

WILLAPA WHISTLER

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Spring 2017



Northern Pygmy Owl - Image courtesy of Mary Ann Gillespey
Photo was taken on December 16th at Mary's home on the Nemah River estuary
on Willapa Bay with a cell phone through her Kowa scope

The Green's Observation on Living on the Coast

By Margaret Green

Just 80 miles west of Longview/Rainier one can discover new opportunities for observing wild life beyond our customary species. We moved from Longview to Gearhart, Oregon in April 2016, and now are coastal residents of nearly a year. Living and exploring the coastal forests and prairies, the dunes and beaches has offered some delightful experiences.

One of our more interesting sightings happened last summer, when we began seeing large black fins circling just beyond the breakers off Gearhart Beach. Amongst these were repeated whale spouts. We identified 3 whales and at least 5 Orcas. Several local naturalists offered the explanation that this rogue Orca pod (often seen at the mouth of the Columbia) was trying to separate a mother gray whale from her calf. The mother was successful in staying between her calf and the predators as two whales were seen a few miles north within an hour of our sighting. It is hard to know who to root for during these natural world battles.

Continued on page three...

A Message to Our National Audubon Members

Please become one of the National Audubon Society (NAS) members in our area who annually sends \$20 to join and support our local chapter, Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS). This additional \$20 provided directly to the chapter, is a very significant contribution toward 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. **Or come to our annual member meeting to learn more about us, see the box on the right of this page for more information.**

We know donations are discretionary and appreciate whatever level of giving you choose. You will find more details on our member form on page 2.

Annual Meeting and Dinner Announcement

This year Willapa Hills Audubon Society will take a different approach to its annual meeting. We will combine the first quarter 2017 board meeting with the annual meeting for WHAS members and a no host dinner for all members and invited guests.

The meeting and dinner will be held on **Friday, March 17** from 6:30 PM until 8:30pm at **Vernie's Pizza** (360.578.9561) at 900 Triangle Shopping Center in Longview, WA. For those unfamiliar with the mall, Vernie's is located at the intersection of 10th street and Washington Way.

Since the dinner is no-host, members will be able to choose from Vernie's menu of pizzas, sandwiches and salads. Wine, beer, coffee, tea and soft drinks are available. Members will pay for their own meals.

There will not be a program scheduled with this meeting.

A side note: Friday, March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. While we have a reserved space to meet, the restaurant may be crowded and noisy. Parking may also be problematic.

Will you be wearing green to the event? For additional information, call Larry Brandt at 360.200.4580 or email lbrandt@cni.net

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Support our mission, join WHAS today!

Check type of Membership:

- ☐ New Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ Renewal Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society.
Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____

Membership includes 4 issues of our newsletter *WILLAPA WHISTLER* annually.

We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible

For membership in National Audubon Society visit <http://www.audubon.org/>.

Please make your check payable to:

WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to:

WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632.

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Y14:7XCH rev. 2007

Thank you for supporting your local Audubon chapter -- Willapa Hills Audubon Society!

We will not share your contact information with anyone.

*) 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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OTHER

Please indicate any **new** information:

I prefer you contact me by:

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Mail

Other options:

- ☐ I prefer to receive the *WHISTLER* by email
(Add your email address below)
- ☐ Contact me about volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Add me to your announcement email list*

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival 2017

For nearly two decades people celebrated the annual return of nearly 35,000 sand hill cranes to Othello, Washington every March as they migrate north to their breeding grounds in Alaska. The Festival offers an incredible opportunity to view the cranes up-close, with tours led by local experts.

The 20th Annual festival will be held March 24-26, 2017. More:
<http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

Olympic BirdFest 2017

Come Bird in Sequim, Washington, **April 7-9, 2017**

Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction & raffle, gala banquet, and more. The featured speaker this year is: Bonnie Block. Join the festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 4-6, 2017.

More info and BirdFest registration at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

Earth Day 2017 is April 22

Kids and adults can celebrate Earth Day at the Cowlitz Expo Center. Don't miss the fun and educational opportunities.

The People's Climate March

On **Saturday, April 29th**, just before the 100th day of the Trump administration, hundreds of thousands of people will assemble in Washington, DC and across the country for People's Climate March. What: People's Climate March

When: April 29, 2017

Where: Washington, D.C. and around the country.

RSVP now on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/241590836287791/>

Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest

May 18-21, 2017

Check <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/> for the program

...continued from page one: The Green's Observation on Living on the Coast

John takes a daily beach walk and it is always interesting. We have seen 6 eagles at one time, “celebrating” a comrade’s successful catch of a small sea perch, too small to share. Another day, one was clinging to a crab and puzzling over its best approach for consuming. The eagles are plentiful this winter and John sees them daily. We hope to find successful nests over the next couple months for observation.

One of the most exciting finds has been a group of 5 Snowy Plovers that have been present almost daily for nearly two months. This is a rare and endangered shore bird for which there are recovery plans/actions happening at Leadbetter Point on the Long Beach Peninsula. Two of John’s birds are banded. After reporting the birds, including a picture of the bands, we were told they had been banded in Central Oregon. We hope that Gearhart Beach might be considered suitable habitat for nesting by these small birds, though tourist activity and the presence of avian, and mammalian predators would present a deterrent for success. Seeing them regularly has encouraged us for prospects of this species’ survival.

After our first big storm, we began seeing Red Phalaropes in inland water bodies, puddles in yards and streets and in parking lots. These are small birds that



A wildlife viewing opportunity that is always a thrill is a visit from the Gearhart elk herd, a group of about 80 individuals that wander the dunes, yards, prairies, and forests between Seaside and Camp Rilea.

The variety of gulls and ocean birds offer new challenges to our bird watching hikes, but the forests have all the familiar species that abound in the hills around Longview. Bluebirds and Meadowlarks have been an added treat. The beauty of these coastal communities is their proximity to so many lovely hikes. The northward shorebird migration in April is an annual event that provides opportunities to see those birds in vast numbers and in breeding plumage rather than the non-breeding black/white and gray palette. It is worth a trip.

Our wildlife sightings have been plentiful and of high quality because of the consistency of our presence. But 80 miles is not far to travel for an occasional glimpse of something special.

Images: Bald Eagle, Snowy Plover, Elk - courtesy of John Green

spend their entire lives on the ocean. The high winds had pushed them inland. At the Cannon Beach Sewage Ponds, hundreds could be found feeding. Sadly, these birds are oblivious to the dangers of land predators so many succumbed to predation by hawks, ravens, and coyotes. And though it was amazing, and honestly, enjoyable to observe these birds at close range, it was a very sad phenomena, that we are told happens yearly, to some degree. A birder’s delight is often a bird’s demise.

Walking the beach introduces us to a multitude of sea creatures such as fried egg jelly fish, pyrosomes and many dead seabirds and mammals such as murres, grebes, albatross, porpoise, seal lions, and even a rabbit. The Seaside Aquarium, our resident experts have been very helpful with identifications and actually performed necropsies on various sea lions and a still borne whale carcass John found.



Help Protect the Marbled Murrelet – Write comments by March 9, 2017

By Charlotte Persons

This endangered seabird feeds in the ocean and flies up to 55 miles inland to nest in old growth forest. **The Washington state population of this unique bird has shrunk by 44% over the last 15 years, leaving only about 7,500 birds remaining.** The plight of the murrelet is so dire that in December 2016 the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission uplisted this species' status from "threatened" to the more serious "endangered."

Now your input is needed to protect the Marbled Murrelet! Extinction of the bird in our state would lead to a gap and genetic bottleneck between the southern populations in Oregon and N. California and the northern populations in British Columbia and Alaska. These populations are also under threat – for example, Marbled Murrelet in Alaska have declined 70% since the 1990's.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing the Long-term Conservation Strategy, a plan for the next 50 years. But all six of the proposed alternatives will lead to the extinction of the Marbled Murrelet in Washington State!

The conservation community has been involved in the development of a Long-Term Conservation Strategy for several years and successfully advocated for the inclusion of an alternative based on the 2008 Science Team Report. This was the best-available science at the time, but more current research has been published and should be fully incorporated into at least one alternative.

Fortunately, a coalition of conservation organizations has been working to develop such an alternative, one that gives the Marbled Murrelet its best chance for survival in Washington. The details of this alternative will be available by the end of February; the goals and framework of the Conservation Alternative are outlined below. Please show your support for this alternative before the end of the public comment period on Thursday, March 9.

Please request that Board of Natural Resources analyze the Conservation Alternative in a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement before they select a preferred alternative.

Submit your comments by email at sepacenter@dnr.wa.gov or by letter or postcard to SEPA Center, PO Box 47015, Olympia, WA 98504-7015. Please include the file number "12-042001" on letters and postcards and in the subject line of comments send by e-mail.

The Conservation Alternative aims to achieve the following biological goals adapted from the 2008 Science Team Report and the 1997 Recovery Plan for the Marbled Murrelet:

1. a stable or increasing murrelet population for at least a 10-year period
2. an increasing geographic distribution of murrelets
3. a murrelet population that is resilient to disturbances (e.g. habitat loss from stochastic events such as wildfires, insect outbreaks, windthrow)

The Conservative Alternative also recommends:

1. Protecting all current and future habitat within the next 50 years (all habitat classified higher than "low quality" by the DNR) and/or
2. Protecting all Emphasis Areas and Special Habitat Areas from Alternative E (collectively "Conservation Areas" when combined with Marbled Murrelet Management Areas)
3. Establishing no-touch 150-meter buffers around all occupied nesting sites and old forest in the Olympic Experimental State Forest planning unit as mapped in the 2008 Science Team Report.

To read the Conservation Alternative created by the Marbled Murrelet Survival Project, go to Seattle Audubon's website at www.seattleaudubon.org and put in "Marbled Murrelet" in the search window in the right upper corner of the home page.

To read the draft Environmental Impact Statement (dEIS) proposed by the DNR for the Marbled Murrelet Long Term Conservation Strategy, go to <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/mmltcs>

For more information for talking points for your comments on the dEIS, go our website at <http://willapahillsaudubon.org/index.php/current-issue/455-action-alert-help-protect-the-marbled-murrelet-in-washington-state>



© Suzy Whitley

Twenty-two **Trumpeter Swans** were counted during the Leadbetter CBC in December - a higher number than in recent years. They have been very visible this year on many of the freshwater lakes making for wonder photographic opportunities. There are five signets in that number and the parents have been showing them all the good feeding locations. In the 17 years I have lived on one of those small lakes the swans have been on the lake on a hand full of occasions. This winter they have been coming to the lake every few days and even coming out of the water in my yard to relax. These photos were taken from my patio door.

Image courtesy of Suzy Whitley

34th Cowlitz Columbia Christmas Bird Count

By Bob Reistroffer

21 field observers and three feeder watchers joined and spent the cold snowy, rainy, sunny day finding 13,452 birds with 96 species recorded. The temperature ranged from 25° to 36°. Also during count week an additional 4 species were reported.

No high or low counts this year: The snow and ice caused the groups to alter their normal count area

Seen during count week: Turkey Vulture, Barn Owl, Dipper, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Thank you all for a great job.

Hope to see you all next year on Sunday, Jan 1, 2018.



This winter, there have been 3 **Great Egrets** around the Long Beach peninsula in Pacific County. They are probably coming from the rookery in Kalama, WA are a recent addition to Pacific County. As the cold winter began freezing all the lake the egrets found one shallow river with surrounding wetland to feed in. Then the high tides arrived making that area too deep to feed. These photos were taken in a road side ditch where the county had recently cut back the cattails opening the water for them to feed in. They were feasting on the tiny Stickleback fish.

Image courtesy of Suzy Whitley

Wahkiakum CBC Results

By Andrew Emlen

The 19th annual Wahkiakum CBC was held Dec 29, 2016. 23 volunteers found 45,199 individual birds of 115 species in 40°F temperatures with a light east wind. The most abundant species this year was Cackling Goose, with 12,098 counted, followed by Greater Scaup at 10,388 and European Starling at 4853. Notable misses included Purple Finch and Red-breasted Nuthatch. New to the count this year was a Turkey Vulture over Puget Island. It was perhaps inevitable that this species would start to overwinter, as they have been staying here increasingly late in the fall and showing up earlier in February. Other unusual species included a Clark's Grebe at Knappa. New high counts were set for Northern Shoveler (670, previous high 392), Ring-necked Duck (188, previous high 155), American Kestrel (26, previous high 20) and Brown Creeper (17, previous high 11). Notably, we set new highs for three species that have expanded their range into this area in recent years: Great Egret (18, previous high 4), Red-shouldered Hawk (8, previous high 6), and Black Phoebe (4, previous high 3).

Bald Eagle Surveyors Spy Twelve

By Darrel Whipple

The 39th Mid-winter Bald Eagle Survey sponsored by WHAS turned up ten adults and two immature eagles in the two latitude-longitude blocks along the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers between Toledo and Kalama.

Steve Hemenway and I conducted the survey on January 26, 2017, using a vehicle route that was prescribed in 1979. The survey hours were 7:45 am to 5:15 pm, the last 1.5 hours being devoted to an unscheduled side trip to ogle the Golden Eagle and Short-eared Owl on the auto tour at Ridgefield NWR.

There was some fog in the early hours, hampering visibility at Sandy Bend and Pleasant Hill. Temperatures were in the 30s and 40s with cloudiness after the fog lifted. Nine of the eagles were found in the northern block -- including the immatures -- and three were found in the southern. Each block is about eight by twelve miles in size, and the route covers approximately 120 miles.

Thirty other species were noted, including 12 Red-tailed Hawks and four Kestrels.

Plant a Tree for Wildlife

From the WDFW blog: Crossing Paths with Washington's Wildlife

April is the month of Arbor Day and Earth Day, a good month to advocate for wildlife habitat -- tree planting.

Arbor Day has always been about planting trees, starting in 1872 in Nebraska and officially celebrated nationwide on the last Friday of April. Washington State traditionally celebrates Arbor Day the second Wednesday of the month, April 12 this year. Oregon celebrates it during the first week of April.

Earth Day began on April 22, 1970 at the start of the movement when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was formed and the Endangered Species Act and other environmental laws were passed. Earthday 17 is on April 22.

Over the next years there is a national goal of planting 7.8 billion trees by the 50th anniversary of Earth Day in 2020 to help combat climate change.

So how can something as simple as a tree address something as complex as climate change? Trees absorb excess and harmful carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. In a single year an acre of mature trees absorbs the same amount of carbon dioxide produced by driving the average car 26,000 miles.

Trees help us breathe clean air by absorbing odors and pollutant gases (nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and ozone) and filtering particulates out of the air by trapping them in their leaves and bark. Trees save us energy, up to 30 percent in cooling costs when properly planted around a house to shade sunny south and west sides. They can provide food and income, too. And of course trees are critical to wildlife, providing nesting sites, roosting spaces, escape cover, and food for a diversity of native mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, and invertebrates like butterflies and moths. **So let's get planting!**

Tree species native to Washington are your best bet, not only for native wildlife but for ease of care and long-term sustainability. The following are among good choices, depending on your landscape:

Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) is a fast-growing tree suited for large landscapes that provides homes for cavity-nesting birds and food for insectivorous birds like woodpeckers and nuthatches.

Douglas maple (*Acer glabrum douglassii*) is a small tree used for its seeds by grosbeaks, quail and grouse, for its twigs and bark by deer and beavers, and as a larval host for some moth species.

Vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) is best suited for westside landscapes where it grows naturally in groups as large understory shrubs or small trees. It's a larval plant for brown tissue and polyphemus moths, a good nectar source for bees, and seed-producer for a variety of birds.

Oregon white oak or "Garry oak" (*Quercus garryana*) is a thick-limbed, long-lived tree that is Washington's only native

oak. Like all oaks, it produces acorns loved by everything from Clark's nutcrackers to tree squirrels, and at maturity they often provide cavities for nesting and roosting by both birds and mammals.

Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nutallii*) has large, creamy-white, showy flowers eaten by spring azure butterfly larvae. A diversity of birds, including bluebirds, sapsuckers, white-crowned and song sparrows, tree swallows, towhees, and vireos eat its fruit.

Cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*) is a native small tree or tall shrub that grows well in disturbed sites. Its berries are eaten by grosbeaks, grouse, jays, robins and tanagers, as well as bears, foxes, coyotes and raccoons.

Native birches (*Betula* spp.) are hardy clump-growers to plant far from drain pipes or foundations, but they produce lots of wildlife habitat: seeds for juncos, siskins and other birds; insects for kinglets, warblers and other birds; bark for nesting material; leaves for mourning cloak and swallowtail butterfly larvae; twigs for elk, deer and small mammals; cavities for birds and other wildlife.

Native hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.) are more shrub-like than tree, with densities that often provide good escape cover for songbirds. Berries are favored by robins, waxwings, wood ducks, turkeys, black bears, coyotes and foxes, to name a few.

Native pines (*Pinus* spp.), which can be fast-growing large trees best suited for larger properties, provide nesting sites for many songbirds and seeds for, among others, crossbills, mourning doves, jays, finches, siskins, and chipmunks.

Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) grows quickly with a dense screen of soft needles that are used by silver-spotted tiger moth

larvae, among others; its seeds are eaten by grouse and many songbirds, its associated insects are eaten by brown creepers and woodpeckers, its twigs are browsed by deer and elk; at maturity its cavities harbor flying squirrels and other animals.

Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), Washington's state tree, is favored by elk and deer for its delicate feathery foliage, and juncos, siskins, chickadees and squirrels for its seeds.

Lots more detail about these and many other trees for wildlife is available in the book by WDFW wildlife biologist Russell Link, "Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest" (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/book>)

Certified arborists can be found through the Pacific Northwest chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture <http://www.pnwisa.org/>

More information about Arbor Day, including details on how to properly plant a tree, see <http://www.arborday.org>



WHAS Brings Nature to the Children's Discovery Museum

By Ann Cordero

Something new and exciting is happening in Kelso, and Willapa Hills Audubon Society is both a part and a partner of it!

The Children's Discovery Museum opened for regular hours in its own location at Three Rivers Mall on January 4,

2017, after hosting three "pop-up" events during the autumn. It is now open on Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free, and with more grants, donations, and volunteers it hopes to remain free and to

possibly expand its hours. A group of community professionals led by pediatrician Erin Harnish has been planning the museum for several years. Their concentrated effort in the last 18 months has made it a reality. Dawn Morgan is the Executive Director.

In the space that had been Macy's clearance store, children now find a hands-on farm-to-market exhibit, a vertical wind tunnel, and a booth where they can be showered by colored ping pong balls and then vacuum them up to prepare for the next deluge. Creative expression thrives in the dance corner (painted by Keely Morgan), the puppet theater, the colored shadows, the Lego tables, the drawing station, and the two harmonographs. Erin Harnish's father Gene Lynch has engineered several of the exhibits. Blocks, a water safety boat, an illuminated house, giant tic-tac-toe, and a reading corner also keep kids entertained. And WHAS provides explorations of nature with shells, rocks, plants, bones, and feathers to touch, as well as nests, insects and other natural objects in display cases, which will also house bird mounts.

Our partnership began in August at the Fallen Leaf Nature Niche, which had just been notified that it would have to vacate Lower Columbia College so that the McLaughlin Community Resource Center could be used for classroom space. Pam Wright facilitated communications with the museum board, who sent their secretary Lauren Morin and their exhibits chair Hahli Clark to see what we had to offer. They liked our specimens and hands-on activities

and welcomed us to join them. WHAS subsequently participated in STEM Night and the three initial museum events. Ann Cordero now volunteers during the museum open hours to give children a personalized glimpse of nature in return for some



precious moments. A boy overcame his fear of skeletons by examining a skull; a little girl gleefully declared that a bovine rib was a banana!

Willapa Hills Audubon Society has budgeted a \$1,000 donation to the Children's Discovery Museum, making it a Founding Member. In addition, it has set aside \$1,500 to develop a permanent exhibit for the museum. We now have three display

cases and a specimen table. Our tentative plan is to add a stump with slots for laminated pictures of birds, animals, rocks and habitats that can be further explored by viewing exhibits in glass-covered drawers and peering through microscopes. We also plan to purchase digital picture frames for slide presentations within the display cases.

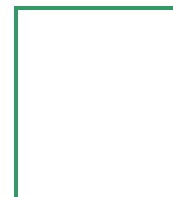
We encourage and welcome both WHAS members and the local community to visit the Children's Discovery Museum and share your ideas and digital photos for our exhibit. Send your suggestions, questions, and photos to Ann Cordero at FLNatureNiche@gmail.com. The museum is recruiting more volunteers and would be grateful for donations of time, materials, and funds. It is a spirited endeavor where children and adults participate together and everyone has fun. It has already sparked friendships, meaningful conversations, and plenty of learning and delight.

Come discover it with your children! And to everyone in WHAS, thank you!





PO Box 399
Longview, WA 98632



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.

TEMP -- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Willapa-Hills-Audubon/1386609461578276>

WHAS Programs and Field Trips

WHAS events are free and open to the public (Unless otherwise noted). Check the website calendar for the latest information and updates.

Friday, March 17 – 6:30pm
WHAS Annual Meeting and Dinner
More info on page one.

April 22 2017
Earthday

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 <http://whistler.willapahillsaudubon.org> for this and past issues.

Other winter plans will appear on our website and will be announced through our gmail alert system. More information about the alert system here: <http://willapahillsaudubon.org/index.php/member-services>

The Mission of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society is to support ecologically responsible ways of life, to help maintain biologically diverse habitats, and to promote environmental understanding and enjoyment of nature.

Check out our website at www.willapahillsaudubon.org