

# WILLAPA WHISTLER

*A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society*

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**Hooded Mergansers** -- Image Royce Craig

Royce Craig captured this photo of a pair of Hooded Mergansers in early spring at the Three Rivers Golf course.

## Spring Activities at Indian Jack Slough

**By Russ Kastberg**

We've been busy at Indian Jack Slough (IJS) surveying for amphibian and planting trees on the newly restored wetlands along Risk Road.

WHAS co-sponsors Southwest Washington Amphibian Monitoring Project (SWAMP), which has been surveying amphibians at IJS since 2007. In March we hosted two groups of high school students (42 total plus adult teachers) from the Casee Center in the Battleground, Clark County, school district. These students are interested in studying environmental sciences along with their required curriculum. Carlo Abbruzzese and Andrew Emlen, WHAS members, led the group on a short course identifying birds at Julia Butler Hansen Refuge Headquarters before we moved over to survey amphibians at IJS.

*Continued on page 4 – Indian Jack Slough*



*Image: Russ Kastberg*

## 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count

**Mostly extracted from the GBBC website by Larry Turner**

The 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count was the "first-ever" global GBBC, and it was quite successful. And, for the first time, WHAS had a program for the public and went out and counted some of our local birds.

We had 16 participants and 16 bird species were identified following the program; perhaps additional species were found by the participants at home after the program.

Thanks to Bob Arnsdorf for putting on the program and to Darrel Whipple and Charlotte Persons for help in leading groups to count.

Although it was called a global event (and rightfully so), it was still dominated by North America. There were more than 134,000 checklists submitted from 111 countries, with over 120,000 from the U.S. and over 12,000 from Canada.

The next highest countries were 467 checklists from India and 393 from Mexico. More different species (645) were seen in Mexico than any other country, followed by the U.S. with 638 species, and India with 544 species. Amazingly, 4004 different species were reported, accounting for almost 40% of all species in the world.

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- ☐ New Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- ☐ Renewal Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
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Enclosed is my additional donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Membership includes 6 issues of our newsletter *WILLAPA WHISTLER* annually.

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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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### OTHER

## 50<sup>th</sup> WENAS Audbon Campout

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

**The Wenas Audubon Campout will take place on Memorial Day Weekend (May 24-27) at the Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg).** This three-day annual event invites campers to participate in a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wenas Audubon Campout. In the spring of 1963, three women wandered into the Wenas Creek area while on a bird walk. Struck by the abundance of wildlife they found there, the women rallied to protect the area and reserve the site for bird-lovers to gather on Memorial Weekend for years to come. In 2013, the tradition continues. Event organizers have planned additional programming to celebrate the last half-century of Wenas Audubon Campouts, including a photo gallery and fireside presentation of the natural and homesteading history of the Wenas Valley. Commemorative t-shirts will also be available for purchase.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website ([www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org)) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information. Pre-registration is not required. The campout is free and open to all ages; however, donations are encouraged. Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass (<http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/>).

## Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest

**May 16-19 2013**

Come the third weekend in May, and discover the natural beauty of North Central Washington state. The Leavenworth area features spectacular habitats ranging from snow-capped mountains to sunny ponderosa pine forests, to lush riparian zones, to shrub-steppe. <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com> has more information.



## Book Review

By Carolyn Norred

### *Gifts of the Crow*

John Marzluff and Tony Angell

Simon & Schuster; Free Press; 2012

Anyone who has ever stopped by McDonalds for some quick fried potatoes, knows crows. I'm guessing most folk, even non-birders who don't eat fast-food, recognize crows when they see them.

However, after reading Marzluff's entertaining book on the subject, crow, I was surprised by how well crows know us - humans.

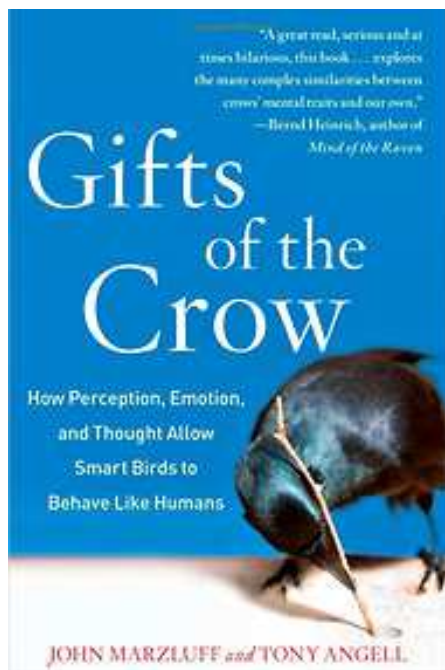
John Marzluff, University of WA professor of wildlife science, has spent years observing and testing corvids in general, and crows more specifically. The author of four books and a collection of papers, public presentations, and videos, Marzluff writes in a friendly, sometimes humorous style that incorporates the hard science of ornithological study without losing his lay readers in language and data specifics.

The book focuses on the neurobiology of the crow's brain and fully examines its startling parallel with the human brain. Crows, it appears, share with us a brain structure and chemistry that differs most significantly only in the forebrain, indicating a surprising

capacity for thought, memory, and emotion in the bird. Marzluff develops his conclusions with a variety of scientific experiments and some engaging corvid character anecdotes. Betty, for example, can make her own hooks from a wire strip and then use them to reach into a tube and retrieve a bit of desired food. Bela, recognizes human faces and knows, from his experience, whether you are friend or foe. Hitchcock and his mate enjoyed pulling windshield wiper rubbers from parked cars. but after only one session of negative reinforcement, this quick-study got the message and now keeps his distance from those wipers.

Adding to Marzluff's expertise and open style in this read is Tony Angell's entertaining illustrations and charts. For a lay reader like this one, the visuals are a necessary addition to the verbal analysis Marzluff provides.

In conclusion, I might add this cautionary note: If you like to see humans as the center of the universe, you might want to skip this book because as it develops the degree to which humans and corvid species are intertwined, it may leave you feeling a little miffed to realize that, although we might be able to think like a crow, we still can't fly like one.



## Translucent tape to prevent bird collisions

By Ann Musché

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) now offers a tape we have on our windows to help birds avoid collisions. See <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120221.html>

We followed their advice to place the 3/4-inch-wide strips vertically on 4-inch centers (as they found birds would not fly through a vertical opening narrower than 4 inches.) It is meant to cut down the number of birds who, seeing the reflection of trees in our big windows, fly into the glass. (We do not have a LOT of these collisions here, but we are sorry to have ANY....) This tape interferes very little with the view out the window.

ABC says on the website "the Bird Tape is available in 3-inch and three-quarter-inch width rolls. The 3-inch tape is applied in blocks in a variety of patterns, while the thinner tape is applied in parallel strips, normally vertically over the full height of the window. Because it is translucent, the tape lets birds see the glass, yet unlike silhouettes that people sometimes use as deterrents, allows light to pass through into the room. It is easily applied and easily removed and lasts up to four years."

I think there are many of us who are delighted to feed birds and have them nearby, but are very concerned about birds crashing into our windows.



Image: American Bird Conservancy, Steve Holmer



## Continued from page one - Indian Jack Slough

This has been a record year for amphibians at IJS as we have found over 5000 red-legged frog egg masses at the newly created wetlands. Ideal amphibian habitat has been created by removing the reed canary grass and replacing it with shallow, open water. Native plants have emerged from the dormant seed bank and are flourishing. The habitat should improve even more in years to come.

WHAS received funding from Washington State Audubon's Collaborative Grant Program, which has been partially used to purchase 300 Sitka Spruce trees. Volunteers (10) from WHAS and Columbia Land Trust planted the trees around the newly created



wetlands. CLT steward Dan Friesz augered the holes, and the volunteers planted the trees with the blue rodent protectors. The idea is to establish a conifer riparian zone around the wetlands before the reed canary grass can re-establish itself.

**THANK YOU** to all the volunteers that have helped us this spring at Indian Jack Slough. The next time you are in the area, take the loop drive off Highway 4 along Risk Road and Nelson Creek Road and observe the new wetlands and plantings. In addition to seeing elk and deer, you will see an abundance of water fowl and upland birds.



## ...continued from page one – 2013 GBBC

In North America, the Northern Cardinal was the most frequently reported species, being on 46,991 checklists, followed by the Dark-eyed Junco and Mourning Dove, each on over 40,000 checklists. The largest flock reported was over 5,000,000 Red-winged Blackbirds at St. Joseph, Missouri, where the trees were reported to be black-leaved with the birds. The count may have been off by 1015 birds. A few miles north, 700,000-1,100,000 Snow Geese were reported from Squaw Creek NWR in Missouri. Internationally, 60,000 flamingos were reported in Tanzania.

The GBBC summary remarked on a large irruption of winter finches (species not named), numerous and widespread Common Redpolls, an impressive increase in Evening Grosbeaks (which we see at our home now, but not in February), a relative lack of Cedar Waxwings, and high numbers of red-breasted nuthatches, more southerly than usual. Most North American observers were in the eastern half of the continent, and as a result, many of the interesting items were centered there.

For our part of the country, the largest number of a species seen by one individual in Washington was 45,000 snow geese in Skagit Valley, followed by 37,500 American Robins in Yakima Valley (at someone's home – must have a big yard). The next highest was 3500 dunlin and crows. WHAS super-birder Russ Koppendreyer spotted the largest numbers of four species: 642 Northern Shovelers at the Longview Sewage Ponds, along with 833 Greater Scaup, 10 American Kestrels, and 149 Dark-eyed juncos at the Woodland Bottoms. In Oregon, the largest number reported by one individual was 9000 Tundra Swans near Klamath Falls, followed by 5000 Cackling Geese at Basket Slough NWR.

Last year, there was more information on total numbers of birds, rather than just checklists, and information by zip code.

These were not seen this year; it may be too early for those results.

A few highlights from the report underscore the magnitude of this first-ever global GBBC. In four days, observations were collected from 111 countries, on more 134,000 checklists. Even more amazing is that bird watchers reported 4,004 species, which is 39 percent of all species in the world!

Some findings:

- Top species reported for the entire count were Northern Cardinal, Dark-eyed Junco, and Mourning Dove, reflecting the high participation in the United States and Canada, where the GBBC has been established for more than a decade.
- Top species reported outside of the U.S. and Canada were Eurasian Blackbird, Black Kite, and Great Tit, reflecting greater participation from India, where these species are often found.
- The largest flock was reported from Mark Youngdahl Urban Conservation Area in St. Joseph, Missouri, where observers saw an estimated 5 million Red-winged Blackbirds.
- White-winged Crossbills were reported in 20 states, with large numbers in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, and southerly sightings in Arkansas, Kansas, and Kentucky.
- Cedar Waxwings were reported in surprisingly low numbers in the northeast quadrant of North America, likely because of there was not enough winter fruit crop to sustain birds in the region.
- GBBC data show more insect-eating birds, such as swallows, are now spending the winter months farther north than in the past.

### Diving Bird Program

**By Bob Arnsdorf**

Please join local birding expert **Harry Nehls**, author of *Birds of the Willamette Valley Region*, on Wednesday May 8 at 7:00 pm at Lower Columbia College, Room PSC 102 as he discusses the *unique features and fascinating natural history of diving birds including cormorants, pelicans, loons and grebes*.

The program is free, open to all and sponsored by the LCC Sustainability Club and the Willapa Hills Audubon Society.

### Tid Bits

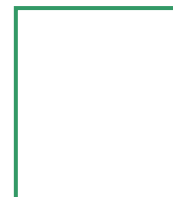
**By John Green**

**Did you know?**

- Wild Birds Unlimited reports that Red-breasted Nuthatches line the entrance to their nesting cavities with drops of sticky conifer resin, apparently to discourage predators and nest competitors from entering. So how does the nuthatch avoid the resin? It dives directly into the nest cavity without ever touching the sides of the entry hole.
- Vultures have the bird kingdom's slowest wing beat, at one beat per minutes. It doesn't keep him down, though. A vulture collided with a jet liner flying at 37,000 feet.



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

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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 15<sup>th</sup> of each even-numbered month. Send your contributions to:

WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632

or email them to

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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.

#### **May 8, Wednesday** at 7pm at LCC Room PSC 102

Please join local birding expert **Harry Nehls**, author of *Birds of the Willamette Valley Region*, on Wednesday May 8 at 7:00 pm at Lower Columbia College, Room PSC 102 as he discusses the *Unique features and fascinating natural history of diving birds* including cormorants, pelicans, loons and grebes.

The program is free, open to all and sponsored by the LCC Sustainability Club and the Willapa Hills Audubon Society.

#### **May 11, Saturday Second Saturday Lake Sacajawea Bird Walk**

Meet at 8:00 AM at the Hemlock Square off Kessler Blvd and Hemlock in Longview. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars if you have them. The leader will have a scope for better views. The walk will last about 1 ½ hours. No pre sign up necessary.

We will resume our monthly Lake walks in September. Traditionally, we take the summer off from scheduled field trips in order to allow us all to get out in nature and enjoy. Any spur-of-the moment trips will be announced by way of our gmail alert list.

*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](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org)**