

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Fall 2018



Dickcissel --- Image by Royce Craig, taken on Pleasant Hill (Kelso) in May 2018

Birding Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

By Steve Puddicombe

Naturalist and photographer Dan Streiffert will bring his program of bird photographs and descriptions of a recent trip to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to Kelso on **October 23, 2018 at 7 pm at the Kelso Senior Center**. Most of us will never get to visit this vast and remote area, often called the "Serengeti of the north." Join us for this intimate view.

Streiffert is a retired engineer, nature photographer and member of the Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee.

The program is free and open to the public.

Christmas Bird Counts 2018

Save the dates:

This is a fun event for seasoned and new-be birders alike. We will have all the details in the Winter Whistler - published in early December.

Leadbetter CBC (Pacific County) - December 15, 2018

Wahkiakum CBC - December 28, 2018

Coordinator: Andrew Emlen

Cowlitz-Columbia CBC - January 1, 2019

Coordinator: Bob Reistroffer

Where the Birds Roost

By Steve Puddicombe, *President*

Since its inception more than a century ago Audubon has been known for its reliance on science and the study of birds as an essential arm for the promotion of preservation. John James Audubon's paintings were celebrated not only for their beauty but for their accuracy of depiction as well, and his devotion to remarking on their subjects' true habits and haunts. His paintings meld the worlds of science and art, of study and enjoyment, and the society named for him has carried on this tradition that began in the golden age of discovery when amateur naturalists could transform themselves into scientists.

That era informs today's Audubon Society in a fundamental way: grass roots science or "citizen science" (a term with origins in Audubon) was at the heart of the original Christmas bird counts when Audubon was founded, just as it is today. Part of the great enjoyment of bird watching is still the possibility of a rare sighting or by participating in expanding the knowledge of bird activity in a changing world. To a lesser or greater degree all of us in Audubon are contributors to ornithology and a better understanding of bird life in all its vast variety.

Beyond that, the functioning of the hundreds of Audubon chapters in the United States and abroad has rooted itself in rational, fact-based discourse.

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Support our mission, join WHAS today!

Check type of Membership:

- ☐ New Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ Renewal Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society.

Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____

Membership includes 4 issues of our newsletter *WILLAPA WHISTLER* annually.

We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible

For membership in National Audubon Society visit <http://www.audubon.org/>.

Please make your check payable to:

WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to:

WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632.

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Y14:7XCH rev. 2007

Thank you for supporting your local Audubon chapter -- Willapa Hills Audubon Society!

We will not share your contact information with anyone.

*) To announce **occasional** reminders and to communicate last minute changes due to weather or other issues for WHAS programs and field trips.



-Clip

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OTHER

Please indicate any **new** information:

I prefer you contact me by:

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Mail

Other options:

- ☐ I prefer to receive the *WHISTLER* by email
(Add your email address below)
- ☐ Contact me about volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Add me to your announcement email list*

Long Beach Peninsula Bird Festival 2018

Wings over Willapa - September 29, 2018. The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge are hosting a birding, art and nature festival on Long Beach Peninsula celebrating the Wildlife Refuge with a day full of classes, workshops, guided tours and more.

More info: <https://friendsofwillaparefuge.org/wings-over-willapa>

Pudget Sound Bird Fest 2018

Come to Edmonds, Washington, September 14-16, 2018
Bird Fest offers guided nature walks at parks and viewing stations in and around Edmonds, field workshops on bird identification, nature photography, wildlife habitat, and two boat cruises to choose from.
More info and BirdFest registration at www.pugetsoundbirdfest.org/

ACOW Fall 2018

The next meeting of the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) will be hosted by King County chapters and Eastside Audubon on Saturday October 13, 2018 in Woodinville, WA. This year's theme, "Through a Local Lens," shines a spotlight on the work WA Audubon Chapters have done in the state to advance National Audubon priorities and sets the stage for conservation and advocacy efforts. Contact board members on the left for more information.

HawkFest 2018

Pateros, WA (City Park), Saturday, September 15, 2018; 8:00 am – 3:00 p.m.

Join the Chelan and Entiat Ranger Districts, North Central Washington Audubon Society, and Hawkwatch International this fall for the ninth annual HawkFest! More info at www.ncwaudubon.org

Ridgefield BirdFest and Bluegrass Celebration

The 2018 Event is on October 5, 6 & 7th, 2018 with a new schedule- all in town events will be Saturday only, with kick-off events Friday evening. More at <https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/>

The Marbled Murrelets Need You This Fall

By Maria M. Ruth, Black Hills Audubon Society

Next month, Washington State will be seeking public input on important decisions on the fate of this endangered seabird. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will release its Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS) for the Long Term Conservation Strategy for the Marbled Murrelet. This strategy will be implemented on 1.4 million acres of state forest for the next 50 years.

This is a critical time for the endangered seabird whose population in Washington has declined 44% since 2001. DNR manages 213,000 acres of land in western Washington where mature and old-growth coastal forests provide the murrelet's preferred nesting trees. These forests are public lands and you have a voice in how they are managed.

Many of you submitted comments on the previous draft of the Environmental Impact Statement in early 2017. Your comments sent a strong message to DNR that it was not doing enough to protect the murrelets on our state lands. For that we thank you!

Now we need your help again. There will be a 60-day public comment period this fall that follows the release of the RDEIS. Our goal is to guide DNR to select an alternative that makes a significant contribution to the recovery of the endangered murrelet.

The Marbled Murrelet Coalition will be analyzing the RDEIS, and will provide background information and issue talking points—scientific, legal, and economic—for you to consider including in your public comments. We'll also provide you with press releases, action alerts, short articles, images, and

graphics you can use in your newsletters, social media, and other outreach to your membership.

Your voice. Your public land. Your trees. Your wildlife. Follow Murrelet Survival Project on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MurreletSurvival/> for news and updates.



Check our website at www.willapahillsaudubon.org for an announcement about the dEIS as soon as it is published.

The Marbled Murrelet Coalition includes Conservation Northwest, Defenders of Wildlife, Olympic Forest Coalition, Seattle Audubon Society, Washington Environmental Council, and Washington Forest Law Center.

2018 Cowlitz County Bird List

The Cowlitz County Bird List is maintained by Russ Koppendrayar.

2018 is half over and we have seen birds in winter, in migration and in breeding season. This means further additions will be slow, but usually of the unexpected variety for the last six months.

Easily the highlight of the last couple months was a *Dickcissel* (see the image on page one) showing up at a bird bath on Pleasant Hill Road between Castle Rock and Kelso where it made use of the facilities and was never seen again. It certainly does pay to have a water feature in the yard. This **first ever**

record for Cowlitz County was not only noticed by the residents, but well photographed. Assuming this bird is accepted by the Washington Bird Records Committee it will be the sixteenth record for the state. With the excellent photographic documentation we would expect no problem with acceptance.

For this and other lists please check our website at <https://willapahillsaudubon.org/index.php/bird-lists/cowlitz-county-bird-list>

Continued from page one: Where the Birds Roosts - By Steve Puddicombe

At least, that has been my experience. At Willapa Hills board discussions, over policy decisions and in determining whether or not to support certain conservation initiatives, for instance, the science involved has been a keystone to our decisions. This ethos permeates all our deliberations and, I believe, gives our chapter and Audubon a unique credibility.

It's also no secret that much of our membership has a background in science and/or in education, or has served on behalf of the public in agencies that manage our resources. Our current board and active committee membership includes several educators, several folks that have worked for the Washington Department of Natural Resources, and a former career scientist at the Federal EPA.

We also have on our board two former commercial fishermen and some of our membership has worked in the timber and oyster industry. It's not uncanny for those who work



John Audubon:
Plate 11 – Bird of
Washington

intimately in the natural world to have a keen eye for its denizens. In fact, the beauty of it is that science is a language that has no boundaries or cultural barriers and is open to all.

Which brings us back to the great tradition that Audubon provides: The means to satisfy that great human urge to understand and preserve the natural world. Through scientific inquiry and documentation at the grass roots level we empower our citizenry and promote grass roots activism. That's where the birds roost.

Happy Birding!

WHAS continues to sponsor or partner in grass roots science projects in our territory's local communities.

We sponsor 3 Christmas bird counts and now monitor a vaux swift roost at Carpet One in Rainier, OR. We recently sponsored a Rainier high school student's project to build a vaux swift roost as an experiment in attracting swifts if a current roost is closed off or torn down. See this Whistler for more details.

If you have an idea for a citizen science project, let us know—maybe we can help.

And check out our programs and field trips all year here and at <https://www.willapahillsaudubon.org/>

Yellow-breasted Chat Song

By Thomas Bancroft

The morning opened calm but suggested it would be hot before long. Cottonwoods lined Lower Umptanum Creek in Kittitas County, and patches of quaking aspens grew along the trail. The morning bird chorus would start in a half hour and the trail seemed sublime in the subdued light of my headlamp. On this mid-June morning, the aspens smelled sweet, and the grass lapped at my waist. Except for the nearby creek, the valley was quiet as I sat down under some aspens to wait.

The first squawk came from the far side of the grove.

Whistles, mews, catcalls, cackles, and rattles then penetrated the trees. The song seemed more rapid than I remembered from western Pennsylvania, but definitely, a yellow-breasted chat had begun to declare that morning had arrived and this part of the valley was his. After twenty minutes, when nothing else had started to sing, I began to work slowly around the aspen grove. He sang from the opposite side of an elderberry bush and was down out of sight.

My first yellow-breasted chat was on our neighbor's farm when I was in junior high in Western Pennsylvania. The neighbor had not mowed his field down over the back hill for many years, and the bushes had grown thick. I was trudging up the dirt lane through the patch when this series of whistles, catcalls, clucks, and rattles came pilling out the thick bushes. I went home and immediately put my mother's LP of Peterson's Birds

of Eastern North America on the phonograph in the dining room. Eventually, the yellow-breasted chat call came through the speakers. I never did see the bird on several return trips to the abandoned field.

This spring the American Ornithologist Union removed this bird from the wood warbler family, Parulidae, and put it into a monotypic family, Icteriidae. The two "i" in Icteriidae keeps it from being with blackbirds, meadowlarks, and orioles. Scientists now think it is more closely related to the tanagers and old world

buntings than it is to the wood warblers. The reality is that it still is an enigma. The call seemed different from any wood warbler I knew and different from almost anything else too. Here is a link to a 10-minute Sonogram of the Song:

<https://vimeo.com/221848178>

Dr. Donald Kroodsma once answered a question about how he learned to identify bird songs by saying that he listened with his eyes. His calls are shown by intense red,

and where the sonogram becomes almost white, it is showing the loudest notes. Individual calls, songs, and screeches range from 1,500 kilohertz to about 15,000 kilohertz. He constantly shuffled his different notes in the sequence. A lazuli bunting and an American goldfinch can also be heard in the background.

The male chat sang non-stop for more than an hour along Umptanum Creek, never taking more than a few second pause in his rattling. Finally, I left to hike farther up the canyon.



Yellow-breasted chat
- Image: Jim Conrad

Hannah Cargill builds artificial chimney for Vaux's Swifts

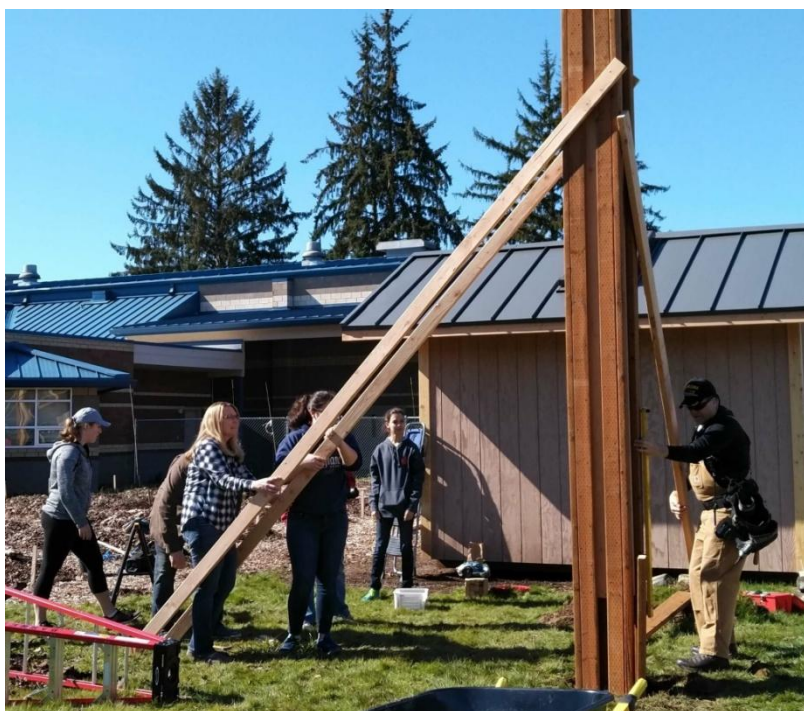
By Darrel Whipple

Hannah Cargill of Castle Rock envisioned a human-built snag to substitute for the real thing in an effort to provide a nesting and roosting place for migrating Vaux's Swifts. She turned the idea into a real world project that won her the Girl Scout Gold Award last month.

Over the past year-and-a-half Hannah consulted Larry Schwitters of Issaquah (Vaux's Happening) and me regarding the needs and habits of Vaux's Swifts and we gave her some construction ideas from the few (as yet unsuccessful) attempts by others to attract swifts to such a chimney. We told her it's a long shot, but she persisted!

More construction advice came from others she enlisted to help with the project, but she finally settled on the design and materials that you see in the finished product in the school garden at Barnes Elementary School in Kelso. Siting was facilitated by Pat Reistroffer and Ian Thompson of Lower Columbia School Gardens and by the Kelso School District.

The chimney sports a plaque recognizing those who participated in the project, which was completed in March, 2018. Hannah solicited donations of materials



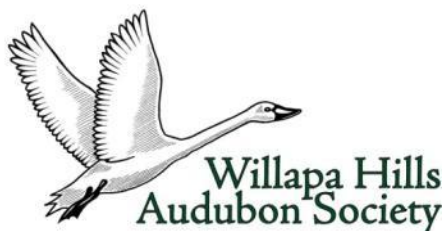
from local area businesses and individuals. Erection of the chimney was assisted by Building in Youth. Hannah also developed a handout about Vaux's Swifts for the students who visit the garden.

Hannah may be off to college before the September migration ends, but there should be plenty of other observers around Barnes Elementary School garden to notice if the birds happen to drop in after sunset to try out their new digs. For thousands of years Vaux's Swifts have made use of old-growth cedar snags in the Northwest for roosting in groups of tens to thousands. But suitable snags are in short supply these days, so the diminutive birds have come to depend for shelter on the chimneys of homes, schools, churches and businesses along their migration route on the Pacific Flyway, despite the urban perils to the birds and the declining availability of large, open brick chimneys.

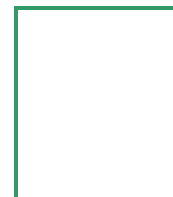
Photos courtesy of Hannah Cargill: They capture moments during construction of the artificial chimney for migrating Vaux's Swifts. Temporary supports were later removed.



Audubon chapters, including WHAS, are actively monitoring the population of Vaux's Swifts by counting the birds as they enter their regular stopping places during the northbound migration in May and the southbound migration in September. **To volunteer as an observer, or just to witness the spectacle when roosting numbers are at their peak at Carpet One in Rainier, Oregon, call Darrel Whipple (503-556-9838) or join any Saturday observation in September starting a half-hour before sunset on the steps of Rainier City Hall.**



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Longview, WA 98632



The *Willapa Whistler* is the quarterly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Complimentary copies are available for free on our website.

TEMP -- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Most WHAS activities and programs are open to the public.

Send in your stories & photos

Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are most welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of February, May, August and November. Send your contributions to:

WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632

or email them to

newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org.

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WHAS Programs and Field Trips

WHAS events are free and open to the public (Unless otherwise noted). Check the website for the latest information and updates.

Birding Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with Dan Streiffert

October 23, 2018 at 7 pm at the Kelso Senior Center

See page one for the details.

The Whistler Online

Did you know that you can subscribe to the Willapa Whistler on our website? All the links are easy to follow. Go to <http://whistler.willapahillsaudubon.org> for this and past issues.

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Other programs and field trips will appear on our website and will be announced through our gmail alert system.

More information about the alert system here: <http://willapahillsaudubon.org/index.php/member-services>

The Mission of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society is to support ecologically responsible ways of life, to help maintain biologically diverse habitats, and to promote environmental understanding and enjoyment of nature.

Check out our website at www.willapahillsaudubon.org