

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 48 // Issue 1

Spring 2022



Common Redpoll as seen in January 22 in Longview
Image courtesy of Russ Koppendrayner

Annual Announcements

By Steve Puddicombe, President

It's that time of year again. Elsewhere in this issue you'll find information on how to renew your chapter membership. WHAS now has an annual renewal just once a year for all members. If you are a National Audubon member you also receive this issue each year so that you can see your local chapter in action. **If you are currently a national-only member in our territory, we invite you to join us as a chapter member as well.** It's never been easier to do and you'll help support our local efforts.

Once again, the board of WHAS has decided not to have an in-person annual banquet due to the pandemic, but everyone is invited to attend our **annual board meeting, Saturday March 26 at 10 a.m. via zoom.** We will post the code to attend at our website on the Friday before the meeting. We are considering a program to coincide with our annual meeting and will also announce that at the website.

It's also time for the **election of our board and officers** as we do every 2 years. Included in this issue you'll find a description of candidates and a ballot, as well as an envelope (you can also use to

send in a renewal check). We'll announce the new board at our annual meeting.

And it's that time of year to look ahead to Spring, the end of the winter rains and flooding, and for the time we can take our masks off and see each other again. That means field trips, programs, and projects. For all this we are in debt to volunteers. **If you've ever felt you'd like to volunteer**, now is the time. Just contact any of us at willapahillsaudubon.org. There are opportunities to aid in banding Purple Martins, improving access to bird-watching sites, helping educate children to understand bird life and habitat concerns, and we have been looking for that coordinator of programs we haven't had in several years.

There is something heroic in these times, in advocating for the natural world and recognizing that we are all in this together. Without melodrama, there is still an overwhelming need to stand strong in favor of our love for birds and how these brethren encapsulate our concern for the future. Please join our efforts and volunteer now.

A Message to Our National Members

Please become one of the National Audubon Society (NAS) members in our area who supports the local chapter, Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS). Membership dues provide resources directly to the chapter. It is a very significant contribution towards local conservation work and education programs, which benefit our communities. We provide speakers and field trips open to all members of our communities free of charge. Your membership donation to WHAS also allows us to send you a copy of our quarterly Willapa Whistler newsletter which includes project updates and event announcements.

We know donations are discretionary and appreciate whatever level of giving you choose. You will find more details in the **president's message** on the left and in our member form on page 2.

2022 Elections for WHAS Board of Directors

Don't forget to vote in our biennial elections. Officers will serve for 2 years; the next election will be in 2024. The final tally for 2022 will be at the next board meeting on March 26. Candidates this year include Steve Puddicombe; Larry Brandt; Cathy Kendall; Sherry Hawkins and five Board Members-at-Large:

...more info on page 5

In this issue of the Whistler:

- Membership Form
- NW Birding Events
- Christmas Bird Count Results
- Keep your feeders clean
- The Loon Lunch
- Conserving Coastal Birds and Habitat

Support our mission, join WHAS today!

Membership renewals are due March 1 of each year. If you prefer to pay by credit or debit card use our online form on our website at <https://willapahillsaudubon.org/join-us-donate>.

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

Please make your check payable to:
 WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to:
WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632.

Name _____
 Address _____ Email _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____

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

We will not share your contact information with anyone. For membership in National Audubon Society visit <https://www.audubon.org/> Chapter# Y14
 *) To announce **occasional** reminders and to communicate last minute changes due to weather or other issues for WHAS programs and field trips.

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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 \$ _____

Donate to WHAS when you shop!


 You shop. Amazon gives.

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.

Winter Wings Festival 2022

Klamath Basin Winter Wings Festival takes place February 18-20, 2022. Winter Wings brings together birders and photographers of all stripes to learn and explore. The Klamath Basin is renowned for its winter raptors and its stunning abundance and diversity of waterfowl. It features **Richard Crossley**, author of the Crossley ID Guides and co-author of Ornithery: For Your Mind, Body, and Soul. For our photography keynote we are excited to have **Jennifer Leigh Warner**, conservation wildlife photographer. Join them for an extensive array of field trips, workshops, and presentations. To learn more visit www.WinterWingsFest.org.

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival 2022

The 2022 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival is scheduled to be held either Virtual or In-Person for March 25-27, 2022. More info: <https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

Olympic BirdFest 2022

Olympic Birdfest will take place April 22-24, 2022. The featured speaker is **Scott Pearson**, researcher in Ecology, Marine Biology and Zoology at the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. It is preceded by a San Juan Islands Cruise and followed by a two-day excursion to the Neah Bay area of coastal Washington. More info and BirdFest registration at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

2021 Willapa Bay Christmas Bird Count Results

By Robert Sudar, Compiler

The weatherman predicted a significant storm for Southwest Washington on Saturday, December 18th, and he didn't disappoint. Despite having to again institute a "pandemic approach" to organizing the count, 19 counters spread amongst 8 groups in 8 sectors of the count circle, plus two feeder watchers, braved heavy (as in sideways) rain and 30-40mph winds to collect bird numbers for this year's Willapa CBC. It was the worst weather that anyone could remember for count day and it certainly had a negative influence on sightings. Willapa Bay was very rough and so the usually flotillas of ducks were mostly absent, as were some other typical birds that prefer the open water. There were fewer sightings, and in some cases no sightings. The same can be said for the ocean side of the peninsula. Crashing waves and blowing sand made it difficult to observe and count. But that's a yearly risk, really – who can predict December weather? – and so this year was an aberration, not the norm.

Overall, 18,486 individual birds comprising 84 species were seen and recorded. The total number of birds is actually slightly more than last year (helped greatly by the 11,625 Dunlin seen) but for comparison, last year we had 88 species and some years we've been close to 100. I don't think this indicates a natural decline, but rather the challenges in seeing what's there. Last year, I lamented that "there were no Brants, no Greater White-fronted Geese, no Gray Jays, no Snowy Plovers, no Northern Shovelers, no owls of any species, no Coots, no Bitterns, no Sapsuckers and only Common Loons." This count we still didn't have any Gray Jays, Northern Shovelers, owls, Coots or Bitterns but we did have 10 Brants, 21 White-fronted Geese, 8 Snowy Plovers, a Red-breasted Sapsucker and all three loon species that we might expect to see in the winter.

Of course, the good news and the bad news and overall drop in species means that there were regular species that weren't seen, such as Peregrine

Falcon and Northern Harrier, and really any members of that family except Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel. Other omissions this year that we would normally expect to see were Ring-necked Duck, Great Egret, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Bewick's Wren or any warblers except Townsend's. And last year's star – Bar-tailed Godwit – was nowhere to be seen this year. But that's kind of the story every year – each count is different.

There were some unusual sightings, too. We had 6 American Dippers – again! We also had 2 Snow Geese, 6 Chipping Sparrows and a White-throated Sparrow. And this year's star might be the Black Phoebe seen in the North Oceanside sector by Suzy Whittey. That species has been seen more frequently in SW Washington in recent years but I believe it's the first time it's been spotted during the count. A Hooded Oriole again made an appearance this year, in the Bay Center area, but unfortunately it was again outside the count week. Bummer! As always, the variety, and the unexpected, are what make birding, and bird counts, interesting!

Many thanks to the counters who persevered through the awful weather to collect another year of valuable data, and especially to Suzy Whittey, who did another great job of organizing the count and making sure we all had the information we needed to do the job. Next year's count will be on December 17th. No doubt it will combine the expected and the unexpected, too!



On Jan. 3, 2022 — during the "count week" — Mary Duvall reported Canada Jays at her home in the Oregon-West sector of the count circle of the Cowlitz-Columbia Christmas Bird Count. (This photo is by Mary on Jan. 8.) Canada Jays, formerly called Gray Jay are coniferous forest dwellers who store up bits of plant and animal food in cracks in tree bark for retrieval during winter.

40th Cowlitz-Columbia CBC Results

By Bob Reistroffer

On January 1, 2022 the 40th 3CBC was held as part of Audubon's 122nd Christmas Bird Count. Eleven field observers and 5 feeder watchers joined and spent a partially sunny day finding 8,620 birds and 90 species. The temperature ranged from 26° to 36°. This was the cold day with ice and snow on many roads that hampered the coverage of the area.

We had several high counts: 39 Common Raven, 154 Varied Thrush, 1 Lesser Goldfinch, 4 Cooper's Hawk.

Seen during count week: 2 Canada Jays, 1 Rough-legged Hawk, 1 Peregrine Falcon, 1 Barn Owl, 1 Eurasian Wigeon, 2 Canvasback, 1 Northern Harrier, 1 Iceland Gull

New to the count this year: 1 Lesser Goldfinch. Thank you all for a great job.

Hope to see you all next year on Tuesday, Jan 1, 2023.

Wahkiakum CBC Results

By Andrew Emlen

The 24th annual Wahkiakum CBC was held January 5, 2022, after canceling on December 28, 2021 due to weather. 15 volunteers found 57,425 individual birds of 113 species plus 2 additional count week species. Temperatures were from 35-40 degrees F with an east wind of 5-7 mph and a nearly ceaseless light rain. Despite having fewer volunteers (usually there are 20-24), this is close to average in terms of numbers of individual birds and species.

The most abundant species this year was Cackling Goose with 20,367 counted, followed by Greater Scaup at 9002 and European Starling at 2900. These are the usual top three. Cackling Geese represented over 35% of all the individuals counted. Conditions made it difficult to find birds that are dependent on flying insects, but as Mike Patterson noted in his trip report, "It was a good day for ducks".

New high counts were set for six waterfowl species: Snow Goose 430 (former high 141), Trumpeter Swan 27 (20),

American Wigeon 2089 (2037), Mallard 2567 (1688), Green-winged Teal 2344 (2199), and Common Merganser 219 (183). A total of 44,354 ducks, geese and swans represented over 77% of all individual birds counted. Other new high counts were for Dunlin 1220 (1006), Red-shouldered Hawk 12 (8) and Rough-legged Hawk 7 (4). The increase in Red-shouldered Hawks for the Wahkiakum Count mirrors increases across Oregon and Washington.

To see how Dr. Steve Hampton used CBC data to track west coast species that have been expanding their ranges northward with the warming climate, see <https://thecottonwoodpost.net/2020/03/09/the-invasion-of-the-pacific-northwest-californias-birds-expand-north-with-warmer-winters>

All of the species he examines have shown similar overall trends in the Wahkiakum CBC circle. Many thanks to all volunteers for counting on a challenging day.

WDFW Reports Dead Birds This Winter – Keep your feeders clean!

WDFW again this winter has said that they are receiving reports of dead and dying songbirds. WDFW has not yet issued a Salmonellosis warning but are concerned. **If you feed birds they recommend daily cleaning of feeders, or to take them down until April if feeder maintenance is a problem.**

Salmonellosis is a common and usually fatal bird disease caused by the salmonella bacteria. It is transmitted through droppings and saliva when birds flock together in large numbers, such as at bird feeders. The first indication that a bird has it is that it will appear to be tame, is lethargic, fluffs out its feathers, and is easy to approach. At that point, it is usually in late stages of the illness and there is nothing that can be done to help except to report them to WDFW's online reporting tool for sick, injured or dead wildlife. It is important to note that salmonellosis can be asymptomatic. Asymptomatic individuals pose as much a risk in spread of this pathogen as those obviously sick.



Image by Doug Kuehn

Reducing unnatural opportunities for backyard birds to flock together, such as at bird feeders, helps to alleviate these risks in transmission amongst individuals.

The Loon Lunch

By Suzy Whittey

At the Chinook Marina in early January I photographed this Common Loon thinking it was trying to eat a crab because my eye saw orange in its mouth. It wasn't until I was looking at the photos on my computer that I realized that it was not a crab, but a Ruddy Turnstone. I was amazed because the Ruddy appeared alive even though the Loon had dove with it many times.

I shared the photos with my birding friends wanting their input on how these two met. The early and most common answer was that a storm blew the Ruddy into the water. Then I heard from a birder wanting to know if I knew about the "Alligator Effect". It turns out that Loons will hunt like an Alligator by submerging their bodies below the water with only the tops of their heads and eyes exposed so they can swim up and snatch prey.

Ruddy Turnstones tend to feed on rocks and their bodies are adapted to this. From the "All About Birds" website "*Walking on wet and slippery rocks can be treacherous for just about anyone without good gripping shoes. Ruddy Turnstones have special feet that are somewhat spiny, with short, sharply curved toenails that help them hold on. They also have a low*

center of gravity thanks to their short legs that helps keep them anchored."

As soon as I read that, the scenario came together in my mind. The Ruddy was probably at the water's edge feeding on



By: Holly K. Austin -

<http://woodswomanextraordinaire.blogspot.com/2011/08/loon-alligator.html>

the rocks that surround the marina and the Loon seeing the Ruddy snuck up like an alligator and grabbed the Ruddy. Mystery solved? I think so.

Thanks to: Margaret & John Green ~ Dianne Fuller ~ Dan Varland PhD ~ Scott Horton PhD ~ Madeline Kalbach PhD



Suzy Whittey
Loon holding onto the wing of the live Ruddy



Suzy Whittey
The Ruddy is standing up in the mouth of the Loon

Conserving Coastal Birds and Habitat

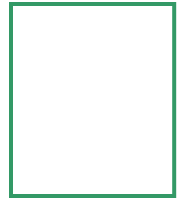
From Washington Audubon

2022 is a crucial year for Puget Sound seabirds and shorebirds. With new investments in Puget Sound by the federal government and a bold strategy for salmon recovery led by the Governor and Tribes, important advancements could be made that would have lasting impacts on salmon, birds, and coastal communities. Investments made in habitat and clean water for salmon will benefit birds through the restoration and protection of wintering and foraging grounds in nearshore and estuary habitats. We are

also working closely with our partners at the Stillaguamish Tribe, WDFW, and Ecostudies to develop a more strategic approach to avian monitoring in estuaries. We are excited to work together with Audubon chapters and partners to strengthen shoreline protection regulations, accelerate estuary restoration, and deliver scientific support for the conservation of Pacific Flyway birds like Dunlin and Surf Scoters.



PO Box 399
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.



Please recycle your *Whistler*
or pass it on to a friend.

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.

Fieldtrips and in person programs are postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions and will resume once gatherings are allowed again.
Please check our website for updates!

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.

Don't forget to **vote** for
WHAS Board Officers!

See ballot attached to this issue
for all local WHAS members!

**WHAS made changes to membership by switching to a yearly renewal date.
All membership renewals are due in March.**

**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/member-services>**