



WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Spring 2025

WHAS membership is based on a yearly renewal date.
All membership renewals are due in March, see page 2 for the details.



Snowy Plovers - Image by John Green

Annual Meeting, Banquet and Program

By Steve Puddicombe

Willapa Hills Audubon's annual meeting and banquet will be **Friday, March 28** at the **Catlin Senior Center in Kelso, at 106 Eighth Ave**, (just east of JoAnn's Fabric Store), and just north of Ocean Beach Highway.

We'll have our board meeting at 4:30 pm, and all WHAS chapter members are welcome to attend. We'll be discussing the progress of various initiatives, and take care of the usual business, including counting the votes of our ballot (see elsewhere in this issue) as to the future name as a chapter, and whether or not Audubon's name will remain. See elsewhere the final arguments pro and con, and please send in your choice.

The banquet will follow at 6 pm with a potluck supper and program. All in the community are welcome. Bring a salad, main dish, veg or desert to feed 6-8 people. Also bring your own table ware and serving implements, as well as a preferred beverage. Paper plates and napkins will be provided.

Program features **Snowy Plovers in the Pacific Northwest: On the Road to Recovery**

The program begins at 7 and features **Allison Anholt and her talk, "Snowy Plovers in the Pacific Northwest: On the Road to Recovery."**

She is currently the lead conservation biologist for Washington State's Department of Fish and Wildlife. The subject should hold high interest for our chapter as many of us have worked on SNPL conservation at the coast in year's past.

WHAS is delighted to host Allison Anholt, whose role with WDFW is to conserve nongame waterbirds across the entire state. She holds a master's degree from Rutgers University, where she studied piping plovers. Her professional experience ranges across the USA, conserving at-risk coastal birds from coastal New Jersey to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in Mississippi, the Florida Everglades to the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, and many

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. You will find more details on our member form on page 2.

places in between. Allison lives in Olympia.

This shapes up to be a fun and interesting event and we encourage the public, and family and friends to attend.

C U there!

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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://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:
 I prefer you contact me by:
 Phone
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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 \$ _____

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

The 2024 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival is scheduled to be held for **March 21-23, 2025**. Celebrate their return and discover why nearly 35,000 sandhill cranes choose Othello.
 More info: <https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

Olympic BirdFest

April 10-13, 2025
 The April dates of Olympic BirdFest are timed to overlap wintering birds such as Harlequin and Long tailed ducks, songbirds, and seabirds with spring migration.
 More info and BirdFest registration at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

Get Intimate with the Shrub Steppe

May 9 - 11, 2025
 Join the Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN) for the 26th annual Get Intimate with the Shrub-Steppe (GISS)—a community event celebrating the rare and endangered shrub-steppe habitat of Central Washington.
 More at <https://www.ycic.org/giss>

Wenas Audubon Campout

May 30 – June 2, 2025
 You are invited to attend a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington!
 Information on dispersed camping, activities, and what to expect are on the website, <https://wenasaudubon.org>

2025 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey Tallies 22

By Darrel Whipple

Bald Eagles were found in their usual and accustomed places during the annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey sponsored by Willapa Hills Audubon.

I took advantage of what promised to be fair weather on a Sunday late in January, recruited a couple buddies as driver and scribe to compensate for my mobility shortcomings, and shoved off from the Longview Public Library at 8:05 am on January 26.

As it turned out, both Kerry Noel and Steve Aschenbrenner of Clatskanie were sharp-eyed spotters that day to bring our total for the count to a respectable 22 eagles, despite the 29-degree start and widespread frozen ground.

We enjoyed walking a full circuit on the wetland boardwalk at Silver Lake, hoping for more than the one distant eagle we sighted. We lingered, but no luck.

I was glad I wore my long undies!

Later stops along our prescribed vehicle route along the Cowlitz were more productive and gave us a total of 13 eagles in the north latitude-longitude block, whereupon we headed for Kalama with our sack lunches to scan the forested islands for white heads off the Columbia shore.

We did get a distant one there, but more exciting was Steve's discovery of an adult perched atop the tallest crane at the Port of Kalama!

Later, we gambled and drove all the way up to the Kalama Falls Fish Hatchery, where Kerry immediately spotted a nearby adult to crown the day.

At 3:30 pm we ended our adventure having travelled 123 miles, tallied 16 adult Bald Eagles, 2 sub-adults and 4 of undetermined maturity.

Seventeen other bird species were also noted.

WHAS's Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey covers two latitude-longitude blocks along the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers, originally assigned to WHAS as part of a nationwide study of eagle populations that ran from 1979 to 1989, coordinated by the National Wildlife Federation.

Call for Earth Day volunteers

By Ann Cordero

This year Willapa Hills Audubon Society will again participate in Earth Day, which will be held at the Children's Discovery Museum in Kelso on April 26 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. For Earth Rocks! A Day of Discovery, the free museum has invited local organizations, businesses, and community leaders to provide hands-on activities, interactive exhibits, and information booths to accompany the unveiling of its new Mt. St. Helens exhibit. Our organization will be using our wooden wings to measure participants' arm spans against life size bird wingspans and engaging with families in our own Nature Niche exhibit.

We are hoping to have 10 volunteers, which would give us 2 volunteers at a time with 1-hour shifts and a chance for everyone to enjoy the other exhibits. If you are interested in helping, please contact Gloria Nichols at (360) 636-3793 or jgnt@comcast.net or Ann Cordero at (415) 622-8764 or flnatureniche@gmail.com

We need you!

By Steve Puddicombe, President

This issue of the Whistler is chock full of information for our local chapter members and the national Audubon members in our area, as this is our annual edition sent to all. If you are a chapter member, please note it is time to renew your membership. All should note we have our annual banquet and program coming up at the end of March.

For chapter members we have a ballot insert for possibly changing our name.

Finally, WHAS still has need of committee members and volunteers. We need program and field trip coordinators, a membership chair, and our vice president chair is now empty. Beyond that we can always use volunteers for educational programs and other events. Consider helping this worthy organization with some of your time and energy!

Contact a board member at willapahillsaudubon.org/about-whas/contact-us if you can help. Happy Birding!

2024 Cowlitz/Columbia Christmas Bird Count Wrap Up

By Becky Kent

I just want to give a big Thank You to everyone for helping out this year. We finished with 95 species and 13,698 individual birds for the day, along with another 9 for count week. Of all the species, 43 were above average for the last 10 years.

We added 1 new species to count day that have not been seen before: Sandhill Crane. Both Long-tailed Duck and Rufous Hummingbird were found during count week and are being added to the list as a new species. We had a couple of notable misses: Bushtit and Purple Finch.

We had 6 species with high counts: Trumpeter Swan 321 (249 previous), Canvasback 29 (19), Great Egret 43 (40), Common Raven 126 (39), Barn Swallow 5 (1), and Lesser Goldfinch 18 (6).

Since 1982, there are 14 species that have only been seen once on count day, 6 species only seen once during count week, and 33 species that have been seen every year.

We had 25 people out in the field and 2 feeder watchers. We had a total of 270 miles during 64.5 total hours of birding! I hope to see everyone again next year!

Name Change Ballot Introduction

By Ann Cordero

If you are a member of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society you will find the ballot attached to this edition of the Whistler. You can read a pro and a contra statement on this and the next page.

Our year-long process of naming the chapter is culminating in this vote, so be sure to vote for the name of your

choice. We want to get a true representation of our members' opinions, so it is important that each member participates. If you have a family membership, use one field for each adult. Ranked choice voting will tell us whether we want to change our name and the name that is most preferred. Rank up to 4 choices. Mark no more than one square in each column.

Considering John James Audubon – Argument for keeping the Name Audubon

By Robert Sudar

Who was John James Audubon, and why is his name used to grace the title of one of the premier conservation organizations in America? What did he do besides his drawings of birds? What were his actions as an immigrant, as a businessman, and as a naturalist? Those questions, and their answers, are driving recent discussions about diversity, equity, and changing the name of Audubon Society chapters to something reflective of protecting birds and bird habitat.

A name change of the Audubon Society, or even of a small local chapter like ours, is no small thing in my opinion. The root of the issue is recent information that has been brought to light about Mr. Audubon's personal life and actions outside of his bird artistry. For instance, it is known that he owned slaves at one time and later sold them. He also provided skulls to scientists who were looking for links between race, physical features and intelligence. This subject may be abhorrent to us today, but it was a common field of study until the 1940's and there was coursework in that field, called Eugenics, at many major universities.

I wrote a story for the Willapa Whistler last spring that suggested several videos available at the Longview Public Library that explored Audubon's story. Neither were "deep dives" into his story, and both were produced prior to serious discussions about his character. In addition, he died almost 175 years ago. Though he was an avid writer, he was also known as a prodigious storyteller. Part of the task is separating fact from fiction. Wikipedia has a thorough discussion of his life, as do other online sources. Still, how do we take measure of the man?

He was born into a slaveholding society in Haiti. He spent his youth in France and his father bought him a farm and a lead mine in Pennsylvania before he could be conscripted into Napoleon's army. He was more interested in nature than in managing the farm, so he sold part of it and moved to Kentucky, and then to Missouri, and eventually moved his family to Louisiana, having spent a good portion of his life in slaveholding states. He struggled as a businessman. He owned several slaves, and he did sell them when his businesses faltered. On the other hand, he grew up in a slave-holding portion of society and spent much of his life in the South where slavery was legal until a decade after his death. When he completed his bird artistry, he had to travel to England to find sponsors and to get his book published. Despite the scale and quality of his work, he lived in a time when nature and environmentalism did not dominate the public's interest as they would 50 or 75 years later, or as they do

now. So how might we today, when the equity and inclusion movements have brought us into discussions we perhaps should have had decades ago, respond to the questions Audubon's personal life and activities outside of his art demand? Audubon's work with birds created a radical change in bird artistry. I would offer that Audubon's new inroads into bird art brought new knowledge and understanding of birds at the time and later were used to help with the protection of some bird species. He had a deep interest in nature, even though he probably collected thousands of birds with his shotgun in order to study them throughout his life and to complete his paintings. His methods are no secret. He died in 1851, a decade before the Civil War brought the issue of slavery to a head. He was a great storyteller, including tales of spending time with slaves during his forays into the wild but also of helping return them to their owners. He clearly didn't oppose slavery. Less is known about his collection of human remains for scientific studies that were popular at the time, though such activities would be an anathema to us today. Good or bad, in many ways John James Audubon was a man of his times.

I would offer another perspective on this issue, and that relates to the effectiveness of an environmental organization as a proponent for the protection of nature and the plants and animals within. When working with legislators, local politicians or even the general public, name recognition can be important. When people hear "The Audubon Society", they may praise or revile it but that's because of its environmental reputation, not because it's named after John James Audubon. Most people know nothing about the man. That doesn't mean that we should ignore his behavior during his lifetime. His beliefs, his advocations, his adherence to science (both pros and cons documented in the literature), and his art all provide some reference points. He spent most of his life after getting his artistry published selling subscriptions to his volume. When he died after falling into dementia he was neither a poor man nor a wealthy man. It could be argued that he never realized significant gain from his artistry, nor did he live to see his name used for environmental causes. But over the last 100 years the Audubon name has stood for environmental protection and is an effective standard when defending nature in the spoken word or in print. In maintaining the name "Audubon" in our chapter, we don't honor the man – we honor the work and the impact it has had. I think we should remain Willapa Hills Audubon.

Argument for Changing the Name of Willapa Hills Audubon Society

By Ann Cordero

There are some disadvantages in naming an organization for an individual, especially if that person's reputation becomes tarnished with time. John James Audubon lived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and was a man of his times. His gigantic *Birds of America* volume of bird art and his writings made a significant contribution to ornithology. But to execute them he often shot over 100 birds in a day and falsified some of his writings and pictures. Like many of his contemporaries, he advocated slavery. Though the generation after him respected him as a scientist and conservationist, many of his actions contradict the modern ethics of science and conservation which the Audubon Society represents.

Caution is necessary in evaluating a person who lived two centuries ago, and judging that person is even more problematic. Audubon lived a long and complex life and much of the detail is lost to history. In the America of his time attitudes like his, which today we might call brash and eccentric, were commonplace. Even against this background, Audubon stood out as a flamboyant personality. His support for slavery at a time when abolitionism was a choice was not unusual, but it is no recommendation for his attitudes in our time. Kaufman points out that he sold his own slaves in Louisiana, far away from their families in Kentucky. J. Drew Lanham, an American black conservation ornithologist, cites a story in which Audubon claims to have befriended a runaway slave then returned him and his family to their previous owners. He wonders how he would have felt in that slave's place. Similarly, it was a widespread practice in the early 1800's for people to engage in grave robbing to sell skulls to phrenologists, as Audubon did. Today both phrenology and eugenics are discredited as pseudoscience.

His reputation as a scientist and conservationist has also been called into question. His writings include many exaggerations and fabrications, especially in his autobiographical exploits. His lies about discovering the Small-headed flycatcher alienated the American ornithologists of his day. He was denied membership in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and this unpopularity influenced his decision to conduct his work in England. There his persona as the American woodsman and his assertions about birds were more readily—and naively—accepted. As a marketing ploy, Audubon invented a fraudulent species of eagle known as the Bird of Washington, playing on the British fascination with George Washington. Audubon's insistence that the Bird of Washington was a distinct species was responsible for confusion in popular books in America as well. Kaufman (p. 153) said that apparently this experience left him thinking that he could get away with anything. Later he stole a hawk specimen so he could describe it to honor a friend. He also allowed the French naturalist Rafinesque to describe a species of fish from some Audubon drawings that were totally imaginary, using the incident to make fun of the foreign

scientist instead of confessing the joke. His view of conservation was limited: he speculated about bird species disappearing while he himself continued to kill thousands of birds.

Several Audubon chapters, including New York City, Seattle, Portland, and Tacoma, have changed their names in response to Audubon's personal flaws. For chapter names, visit the online map (Audubon Near You). The National Audubon Society chose to retain the name Audubon for the recognition the organization has achieved on its own. We could retain the recognition by noting that we are an Audubon chapter while choosing a more descriptive name to show that we acknowledge changing attitudes in the 21st century. We are choosing between these alternatives with this vote.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion matter. Audubon made a unique contribution to the diversity of art and ornithology, and all our sources advocate that his art should be enjoyed and celebrated. But the personal behavior of John James Audubon does not, in my opinion, justify monumentalizing his name as representative of our conservation organization. Lanham, as a person of color, values organizations that care. He cites the Sierra Club's denunciation of John Muir's racism as an example. Changing our name will not end racism, but removing Audubon's name would be a step in that direction. In the words of Desmond Tutu, "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

Sources:

Audubon Near You

<https://www.audubon.org/about/audubon-near-you?state=OR>

Brainy Quote

https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/desmond_tutu_387490

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Wikipedia: John James Audubon

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_James_Audubon

[John James Audubon : the nature of the American woodsman](#)

by

Nobles, Gregory H., author.

Series:

[Early American studies](#)

Published: 2017

2024 Leadbetter Christmas Bird Count Results

By Robert Sudar, Count Compiler

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) period starts on December 14th each year, and our Willapa Hills Leadbetter Point count on the north end of the Long Beach Peninsula and east side of Willapa Bay is always on the first Saturday of the count period, so this year it was on the 14th. Apparently, Mother Nature didn't get the message because she sent a windy storm on Friday the 13th that lingered into Saturday morning, along with king tides for the weekend, so conditions weren't ideal for a bird count. In addition, that weekend wasn't a good fit for some of our usual counters, so we had to spread the available folks around in order to cover as much of the count circle as possible.

A further complication as Saturday dawned was flooded roads in the two sectors on the east side of the Bay. As a consequence, the volunteers weren't able to count those areas until Sunday, the 15th. Any species they saw that wasn't seen on the "count day" could be counted as "count week" sightings but couldn't contribute to the count day totals. However, their efforts did add to the historical record, which is what the CBC is all about.

The windy morning did not contribute to a pleasant start for counting birds. In the area my fellow counter and I were doing – the southwest portion of Willapa Bay that is within the circle – we didn't see our first bird until about 20 minutes after we started. But the weather slowly improved as the day wore on, the rain diminished, and the wind didn't stop but it did slow down enough to make the counting more tolerable. Overall, it wasn't as bad as two years ago, but I don't know if that's really a positive statement or not!

Though we didn't have any flooded roads in our area, the king tides and the wind did have an impact on bird abundances we'd normally see on the bay. Where there was some shelter, the waterfowl would congregate. And the same

goes for songbirds. Where feeders were shielded from the wind by trees or shrubbery, birds were active. And as usual, Crows and Pine Siskins didn't seem to mind and took to the air in flocks when the urge to do so moved them.

On count day, the six of us assigned to sectors and the one feeder watcher saw 73 species, and the Sunday counters added another 14 for count week. A total of 87 species is a bit lower than usual but overall, not bad, especially considering the weather-related challenges. On the windy, rainy day I mentioned in 2022 we had 93 species but also had counters in all the usual areas. This year, even with some intentional overlapping, we didn't cover everywhere we normally would. In 2023, when the weather was about as perfect as it can be in December, we had 101 species.

The total number of birds seen on count day was 22,591. Not surprisingly, Dunlins were the big contributor with 18,240 individuals. We had two Canvasback ducks – not a typical species but not a first for this count. Other noteworthy specifics were 21 Hooded Mergansers, 11 Long-billed Dowitchers and 44 Killdeer. On the downside, 11 Anna's Hummingbird is a low number compared to recent results and there were no Gray Jays, Mourning Doves, Black Brants or Brown Creepers, species we usually see even if only a few. And no Black Phoebe, after seeing this "newer" species the last few years.

In summary, it was great to get another year of data for the Leadbetter Count, even if we had to work around weather and volunteer availability issues. My thanks to all those who participated, and to all who have participated over the last 50 years or so to collect this data. Next December the count will be on December 20th – hope to see some of you then!

2024 Results for the Wahkiakum CBC

By Andrew Emlen

The 27th Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count was held December 30, 2024. Twenty-four volunteers counted 31,168 individuals of 113 species, just above average for species numbers, below average for numbers of individual birds. Weather largely cooperated, with temperatures in the low to mid 40's, wind 2-8 from the east, and occasional rain, alternating with a few sun breaks.

Two species new to the count were found - a female Long-tailed Duck near FitzPatrick Island, and a pair of American White Pelicans at Woody Island. Since White Pelicans have been wintering in the Astoria area for the past several winters, it was perhaps inevitable that some would eventually appear on this count.

Here are the top five most abundant species on the count this winter: Greater Scaup: 6330 (Greater/Lesser Scaup 2758), Cackling Goose: 4712, European Starling: 2661, Pine Siskin: 2415, American Wigeon: 1464

The top three spots are typical for this count, though the irruption of Pine Siskins was not - only one year of the 26

previous Wahkiakum counts was higher, 2759 in 2012. In 2022 we had just one lone Pine Siskin.

We had new high counts for 5 species (former high count in parentheses): Trumpeter Swan: 48 (27), Greater Yellowlegs: 92 (68), Great Egret: 63 (54 last winter), Cooper's Hawk: 5 (4), Northern Flicker: 74 (67)

The number of Great Egrets on the count has been increasing as they have expanded their range. We missed them entirely on four early counts; this year the Great Egret count surpassed that of Great Blue Herons (43).

We set a new low for American Coot at 46 (previous low 70). For comparison, the high count is 4363. The big flocks aren't in the same place every winter, so hopefully somewhere nearby are large numbers of them.

Notable misses (number of the previous 26 counts in which we missed that species in parentheses): Ruddy Duck (3), Horned Grebe (1), American Goldfinch (1) Many thanks to everyone who helped with the count

Black-headed Grosbeak: Flashy Songster with a Pallet for Toxic Butterflies

By David Slater

Birds have a unique place in our culture and science. The beauty of their forms, songs and behaviors inspires our curiosities, ignites our wonder, and captures our hearts, causing us to want to learn more. Their constant presence, wherever we travel to, reminds us that they have adapted to excel in their preferred habitats.

On a May morning, when the sweet song of the Black-headed Grosbeak rolls down from the treetops in a rich warble, like a robin on steroids, I catch my breath and my heart races.

The song is familiar. It reminds me of the song of an American Robin, but it is often softer, sweeter, and faster. Its call note is an emphatic, sharp “tick,” a squeaky chip note that can be an effective way to find these birds.

Black-headed Grosbeaks are larger and chunkier than a House Finch and more compact and slimmer than an American Robin. They measure about seven inches in length and have a wingspan of about twelve and one-half inches. The bill is large and triangular, and thick at the base. Their heads are large, and their necks are short and thick.

The male’s colors pop. He has orange-cinnamon underparts with a black head and black-and-white wings. The female has white eyebrows and pale, buff underparts. Some females have streaks on the sides of the breast.

Look for these flashy songsters in riparian, broadleaf forests with a few large trees and complex understory, often foraging high in flowering trees to feed on spring buds. They sing as they perch in middle and high levels in trees along edges. These birds can occur with scattered conifers, but they are absent where conifers dominate.

In most passerines only males sing. However, females of Black-headed Grosbeaks sing regularly, though they tend to sing at a lower volume than males and less frequently.

Like many tanagers and wood-warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks are sexually dimorphic in adult plumage during the breeding seasons. They are unusual among birds in that the males do not acquire their full adult plumage by their first breeding season. The first potential breeding season their plumage is intermediate – between male and female. While these males are capable of breeding, they tend to be less successful than older

males. Apparently, this is because females prefer older (more colorful) males. Thus, older males pass on proven genes from birds that have adapted to live in their current habitat, enhancing survival of succeeding generations.

Nests are usually placed in the outer branches of a small deciduous tree or bush by a stream. Look for nests about twenty-five feet high. Chicks are altricial which means that they are born

with closed eyes, naked, patches of down feathers and unable to move away from the nest. They remain in the nest and depend on their parents for food, heat, and protection. Altricial birds include passerine birds, hummingbirds, swallows, and woodpeckers, among others. They are mainly monogamous with pair bonds seasonally.

Despite his fancy plumage, the male incubates the eggs and feeds the young equally with the female. These birds are territorial during breeding season and both male and female energetically defend their



Photo: Bridget Spenser / Macaulay Library

nesting territory. Species such as warblers and Bushtits that come near the nest are tolerated, but they attack predators including Scrub-Jays and Steller’s Jays. They are resistant to brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Robust bills make these birds well equipped for cracking seeds and crushing hard-bodied snails and insects. About 60% of their food is insects and other small animals and the rest of their feeding is on seeds and fruits, such as cultivated orchard fruit, like cherries, apricots, plums, blackberries, and crabapples. During migration, berries are a favored food. During the breeding season, they often come to feeders.

Black-headed Grosbeaks spend their winters in central Mexico with monarch butterflies. Monarchs become toxic to predators by storing toxins from the milkweed plants that they eat. This makes monarchs very distasteful or unpleasant to predators. Grosbeaks have evolved ways to tolerate these toxins. In addition, grosbeaks eat fewer female Monarchs than male Monarchs. Female Monarchs have, on average, 30% higher toxin concentrations than males.

Experiencing the rush of spotting and/or hearing a Black-headed Grosbeak will inspire you to want to learn more, share more and conserve the birds that we have.

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.

Friday, March 28, 2025, at 6pm

Annual Banquet and Program, find all the details on page one

Friday, March 28, 2025, at 7pm

Program: Snowy Plovers in the Pacific Northwest: On the Road to Recovery with Allison Anholt
more info on page one

Throughout May 2025, 1hour before sunset

Vaux's Swifts Viewing at W 3rd Street at the Riverside Community Church in Rainier Oregon.

**If you are a local chapter member of
the Willapa Hills Audubon Society,
don't forget to vote on a possible
name change.**

More info in this issue!

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.

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>

<https://www.facebook.com/willapahillsaudubon/>

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

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

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
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Willapa Hills
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