

Birding Bits

By Russ Koppendrayner

It's late spring migration and early summer nesting time for passerines, with bird song and activity at their maximum. While song-birds can be found in many habitats, one of the most under-birded seems to be the large timber company tree farms. While some stands are large single aged mono-cultures, largely devoid of birds, other places have various aged trees in close proximity, mixed with other vegetation and can be quite birdy. I've found the best access is to park and walk on the gated logging roads. Frequently on a morning's bird walk, there is no one else around. My favorite tree farm habitat is about 2.5 miles up the 1901 Weyerhaeuser Road. This is reached by turning on the 1900 road just before Kid Valley, about 18 miles east of Castle Rock. I've been birding this spot a few times each summer for the past 10 years. Within easy walking distance of a junction of five different roads, there are clear-cuts, young and mature stands of Douglas fir, plus some alders.

My first ever visit to this area was highlighted by a northern pigmy owl being mobbed by a variety of passerines. June 2006 was the best ever at this site, both for the number of species, and the unusual birds. The clear-cut held a pair of western blue birds. Is this species more numerous in Western Washington than is realized? This was the second pair I've seen in a clear-cut, an environment that I rarely bird. The mature stands hosted a number of pairs of hermit warblers, my favorite Southwest Washington specialty. The best find was the bay-breasted warbler in the immature Douglas fir. This eastern vagrant sang for a month and was seen by many people including a number of WHAS members.

So let's get out there and enjoy some summer walks while exploring our nearby tree farms. These roads can be found up nearly every drainage in our area, and are open, in most cases, to non-motorized recreation. Obey any signs, watch out for log trucks on weekdays, and enjoy the outdoors.

Newsletter Editor Needed

WHAS will need a new newsletter editor for 2008. Al and Diane Clark, current editors, will help you get started. Contact them for information at 360-795-3915, alan_c_clark@hotmail.com.

You Are Invited!

Wenas Campout, May 25-28, 2007

www.wenasaudubon.org

By Helen Engle

For over 38 years Audubon families have been camping at the Wenas Creek Campground, officially named the Hazel Wolf Wenas Creek Bird Sanctuary. The location, SW of Ellensburg, is now in an "Important Bird Area" which Auduboners have been assured will be in protective status soon.

The free "primitive" campground along the north fork of Wenas Creek has exceptional opportunities for birding, botanizing and enjoying spring in the eastern foothills of the Cascades.

- * The campground is about 2,500' elevation, can be quite cold at night, hot during day.
- * Bring water for drinking (the creek is beautiful and bountiful but not potable).
- * We set up tents or use "pick-up" type campers.
- * We all share in the rent of portable toilets for four days.
- * Bicycles and Frisbees are fun, telescopes and cameras standard gear.
- * Please leave pets at home.
- * There are organized field trips throughout the Wenas drainage and WADF&W management areas and some on private property at owners' requests.
- * In camp we have natural history workshops with some of the state's top birders, WNPS botanists, entomologists etc.
- * There is an old-fashioned campfire in the evening with singing, story telling and recapping the sightings of the day.

Visit the new Wenas Website, by Webmaster Michael Hobbs, to see a familiar smiling face and get lots of downloadable information about our campout (www.wenasaudubon.org). There's a bird checklist, wildflower checklist, outline of field trips and program, directions to the campground, and more. If you don't do websites, contact me and I'll send you printed information.

Bring friends, family, and join us at Wenas Memorial Day Weekend - May 25-28, 2007!
See you there, Helen Engle, hengle@iinet.com, 253-564-3112.