

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 32, Issue 6

<http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org>

November/December 2006



2006 Christmas Bird Counts

All Members and Friends Are Invited to Participate

By Alan Richards



The National Audubon Society has been sponsoring the Christmas Bird Count for more than one hundred years. This tradition was begun in 1900 by a small group of dedicated individuals who hoped to provide an alternative to the 'side hunt,' then accepted as a typical Christmas-season activity. Hunters at that time formed teams, or 'sides,' to see who could shoot the most birds in a day. Now, we can compete in a way in which the birds are not the ultimate losers in our game.

This year in our area of Washington, due to the continuing generous support of our own Willapa Hills Audubon Society chapter (WHAS), we have the chance to participate in three different Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs): the **Leadbetter Point CBC on December 16**, the **Wahkiakum CBC on December 29**, and the **Cowlitz-Columbia CBC on January 1**.

Our chapter solicits birdwatchers (or 'birders') of all ability levels. The Counts will be divided into sectors with at least one more-experienced person in each group. It is important to have as many people as we can in each group, to spot as many birds as possible. Please note: NO prior experience is necessary. There is a \$5 per person fee, however this cost will be paid by the Chapter. We wish to introduce as many people as we can to the activity of birding; we also want to bring together people who already share this interest. This is a good opportunity for people to get to know one another better, as well as to learn more about the birds. It is an all-day activity, so dress for the weather, bring a lunch and snacks, plus binoculars, scopes and bird books if you own them.

Another part of the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is people who watch and count birds at their feeders. We seek people who live in the actual CBC circle to participate. Participants count all the birds seen at their feeders, on the day of the Count only, and report them to the compiler for that Count. More information on this activity is available from the contact people listed below.

The Bird Count Coordinator for WHAS is Alan Richards. Please contact him regarding participation in the Leadbetter Point CBC; he may be reached by e-mail at mrm@willapabay.org or via phone at 360-484-7119. The compiler for the Leadbetter Point CBC is Robert Sudar (fallcreek@toledotel.com / 360-423-1780). There will be a count-in get together at Hunter's Inn, Naselle, the evening of the Count, starting at about 5 PM.

Please contact directly the compiler for the Wahkiakum CBC: Andrew Emlen (aceasp@pacifier.com / 360-795-8009). The Wahkiakum CBC groups will meet at Skamokawa Center Café for Washington counters and at The Logger Restaurant (in Knappa) for Oregon counters at 7:00 AM, and at Skamokawa Center Café at about 5:00 PM afterward to tally results.

Please contact directly Bob Reistroffer regarding the Cowlitz-Columbia CBC (BReistrof@aol.com / 360-636-5125). Bob sent the following note: "Well... you can get 2007 off to a great start by being a part of this years 3CBC (Cowlitz-Coweeman-Columbia Bird Count). This will be our 23rd official year and we hope it will be a record setter. Last year we spotted 80 species and 8,728 individual birds. Our count will be a part of the 2006 International Christmas Bird Count. We will be out for an 8 hour period covering a 15 mile diameter area for as many birds as will let us see them. We hope to have more cooperative birds this year. Please plan to join us this year. If you are new to birding this is a great way to discover the thrill. To sign up, call Bob Reistroffer 360-636-5125. I'll form teams in mid-December and get contact information to all participants then. We will plan to have the compilation potluck at our house 146 Scenic View Dr., Longview. I will get a map and driving directions to all participants."

We are looking for a volunteer to be a compiler for the CBC. Please see the notice on Page 7.

Please Join Us!

Support Willapa Hills Audubon Society by paying annual dues directly to this chapter. People who join National Audubon Society automatically become members of WHAS, however, National Audubon Society shares only a very small amount of the total dues money with WHAS—*currently less than \$2.00*. So, consider joining the WHAS chapter to help provide programs, field trips, bird counts and education projects here in our four-county region.

Chapter Membership

____ **\$20** for annual membership dues.

____ **\$15** for full time students. *Make check payable to Willapa Hills Audubon Society.*

National Audubon Membership

____ **\$20** for one year introductory membership in the National Audubon Society with Willapa Hills Audubon Society affiliation. *Make check payable to National Audubon Society*

Combination

____ Yes, you can do both options above, if you like. *Please write a check for each (\$20 to National Audubon Society and \$20 to WHAS.).*

Willapa Whistler Only

____ **\$5** for six issues (one year). *No membership is included with this option. Make check payable to WHAS.*

For any of the options above, clip this form and mail it with your check to:

Willapa Hills Audubon Society
P.O. Box 399
Longview, WA 98632

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

____ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

____ Please add me to your Discussion email list

____ New **Y14**

____ Renewal **7XCH**

For more information about WHAS, You may call Wayne Nelson at 503-556-9379 or Betty Mayfield at 503-556-6841.

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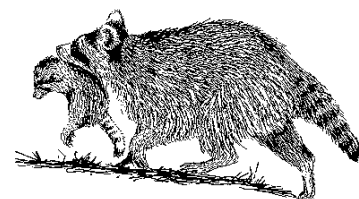
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360-875-6172 bcfarms@willapabay.org



Raccoons, By Robert Savannah, USFWS

PROGRAM SCHEDULE MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

**Watch upcoming Whistlers for details
on time and venues.**

Margaret Green, Program Chair

Saturday afternoon, January 27, 2007

Mike Donahue – Seabird Specialist and avid birder/naturalist will share his knowledge during the “I Love Seabirds” program. This will be a great opportunity to learn about these birds we rarely encounter, because their lives are spent at sea.

Saturday afternoon, February 24, 2007

Dr. Dennis Paulson, scientist and author returns to Longview to provide us “Birds of the Wind: the Lives of Shorebirds”. Last year Dennis shared the wonders of dragonflies. He brings just as much enthusiasm and expertise on the subject of shorebirds.

Monday evening, February 26, 2007

WHAS will cosponsor a Northwest Voices program with the Longview Library and Lower Columbia College. Jim Lynch, author of “The Highest Tide” will read and talk about his book, written of a young boy’s love of tidal flats and marine life near Olympia.

Saturday afternoon, March 17, 2007

Taldi Walters, Alaska Field Coordinator of National Audubon, will share with us the beautiful birds and natural treasures of Alaska, and the challenges facing these wild areas.

Since this is St. Patrick’s Day, we hope to have our silent auction, some other surprises and lots of fun during this program.

Tuesday evening, May 15, 2007

Dr. Robert Michael Pyle will join us for a Northwest Voices Program in Longview. He will take a break from chasing butterflies to read and share thoughts from his new book “Sky Time in Gray’s River: Living for Keeps in a Forgotten Place.”

UPCOMING FIELD TRIP

Introduction to Winter Waterfowl at Lake Sacajawea

*Pamela Wright and Ann Musche
Field Trip Chairs*

Join us November 18 for an orientation to urban winter birds and finally put names on all those ducks at the Lake. We’ve designed this short jaunt for those who would like to mix comfort with birding. We will observe birds at the Lake for about an hour and a half and then retreat to the warmth of John and Margaret Green’s home a block away where we can watch the well-fed backyard birds with a warm drink in hand. This is a wonderful opportunity to jump start your identification skills and get tips on how to attract a diversity of birds to your own yard. We will meet at 8:30am and finish up about 10:30am. Group size is limited, so please RSVP for meeting place details. Contact John or Margaret Green at jgreen2317@aol.com or call 360.575.9238.



Wilson’s warbler, False Pass, Alaska. *Photo By Steve Puddicombe*

Book Review

By Ann Musche

RARE BIRD: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet

Maria Mudd Ruth Rodale Press 2005

It is entirely fitting that I should have written this review, as my husband and I have been avidly curious about them since 20 years ago when a dear friend introduced us to the enigma surrounding these little seabirds.

These birds lead the most astounding lives, forsaking saltwater only in their mysterious (ideally) yearly breeding attempt. Maria Mudd Ruth, though not an ornithologist, nor even a biologist, does a credible job of portraying the puzzle which the nesting of murrelets has represented for many many decades. (The quest to discover the first documented Marbled Murrelet tree nest lasted from 1789 to 1974...when a tree surgeon in Northern California encountered, 148' feet up in a state park redwood tree, a bird he felt "looked like a squashed up porcupine with a beak sticking out....")

Birds with such specialized needs are extremely vulnerable. What these birds want are: very large old trees with limbs broad enough and mossy-licheny enough to create a resting place for an egg and later a hatched chick, near enough to a fish-filled sea, and surrounded by enough other large trees as to provide adequate cover from predators (corvids, rodents and others.)

It was while reading the sections about efforts of a series of concerned biologists, mostly in the 80s and 90s, to bring the plight of these birds to official attention that I had to repeatedly wipe away the tears. Here were clearly laid out, in a timeframe which encompassed roughly my time of membership in WHAS, the myriad ways in which we humans have utterly failed these birds. Oil in the salt waters, and not just spills, gillnetting in particular and overfishing in general, fragmenting of the old forests, encouraging increasing corvids to enter remaining forests, these are the main forces we recognize as causing the downward spiral of the murrelets.

Yet some birds hang on, a few nesting less than 10 miles from where I sit as I write this. We in Audubon perhaps do the best we can to support their breeding efforts.

Lest I discourage you from reading it by mentioning my personal pain and guilt, let me assure you that this book is jammed with readable, enjoyable accounts of the step-by-step discoveries made in recent years. Dedicated scientists have, with great difficulty, looked into the lives of the murrelet to learn what truly intrepid creatures they are, and there are fascinating stories told here....Let this book inform and inspire you.*

Once I got past my pique that the publisher had chosen a non-scientist to do this writing, I found the book to be informative, to for the most part flow smoothly, and though it lacks an index, which I find to be a sad lack in many such modern books, to lay out a compelling story.

*The USFWS is currently conducting a genetic study of the marbled murrelet across its range, after which it must respond to the Bush administration directive to consider delisting the bird (from special considerations under the Endangered Species Act) in CA-OR-WA.

Major Environmental Education Initiative Launched

From Audubon Newswire

TACOMA - Citing the need for Washingtonians to create a sustainable future as our population grows, on September 22 Gov. Chris Gregoire and William J. Ruckelshaus launched E3 Washington (<http://www.e3washington.org/about-e3-washington>), a statewide comprehensive approach to optimizing environmental education for all children and adults who live in Washington State. "Audubon Washington was a key partner in this launch," says Heath Packard, Environmental Education Association of Washington's Board President and Audubon Washington's Policy Director. The initiative is designed to link and leverage current resources, identify areas that need improvement and/or development, and gain increased commitment and funding from both private and public entities.

President's Message

By Steve Puddicombe

Season of Hope

"Fall Time" is here and with it the usual activities of the season. Where I live the harvest of fruit and flesh, followed by the process of preservation and stockpiling in larders, and the frantic chopping and stacking of wood is common, but everywhere, in city and rural dell, prosaic duty is the order of the day as the light wanes and the air cools—leaves must be raked, summer furniture put away, bird feeders hung out. In all cases it is about preparation for winter, yet, along with that, squirreled away carefully with the seeds in marked white envelopes, is the certainty that spring will follow.

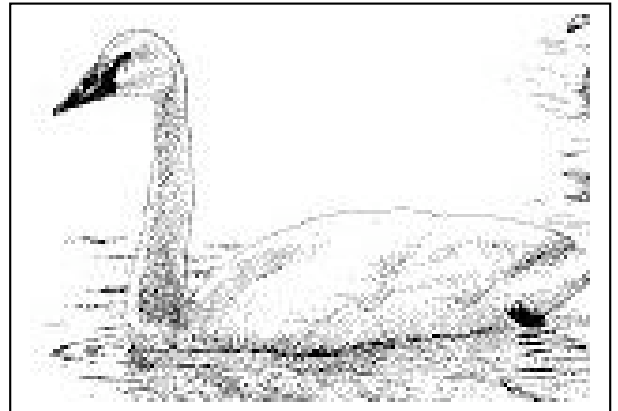
Fittingly or not, autumn is also the beginning of the political season. As the woolly bears search for a proper spot to bed down and seeming billions of flies and ladybugs enter the cracks of my clapboard house to hibernate, the November election looms. As chronicled in recent issues of the Whistler, there are numerous initiatives and campaigns that link to conservation issues; both locally and nationally the outcome of this election will most assuredly create conditions to either enhance or further diminish efforts to protect fish and wildlife and our natural environment.

Yet, even with so much at stake and in the face of such dispiriting events in our world, I cannot help but have hope. Not a naïve hope; not a simplistic hope brought about by blacking out everything unpleasant: but the hope native to all beings on this earth—the raw energy of existence implicit in nesting geese or mating elk, in planting a seed or, indeed, in the act of voting or standing for a cause.

For me hope is most cleanly manifested in the autumnal: it is my favorite season. Bittersweet and lovely, the stink of dead salmon and color of decaying leaves swirling about the harvest basket, still fresh-scented, there is both the sense of loss and impending want along with the reminder of luxuriance and plenty. It is the season when thanksgiving and expectation is most clearly matched.

This year I have a bumper crop of apples. There are so many I even welcome my yearly battle with the deer and flickers in my orchard as a chessman would a worthy adversary. Recently I ordered a hand made

cider press, to be delivered next summer, basking in thoughts of a long quaff and juice trickling down my chin. I find these thoughts to be reassuring, hopeful. Still, the greatest reassurance comes with the light of a new day, when just outside my window there is always the truth of hill and sky, of the trees and grass. Always the certain sure course of nature, come what may.



Highlights from the Sept. 23 Board Meeting

By Charlotte Persons

Most exciting was the possibility of WHAS taking on stewardship of Columbia Land Trust (CLT) acreage across the road from Julia Butler Hanson Refuge. CLT would get grants and do restoration work; WHAS could supply volunteers to do restoration work and to monitor the results. After the meeting, board members had a short tour of the acreage, which has possibilities of being restored to original stream configuration and native foliage. A representative of CLT will come to the next board meeting to make a presentation so that WHAS can decide whether to take on this role.

WHAS's annual goals are: to continue to expand membership; to be actively involved in local conservation issues; to continue to cooperate with other environmental groups with similar goals.

Darrel Whipple reported on several animals being mounted with last year's chapter grant funds from Audubon WA, including a marsh wren, sapsucker, grey fox, belted kingfishers, great horned owl, and brush rabbit (possibly for the owl's talons). Like the rest of our collection, these will be housed at Lower Columbia College's biology lab and used in educational displays.

Darrel will be Education Chair and Margaret Green interim Program Chair until another person can be found.

Wildlife Sightings

By Andrew Emlen

On Oct 2 the Greens saw a Barred Owl land in their downtown Longview yard, a yard list first. Barred Owls have shown a remarkable increase in our area over the last few years. Absent when I moved to Skamokawa in 1999, they first appeared in my yard in 2002, and by last year were the most frequently heard owl after Northern Saw-whet.

In Alan Richards' and Ann Musché's Naselle yard, they watched several Steller's Jays seeming to play tag or otherwise entertain themselves, with a Sharp-shinned Hawk (immature). The hawk would land in the top of a tree, swoop down toward one of the jays, then veer away, after which a jay would do the same toward the hawk, then all would fly around in circles, and then re-land in the tree. This process repeated for several minutes, then all seemed to tire of the game and went their separate ways. A few days later near Mt. Hood Alan watched the same behavior with another Sharp-shinned Hawk and a group of Gray Jays. Also in their yard, elk were heard bugling on 9/12 and 9/19.

The first Varied Thrush appeared in their yard 9/24. Varied Thrushes generally breed in mountains and foothills and descend to lower elevations for the winter, though some breed at low elevations in coastal areas. Their first returning Fox Sparrow was on 10/4. Most of our Fox Sparrows breed at 3000 feet or more in the Cascades and points east.

Another high elevation breeder, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, made its first appearance in my Skamokawa yard 10/2.

On 10/2-7 Ann & Alan encountered partial albino juncos, one with abnormally large amounts of white. None were seen there in 2005, however several were noted in 2004. Margaret Green also reports seeing a partial albino junco in her Longview yard.

On 9/26, Thea Pyle's mushroom foray near Grays River turned up few chanterelles due to the dry season, but she did get a long look at a bobcat that seemed unaware of her presence. She also reports that Woodland Skipper numbers have dwindled since the end of September, but on 10/5 in her Grays River yard a few turned out along with a Lorquin's Admiral and a Mylitta Crescent. Bird numbers there have been quiet but for a large group of Band-tailed Pigeons attracted to the abundant crop of mast from their English White

Oaks. The pigeons, in turn, have attracted raptors, most recently a Red-tailed Hawk.

The first grebes of fall are returning to the lower Columbia; a 10/3 kayak trip turned up a Red-necked Grebe near Puget Island and an Eared Grebe in Blind Slough; neither species is common that far up river.



Bald eagle nesting on a rock spire, Alaska. Photo By Steve Puddicombe

Do you have favorite original wildlife photos or interesting and/or amusing short stories about birding or other wildlife encounters that you would like to share?

We would be happy to print them in the *Whistler*. Copyrights will be acknowledged. Digital photos are preferred, but we can scan film photos if necessary. Please send them to Al and Diane Clark, *Whistler* editors, Box 102, Cathlamet, WA 98612 or email to alan_c_clark@hotmail.com.

Update on WHAS Conservation Issues

By Charlotte Persons

Coal-gasification Plant in Kalama—An article in The Daily News in September announced that the consortium, Energy Northwest, has applied for a permit, and that Cowlitz County PUD plans to get some future electricity from the plant. Please stay alert for future calls for comments.

Copper Mine at Mt. St. Helens—Email 10/17 from Ryan Hunter of Gifford Pinchot Task Force: “You may have heard about the recent court ruling reinstating the 2001 Roadless Rule. In a recent federal court decision, a federal judge found that the Bush administration illegally repealed protections for nearly 60 million acres of pristine national forests lands, thus reinstating the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The suit brought by four states, including Washington, and twenty conservation groups was a historic victory for America’s roadless forests. Not only that, but it also provides added protection to the Tumwater Inventoried Roadless Area, which overlaps with the lease area boundary for the proposed Mount St. Helens mine. This roadless protection will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the mining company to construct an open pit mine at the site, but there is some legal uncertainty at this time as to how it would apply to an underground mine, so, needless to say, we can’t stop fighting!” Please stand ready to write comments as the public comment period will probably begin in December or January when the next stage of the application process is initiated.

Liquid Natural Gas Receiving Terminal at Bradwood, Oregon—Fifty people marched across the Rainier Bridge to Longview on October 14 to protest this facility. The protest was organized by Landowners and Citizens for Safe Community. A full press report can be read from The Daily News files at tdn.com. Be ready to join future action against this facility.

Ethanol Plant in Longview—The siting of this plant is terrible. It is half a block from houses in a residential area and in the Mint Farm Industrial Park, designated “light” industrial in the Comprehensive Plan and in its original EIS. WHAS wrote comments to the Department of Ecology asking that an EIS be required because of problems with emissions and wetlands mitigation. This request was denied. WHAS board has voted to no longer be involved in this issue because there appear to be no environmental issues that affect habitat. Our mission statement does not include

anything about “environmental justice” issues. However, a small, non-associated group called Neighbors for Livability, is continuing to fight the siting. Contact John and Margaret Green at 360-575-9238 or jgreen2317@aol.com if you would like to help.

Who to Call about Dead Birds

Avian influenza (bird flu) and West Nile virus are attracting a lot of attention recently. Both involve birds and have human health implications.

Avian influenza is a viral illness commonly found in birds. Most strains of the virus don’t seriously affect birds and don’t affect people at all. However, one strain, called Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI H5N1) can kill both birds and people. It can be transmitted directly from birds to humans.

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne disease that affects a wide variety of animals, including birds and humans. Birds can serve as a reservoir for the disease and often die from it. Most people, after being exposed by an infected mosquito bite, have either no symptoms or very mild flu-like symptoms. However, susceptible people, especially small children and the elderly, can develop devastating or even fatal symptoms.

So who do you call if you find a dead bird(s) that hasn’t died from any obvious cause? Here are the phone numbers. **Don’t handle the bird. If you feel you must, use protection (rubber gloves, etc., sealable plastic bag).**

Washington 800-606-8768

Oregon 866-968-2600

Volunteer Opportunity – Christmas Bird Count Compiler

We need a Christmas Bird Count compiler. This person compiles the information from all three of the Christmas Bird Counts sponsored by WHAS and sends it to the National Audubon Society. Alan Richards will help the new volunteer to learn the job in 2006, with the goal of that person being the compiler in 2007. Please contact Alan Richards at mrm@willapabay.org, 360-484-7119, if you are interested.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The *Willapa Whistler* is the bi-monthly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Articles, information, wildlife sightings and black-and-white artwork are welcomed. The deadline for inclusion of material in the *Whistler* is the 15th of each even-numbered month. Complimentary copies are sent to organizations and prospective members. All WHAS activities and programs are open to the public. The *Willapa Whistler* is printed on recycled paper using soy based ink.

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.

Field Trip

See Page 3 for Details

November 18 - Introduction to Winter Waterfowl

Programs

See Page 3 for Details

January 27 - I Love Seabirds, by Mike Donahue

February 24 - Birds of the Wind: The Lives of Shorebirds, by Dennis Paulson

February 26 - The Highest Tide, by Jim Lynch

Board Meeting

November 12 - Julia Butler Hansen Refuge Office, 9AM