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WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 39 // Issue 1

January // February 2013



Redhead Duck -- Image Royce Craig

This Redhead Duck is a rare sighting for Cowlitz County, only the 4th recorded. Royce Craig captured the photo on his 3rd visit to the Kalama River area where the bird was found on the ponds along Tradewinds Road. The bird was first seen on November 12.

WHAS Board Meeting notes from Jan. 6

By Charlotte Persons

The board approved the budget for 2013, and a motion to adopt a change to the Constitution and Bylaws to restrict voting on WHAS officers and bylaws changes to WHAS members only. The reasons for this proposed change will be explained in detail in the March/April *Whistler* issue and will be voted on by members at the WHAS Annual Meeting in March.

Legislative Priorities - The board discussed priorities for issues during the 2013 WA legislative session for the new WA Audubon Chapter Coordinator to follow and report back to chapters. WSACC will decide these priorities at a conference call meeting on Jan. 9. The Environmental Priorities Coalition has proposed prioritizing legislation to remove flame retardants from children's products and furniture, accelerate clean energy investment, and continue funding for projects that preserve natural resources. Our board suggested following other legislative actions as well, including those which may come up regarding the coal export terminals, funding purchase of the High Lakes on Mt. St. Helens, funding land purchases to protect Marbled Murrelet habitat, and the proposed Williams gas pipeline in Wahkiakum and Cowlitz counties.

Search for New President - Larry Brandt resigned as president in December after 18 months of dedicated work in that position. He is working in California longer than he anticipated and could not continue on the board. We will miss his energy and enthusiasm, and appreciate his many months of service. WHAS board is looking for a new president to appoint until officer elections in March 2014.

WHAS Annual Meeting and dinner will be held on March 30th. See last page and the March Whistler for more details.

WHAS Amphibian Survey Enter their Fourth Year

Have a hankering to see what's in that pond? Are the kids asking what that goo is or what kind of frog they found? Want to help land managers better understand their impacts on frogs and salamanders? Want to just get out in the fresh air? If so, come join us as we start our 4th year of amphibian egg mass surveys in the Cowlitz County area and 6th year in Clark County. Kick off for the **Cowlitz area** is: Saturday, January 26 at 9:00 LCC, Physical Science Room 104 Kick off for Clark County area is: Saturday, February 2. For more information contact Ann Kastberg at 360-431-1129 or acwikman@cni.net or Dr. Peter Ritson at 360-936-1649 or clarkfrog@gmail.com Or join the Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/498188 683554645/ ... see page 5 for details

Outreach to New Birders

The Great Backyard Bird Count on February 15—18 will be promoted by a WHAS program at the Longview Library. At 12:00 on February 16 we will see a short Powerpoint presentation on the bird count and then expert birders will lead small groups on short birding tours. Birds found on the tours will count in the bird count, and participants will get practice in identifying our common urban birds. New birders and children especially are encouraged to come to the program.

...see page 6 for details

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Support our mission, join WHAS today!

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- O I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$

Membership includes 6 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 <u>http://www.audubon.org/</u>. Please make your check payable to:

WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to: WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632. Please indicate any new information:

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We will not share your contact information with anyone.

*) To announce **occasional** reminders and to communicate last minute schedule changes due to weather or other issues for WHAS programs and field trips.

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Highlights of WHAS Fall Board Meeting

By Charlotte Persons

We had two guest speakers at this meeting. One was Graham Taylor (Sierra Club Public Lands), who discussed plans to coordinate conservation organizations to preserve needed habitat for endangered species, such as the Marbled Murrelet. The other was Dan Serres (Columbia Riverkeeper), who updated us on the proposed Oregon Liquid Natural Gas terminal and the five coal export terminals proposed in the Pacific Northwest. He also described recent proposals for the Hanford Reach.

The board discussed new conservation initiatives by National Audubon Society (NAS) that involve threatened bird species in our region, Western Snowy Plover (Save Our Shores) and Marbled Murrelet (Western Flyway).

The board endorsed applying for a NAS Collaborative Grant Funding for improving habitat at Indian Jack Slough. WHAS is still searching for a *Whistler* editor—contact any board member for more info.

Field Trip Report

By John Green

There were two November trips. The monthly Lake Sacajawea Bird Walk on November 13 had a non-bird highlight when a river otter climbed onto the bank dragging a large bass and consumed it in front of us. We had great views through the scope.

Then on November 17th, 10 hardy souls braved pouring rain to spot 43 species at Woodland Bottoms. The highlights were a Rough-legged Hawk and a Red-necked Grebe on the river. We also had fabulous views of several hundred Sandhill Cranes. We were sorry to miss the Redhead Duck spotted by the Greens (on Kalama River Rd.) while on the scouting trip the day before. We had a Seattle lister join us with the idea of increasing her Cowlitz County numbers. She was delightful company, helping others spot birds. After the trip, she was able to add 10 plus species from the Green backyard and a short foray to the Longview Hot Spots with the Greens as guides.

Christmas Bird Counts 2012 Recap

Editor's note: Check our website for more details. Leadbetter CBC 2012 By Suzy Whittey

This was the Christmas bird count that almost did not happen. When I discovered in mid-November that no one was organizing the Leadbetter CBC that I had participated in for years, I volunteered for the job. I could not imagine a Christmas without counting birds. I also, could not imagine the job, or I might not have tackled it.

So, I want to give my special thanks to Bob & Pat Reistroffer, Jackie Ferrier, John & Margaret Green, Darrell Whipple, and Tom Finn who stepped up to be group leaders. To Alan Richards who guided me along the way and to Robert & Sam Sudar for compiling the data and getting it to Audubon. Without these new friends, who educated me by sharing their group's information, and by answering all my silly questions, I could not have pulled it off.

Our six groups consisted of eighteen other dedicated birders who slogged through wet grass, mud, dripping forests, steady rain, wind and some hail to do what we love to do. BIRD!

Kathleen Sayce gave me a list of home owners who live along the west shore of Willapa Bay and with access to



Image: Russ Ashley Black-throated Blue Warbler that was seen in the Surfside area on the Long Beach Peninsula between October 26th and November 18th. Ryan Merrill with WOS said there were 9 or 10 other records of this bird in WA.



Image: Suzy Whittey Male Summer Tanager seen in December in Seaview, WA that was confirmed by Washington Ornithological Society(WOS) as being only the 4th recorded sighting in the state.

their properties were able to count the length of the bay. Another special thanks to all of these gracious land owners. And let's not forget the four feeder watchers who love the birds in their yards.

Thank you all so very much for making my Christmas special this year. Happy Birding in the New Year, and I can't wait for next year's Christmas Bird Count. Do you have any idea who will organize it? Who me?

2012 Wahkiakum CBC By Andrew Emlen

On Friday, December 28, 21 volunteers participated in the 15th annual Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count. The Wahkiakum Count is one of over 2000 Christmas Bird Counts, bird censuses which take place throughout the Western Hemisphere between December 14th and January 5th each year. The Christmas Bird Count is the world's longest-running citizen science survey, having taken place every year since 1900. The data are compiled into an online database accessible to everyone, and those data are used to monitor the population and distribution of wintering birds. Over 60,000 people throughout the Americas participate. Examples of uses for CBC data include documentation of declining species as well as helping to provide proof of the recovery of the Bald Eagle, allowing our national bird to be removed from the endangered species list. Local volunteers found 59 Bald Eagles last year and 56 this year, Wahkiakum's two highest counts for that species.

Each count takes place in a 15-mile diameter circle. The center of the Wahkiakum Count is in Clifton, Oregon, so the area

encompassed by the Wahkiakum circle includes Cathlamet, Nassa Point, Beaver Creek, Puget Island, The Julia Butler Hansen Refuge, much of the Skamokawa valleys, most of the Lewis & Clark Wildlife Refuge, and Westport, Brownsmead, Knappa and Clifton on the Oregon side of the Columbia. Each year the count compiler, Andrew Emlen, recruits and organizes volunteers to count as many birds within the circle as possible in one day, starting with a few people looking for owls before daylight. Each group is assigned a particular area within the circle, one of the safeguards to avoid double-counting.

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47,692 individual birds of 122 different species were counted within the circle on Friday. "This was a record number of species for our count", reported Emlen. "We didn't find anything really unusual, but we had mild weather and thorough coverage of the area, so we missed very few species that should have been found in the circle."

The kinds of birds found within the Wahkiakum circle has changed over the years. One example is the Red-shouldered Hawk, the range of which has been moving northward. "When we first found a Red-shouldered Hawk here in 1999, it was a rarity in Washington. We didn't find another until 2009. Then last year we found two, and this year six. They are now here year-round and seem to be established." Black Phoebe and Northern Mockingbird are other species that will probably become more common as they move north. In 2009, The National Audubon Society's "Birds and Climate Change: An Analysis of the Christmas Bird Count" found that 177 of the 305 species in the analysis had shifted their ranges to the north over the previous 40 years. This correlated with a rise in January temperatures of nearly 5 degrees Fahrenheit over the same period.

Other new birds have moved into the area for other reasons. After being introduced to the Bahamas from Europe, the Eurasian Collared-Dove flew on its own to Florida in 1982 and has spread rapidly across the country. Year by year, the doves showed up on



Image: Andrew Emlen

This male Anna's Hummingbird was found in John & Nova Lee Knopp's yard in Cathlamet. Unlike the common Rufous Hummingbirds that arrive in February and March and fly south by September, this nonmigratory hummingbird species recently expanded its range into Wahkiakum County, helped by hummingbird feeders such as the Knopps provide. Although a few had been seen earlier, Anna's Hummingbirds first appeared on the Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count in 2007. A new high count for the circle was set this year with 9 found.



Image: Janice Higby Margaret and John Green accompanied a group from the Longview St. Stephens Episcopal church on January 1 to count at Willow Grove. Christmas Bird Counts farther and farther northwest. They first appeared on the Wahkiakum count in 2009. Thirty were found on count day this year, most of them on Puget Island, where they are a familiar sight at feeders or sitting on power lines.

The Christmas Bird Count is a good opportunity for those who are interested in birds to help contribute to our knowledge of them. Anyone who would like to help with next year's count may contact Andrew Emlen at 360-795-8009. Results of any of the Christmas Bird Counts may be found at http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/.

31st Cowlitz Columbia CBC By Bob Reistroffer

On January 1, 2013 the 31st 3CBC was held as part of Audubon's 113th Christmas Bird Count. Eighteen field observers and 3 feeder watchers joined and spent the overcast day finding 19,554 birds and a record <u>108</u> species. The temperature ranged from 32° to 34° .

We had several high counts: 47 Pied-billed

Grebe, 4,161 Cackling Goose, 577 Northern Pintail, 1,682 Greater Scaup, 106 Common Goldeneye, 60 Red-tailed Haws, 9 Virginia Rail, 193 Eurasian Collared-Dove, 7 Great Horned Owl, 71 Northern Flicker, 153 Western Scrub Jay, 19 Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2 American Dipper, 4 Orange-crowned Warbler, 79 Spotted Towhee, 372 Song Sparrow, 16 Lincoln's Sparrow, 287 Golden-crowned Sparrow, and last but not least 437 House Sparrows.

Seen during count week: 1 Ruffed Grouse, New to the count this year: 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, 1 Swamp Sparrow, 1 Barred Owl.

Thank you all for a great job and a great potluck. Hope to see you all next year on Wednesday, Jan 1, 2014.

Citizen Science Amphibian Egg Mass Surveys: Now SWAMP!

By Ann Kastberg

The WHAS-sponsored amphibian egg mass survey is entering its fourth season, gathering useful data, helping land managers, training youngsters, getting out in the fresh air, and



having a good time, as well as partnering with LCC, Columbia Land Trust (CLT), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), 4H, the City of Castle Rock, Castle Rock High School, the City of Longview, and SWAMP.

SWAMP, short for Southwest Washington Amphibian Monitoring Project, is the new inclusive name for Clark County Amphibian Project. We regularly survey in Clark, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Columbia counties. We've surveyed in Skamania and Pacific counties, too.

With consistent surveying, we're starting to see changes





reflected in the data. Notably, CLT's Germany Creek site was one of our first boom sites for red-legged frogs. Last year, when everyone else saw an increase in red-leggeds, Germany Creek had a decline. Why? Most likely because the beavers stopped maintaining the dam that created the frog ponds. On the other hand, CLT made some big changes to the hydrology at Indian Jack Slough (IJS), which the red-leggeds appreciated. They had an amazing year in 2011, loving the newlycreated wetland. Then they laid over 1,000 masses in the new 2012 wetland off Risk Road, choosing stubby native plants in the mud over abundant reed canary grass elsewhere on the site. There have been more changes at IJS, making 2013 a very important and interesting year to survey.

The Mint Farm, a new City of Longview mitigation site, had no red-leggeds nor northwestern salamanders 2011 and had both in

2012! This is a great site for kids, where we find all kinds of critters.

The Castle Rock Sports Complex was a surprise. It was just a bioswale made to catch run-off. Both chorus frogs and long-toed salamanders have been breeding there.

Toads continue to reproduce in the Gray's River,



which is very good news. They're not doing well upriver on the Columbia River Basin. Fortunately, the Gray's River has good stewards in the Satterlunds, Steve Puddicombe and CLT.

More young people have expressed interest in amphibian surveying, making the project more exhilarating and



giving hope to species survival when youngsters take interest in the habitat requirements and getting out in the water to see what's there.

Big thanks to the folks who are

taking leads every year on survey teams: Tom Finn, Russ



Kastberg, Lynn Simpson, Mara McGrath, Luke Slind, Carlo Abbrusseze, Maxine Newman, Dan Friesz, Louis LaPierre, Peter Ritson, Jack Dojan, and, gosh, I hope no one was missed.

One more thing. Each year Carlo Abbruzzese takes me and others to Merrill Lake. It's a beautiful site with a wonderful variety of species. My spring is not complete without going there with Carlo. We've seen cascades frogs, toads, torrent salamanders and more. If there is interest, we'll plan an end-of-

season jaunt to Merrill Lake to see what we can find. It'll be in late spring, depending on when the snow melts.



Hope to see new and old faces on January 26 or February 2. (See the training announcement on the front page).

Backyard Birding: The Great Back Yard Bird Count

By Larry Turner

The 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18. Please join in the 16th annual count. The GBBC is an annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is

welcome--from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easyand it helps the birds.

Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website. Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations

Cats can do more harm to birds than many of the other threats and that includes wind turbines. When looking at human introduced causes only building windows and towers cause more death with birds. According to a study in the Journal of Ornithology cats are the most notorious bird killer in some areas. E. Rosenthal wrote in The New York Times on March 21,

"While public attention has

... Nearly 80 percent of the

focused on wind turbines as a menace to birds, a new study shows that a far greater threat may be posed by a more familiar antagonist: the pet house

birds were killed by predators, and cats were responsible for 47 percent of those deaths, according to the researchers, from the Smithsonian Institution and Towson University in

Maryland. Death rates were particularly high in neighborhoods with large cat populations.

2011:

cat,,.

are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use the GBBC information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations.

The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like

- How will the weather influence bird populations?
 - Where are winter finches and other "irruptive" species that

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appear in large numbers during some years but not others? How will the timing of

birds' migrations compare with past years?

How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?

What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

There is one difference in

the GBBC this year. Beginning in 2013, each participant must set up a free GBBC account to submit their checklists. You'll only need to do this once to participate in all future GBBC events. You will be able to create a GBBC account in January, in advance of the official count.Instructions will be at http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html.

Cat Enclosure in Local Backyard

Predation was so serious in some areas that the catbirds could not replace their numbers for the next generation,

according to the researchers, who affixed tiny radio transmitters to the birds to follow them. It is the first scientific study to calculate what fraction of bird deaths during the vulnerable







fledgling stage can be attributed to cats. "Cats are way up there in terms of threats to birds — they are a formidable force in driving out native species," said Peter Marra of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, one of the authors of the study.

The American Bird Conservancy estimates that up to 500 million birds are killed each year by cats — about half by

pets and half by feral felines. "I hope we can now stop minimizing and trivializing the impacts that outdoor cats have on the environment and start addressing the serious problem of cat predation," said Darin Schroeder, the group's vice president for conservation advocacy.

By contrast, 440,000 birds are killed by wind turbines

each year, according to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, although that number is expected to exceed one million by 2030 as the number of wind farms grows to meet increased demand."



WHAS member Joan Herman has solved the problem of cats killing birds and small mammals with her "cat house" as she calls it that keeps her cats safe as well as the birds. Her cats can go outside at any time through a cat door. The cat house is connected via a screened "tunnel" to the house.

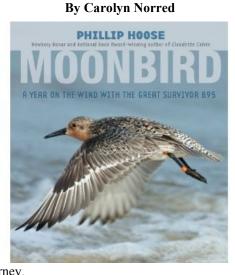
Book Review

Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95 Philip Hoose

Farrar, Straus, Giroux: 2012 Every year, B95, a.k.a. Moonbird, flies 9,000 or more miles from

Moonbird, flies 9,000 or more miles from his winter home in Tierra del Fuego to his spring mating grounds in the Canadian Arctic. This 9,000 miles is a direct route, mapped by men and women who have been studying this four-ounce shorebird for the past two decades. If there's a strong headwind, or storm that blows him and his flock off course, or their regular feeding grounds are insufficient for the group, he may veer unknown hundreds of miles off-route, adding to his miraculous journey.

B95 is a redknot, species rufa, about the size of a robin who was first tagged by scientists in 1995. He has an orange band on his left leg and a black band on his right, inscribed with the the tag, B95. This label allows birders to recognize him specifically and, according to Hoose, the last certain sighting was November, 2011. Such longevity has created a stir among the ornithologists who study these wonders, and, as a result, he has become known as "Moonbird" because his recorded annual migration miles have equaled a trip to the moon and half-way back. At his last sighting, he was still looking strong and healthy. He is known as a very smart bird to have survived for

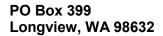


so long, especially since his species' numbers have been reduced by 80% in the years he has been watched.

"Compelling" is a word reviewers frequently use in describing Hoose's telling of the Moonbird's story. I, among others, didn't put this book down once I began it. Supper had to wait. Hoose's style is clear and precise and his research is extended by photographs and maps, some beautiful, others just plain mind-boggling. Philip Hoose, an employee of the Nature Conservancy, has a body of work that includes at least 10 books, not the least of which is his Race to Save the Lord God Bird. (also a reader's delight).

Although the Moonbird may be an exception in age to his flock, he is not exceptional in the wonder of his existence. Hoose makes it clear that the rapid reduction in the population numbers of these birds is in large part a result of human actions. The saving grace of the story is the idea that through education and conscious choices, respecting the lives of the creatures with whom humans share the planet, we may be able to alter this decline and improve our lot in the process.

If you buy one bird book this year, consider this one and then share the story with everyone who will listen.





The *Willapa Whistler* is the bi-monthly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Complimentary copies are sent to organizations and prospective members. All WHAS activities and programs are open to the public.

Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are welcomed. The deadline for inclusion of material in the *Whistler* is the 15th of each even-numbered month. Send your contributions to:

WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632

or email them to

newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org.

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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.

Second Saturday of each month at 8:00 AM at the Hemlock Square at Lake Sacajawea in Longview:

WHAS teams with Longview Parks and Recreation to conduct a **monthly bird walk** around the **lake in Longview**. (Dress for the weather, and bring your binoculars.) Next confirmed date for these 1 ½ hour tours is February 9th.

Saturday, January 19th

Nisqually NWR There are already several people signed up for that trip. There is still room for a few more so to sign up call John Green @ 575-9238 or email jgreen2317@aol.com.

Saturday, January 26th at 9:00 at Lower Columbia College, Physical Science Room 104

WHAS Amphibian Survey in their fourth year, see page one and five for more information.

Saturday, February 16th at 12:00 at the Longview Library

Outreach to New Birders - The Great Backyard Bird Count on February 15—18 will be promoted by a WHAS program. See page one and six for more information

Saturday, March 30th at 6:00pm at the Longview Women's Club

WHAS annual dinner, meeting, and program. Watch the web site and March Whistler for more details. At 7:00 PM, the key note speaker, Master Birder and outdoor photographer, Idie Ulsh will present "*Feathered Architects - The Fascinating World of Bird Nests*". The program will explore how and where birds make nests and will examine interesting aspects of their construction. This program was previously scheduled for March 7.

Non-WHAS Event on Tuesday, February 19th from 8:30am to 4pm at United Churches, 110 11th Ave SE, Olympia WA Join hundreds of other Washington citizens to make our voices heard at the state legislature at the **Washington State Environmental Lobby Day**. For more details and registration visit the Environmental Priorities Coalition site at <u>http://environmentalpriorities.org</u>

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