



WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 49 // Issue 3

Fall 2023



Brown Thrasher

Image by Suzy Whitley

Cooperation

By Steve Puddicombe, President

The Vaux Swifts are beginning to use the roost in Rainier again, on their way South. My own recent migration, from the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands, was much of the same route but by jet aircraft and at 30,000 feet. Yet, here we both are.

But, ruminating on that coincidence I got to thinking about cooperation, and what a role it plays in all forms of life.

With the swifts it's finding a proper roost and then spending the night, safe and warm. The examples in the bird world are so ubiquitous as to be redundant. And similarly across the animal world with some species, such as bees and ants, where individuals are subsumed by the greater whole.

So, what about us?

Yuval Harrari, the historian who wrote the best-seller "Sapiens" (a seminal work) says that what has made humanity so dominant is primarily our ability to cooperate in large numbers. While Chimpanzees can work together in groups up to roughly 100, he points out, Harrari notes that we now cooperate all across the globe and virtually the entire 8 billion of us, in some way or other.

I must confess that my recent travels did rather amaze me in the context Harrari sets out, despite my usual hesitation at clapping our species on the back:

I flew roughly the distance of 1/6 the circumference of the globe, on two separate flights that I booked a month ago, despite all the weather and mechanical considerations, on time in both, fairly comfortably at between 10,000 and 30,000 feet in the atmosphere, and in tubes that were directed at high speeds without accident. And I believed that it would be so.

The only other experience that compares was navigating the highways with thousands of others on my way home from Portland!

It's good to remember and even honor our ability to work together for the common good even as we so often struggle to do so. That we CAN cooperate is our birthright; if we WILL, in light of the difficulties facing us, is the question.

In any case, Happy Birding!

Fall Western Toad Watch

All you toad lovers out there are invited to join the similarly inclined, warts and all, later this Fall at Grays River when thousands of young leave the river and head for their over-wintering grounds.

Each September thousands emerge from the ponds in the riverbed and travel into the riparian areas and beyond to burrow into the soil and "hibernate."

But the time frame for this event is inexact. If you'd be interested in seeing this marvel, let me know at 360-465-2205 or pudfella@willapabay.org and I'll contact you when the time arrives.

Christmas Bird Counts 2023

Save the dates:

This is a fun event for seasoned and new-be birders alike. All dates and events are preliminary as there might be changes and adjustments. We will have all the details on our website and in the Winter Whistler - published in early December.

Leadbetter (Pacific County) –
December 16, 2023

Wahkiakum – tbd (week 52)
Coordinator: Andrew Emlen

Cowlitz-Columbia – January 1, 2024

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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.

✂ _____ -Clip

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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 \$ _____**

Puget Sound Bird Fest

September 9-10, 2023

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 22-24, 2023

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>

Ridgefield BirdFest and Bluegrass Celebration

October 7 2023

BirdFest and Bluegrass is the main event every year that the Friends & the City of Ridgefield put on to bring awareness to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, and all that it has to offer. They celebrate the Sandhill Crane returning to the Refuge, a huge stately bird that is endangered in Washington State, and they celebrate everything the Refuge is and what it brings to the community. More at <https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/>

The Carbon Capture Foundation Offers Free Trees

By Larry Brandt

As they have for the last several years The Carbon Capture Foundation (TCCF), a charitable organization sponsored by one of our own WHAS members, Norm Dick, is offering free bare root native tree seedlings to all WHAS members, their families and friends for planting on their property. Primarily four species will be provided: Douglas fir, western red cedar, black cottonwood, and red alder. However, if other species are needed, that may be possible by special arrangement. Generally, the limit per household is 240 seedlings per year, but this limit may be exceeded by arrangement with TCCF. If you, your family or friends wish to order seedlings you, your family or friends may contact WHAS by email at grossenuf1@gmail.com or phone at 360 425 0083.

The seedlings will be delivered to WHAS this next winter between late December and the end of February. WHAS will be in contact with those requesting trees to coordinate delivery dates and times. Tree recipients are responsible for

making arrangements to plant their seedlings and maintaining them. WSU Extension Foresters are available to help with questions online, by phone and sometimes in person. Also, materials on seedling planting, care and maintenance will be provided by TCCF when you pick up the seedlings.

The only limitations for receiving the free seedlings is that they cannot be used for commercial purposes, for replanting areas you have had logged, or for planting areas that you have to plant to keep your ground as forest land for tax purposes. For planting purposes these trees should generally be planted about 12 feet apart. And cedars are best planted in areas that tend to be wet or close to wet areas. With our current drought conditions cedars are struggling to survive in dry areas that they formerly did well in.

We urge Willapa Hills Audubon members to take advantage of this offering.

Impressions from the WHAS Summer Picnic

WHAS members and friends gathered at the annual summer picnic at the Brandt residence in Cathlamet.

Photo's courtesy of Sherry Hawkins



Breeding Bird Survey Summary 2023

By Robert Sudar

June is Breeding Bird Survey month at the Sudar household and this year we managed to avoid holding it on Father's Day. By 4:40AM on June 11th, we were patiently waiting 5 miles up Abernathy Road for the 4:50AM start time. The weather was about as good as it gets for this survey – no rain, light clouds, and no wind. Not cold enough to require gloves or extra clothes and not too hot by the end of the count around 10:45AM. So basically, nothing much to complain about once we silenced the alarm clock at 3:15AM.

For those of you unfamiliar with this count, it's kind of the opposite of the Christmas Bird Count. Whereas the CBC tabulates what is wintering in our region, the BBS wants to identify what is spending the summer in our area and likely laying eggs and raising young. Because of the leaf cover and the necessary secrecy when trying to protect hatchlings, a lot more of the identification is done by bird call since vocalization is another aspect of breeding season. That's my wife Lisa's role – she is the primary identifier, and I am the recorder. You can count any species you see, too, but many are only heard.

The route assigned to us has been in place for around 50 years or so. Darrel Whipple was the faithful counter for many of those years and he passed the torch on to Lisa six or eight years ago. The count starts 5 miles up Abernathy Road west of Longview – several miles past the fish hatchery – and then runs down to Ocean Beach Highway, west to Oak Point, along Mill Creek for a mile or so and eventually up the Old Cathlamet Highway and into the Elochoman valley, ending up almost in Skamokawa. There are 50 stops – every half mile – where we listen for 3 minutes and record all the species we hear and see, and how many of each species, though that is less precise than in the CBC because it's so much harder to see the birds in their summer habitat. For instance, Lisa may hear a Band-tailed Pigeon calling. It could very well be part of a group of birds but since it's only heard and not seen, it counts as only one unless the

flock presents itself by taking flight or perching in a visible location.

Every year is different, and this year was no exception. We saw a Black Phoebe again on the count. That's a newer species in the area and we've seen it for several years in a row now. Warbling Vireos were heard in quite a few locations instead of the one place on the route where they were historically, and irregularly, present. Lisa heard a Saw-whet Owl. It's very rare to hear or see an owl so that was a bright spot. There was a ruckus at one stop where we thought Steller's Jays might be mobbing another owl. We couldn't spot any owl but some curious Canada Jays came by to check the noise, and us, out, too, and we were happy to add them to the day's list. They are one of our favorite birds on the count. Ducks are not very common along the way but this year we saw both Wood Ducks and Gadwalls at one stop, so it was great to add them to the tally. And we had a group of Common Ravens noisily talking back and forth while perched on a snag. We decided it was a pair of adults training three yearlings. Loudly.

And there were some noticeable absences compared to 2022. We didn't have any Red-breasted Nuthatches, or any Kinglets, and we haven't seen any American Pelicans since 2021 even though we know there is a group in the area. Maybe next year!

We ended up with 53 species, which we felt was pretty good. We had 57 in 2022 but if we can surpass 50, we are happy, so this year goes in the books as a success. We also introduced a newer birder to the count. Longview resident Janice Stixrud wanted to join us, and I think it was a positive experience for her. Of course, there's no point in complaining – once we start the count there is no stopping or turning back unless it rains! But Janice was a good sport, and I think she found it helpful in her journey to learn more about our local birds. Now we have 9 months to practice bird call identification and dull our memory of that early alarm until next year.

Birds seen:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. American Robin | 19. Common Raven | 37. Olive-sided Flycatcher |
| 2. Pacific Wren | 20. Orange-crowned Warbler | 38. Canada Jay |
| 3. Violet-green Swallow | 21. Cedar Waxwing | 39. Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| 4. Pacific-slope Flycatcher | 22. White-crowned Sparrow | 40. Red-winged Blackbird |
| 5. Song Sparrow | 23. Black-headed Grosbeak | 41. Turkey Vulture |
| 6. Warbling Vireo | 24. Osprey | 42. Western Wood-Pewee |
| 7. Red-breasted Sapsucker | 25. Band-tailed Pigeon | 43. Black Phoebe |
| 8. Black-capped Chickadee | 26. Red-shafted Flicker | 44. Marsh Wren |
| 9. Brown Creeper | 27. Steller's Jay | 45. Bald Eagle |
| 10. Swainson's Thrush | 28. Western Tanager | 46. Red Tailed Hawk |
| 11. Wilson's Warbler | 29. Belted Kingfisher | 47. Brown-headed Cowbird |
| 12. European Starling | 30. Oregon Junco | 48. Purple Martin |
| 13. American Crow | 31. Saw-whet Owl | 49. Rufous Hummingbird |
| 14. Eurasian-collared Dove | 32. Towhee | 50. Scrub Jay |
| 15. Mallard | 33. Yellow Warbler | 51. Wood Duck |
| 16. Common Yellowthroat | 34. Hermit Warbler | 52. Gadwall |
| 17. Willow Flycatcher | 35. Varied Thrush | 53. Goldfinch |
| 18. Black-throated Gray Warbler | 36. Barn Swallow | |

WHAS Board members surveyed Grays River and Salmon Creek Watersheds

By Larry Brandt

On June 28 a Willapa Hills Audubon board members along with Stephen Kropp from Legacy Forest Defense Coalition surveyed the Grays river and Salmon creek watersheds in Wahkiakum and Pacific Counties. We were looking for habitat suitable for marbled murrelet nesting.

Images courtesy of Larry Brandt and Cathy Kendall



ACOW 2023

Audubon Washington and the chapters of the King County region are pleased to welcome back chapters from across Washington State for the biggest ACOW to date at Sand Point on the shores of Lake Washington in Seattle.

Friday, September 29 from 2:00PM - 6:00PM

Join us for Friday afternoon conservation sessions and voting on WSACC resolutions. We'll have a pizza dinner and hear from our guest speaker, Rebecca Heisman, author of *Flightpaths*.

Saturday, September 30 from 9:00AM - 6:00PM

We'll kick off Saturday with a morning bird walk and jump into a day of conservation and EDIB workshops. We'll celebrate the winner of the Helen Engle award and hear from guest speaker and researcher Ursula Valdez.

Sunday, October 1 - Field Trip Day!

Learn more and register here:

<https://wa.audubon.org/chapters-centers/acow-2023-together-birds>

Vaux Swifts Fall Migration

Several years ago, Darrel Whipple and crew removed the grating covering the smokestack at Riverside Community church in Rainier OR. The purpose was to attract Vaux swifts during their twice-yearly migration.

The southward migration of the swifts from all over the Northwest usually starts in September, affording us more opportunities to view thousands of them entering the chimney. The success was greater than possibly imagined. One Sunday night in early September saw 19,514 birds enter the chimney before dark. Similar counts happen each night during the 2-3 weeks of migration. You can watch them and meet our volunteers from the corner of W D St and W 3rd St near Fox Creek during the first few weeks of September.

Larry Schwitters of Vaux's Happening recently sent out the rankings for the top 14 roost sites on the flyway for the northbound migration Rainier's Riverside Community Church ranked second or third in all three categories!

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.

September 2023

Fall Western Toad Watch – see page one for the details and signup information.

September 2023

Vaux Swifts Fall Migration – see page five 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.

News from the Children's Discovery Museum on Commerce Ave in Longview

The Camping/Forestry Exhibit will focus on Camping and Nature. which will go hand in hand with the Nature Niche. It will be opening in the middle of September.

Harvest Festival 2023: We are gearing up for the Harvest Festival on October 14th from 10-4pm. We will have the Reptile Roadshow at the museum and kids will be able to see a variety of creatures.

CDM Holiday Extravaganza!! Also, we have our BIG fundraising event at Lower Columbia College on Saturday December 16, 2023, at 7pm in the Wollenberg Auditorium. It will be a night of holiday magic, comedy and music, raffles and Santa might be there, too.

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/get-involved/member-services>

Find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/willapahillsaudubon/>

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or email them to newsleter@willapahillsaudubon.org.
WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632

contributions to:
of February, May, August and November. Send your
most welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the 15th
Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are
Send in your stories & photos

public.
Most WHAS activities and programs are open to the
available for free on our website.

The *Willapa Whistler* is the quarterly publication of the
Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), a chapter of the
National Audubon Society. Complimentary copies are

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