

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 44 // Issue 4

Winter 2018



Common Yellowthroat --- Image by John Green, taken in Gearhart Oregon 2018

Cusp of Spring Field Trip to Nisqually Refuge

Come see raptors, waterfowl, and maybe nesting owls at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge on the Puget Sound near Olympia. Meet Saturday Feb. 23, 2018, at the headquarters' entrance between 9:15 and 9:30 for a 3 - 4 hour tour, depending on weather. Dress for the weather and bring your snacks.

To sign up, call John Green (360-430-8569) or email (jgreen2317@aol.com). Group size may be limited. Distance from Longview is 77 miles; carpooling will be encouraged.

Long Beach CBC needs a new coordinator for 2019

By Steve Puddicombe

With the solstice approaching we look forward to our Christmas bird counts. This year will be the last for Suzy Whitney who is the current coordinator for the Leadbetter count at Long Beach and Willapa Bay. Willapa Hills has sponsored this count since its inception in the 1970's and is looking for a volunteer to lead it beginning next year. We invite anyone interested to contact the board or Suzy.

Knowledge of birding at the coast is helpful but most important is organizational skill, and some computer experience with excel, though not required. Time would be required from early November through the mid-December date of the count.

Suzy has offered to help with a transition next year. The count already has experienced area leaders and birders on call. Please consider this chance to become involved with this historic CBC.

Winging It

By President Steve Puddicombe

With this year's migration season about over and with most bird species settled into their winter quarters, it's time to reflect and muse about this adaptive, and wonderfully metaphoric, event. As you know my literary inclination is shameless when it comes to appropriating comparisons from nature, with no analogy too delicious to resist. But, then, I would argue that this is entirely natural when you recognize how embedded in the natural world we actually are.

...continued on page 5

Christmas Bird Counts

Once again it is time to organize the annual Christmas Bird Count. This WHAS event gives all of us the opportunity to share birding with others. If you are a novice, it provides a wonderful opportunity to learn from the more experienced birders. This citizen science program is in its 119th year and provides data used to understand and develop bird conservation programs. Beginners provide extra eyes and experienced birders provide accuracy. If you are joining the group, come prepared for weather and an extended tour: raingear, field glasses, water, and lunch. WHAS sponsors the following counts:

Leadbetter: December 15, 2018

Wahkiakum: December 28, 2018

Cowlitz Columbia: January 1, 2019

...more info on page 3

In this issue of the Whistler:

- 2 Membership Form
NW Birding Events
- 3 All the details about local
Christmas Bird Count's
- 4 Should winter bird feeding include
hummingbirds?
- 5 Slurping of Trumpeter Swans
- 6 Programs and Fieldtrips

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:

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Name _____ Telephone _____

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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

Please indicate any **new** information:

I prefer you contact me by:

- ☐ Phone
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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*

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Wildlife Sightings: vacant

OTHER

Website: Ludger Wöhrmann
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Olympic BirdFest 2019

Come Bird in Sequim, Washington, April 12-14, 2018
Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction & raffle, gala banquet, and more. The featured speaker this year is: John Marzluff.
Or join the festival pre-trip: a birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands.
More info and BirdFest registration at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

Winter Wings Festival 2019

The 40th Annual Klamath Basin Winter Wings Festival, February 14-17, 2019. Enjoy over 50 guided birding and photography field trips, workshops, receptions, keynotes, and more throughout the Klamath Basin in Oregon and California. Our featured speakers are Pepper Trail, George Lepp and Julie Zickefoose. To learn more visit www.WinterWingsFest.org. Registration opens December 15th at 9 am PST.

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival 2019

For nearly two decades they have celebrated the annual return of nearly 35,000 sand hill cranes to Othello, Washington every March as they migrate north to their breeding grounds in Alaska. The Festival offers an incredible opportunity to view the cranes up-close, with tours led by local experts.

The 22th Annual festival will be held in March 2018. More info: <https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

Christmas Bird Counts 2018



This is the 119th annual Christmas Bird Count. People with any level of birding experience can participate. It is a great opportunity to see shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. Novice birders will be accompanied by more experienced birders so that all data collected is accurate.

Citizen scientist's volunteers, who annually brave the wind and rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count make an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use the data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action.

The **Leadbetter Count Circle** includes the Pacific Ocean beaches on the Long Beach Peninsula, Willapa Bay's east shore mid-point on the peninsula to the tip of Leadbetter point on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and the west side of the bay from the Naselle River north to Bay Center, WA. (See map)

For the **Wahkiakum CBC**, the area includes portions of the Skamokawa, Puget Island, Cathlamet, and Brownsmead areas.

For the **Cowlitz-Columbia CBC**, count circle areas include East Oregon, West Oregon, South Washington, East Washington, West Washington, and North Washington.



House Finches

Image courtesy of WDFW

Ongoing Citizen Science at home "Project Feeder Watch"

Here is a fun opportunity to participate in bird related research, from the comfort of your home.

The **Project Feeder Watch with Cornell Bird Laboratory** will go from November until April, but one can sign up until the end of February. It runs for 21 weeks and involves counting birds at one's feeders or just in a bird-friendly habitat that one has provided. This is usually done in backyards. Birds are counted for two days every week or two (at least 5 days between a pair of counting days), and the results are submitted to the Laboratory for research and analysis. There is a \$18 participation fee which covers some materials.

You do not have to spend a lot of time watching; some people do it before and after work, or 5 minutes each hour, or whatever structure works for you.

For more information and to sign up, visit

<http://feederwatch.org/about/project-overview/>

CBC Where and When?

Leadbetter Christmas Bird Count:

Saturday, December 15, 2018

Because of the large area, and the fact that we access the west side of Willapa Bay on numerous pieces of private property, Participants will be organized into small groups. This year's groups are mostly setup; still if you wish to participate next year you can contact Suzy Whitley at suzy@reachone.com and she will keep you in the loop for 2019.

Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count:

Friday, December 28th 2018

For more information and/or to sign up contact Andrew Emlen by phone 360-795-8009 or email: emlenandrew@gmail.com

Cowlitz – Columbia Christmas Bird Count:

Monday, January 1st 2019

We will be out for an 8 hour period covering a 15 mile diameter circle looking for any birds that will let us see them.

Please plan to join us this year. It is a great way to start out the New Year.

To sign up, call Bob Reistroffer 360-636-5125 or breistrof@aol.com. He'll form teams or you can put together your own team for the area of your choice. (Areas include Eastern Oregon, Western Oregon, Southern Washington, Eastern Washington, Western Washington, and Northern Washington.) He will get information to all participants by mid-December when teams are set. Bob has reserved space at Papa Pete's Pizza, 5614 Ocean Beach Hwy in Longview for the compilation meeting from about 5-6:30pm. HOPE TO SEE YOU 1-1-19 !

Should winter bird feeding include hummingbirds?

From the WDFW blog: Crossing Paths with Washington's Wildlife

As fall advances towards winter and bird feeding stations are set up in many Washington backyards, should hummingbird nectar feeders come down or be maintained?

In eastern Washington, the answer is simple: nectar feeders come down because the birds are gone. The three species of hummingbirds that can be seen at eastside backyard feeders during the spring and summer - rufous, calliope and black-chinned - have migrated south to wintering areas by now.

In western Washington, the answer is a little more complicated because some Anna's hummingbirds can be year-round residents. But would leaving nectar feeders out in westside backyards lure rufous hummingbirds into staying when they should head south?

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists say most research on whether feeders of any kind keep birds from migrating indicates that the impact is insignificant, at least from a species population standpoint. It's possible that a few individuals might linger longer, maybe even be stranded in winter conditions when they should be someplace else. But for the most part, birds that migrate seasonally will do so, even if feeders are left out.

In fact, during the last decade of annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) in Washington, no black-chinned or calliope hummingbirds were counted and only one rufous hummingbird (in 2002) was counted. Anna's hummingbirds, on the other hand, are always in western Washington CBC tallies; 179 were counted in 2001 and 1,137 in 2011 (an increase that may be as reflective of the number of actual observers and count areas as birds attracted to more feeders.)

WDFW biologist Patricia Thompson of Mill Creek notes that the 1993 - 2001 Winter Backyard Bird Surveys she compiled seemed to show an increase in the number of Anna's and rufous hummingbirds over the years, although she's not sure why.

Biologists agree that a greater long-term impact on bird migration is probably climate change and associated changes in available natural habitat across the landscape. Birds have many

triggers that drive them to migrate, not the least of which is changing daylight hours.

Biologists also agree that feeders of any kind are not necessary for any birds, they simply make viewing birds easier for us. For most birds, feeders are bonus food troughs but not necessarily food traps.

"We need to support natural winter processes," said WDFW biologist Chris Anderson of Mill Creek, "and that includes shifts in foraging areas for migrating species like hummingbirds. Taking nectar feeders down at this time of year is probably more natural and avoids the potential for keeping birds dependent on them when they should be moving on. Wild birds are not pets that need to be taken care of through feeding. But if you want to maintain feeders, be responsible and committed to it. Keep those feeders clean, filled, and heated with lights if necessary."

Advice from Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology includes only keeping hummingbird feeders up for two weeks in the fall after you see the last bird using them. They also say:

Maintaining a backyard hummingbird feeder can help provide the birds with nectar critical to their survival, especially during the fall when they need to double their body mass before migration. (Contrary to a common fear, the extra food won't stop a hummer from migrating south when it's time for it to go.) To ensure your yard is a safe and nutritious stopover for hummingbirds:

Fill the feeders with sugar water, made by combining four parts hot water to one part white sugar, boiled for one to two minutes. NEVER use honey, which promotes the growth of harmful bacteria, or artificial sweeteners, which have no nutritional value. Also avoid red food coloring.

Clean the feeders with a solution of one part white vinegar to four parts water about once a week. If your feeder has become dirty, try adding some grains of dry rice to the vinegar solution and shake vigorously. The grains act as a good abrasive. Rinse your feeder well with warm water three times before refilling with sugar solution.



Male Anna's Hummingbird – Palo Alto Norvig

Christmas Bird Counts 2017 Results

Results of the 118th Christmas Bird Count are almost complete online. To get the full count summary, regional summaries, articles from participants go to www.christmasbirdcount.org or if you prefer it delivered right to your inbox, sign up for American Birds [online](http://bit.ly/1XCRCBv) (<http://bit.ly/1XCRCBv>).

American Birds is a FREE quarterly citizen science e-newsletter from National Audubon that contains news from many citizen science programs: the Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, and Hummingbirds at Home. It also includes the types of CBC information and summaries previously distributed in the print edition of American Birds.

Continued from page one: Winging It

My peregrination from work in Alaska each year in October coincides with the massing of millions of waterfowl, particularly of the black brant, at Izembek National Wildlife Refuge at Cold Bay, as they ready themselves for the continental flight to the southern US and beyond. And I always feel a kinship with these beings below, as I ascend into the sky, knowing that my own migration is essentially the same as theirs: I, too, have advantaged myself to the fecundity of the north, have nurtured myself on the short, summer production of energy and food in its near epic effusion.

There is nothing particularly profound about all this. I have found a niche and exploited it. In the same way, I frequently travel south during winter to camp and bird where it is warm and sunny. And whether it's by jet or in my trusty truck

(with enough miles on it to go to the moon), as the saying goes, I do it because I can.

But for birds, the ability to fly thousands of miles to expand nesting and survival capability is an extraordinary evolutionary development. All animals and plants move and expand range but no other animal can do so with such spectacular effect—except, perhaps, we human beings.

Yet, if migration was best understood solely as a circular course I would be disappointed. For me it is mostly a story of determination and grit; the thing must be done. These days my mind also travels, from dark truths to lighter ones, moving between these poles like an arctic tern. There is food in both places, it seems, but to dwell in one place too long would bring hunger and a starvation of the spirit.

Happy Birding and Enjoy the season!

Slurping of Trumpeter Swans

By Thomas Bancroft

Eight trumpeter swans stood in the muddy water, their necks bent in an “S” shape curve, and their bills half submerged in the mucky mess. A thin layer of water covered the fallow field, and the temperature hung in the high 30s. Their heads moved sideways, in quick even movements, and their mouths opened and shut rapidly. Four bright white adults fed not more than fifty yards from me as well as four equally large, grayish-white young of the year. Their elephantine legs held their bodies above the muddy water as they crept through the quagmire, gradually approaching where I froze, transfixed by their size.

[Play Slurping Sound](#) or <https://bit.ly/2P8Jknr>

The slurp-slurp-slurp followed by a pause then more slurping put me into a trance. I was standing on the side of Wylie Slough Road with headsets over my ears and a directional microphone pointing across the road. My digital recorder was capturing every nuance, and the headphones emphasized the mesmerizing sound. Weekly for three years, I would visit my daughter at her Georgetown apartment. We would head out someplace: going for a walk, picking up supplies, or hitting a movie, often stopping on the way back for a fortified fruit smoothie. She'd order tropical fruit, and I'd pick raspberry. My daughter would insist they add antioxidants to mine. We'd grab a corner table where we could chat and slowly drink our concoctions. Slurping came when we were trying to get the last few sips from the bottom.

These swans are huge, twenty-five pounds, as much as a beagle, but larger because birds have hollow bones and large air sacks that displace fluids in their body cavities. In spite of their weight, they are graceful, strong fliers that return each winter to the Skagit from breeding grounds in the north. Two pairs -- each with their two full-grown young -- were having breakfast. These two families probably had flown together from an Alaska wilderness to winter in these agricultural fields.

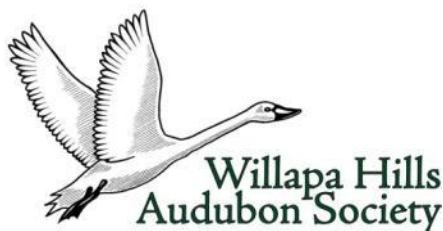
These swans were pumping the slurry through their mouths, filtering out plant material. The back and forth motion of their heads moved the bills through the brown suspension, continuing to churn up the water. Their bill lamellae acted like a sieve, and occasionally, a green stem or white root disappeared into a mouth. I had watched Trumpeter Swans dig potatoes and graze on grass or growing grains, but never filter plant material from the dirty ooze.



When the cygnets first hatch, the parents take them to good feeding areas, often stirring up the water to make aquatic plants and animals more readily available. The young must eat on their own; the parents don't feed them. These thoughts made me think about my younger days and what we ate at home. We had some variation but often certain nights were specific main courses of chicken, beef, or pork, always with potatoes. The vegetables did change with the seasons. I probably bucked eating beans and spinach. Now, one of the things I enjoyed most was trying new recipes, especially when traveling. Swans had learned to exploit novel foods that weren't part of the environment before Europeans arrived.

It is hard to imagine that the known Trumpeter Swan population was only 69 individuals in 1935. A few additional unrecorded flocks, however, were hiding at the time in Canada and Alaska. Shooting them for their feathers, skin, and meat had decimated the once widespread species. Protection and reintroductions have allowed these swans to recover. In 2005, ornithologists estimated that their numbers had climbed to more than 34,000. Two families, perhaps sisters with their spouses and children, traveling together were right across from me. [Play Slurping Sound with nervous adults](#) or <https://bit.ly/2KKHxob>

The adults started to honk sporadically and softly. A nervous gesture, so I grabbed my gear to leave them in peace.



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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.

Field Trip to Cusp of Spring at the Nisqually Refuge

Come see raptors, waterfowl, and maybe nesting owls at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge on the Puget Sound near Olympia. Meet Saturday Feb. 23, 2018, at the headquarters' entrance between 9:15 and 9:30 for a 3 - 4 hour tour, depending on weather.

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The Whistler Online

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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