

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Summer 2020



Bald Eagle --- Image by Steve Hemenway, February 25 near the Cowlitz River

Willapa Hills Audubon Annual Picnic

By Larry Brandt

We're all looking forward to our annual picnic scheduled for **Saturday, August 8**, Covid-19 willing. And we're excited by two recent events and hope to share these with picnic attendees: First, our resident ospreys have hatched three chicks. The nest is visible from the yard and a telescope puts you right in the nest. The noise from the talking parents can be heard for blocks! I guess they're happy parents! Second, we have a pair of red-breasted sapsuckers nesting somewhere nearby. I can't find the nest but we see them regularly. This siting makes 63 species found at our home!

As in previous years, the picnic will be held at the Brandt residence, 18 Island View Lane in Cathlamet, WA. Hours are **2:00pm to 5:00pm**. Attendees are asked to bring one covered dish (a salad, entree, dessert or snack) to feed 4 to 6 people. Each person should bring their own plates, cups and tableware. Ice, water, iced tea, napkins, paper towels, tables and chairs will be provided. Sun and rain protection is available if needed. The Brandt residence is located on the east edge of Cathlamet on the south side of State Hwy 4. To get to the picnic from Longview, look for the yellow 40-mph speed sign as you enter Cathlamet. Turn left onto Island View Drive 50-yards past the speed sign. To get to the picnic from the west, drive through Cathlamet on Hwy 4. As you are leaving Cathlamet look for a yellow 55-mph speed sign. Immediately turn right onto Island View Drive. Stay in the right lane and drive all the way back to the end of the road (0.1-mi.). There is lots of space for parking.

So, mark your calendars for August 8. We will send out an email alert if the picnic is cancelled due to **Covid-19**. This same information will be posted on the Willapa Hills website: www.willapahillsaudubon.org

Earth Month

By President Steve Puddicombe

This year's Earth Day celebrations were much muted if not canceled entirely, due to the social distancing requirements needed to stymie the Covid19. Yet the last month, without streams of cars on our highways and hordes of people at our beaches and parks, proved to be more of a boon to the natural world than any one day ever could be. In one month we got a lesson more pure and informative than any number of booths or displays at county fairgrounds can provide.

We've seen clear skies and unsullied vistas in cities around the world that have for years been clouded with vehicle emissions. Human activity curtailed, we've seen feeding animals reclaim the daylight hours and small town squares; we've seen porpoises swimming near shore, turtles advancing up empty beaches to lay their eggs; and we've seen herds of elk cavorting in coastal waters.

We've seen just how completely humanity dominates our globe, and how important our stewardship is. We've seen how a microscopic bit of DNA can discombobulate us. It's all in stark contrast to the world we experienced just over a month ago, and tenfold.

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Support our mission, join WHAS today!

Membership renewals are due March 1 of each year. If you prefer to pay by credit card use our online form on our website. Membership includes 4 issues of our newsletter *WILLAPA WHISTLER* annually. Gift Memberships are available online.

Check type of Membership:

- Individual Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$25 check for annual membership)
- Family Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$35 check for annual membership)
- Lifetime Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$750 check for lifetime membership)

We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible
 For membership in National Audubon Society visit <https://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 _____ Chapter # Y14

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
- Email
- Mail

Other options:(Add your email below)

- I prefer to receive the *WHISTLER* by email
- Contact me about volunteer opportunities
- Add me to your announcement email list*
- I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____**

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Shop at Amazon through <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/91-0951287>. Choose "Willapa Hills Audubon Society" as your charity and we'll receive 0.5% of your purchase total.

**Volunteer Opportunity:
 Purple Martin Count and Banding**

Randy Hill, along with Cindy McCormack, will be banding and counting purple martins again this summer at various locations in SW Washington. They will likely have 3, possibly 4 banding sessions in July and August, about 10-14 days apart. "Everyone will have a chance to see up close and handle nestlings, learn aging comparing nestlings to representative photos of plumage, feather emergence and patterning. As with band searches and attempts to ID we will sex and age adults and yearlings." Locations include Ridgefield NWR, Julia Butler Hanson NWR and Indian Jack Slough, the Columbia Land Trust property near Cathlamet, as well as others.

Randy says that birders are welcome to count birds at gourd and nest box locations themselves, following guidelines he can provide interested parties. He recommends having 2 scopes and several spotters from different spotting angles for accuracy. These counts can begin at any time.

For more information and to volunteer to help with banding contact Randy at re_hill@q.com

Sharp-shinned Hawk Predator to Hummingbirds

By Suzy Whittey ~ Photographs by Doug Swanson

A good friend of mine witnesses and photographed a series of hunts by a Sharp-shinned Hawk on the Anna's Hummingbirds who frequent his yard. Over a three hour time frame starting about four in the afternoon and lasting until dusk, Doug Swanson who lives in a gated RV community on the Long Beach Peninsula watched amazed as the Sharpie and the Hummers battled in the narrow spaces between his RV and his gardens that are backed by a fence in his yard. The sharpie was successful on 3 out of 7 attempts. Catching and consuming 3 Hummers in 3 hours. Most of the aerial maneuvering was in and around the bushes, flowers, yard



art and his BBQ grill just below the 10 foot level.

When we watch Hummingbirds around a feeder or flowers and they are buzzing up, down and around they appear to be moving too fast for a predator. But a Hummingbird's maximum forward flight speed is 30 miles per hour, a Robins is between 20 – 36 mph in comparison. When hunting a sharpie can reach speeds up to 60 mph in short bursts. Songbirds make up about 90 percent of the Sharp-shinned Hawk's diet. Birds smaller than an American Robins are their most frequent prey.

WHAS Board Notes and Election Results

By Steve Puddicombe

The Willapa Hills Society board met virtually online on April 13, via phone. Among a variety of issues, the situation with Covid 19 was a major topic. WHAS has cancelled several events and delayed others and the uncertainty of the future of public gatherings led to a discussion about the possibility of holding virtual webinars and presentations online. It was agreed to have the next board meeting on June 20 online as well, this time with the video links from individual attendees.

The results of the **board elections** were certified as follows: Steve Puddicombe, president; Larry Brandt, vice-president; Sherry Hawkins, treasurer; Cathy Kendall, secretary; John Gross, Darrel Whipple, Ann Cordero, Robert Sudar and Randy Bergman, board members-at-large. Board members serve two-year terms. The next election will be in 2022.

Several conservation issues were discussed and are ongoing: WHAS has signed on to a letter asking for an EIS before a proposed road across the pumice plain at Mt St Helens national monument is approved. Dam removal on the Snake and Columbia rivers to restore salmon numbers continues to be a topic of discussion. Now there is a new proposal to build a dam on the headwaters of the Chehalis River.

Programs, field trips and important conservation issues are listed at our website and frequently updated and if you are on the WHAS alert list you will receive notices via email. If you'd like to be on the alert list go to the WHAS website at www.willapahillsaudubon.org/member-services and follow the links to sign on.

Continued from page one: Earth Month

50 years after the first Earth Day, this "Earth Month" has been a deep reveal of interconnection and interdependence. From the wet markets of Wuhan to the piazzas of Italy and the senior centers of Seattle, we are all in this together.

WHAS has responded by carrying our board meetings

online and by canceling all our events until further notice. Check out our website for educational opportunities and activities for the home-bound. Watching and learning about birds remains a simple joy.

Stay safe! And happy birding.

Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey nets record 74

By Darrel Whipple – Image by Steve Hemenway

With the last four years running up totals of 24, 12, 26 and 14 eagles, respectively, one would be forgiven for asking, "What's going on here with the 2020 survey?" "How come this year's survey yielded 74 Bald Eagles?" "And what's with the photo of eagles in the barnyard? Give me a break!"

Indeed. Well, Steve Hemenway and I had decided to run the survey later than the usual last week of January, waiting for him and Deb to return from their trip to California and Mexico. So it ended up coinciding with the last days of the smelt run on the Cowlitz and Columbia. Hungry eagles showed up from all over the region. How fortuitous!

And if Feb. 25 had not started off with an hour of thick fog, we would likely have tallied 30 more at Rocky Point instead of the five we barely glimpsed. (Steve proved that possibility on his way home through that stretch, counting 33 eagles in a steady rain.)

We turned up eagles at all the usual perches, and soaring eagles in between. The north latitude-longitude block (roughly, the Coweeman mouth to the I-5 bridge over the Cowlitz, as described 1979) yielded 26 adults, 13 sub-adults and 11 undetermined (soaring). The south block (Coweeman to



Kalama Marina) had 14 adults, 2 sub-adults and 8 undetermined (soaring).

The total for the seven-hour 2020 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey was 74 eagles (40 adults, 15 sub-adults and 19 undetermined).

We also noted the presence of 33 other species, including 1 Peregrine Falcon and 9 Red-tailed Hawks. The barnyard eagles on Mandy Road? Well, we're still scratching our heads over that one.

Audubon Society Winter Raptor Survey Project

By Jeff Fleischer

The Winter Raptor Survey Project (sponsored by ECAS), originally started as an Oregon project, is a very large citizen science project that covers the 4 Pacific Northwest states of Oregon, Idaho, Washington, and a small part of Northern California. The project is designed to enumerate wintering populations of birds of prey with once a month surveys being conducted during December through February with optional surveys additionally completed in November and March. We ended this winter's effort with a total of 392 active routes covering more than 24,800 miles of transects. All project data is portrayed in a collection of charts and maps that can be found on the ECAS website (ecaudubon.org) and is also provided to *The Peregrine Fund* for storage in their data base and analysis.

Prior to this past winter, 22 routes in WA extended from the Cathlamet area along the WA side of the Columbia River all the way east to the Tri Cities area. For this past winter, an extensive expansion effort occurred adding 66 new WA routes, mostly throughout eastern WA. Three routes were added to the SW coastal region, one covering the Long Beach peninsula, one covering the Chinook-Naselle area and the third covering the Grays River area. All three were very successful survey efforts, coming up with a total of 9 species (Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Cooper's Hawk, Barn Owl, and Barred Owl)

with Bald Eagles the most prevalent species found. To date, 31 species of birds of prey have been recorded on project surveys.

Volunteers for the project are provided a survey route prepared by the Project Coordinator. They are asked to commit to doing one survey per month during the three month primary survey period and they can conduct the surveys based on their own life schedules. They should have a good working knowledge of raptor ID and have at least a pair of binoculars to use (spotting scopes suggested but not required). They are asked to drive their routes in a manner that will allow for thorough examination of habitat to get the most birds for the time spent on the surveys and can hopefully conduct these surveys during favorable weather conditions when most birds are out and about.

The expansion effort this past winter was a tremendous success but there is still room for more routes for next season. Besides the three routes mentioned, other established routes in the SW quadrant of WA include two in the Cathlamet area, two in the Ridgefield area, and one each in the Longview, Woodland, and Vancouver Lake areas. More routes have already been prepared for next winter and they include coverage in the Raymond-Holcomb, Raymond-Tokeland, Boistfort-PeEll, Toledo, Winlock, and Brush Prairie areas with a few more still to be planned in this part of the state.

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Continued from page 4: Winter Raptor Survey

It is our firm hope that those reading this article will be interested in participating in this project next winter by taking on one or more of these available new routes.

You will be joining a cadre of hundreds of enthusiastic raptor lovers that have managed to conduct over 12,000 surveys in the 16 years of this project. More than 52,500 hours have been provided by project volunteers to conduct these surveys with

more than 90% volunteer return rate each winter, once you get involved you don't want to quit :).

If this sounds like something that you would like to get involved with next winter, please email me with your location so that I can match you up with a route near you. I will provide the necessary items, including a project survey protocol, to get you started and be available any time to help you enjoy the experience!

You can reach Jeff at raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com

Conservation Matters

By Larry Brandt, Conservation Chairman

Two proposed land use projects in our very back yard may soon come to fruition and create irreparable harm to the environments of Cowlitz, Lewis, and Wahkiakum Counties unless our communities unite to halt them in their tracks.

The most disconcerting of these is a proposal to build a dam on the Chehalis River near Pe El, WA. The purpose of the dam is strictly for flood control. No doubt, you have seen or heard about the farms, homes and businesses around Centralia that were built in the Chehalis flood plain in total disregard of the natural motions of the river system. Dikes were built decades ago to protect portions of Lewis County and the City of Chehalis. In spite of diking, these very farms, homes and businesses have suffered multiple losses over the past decades. To protect the at-risk structures the Chehalis Flood District proposes to spend more than \$640,000,000 to build a temporary retention-only dam. While this action and the addition of levies will spare some of the homes and businesses in the natural flood plain, the environmental cost will be staggering.

Scientists and analysts that prepared the WA State Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) have determined that the dam project will adversely impact salmon and other fishes, wildlife such as amphibians, water quality, river channel stability and recreation. Further, the EIS states: The project would increase greenhouse gas emissions and could significantly impact tribal and cultural resources.

Two public meetings were previously held in Montesano and Centralia and no other meetings are scheduled at this time. It is up to the public to tell the Flood District "NO" on this project and to find other means to save poorly located assets. Imagine how many dikes can be built and businesses and homes relocated for \$640,000,000!

The Willapa Hills Audubon board of directors is asking members to call or write the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to tell them we disapprove of the project. Comments can be submitted until May 27, 2020. Please, please call or email your comments to Chehalis River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Project EIS, Anchor QEA, 1201 Third Avenue, Suite 2600, Seattle WA 98101. On-line comments can be submitted to <https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/eis/>
The Chehalis River source is in the hills of Wahkiakum County.

We next address an issue of critical importance to conservationists, to hikers and to researchers working on the pumice plain below Mt. Saint Helens. The plain was created when Mt Saint Helens erupted in May 1980. This locale, stretching out from the cone of Mt. Saint Helens, is one of the most unique places on earth. However, the six square miles of



landscape and forty years of geological and biological research are in jeopardy because the U. S. Forest Service wishes to build a road across the middle of the pristine pumice landscape. Their stated goal is to access a drainage tunnel built in 1997. This action would, not only destroy the research of many scientists, but the back and forth of enormous drill rigs, grinders and crew vehicles would likely impact the entirety of the plain. In several letters to the U.S. Forest service Susan Saul*, Conservation chairman of Vancouver Audubon, objected to the proposed plan to build a road, and instead, proposed delivering workers and equipment by helicopter. Something the USFS frequently does. The cost of helicopter access to the tunnel would likely be more than building a road. However, Susan's plan would not jeopardize the millions of dollars of research money previously invested in studies of geological and biological significance. An excellent article about the pumice plain and impact of road-building can be found at: <http://www.walpa.org/waterline/march-2019/researchers-conservationists-raise-alarm-about-proposed-road-through-mount-st-helens-pumice-plain/>
Willapa Hills Audubon will inform members when a comment period re-opens.

*Susan Saul was one of the first advocates for the creation of the Saint Helens monument and a lifelong leader in its conservation. Willapa Hills Audubon Society was a proud co-signer of Susan's letters.

Richard Louv Article Brings Kids and Parents Together with Nature

By Ann Cordero

Here in Southwest Washington and Northwest Oregon we are fortunate to have places where we can be outside and take advantage of social distancing to give our children an appreciation for nature. I'd like to recommend a current article by Richard Louv of the Children & Nature Network, the man who coined the phrase "Nature-Deficit Disorder." The title is: "10 Nature Activities to Help Your Family Through the Coronavirus Pandemic" and it is available at:

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/2020/03/16/10-nature-activities-to-help-get-your-family-through-the-pandemic/>

When you read the article you will realize that Louv has many more than ten suggestions, including books, games, and webcams and some interesting insights. Here is his basic list:

- Pick a "sit spot."
- Set up a world-watching window. Bring the outside in.
- Take a hike or do exercise outdoors.
- Go backyard, rooftop or deck camping.
- Got dirt? (Dig in it!)
- Find nature everywhere—and create more of it.
- Plant a family or friendship tree or adopt one.
- Be an electronic wildlife watcher.
- Give a book that will inspire an outdoor adventure.
- Tell your own nature stories.

Audubon members are already demonstrating an interest in the natural world, and it is vital to share this with the children in our lives, especially those with whom we are living at this time of confinement. It is an opportunity for mentoring and learning together. I once heard the educator Madeline Hunter say, "People learn better when taught." Now we can take the time to examine, identify, and tell the stories of natural features like plants, animals, nests, rocks, fossils, and water together, read books about biology and earth science, and explore the world with binoculars and hand lenses. My parents did all of these things for their children and gave us wonderful memories in the process. We can also give our children space to engage with the natural world in solitude.

Not only do these activities promote the development of each child's naturalist intelligence, as described by Howard Gardner, but they also cultivate the sense of wonder which Rachel Carson recognized as the spark that will kindle a lifetime of fascination and curiosity about the world. We can give children the tools to understand concepts of ecology and to become responsible stewards of the Earth, especially if we all have fun together exploring and discovering. Enjoy your adventures!

New species at our farm

By Robert and Lisa Sudar

We had an unusual species at our farm west of Longview about 10 days ago – a Lazuli Bunting. Neither Lisa nor I had ever seen one before and I didn't even know that they occurred west of the Cascades, but Sibley says they do.

Here is what Russ Koppendrayner had to say about it: Lazuli Bunting is a species that has been increasing in abundance in Western Washington for the last 20 years or so. For Cowlitz County I first found them only in the Toutle drainage and some of the other regeneration areas up towards Mt. St. Helens. Then we found them in Willow Grove and more recently in clear cuts for the first few years of regrowth. Other Western WA counties have similar stories with their expansion being slower as you get closer to the Pacific. Nice find.



Spring Migration of Swifts documented at Rainier Church

By Darrel Whipple, Image by Linda Jennings

Looking back to last fall, it was a banner season of swift watching, culminating in a dramatic one-night count of 17,889 southbound birds roosting in the church chimney on September 30, 2019. This was the second highest report among the 15 major roost sites on the flyway.

WHAS's volunteer observers again leapt into action April 24th, 2020, to greet the returning birds in the northbound migration. Observers were Carolyn and Art Norred, Linda and David Jennings, Kerry Noel and me.

Except . . . northbound wasn't quite so dramatic, number-wise, at least. Our high count came on May 6 when Carolyn and Art tallied 12,090 of the wee birds



Primal Warblings

By Carolyn Norred

The Swift Migrations

The blacktop parking lot has a hole that holds a severed pipe where a merry-go-round once stood.

The Riverside Church meets in the old elementary school where at recess I would rush to push that merry-go-round as hard and fast as I possibly could when I was six and certain.

This evening I stand here, somewhere between science and sentiment as thousands of tiny birds flying in from Venezuela without reservations circle above me, grouping to roost in a defunct church chimney on their way north for the season.

I count them by tens carefully with my clicker 2,000 one night, over 6,000 another. For a week or two I attend faithfully filing my report online knowing at seventy-six I haven't got a clue.

spiraling into the Riverside Community Church chimney in Rainier.

Nevertheless, that number stands out as the highest one-night count -- ever! -- in a northbound migration of Vaux's Swifts, from any site other than Wagner Elementary in Monroe, Washington. (It has not been uncommon for Wagner to top 10,000, and its record is 21,027 on May 7, 2008.)

So, the Rainier site is making history in only its first cycle of migrations. The chimney was opened to swifts on April 30, 2019, when Larry Schwitters, Paul Rice, David Rice and I removed the top grate that had been there since 1992. No swifts roosted last spring, but thousands found the chimney during the southbound migration. And we can look for a repeat performance come this September, if the current nesting season goes well for the swifts.

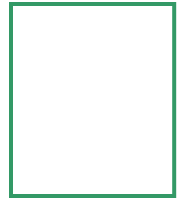
Well, you win some, you lose some . . .

One evening in early May Carolyn Norred was sitting in her camp chair watching hundreds of Vaux's Swifts soaring and diving over the Riverside Community Church in Rainier. Two teenaged girls walked by, heading for the Fox Creek Trail. Carolyn pointed out the birds and explained she was there to count them as they fly into the chimney.

After a short while the girls came back from the trail, and Carolyn's husband Art heard one say to the other, "There's that goofy lady still counting those birds. She's gotta be off her rocker!"



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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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Find us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Willapa-Hills-Audubon/1386609461578276>

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.

Willapa Hills Audubon Annual Picnic

All members are invited to attend the 2020 annual picnic on Saturday, August 8th, at 2pm; more info on page 1

Kyleen Austin's presentation "*Exploring the Waters Of The Pacific Northwest*", that was canceled in March, has been rescheduled as a **live-streamed event on Zoom at 2 PM, June 28, 2020**.

It is the story with photographs of Austin's epic journey kayaking from Alaska to Washington during Summer, 2019. Check our website later for access code information for this event. If you are on our alert list, we'll send out a notice.

**WHAS made changes to membership by switching to a yearly renewal date.
All membership renewals are due at the beginning of the year.**

**Other programs and field trips will appear on our website and will be announced through our email alert system.
More information about the alert system here: <http://willapahillsaudubon.org/index.php/member-services>**