

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Summer 2022



Gambles' White crowned Sparrow - Image by Suzy Whittey (see page 3)

The Struggle for Survival

By Steve Puddicombe, President

This morning I found several baby Robins that had been plucked from their nest and randomly dropped, about 25 feet apart. They were getting pretty big but were still fairly naked, with well-developed tail and wing feathers, about 3-1/2 inches long. Earlier in Spring I saw the usual three or four blue eggs scattered close together along the road near the barn; perhaps the victims of marauding Starlings. And my lone tree swallow, nesting in a box on the wire pole, seems to have lost its mate. I only see the one, head poked out of the box or perched on the wire, strangely quiet when normally the air is alive with them in the morning and at dusk.

Each spring I see this sort of thing: a dead hummingbird on a window sill; a dead bat in the grass; chicks of various species strewn about. One year I found three dead Barn Swallow youths in an abandoned nest, not quite fledged, huddled together for warmth. Perhaps their parents had been killed. It was so poignant that I gathered the nest and kept it in my house. I still have it all these years later, exactly as I found them; and though skeletons now I can still see the wing of

one sibling covering another, can sense the repose unto death from starvation in that earthen nest tucked under the eave of my shop.

It isn't morbid, my propensity to collect these specimens. I'm fascinated by the shapes and forms, the variety of physiognomy, the rich coloring or lack thereof, in the pursuit of survival. It's a resource to understand our fellow beings. I've got Garter Snake skins, a preserved native Alligator Lizard, the skull of a Great Blue Heron, a Pacific Wren, and the skulls of a Sea Otter and Wolf, from Alaska, among other things.

But all these remnants of lives lost are also, in some way, a gentle reminder that there is danger out there; that mortality is ever-present. We birders know all about this: where there are small birds in numbers there are always the fewer, larger predators. We know all about the aggression for dominance in mating, the territorial competition for resources, the reality of the food chain. And the devastation of disease.

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Annual Picnic

By Larry Brandt

Don't miss the Willapa Hills Audubon annual picnic.

After a hiatus related to the Covid-19 pandemic, Willapa Hills Audubon will resume our summer picnic. Again, this year the picnic will be held at the Larry and Sam Brandt residence overlooking the Columbia River in Cathlamet.

Members and guests are invited, and kids are welcome. Attendees should bring a salad, entree, or dessert to feed 4-6 people. You will also need to bring your own plates, tableware, and refreshments. We will provide seating for everyone, water, ice, cups, napkins/towels, and trash disposal.

So, come and watch the ospreys rearing their young. Set aside **Sunday, August 14** for a fun time with other birders. Picnic hours will be 2-5 pm.

To reach the Brandt residence from Longview, watch for the yellow '45 mph sign as you near town. Take the next left at Island View Lane and keep right all the way back to our house. From Naselle, drive thru Cathlamet on Hwy 4 and watch for the 55-mph speed sign. Take an immediate right turn onto Island View Lane and drive all the way back keeping to the right.

We will send this message out again a few days before the picnic or check our website for these details.

Have a great summer and stay safe!

In this issue of the Whistler:

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- NW Birding Events
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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 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!



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.

Rainier Audubon Bird Festival

June 25, 2022, at Flaming Geyser State Park, Auburn; more info here: <https://rainieraudubon.org/event/bird-festival-at-flaming-geyser-state-park>

Puget Sound Bird Fest

September 10-11, 2022

Keynote Speaker: Martha Jordan

The Puget Sound Bird Fest is a celebration of birds and nature that happens each fall in Edmonds, Washington. Typically, the weekend-long event offers presentations by local experts, field activities, exhibits, vendors, kid's activities, and workshops and demonstrations. Many Bird Fest activities are free , other activities require a nominal fee and advance registration.. Please check <http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com> for the latest information.

Wings over Willapa Festival

September 23-25, 2022

This annual birding and nature festival is a celebration of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge's many species and diverse habitats. There will be an array of tours, workshops and other events happening all around the Long Beach Peninsula and Willapa Bay. More info at <https://friendsofwillaparefuge.org/Wings-Over-Willapa>

Gambles' White-crowned Sparrow Mystery

By Suzy Whittey

On April 21st and 22nd of this year I had a special surprise when I saw a color leg banded Gamble's White-crowned Sparrow at my feeder in Long Beach, WA. I had had a flock of about 22 Golden-crown Sparrows show up with 2 white crowns probably on their way north.

I was very excited to see the bird and I took some photos, then went to the USGS Bird Banding Lab's website to report the bird. I had difficulty making the report due to the fact that the bird did not have a silver numbered Federal leg band. It only had plastic colored auxiliary markers on each leg.

I was told in an email from the USGS site that they would try to locate where the bird was banded but it would be highly unlikely that they would ever know who banded the bird because of the lack of a numbered band. They share my observation with bird banders from southern California to Alaska along the Pacific Flyway.

I heard from many ornithologist and the consensus was that the bird was either part of a research project or was a captive bird from an individual's private aviary



Suzy Whittey 4-21-2022

that escaped. Licensed banders will always put a Federal band on their birds.

Earth Day, 2022

By Steve Puddicombe, images by Ann Cordero

Willapa Hills Audubon had a booth at this year's celebration held at Lake Sacagawea on April 30th and organized by Karry Williquette, recreation coordinator for the city of Longview. The recent rains mostly held off and the event was well attended with lots of kids present, young and old. There was a sense of joy in celebrating after several years cancellation of the event due to the Covid pandemic. And the outdoor location matched everyone's enthusiasm.

Kids were once again wowed by several of our mounted specimens, especially the colorful Kestrel, and by learning their wingspan with our folding wings (seagull, Red Tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle). We got a lot of questions from many and even made some connections with community



members for projects in area schools and parks. Fun was had by all.



Thanks to Gloria Nichols, Larry Brandt, Ann Cordero and Sherry Hawkins for organizing our participation, and to Dave and Libby Whitney, Carolyn Norred, Steve Puddicombe for helping. Stephen Glucoft aided with publicity.



...continued from page one: The Struggle for Survival

These last few years have been a stark reminder that human beings are not separate from the natural world of struggle. The Covid virus has held the entire earth in its thrall for more than two years and has forever changed our society. We've also seen in detail how our propensity for the acquisition of power and the use of violence is still a threat to us all. Observing our adaptation to these threats has been fascinating and not unlike watching birds and our other brethren.

WHAS has been adapting as well. We've been holding our meetings and some programs via Zoom for two years now. Our CBC's have been held with smaller numbers and with carloads of family members and friends to minimize the chance of virus transmission. It's a tough go, however, and it was great to finally get out in public at the recent Earth Day gathering in Longview where we attracted potential new members and entranced youngsters with our mounted specimens.

Happy Birding!

Vaux Swifts Spring Migration

By Carolyn Norred

21,131 little Vaux Swifts roosting in a 4x4 defunct furnace chimney in Rainier, OR: No, even though I am there, counting, I don't believe it either, but that is the number Terri and I finished with as we each clicked away on our little clickers as the swifts crowded into the chimney top on the evening of May 11, 2022.

In order to count these drifts of little cigar-shaped birds, we each have a clicker as we eyeball the critters dropping into the chimney. Then we time our numbers by 10. It is sometimes surprising how closely we come to each other's number, considering how quickly the birds drop into their roost. Each evening throughout the month of May these numbers reach into the thousands.

The birds are on a journey north to lay eggs and raise babies in British Columbia. The amazing part is their journey begins in Central America. Averaging about four inches long, they fly all day as they cannot stand perched on a branch. Their little legs are shaped for hanging onto a rough tree bark or brick chimney side. Thus, they rest overnight along the way.

The last few years Terri, Juni, and I have enjoyed recording the Riverside Church chimney roost data for a Cornell University Swift study. Terri and I compare counts to reassure ourselves that the astounding numbers we end with are legitimate. Juni clicks a masterful camera.

The birds can be pretty unpredictable but, in general, we can say if the weather is relatively calm, they begin entering the roost sometime around 7:00 p.m. and conclude after sunset, usually by 9:00 p.m.

In conclusion, I will say that a couple of fine added benefits of our time spent counting at the roost is the variety of other birds and folk who come by as we sit in our camp chairs enjoying the evening and watch the town close for the night.

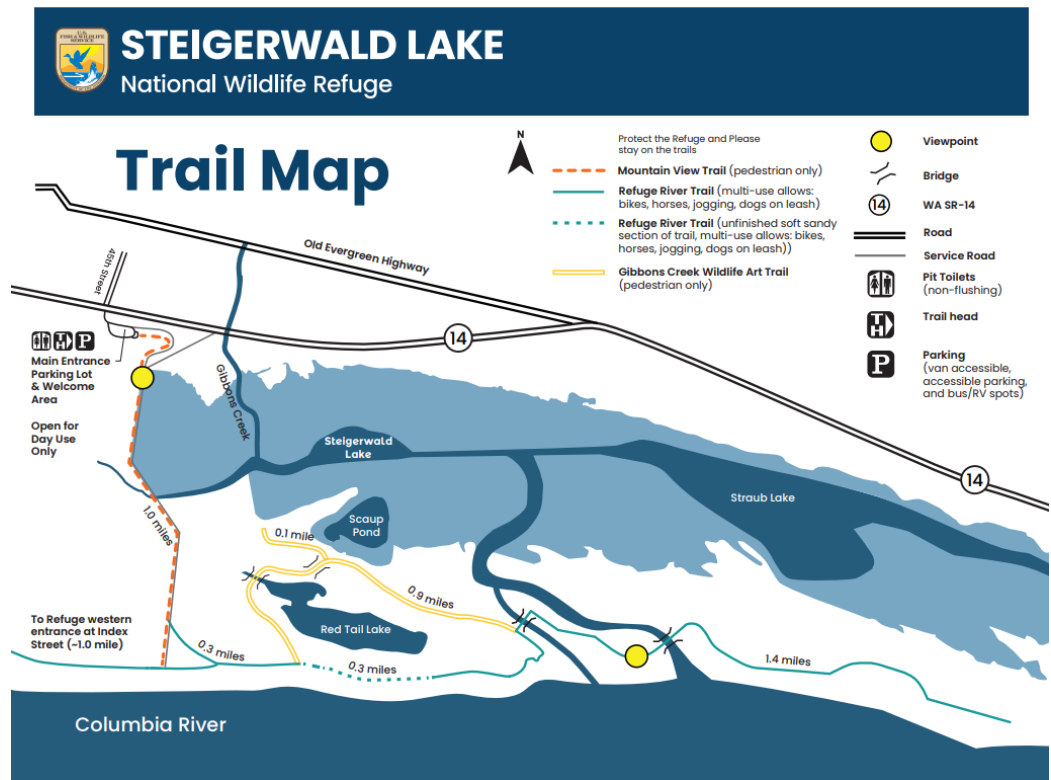


The picture is of a great blue heron who swooped in low and perched atop the chimney surveying the territory for some time one evening.

Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge reopened in May

The Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge reopened on May 1st, 2022, after a massive restoration project to restore historic seasonal wetlands. It was the largest restoration project along the lower Columbia River. Many of the trails and facilities were rerouted or changed during the work.

The project was started to limit flooding and increase salmon and steelhead migration. Funding came from the Bonneville Power Administration, the Washington Department of Ecology, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bonneville Environmental Foundation.



2022 Elections for WHAS Board of Directors

The results of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society’s bi-annual **board elections** were certified as follows:

- Steve Puddicombe, President,
- Larry Brandt, Vice-president,
- Sherry Hawkins, Treasurer,
- Cathy Kendall, Secretary,
- Darrel Whipple, Member-at-large,
- John Gross, Member-at-large,
- Ann Cordero, Member-at-large,
- Robert Sudar Member-at-large,
- Carolyn Norred, Member-at-large.

Board members serve two-year terms. The next election will be in 2024.

Changes included removing about 2 miles of levees separating the Columbia River from nearby Gibbons Creek, that reopened a natural pathway for salmon and steelhead migration and added almost 1000 acres of floodplain habitat. Before removing the levee, fish could only bypass the embankment through a fish ladder, which is a series of pools built to allow fish to swim over obstacles like dams.

The levee was originally constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1960s to prevent the Columbia River from flooding the area. Steigerwald Lake NWR was established in 1987 to offset lowland habitat loss caused by construction at the Bonneville dam. These lands were established to reduce the impact of this loss and provide more habitat for migrating and resident wildlife.

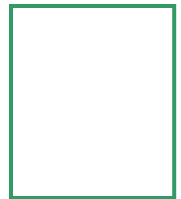
Trails include the Mountain View Trail, Gibbons Creek Wildlife Art Trail, and the Refuge River Trail.

The main visitor facilities are accessible via the main entrance off highway 14, though the refuge can also be reached via a trail connection from William Clark Park at South 32nd Street, Washougal, WA. See map for more information.

The map and some of the information are courtesy of <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/steigerwald-lake>



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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.

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/willapahillsaudubon/>

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.

Sunday, August 14 - 2-5pm in Cathlamet, WA
WHAS Annual Picnic – see page one for the details

The Whistler Online

Did you know that you can subscribe to the Willapa Whistler on our website? All the links are easy to follow.

Go to whistler.willapahillsaudubon.org for this and past issues.

Membership Renewals

WHAS made changes to membership by switching to a yearly renewal date.

All **membership** renewals are **due in March** of each year.

You can renew online by using a credit card or by mailing a check.

See page 2 for the details!

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: <https://willapahillsaudubon.org/member-services>