop. Your second stop is 5 miles from Exit 221, the Snow Goose Produce market. parking is available and this is generally an area where the birds can be seen. Please review the enclosed map.

To reach the Padilla Bay Reserve, take Exit 230 from I-5, driving west on Highway 20 to the Bayview-Edison Road going north. The focal point of the Reserve is the Interpretive Center with exhibits, maps and information. There are two developed trails, one along the bay and the other into the back meadow. Again, there is plenty of parking available.

Visitors into the town of La Conner will find very accessible viewing. La Conner is located on a saltwater channel that receives generous amounts of water runoff from the nearby fields and from the Skagit River. The combination makes this weather protected area perfect for many of the smaller species of waterfowl and shorebirds. Stop at the Visitor Information Center located at 606 Morris Street in La Conner for more info on birding.

Trumpeter & Tundra Swans

Skagit Valley's wintering Trumpeter & Tundra Swan population now numbers about 10,000. The adult Swan has a wing span of about 5 feet. Trumpeters are often accompanied by Tundra Swans, a bit smaller and lighter in color with a wing span of about 4.5 feet. Both the Trumpeter and Tundra Swans are sensitive to human intrusion, so please stay in your vehicle while observing them.



Snow Geese

Only about half the size of the Trumpeters, Snow Geese of all ages have black wing tips and a wing span of about 3 feet. They number about 55,000 birds in Skagit, with many on Fir Island. As with the Trumpeters, we advise viewers to avoid disturbing the flocks by approaching too close. They need to feed undisturbed in order to store up energy for the winter stay and spring migration. If the flock is feeding near a road, please remain in your vehicle. When they are feeding far from the road, use binoculars or a long camera lens to view them without disturbing them.

Winter Birds of the Skagit Flats

Winter Birds

One of Washington's most spectacular events is the return of the migrating birds to the Skagit Valley. The rich farmlands provide these birds with a natural feeding ground as they build up the energy required for the long Northern return flight in the spring. In addition, many area farmers contribute acres of land to the "Barley for Birds" program. The Skagit Valley hosts the largest wintering population of birds in the lower 48 states. Some 55,000 Snow Geese return here annually, along with 10,000 Trumpeter & Tundra Swans. North of La Conner is the Padilla Bay Natural Reserve where, along with the Snow Geese, the Brant's Geese come to feed. The area between La Conner and Padilla Bay also offers a good opportunity for seeing Hawks and Bald Eagles. Skagit Flats is home to 13 daylight species of birds of prey.