

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Fall 2024



Can you spot the four Barred Owls? - Image courtesy of Darrel Whipple

A Patch of Sky

By Steve Puddicombe, President

As children we are such joyous sponges, soaking up the world with such a democratic discernment that it evades judgment, worry, or fear, or any and all rejection.

When young we crouch down and look at slugs, eyeball to eyeball. We get prone and, with our youthful, wonderful eyesight, focus in on earthworms, ants, the eggs of crane flies and, perhaps, an uncovered nest of meadow mice, the young babes so fragile and vulnerable, blind, pale, veiny and hairless, we feel we have desecrated a home and its inhabitants, and desire to help in some way....

As youths we lay back in the summer grass and watch a patch of sky with wonder, imagining clouds as shapes of import, questioning what is, in fact, "blue", and, above all else wondering just how far that sky could extend into distance, into time.

This summer, one day, I lay on a hammock and looked at that patch of sky. I saw wisps of cloud in imitation of ghouls or angels; saw the blue of the sky and wondered how far it could go.....and, saw birds.... swallows; a flock of chickadees; a soaring pair of Turkey Vultures; a crowa lone heron, ("cronk, cronk!"); a Bald Eagle.

And there were bees, and various bugs, and even a flitting butterfly. A bit later a hummingbird buzzed overhead. Then there was a small band of Cedar Waxwings.

It was a reminder of how much life there is around us, all the time, even in a patch of sky. Enjoy the late Summer and.....Happy Birding!

Vaux's 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's 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 as they funnel into the chimney to roost for the night. The success was greater than possibly imagined. One Sunday night in early September saw 25000 birds enter the chimney before dark.

...continued on page 3

Christmas Bird Counts 2024

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 14
- Wahkiakum – tbd (week 52)
Coordinator: Andrew Emlen
- Cowlitz-Columbia – December 28
Coordinator: Becky Kent

In this issue of the Whistler:

- Membership Form
- NW Birding Events
- Field Trips and Programs
- A Lovely Picnic at the Turners' home
- Children's Discovery Museum is Moving to Catlin School
- A Camera for the Chimney at Riverside Church in Rainier, Ore

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://www.willapahillsaudubon.org/join-renew-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 _____ Phone _____

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:
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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 \$ _____

Wings over Willapa Festival

September 20-22, 2024
 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>

ACOW 2024

Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) is the annual, statewide chapter gathering when we get to strengthen relationships with other chapters, discuss shared challenges, and learn from each other. ACOW 2024 will be hosted by Black Hills Audubon Society in Olympia and supported by the other chapters in the southwest Washington region. We have reserved a meeting space at **South Puget Sound Community College Lacey Campus on October 4-5, 2024**, with October 6 as the traditional field trip day.

Ridgefield BirdFest & Bluegrass Festival

October 5 2024
 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/>

A Lovely Picnic at the Turners' home

By Ann Cordero

On Saturday, August 10, seven of us enjoyed a delightful picnic at the home of Larry and Joanne Turner. The food was excellent, including warm blackberry cobbler with ice cream! We sat on the spacious porch, surrounded by lovely gardens.

The company was great, and the conversation ranged over many adventures near home and around the world, including Larry Brandt's current work at Hanford. It was fun to be together! But we missed the rest of you!

Image provided by Ann Cordero



Field Trip to Billy Frank Nisqually NWR

By John Green

Do you enjoy waterfowl, eagles, hawks and shorebirds? Join past Willapa Hills Longview members John and Margaret Green on a trip to Billy Frank Nisqually Wildlife Refuge, just north of Olympia, Washington.

We will meet in the refuge parking lot at 9:00 AM, Wednesday morning, January 22nd, 2025. The Refuge is roughly an hour's drive from Longview, at I5 exit 114. Be sure to dress for inclement weather, since January can be unpredictable.

We will spend 3 - 4 hours walking well maintained trails but if you don't wish to stay the entire time, you can peel **So, mark your calendars for January 22**

off from the group at any point. There are also benches available for relaxed viewing.

We did this trip a few years ago and saw lots of birds. Please RSVP by emailing John at jgreen2317@aol.com

Here is the link to the NWR web site to check it out: [Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](http://BillyFrankJr.NisquallyNationalWildlifeRefuge|U.S.Fish&WildlifeService(fws.gov)). A \$3 per vehicle pass is required if you do not possess a senior or other pass for wildlife refuges and other public facilities.

...continued from page one: Vaux's Swifts Fall Migration

Similar counts happen each night during the 3-4 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.

The birds can be unpredictable but, in general, if the weather is relatively calm, they begin entering the roost around an hour before sunset and conclude half an hour after sunset.

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

See page 5 to find out about our process of installing a camera in the chimney to get a live picture on our website in the future and how you might be able to help.

Children's Discovery Museum is Moving to Catlin School

By Ann Cordero

It's an exciting time at the Children's Discovery Museum as it moves into its new home in Kelso's Catlin Elementary School. The museum has partnered with Kelso School District which has provided it with 5 rooms, including the former cafeteria. This will allow the free museum to display exhibits it has featured at its location on Commerce Avenue in Longview for the past five years, as well as other exhibits which have been in storage. The new site opens many possibilities.

The Nature Niche, sponsored by the Willapa Hills Audubon Society, will have 2 stations in the new museum. It will be enhanced by microscope space on a counter, a sink, natural light, ample storage space, and a bulletin board. Parents will be encouraged to discuss the natural objects in the Nature Niche in much the same way as they facilitate their

children's interaction with the museum's market, doctor's and dentist's offices, and other exhibits.

Volunteers are needed to support this expansion. The essential qualification for a museum volunteer is enjoyment of interaction with children and their families. A good reason to volunteer is for the fun of it! The minimum age for volunteers is 14 and the experience could be used as community service. In the first years of the Children's Discovery Museum's operation, Cowlitz AmeriCorps Network provided essential volunteers. AmeriCorps' absence from the county has left a void that needs to be filled by new volunteers who can staff the enlarged

museum. It is possible for a committed, self-directed volunteer to obtain work experience and perhaps an internship in Early Childhood Education, elementary and secondary education, recreation, and/or natural history interpretation, as well as public contact. The museum requires an application and background check for volunteers.

For those with a specific interest in working with natural history, there are opportunities to mentor volunteers and display a variety of Nature Niche themes with objects like nests, feathers, bones, shells, wood, pinecones, rocks, minerals, fossils, and insects. An appreciation for nature is more important for this work than exact identification.

The grand reopening will be Saturday, September 28 from 11-4, featuring the museum's next quarterly exhibit sponsored by Weyerhaeuser. Logging trucks and equipment will be onsite for children and

families to enjoy. Other CDM sponsors will also be present, including WHAS. Catlin School is near the Twin Cities Mall (Harbor Freight Tools, Big Lots, JoAnn's Fabrics, etc.) at the east end of Ocean Beach Highway. From the mall, follow Washington Way to Yan's Restaurant (before the bridge) and turn left on Long Avenue. Catlin School is on the right, before Fisher's Lane. Plan to visit the museum both for the reopening and afterwards (more details to come!).

Enjoy the fun and creative spirit at Children's Discovery Museum's new venue!



Wings Over Willapa Festival September 20 - 22

The Wings Over Willapa Festival celebrates birds, nature, and art during a multi-day event held at the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and other natural sites on Washington's Long Beach Peninsula. The Festival has something for everyone who loves to explore in nature.

Events include expert-led bird walks and programs ranging from wildlife tracking to adventures at Leadbetter Point. Other highlights include a guided tour to Long Island to an old-growth cedar grove, Pelagic birding trip, hand building with clay to

create your own bird bath, and a special Nature Play Day on Saturday for children and families.

Saturday's Keynote speaker features author Marina Richie. Join her for a headfirst dive into belted kingfishers over seven seasons on a home creek. Her photo-filled presentation threads natural history, memoir, and myth. She introduces the practice of deep birding leading to kinship with a wild neighborhood and personal transformation.

See all the information at

https://friendsofwillaparefuge.org/Wings_2024



A Camera for the Chimney at Riverside Church in Rainier, Oregon

By Larry Schwitters, Project Coordinator Audubon Vaux/s Happening

In 2010 the 3 Seattle area Audubon chapters thought it would be really cool to put a video camera inside the Monroe school chimney swift roost site as it's tear-down-saving earthquake retrofit was nearing completion. That task fell on ex-mountaineer Larry Schwitters. He's seriously technically deficient but good with wrenches. It wasn't easy or cheap, but it happened. Fourteen years later it's still working and there is nothing anywhere else like it.

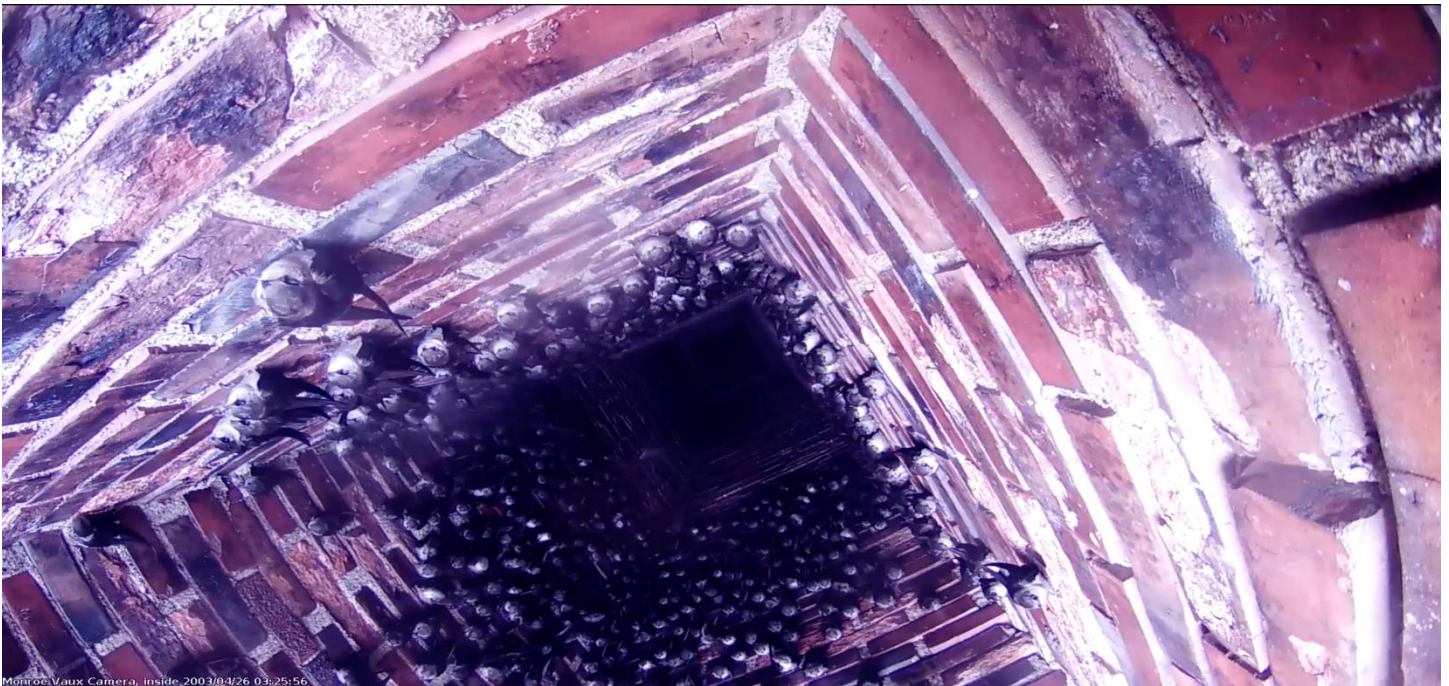
Could Willapa Hills Audubon do the same with the newly opened Rainier Riverside Church swift communal roost? Yes indeed, if Paster Dean is willing to make it happen. He is. Now what?

Schwitters is now Joe Biden old but still pretty spry and owns a lot of rope. He also lives a long way away. But Grand Pa Schwitters is willing, if not totally able.

In March he again made a serious pest of himself with the regional Vivotek Rep looking for what would be their best camera for the job recommendation. He got it and bought it and his ex-Microsoft son engaged in a successful struggle to make it work on the bench.

You can't just duct tape the Vivotek to the top inside bricks. Going to need a custom adjustable mount. Check. That took a while. On the photo can you see the little blue pulley? That will be used in helping get the ladder up there whenever one needs getting up there. Don't want to be renting a crane every time or rounding up 3 not-afraid-of-heights nature lovers to go up on the roof.

splicing in a 3-D printed chrome moly and titanium replacement. He's gone from stay in bed, to scooter, to crutches, to Star Trek boot, to can-walk-but-it-hurts. Over 100 straight days of Physical Therapy brings us to the present. They're telling me I've climbed my last ladder. Ha! Wanna bet?



Mohrde Vaux Camera, inside, 2003/04/26 03:25:56

Going to need a couple hundred feet of cat 6 direct burial cable. Check, good price in black. Come May we had had a serious complication. Very high milage Schwitters's left ankle was no longer functional. Dr. Bone Saw spent seven hours

Contact Larry through his website at www.vauxhappening.org

Do we want to proceed? The livestream in-chimney wee bird video action would be seen on your website. But I'm a long way away and your involvement will take more than a onetime monetary investment. **What do ya think?**

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.

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.

Saturday, January 22, 2025

Field Trip to Billy Frank Nisqually NWR

See the details on page three

Through September

Watch Vaux's Swifts and meet our volunteers from the corner of W D St and W 3rd St near Fox Creek in Rainier, Ore during the first few weeks of September.

See details on page one

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/>

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



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 newsleter@willapahillsaudubon.org.

Most WHAS activities and programs are open to the public.
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.

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