



# WILLAPA WHISTLER

*A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society*

Volume 49 // Issue 1

Spring 2023

WHAS made changes to membership by switching to a yearly renewal date.  
**All membership renewals are due in March, see page 2 for the details.**



Evening Grosbeak - Image courtesy of Royce Craig

## WHAS Board Looks to Change Chapter Name

### From the WHAS Board

At a special board meeting recently a majority of the board present voted unanimously to begin a process of investigation into a name change to the organization.

By consensus a committee has been appointed to begin this process and the end result will most likely be a name change that won't include the name Audubon but will honor our founding as a National Audubon chapter in 1975.

The board took this action after more than a year's discussion of the issue and the special two-hour meeting held on February 11, ending with the resolution to seriously look into a name change.

The discussion has been ongoing since at least 2021 when National Audubon began in earnest to address JJ Audubon's flawed character and slave-holding past. That discussion followed efforts to make Audubon more inviting to a new and more inclusive generation of Americans, and evolved into a national debate on whether to retain the Audubon name.

A decision on that discussion is expected to conclude soon. Similarly, Seattle Audubon decided last year to drop Audubon from that chapter's name and is expected to announce a new name

sometime in June. Several other chapters nationwide have also decided to change their names, and still others await the decision at the national level.

With all this in mind, and more, the WHAS board has decided to move forward but on our own terms. We acted with a nod to the future and our ability to gain new members and also to be more impactful. We noted that the organization was never primarily about Mr. Audubon and his personal story but about birding and by changing the name we can move forward cleanly. We also believe this can be done without striking off JJ Audubon's achievements in ornithology, but by carefully re-examining him, and his history, with solid and nuanced scholarship.

We counsel care at the national and state level of Audubon, to move with a transition plan in place if the name is changed; and for continuing cooperation with all current chapters, if not. We want to emphasize the legacy of respect that the Audubon Society has built in the US and around the world, the citizen science and the conservation efforts to protect all bird species and their habitats.

## 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.

Again, WHAS has benefited from our relationship with the wider world of Audubon and so the board is most concerned about this issue of transition here in Washington state, where the statewide Audubon WA is so effective.

The board continues to be open to comments from you chapter members. (See page 2) As of now, there is no timeline for action and any change will be the result of careful consideration and a continuing conversation with you.

### In this issue of the Whistler:

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- Volunteers Needed at Earth Day booth

**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://willapahillsaudubon.org/join-us-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 \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

✂ \_\_\_\_\_ -Clip

<b>OFFICERS</b>	<b>President:</b>	<b>Steve Puddicombe</b>
	360 465 2205	president@willapahillsaudubon.org
	<b>Vice-President:</b>	<b>vacant</b>
	<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Cathy Kendall</b>
	408- 205-3058	clkendall95@comcast.net
	<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Sherry Hawkins</b>
	971-255-2531	treasurer@willapahillsaudubon.org
	<b>Director at Large:</b>	<b>John Gross</b>
	360-425-0083	grossenuf1@gmail.com
	<b>Director at Large:</b>	<b>Darrel Whipple</b>
503-556-9838	dwhipple@opusnet.com	
<b>Director at Large:</b>	<b>Ann Cordero</b>	
360-577-8626	flnatureniche@gmail.com	
<b>Director at Large</b>	<b>Robert Sudar</b>	
360-423-1780	fallcreek734@gmail.com	
<b>Director at Large</b>	<b>Carolyn Norred</b>	
360-578-2853	cjnorred@gmail.com	
<b>Conservation:</b>	<b>Larry Brandt</b>	
360-200-4580	conservation@willapahillsaudubon.org	
<b>Hospitality:</b>	<b>Gloria Nichols</b>	
360-636-3793	gjnt@comcast.net	
<b>Program:</b>	<b>vacant</b>	
for questions contact President Steve Puddicombe		
<b>Field Trip:</b>	<b>vacant</b>	
<b>Membership:</b>	<b>vacant</b>	
<b>Finance:</b>	<b>vacant</b>	

<b>OTHER</b>	<b>Newsletter:</b>	<b>Ludger Wöhrmann</b>
	360-423-7004	newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org
	<b>Publicity:</b>	<b>Stephen Glucoft</b>
	360-577-7720	sglucoft@comcast.net
<b>Website:</b>	<b>Ludger Wöhrmann</b>	
360-423-7004	webmaster@willapahillsaudubon.org	

Please indicate any **new** information:  
 I prefer you contact me by:  
 Phone  
 Email  
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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 2023

The 2023 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival is scheduled to be held for March 24-26, 2023. More info:  
<https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

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### Olympic BirdFest 2023

Olympic Birdfest will take place April 13-16, 2023. This festival provides participants the opportunity to view a wide variety of birds normally seen on the Olympic Peninsula. Field trips are planned for Sequim Bay, Port Angeles Harbor, Ediz Hook, Dungeness Spit and the Elwha River, as well as trips through wooded areas to view songbirds and locate owls in the evening. Boat trips to Protection Island are also planned  
 More info and BirdFest registration at [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

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### Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest

Come bird for 3-days during the second weekend of May, 12th - 14th, and discover the natural beauty of endangered shrub-steppe habitat in Central Washington State! The Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest will offer expert-led field trips, vendors, extended field trips, lectures and keynote speakers.  
 Find them online at <https://www.ycic.org/giss-and-birdfest>

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### Wenas Campout June 2-5

You are invited to a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington. Each year, Audubon chapters and their friends gather for a few days of camping, birding, and exploring the Wenas Wildlife Area near Ellensburg, WA. In 2023, the campout will be held the first weekend in June, avoiding the crowds of Memorial Day. Information on dispersed camping, activities, and what to expect are on the website at <https://wenasaudubon.org>

## Renewal and Rebirth

By Steve Puddicombe, President

This issue of the Whistler marks the first of the new year. And, as has been explained for several years, WHAS now has a yearly membership renewal date, ending the cumbersome practice of asking for renewal on a month by month basis, based on the date when someone first joined. We no longer send individual notification; all our chapter and national members receive a mailed Whistler with self-addressed envelope and detaching membership form.

Note that we have several WHAS membership categories: instead of just the one individual membership of the past we now have an individual, family and lifetime option. You can send a check with the enclosed self-addressed envelope or use our credit card payment option online at [www.willapahillsaudubon.org](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org). If you want to give a gift donation to someone you can do so most easily at our pay site online. The pay site also makes it easy to make a donation if you want to support one of our conservation initiatives or if you just want to increase your support at any time.

On page one in this issue you will find a discussion about a name change for our organization as the board recently passed a resolution to investigate a change, in earnest. Over the last few years in this column I've mentioned the issue in passing as rumblings came from around the country about JJ Audubon's legacy in light of changing scholarship and culture.

WHAS has seen a lot of change since its founding nearly 50 years ago. The average membership age is older now and the economy in our territory has become less oriented to fishing, farming and forest products. A lot of folks have come and gone from chapter membership, following economic opportunity and other pursuits. Similarly, National Audubon, founded in 1901, has seen much change in American life. But WHAS is still here, and the original tenets remain: to preserve, protect, study and enjoy birds. And to do so with a strong emphasis on citizen science.

So forgive me if I downplay the relative importance of a name change when a far more pressing issue is in retaining and increasing our membership and insuring our presence into the future.

My resident Black Phoebe first showed up about 3 years ago and inters here. I see and hear it each day as it chirps from my roof peak and the tops of my nearby magnolia and willow trees. I was delighted today to hear a second phoebe as it flitted into my open garage! The Audubon sponsored Christmas Bird Counts have indicated a range expansion of the species in recent years and perhaps a nesting pair here is in the offing. That's a change I can welcome!

Happy Birding!

## New Avian Interpretive Signs for Lake Sacajawea Park

By Cathy Kendall

If you've visited Longview's beautiful Lake Sacajawea Park lately, you may have noticed that the bird interpretive signs are in sad shape. As you can see from the photos, the one on the Kessler Boulevard side is still legible but faded and has been marred by graffiti. The sign on the other side of the lake, facing Nichols Boulevard, has been almost completely obliterated by sun and weather.

The signs were installed approximately 15 years ago in honor of Ruth Deery, a founding member of WHAS, and were the result of collaboration between WHAS, two local artists, and the City of Longview.



Longview resident and nature enthusiast Vincent Mahouski was walking at the park last year and noticed that the interpretative signs were in a state of disrepair. He decided to do something about it and contacted the City. The City put him in touch with WHAS. Vinny is now working with WHAS secretary Cathy Kendall and the City Parks & Recreation Department to replace the signs. Kristi Ruhland at Parks & Rec tracked down the original digital artwork and provided it to Cathy. Vinny and Cathy are now working with Fossil Industries, the New York graphics company that made the original signs, to replace them. By this summer, we hope to have bright new bird signs at the well-loved park.

## Sparse results for the 2023 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

By Clay Patrick

I was privileged to accompany Darrel Whipple and act as his driver on this year's Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey, January 24, 2023. Looking ahead at the weather forecast, we tried to pick a day with no rain. We were successful in that, but the drier, 38 degree weather also brought high fog all morning, which limited our distance visibility considerably. We started at the Longview Library at 7:40 AM, and ten minutes later saw our first adult along the dike south of Riverside Park, along the Cowlitz River.

Continuing in the north block of the survey, we saw none for the next 40 minutes, and then on up the Cowlitz, on Cook Ferry Road I spotted something moving along the road just as we were coming around a curve. I slowed, and then stopped as I saw an adult right on the road, with partially eaten prey or road-kill in its talons. We were surprised it didn't fly off with it, but it stuck around and gave us quite a show. It was joined moments later by a sub-adult who challenged the adult a bit, but it stood its ground. My camera was still in the back seat, and I didn't want to spook it away by trying to get it, so we didn't get a photo.

Almost an hour passed before we saw our next adult across the Cowlitz on Horseshoe Bend Estates road (south of Castle Rock).

Our next stop was Silver Lake, and after the results Darrel had there in 2020, he was surprised and disappointed that we were able to spot no Eagles there, despite hanging around on the boardwalk through the wetlands for about 45 minutes. There was still quite a bit of high fog, and we didn't see many other birds either. Maybe they were all sleeping in! At a far distance we saw two large birds in a tree, but even with binoculars we couldn't confirm they were Eagles. As we were driving away from Silver Lake, we drove by that tree, and they were a pair of Red-Tail Hawks. We were disappointed.

We drove back to I-5, then north to the Toutle River and exiting at Barnes Road. We stopped for a while on the old Highway 99 "Mickey Mouse Bridge" over the Toutle (that's really what it's called, but nobody knows why for sure). We saw one sub-adult there, mid-morning. Then we crossed I-5 going NW on Barnes Road, and then up Imboden Road near to the Cowlitz, where we saw another adult. Tried a side road or two down toward the river but saw nothing. On Mandy Road we saw another adult. None of these were very close to us. Our total count for the north block was just five adults and two sub-adults.

Then to the south block, stopping first at Kalama, and we had our bag lunches at one of the little parks along the Columbia south of McMenamans. Then up to the marina, where Darrel spotted one adult clear across the Columbia! Then we went all the way up the Kalama River Road, to the second fish hatchery on that road. We saw nothing until we started back down the river, where we saw single adults in two locations, across the river. This road is fairly twisty and narrow, with limited places to stop (no shoulder).

We stopped in the road to get a better look at the first Eagle we saw. I'd stopped far enough away from a curve not to be dangerous, but two vehicles had to pass us. I was too busy looking at the Eagle to notice them coming up on me, or I might have moved. A couple of minutes later a truck came back the other way, and the driver stopped to talk to us. It was one of the vehicles who had to go around us, driven by a very nice young man, probably no older than 20. He had turned around and come back to us because he was concerned we might need help! (A couple of old guys in a car stopped in the middle of the road!)

I explained why we'd stopped, and thanked him profusely, telling him how nice it was for him to have done that. That was perhaps the high point of the day for me!

The last Eagle we saw was back in Longview, an adult at Gerhart Gardens Park, Longview, at 3:45 PM in the afternoon. That was the fourth for the south block, making our total for the day just eleven, nine adults and two sub-adults. We saw 21 other species of birds during the day, finishing at 4:00 PM. Each of the two blocks is about eight by twelve miles in size, and we drove a total of 121.4 miles (close to the average).

Although I was disappointed we didn't see more Eagles, I always enjoy being in Darrel's company, and we had a fun day together. Maybe we'll see more next year!

### Volunteer at our Earth Day Booth

On Saturday, April 29, WHAS will have a booth at the Earth Day celebration at Lake Sacajawea in Longview. This is a fun event with lots of community booths and entertainment. Just as in past years, we need volunteers.

We usually have two children's activities: making bird feeders with peanut butter as glue for seeds on toilet paper rolls, and measuring kids' arm spans against wooden bird wings that are duck-sized to eagle-sized. If helping with those activities does not sound like fun, you can talk to kids and their parents about the bird mounts or explain what Audubon does.

**Contact Gloria Nichols at 360.636.3793 to help.**

### 41<sup>st</sup> Cowlitz Columbia CBC Result

By Bob Reistroffer

On January 1, 2023 the 41<sup>st</sup> 3CBC was held as part of Audubon's 123<sup>rd</sup> Christmas Bird Count. Thirteen field observers and one feeder watcher joined and spent a partially sunny day finding 9,608 birds and 99 species. The temperature ranged from 40° to 46°. This was the cool day with a low fog in the morning and partly cloudy in the afternoon.

**We had a couple of new birds to this count:** 1 Brandt's Cormorant, 1 American Pipit

**Sightings during the count week:** Common Loon, Snow Goose, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Great Horned Owl, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Harrier, Short-billed (Mew Gull), Pileated Woodpecker, Brown-headed Cowbird.

Thank you all for a great job. Hope to see you all next year on Monday, Jan 1, 2024.

\*\*\* **Change of note for 2024** \*\*\*

I would like to say welcome and thank you to Becky Kent who has volunteered to take over the compilation of the 3CBC

## 2022 Breeding Bird Survey Summary

By Robert Sudar

Springtime and early summer are the time for birdsong; hence the Breeding Bird Survey is held in late May and June each year. This survey goes back to 1960s, but one local route on the Washington side of the Columbia – near Abernathy hatchery to Skamokawa – was passed on to Darrel Whipple in the 1970s and he faithfully completed the survey each year until just a few years ago when he convinced my wife – Lisa Sudar – to take it over. I had been Darrel’s “data recorder” for a few years and I still hold that role as my wife surveys the route. I just don’t have the ear, or the memory, but I’m happy to be the willing assistant.

The idea behind the survey is simple. The birds we have locally in the summer are a different mix than what we have in the winter during the Christmas Bird Counts. The challenge in the summer is that the trees have leaves and the birds are nesting so it’s harder to know what’s there. However, they are singing, so that’s the key. You can identify them by sight or sound. The survey route is comprised of 50 3-minute listening events, half a mile apart, over the 24.5 mile course, so it tends to be somewhat frenetic and by the end of it – starting at 4:50 AM and finishing by 10:30AM or so – you are exhausted and ready for a nap. Assuming you can get bird songs out of your mind!

This year Lisa heard or saw (I can help point things out but I need to stay nearby) 57 species, which was very good for us – we usually hope for 50 at least. And it was an especially satisfying total because we had very few waterbirds – the closest thing to a duck was a Double-crested Cormorant. But we did have a few firsts – Western Wood Pewee and Black Phoebe –

and a good selection of warblers, flycatchers and other visitors and local residents.

One thing that we did a little differently this year is that we used the Merlin bird song app from Cornell to compare with what we saw and heard. It was a great help in providing a boost in confidence! We didn’t include anything in the data if only Merlin heard it, but if Lisa wasn’t sure but had an idea, and Merlin matched her hunch, then we counted it. By the end, Lisa heard or saw 297 total birds at the 50 stops, Merlin heard 204 birds, and they agreed on 160 birds. Obviously, Merlin could only “hear” them and so you would expect its count would be lower, but it also did miss a few species that Lisa could clearly identify. And there were only seven birds that Merlin “heard” that we couldn’t confirm, ranging from Black-capped Chickadee and Savannah Sparrow, which we’ve heard or seen on this route in the past, to Spotted Owl and Yellow-breasted Chat, which we feel pretty certain weren’t there. We suspect the owl was actually a barking dog we heard about the time Merlin made the ID. Nothing’s perfect!

Overall, it was another enjoyable survey – discounting the 4:50AM start – and another chance to get better at birding. And testing Merlin was a great experiment. It’s a part of the free Merlin app. If you haven’t tried it, I’d suggest that you do. It was great help, and practicing with it before the count verified some of the calls we have heard but for which we had some uncertainties. Just goes to show that birding is certainly an exercise in lifelong learning!

### Breeding Bird Survey Species Count June 19, 2022

1. American Robin	24. Rufous Hummingbird	47. Common Yellowthroat
2. Pacific Slope Flycatcher	25. Scrub Jay	48. Red-winged Blackbird
3. Pacific Wren	26. Yellow Warbler	49. Marsh Wren
4. Swainson’s Thrush	27. Black-throated Gray Warbler	50. Great Blue Heron
5. Warbling Vireo	28. Spotted Towhee	51. Mourning Dove
6. Song Sparrow	29. Willow Flycatcher	52. Western Wood Pewee
7. Varied Thrush	30. Steller’s Jay	53. Purple Martin
8. Wilson’s Warbler	31. Hermit Warbler	54. Red-tailed Hawk
9. Violet-green Swallow	32. Townsend’s Warbler	55. Golden-crowned Kinglet
10. Cedar Waxwing	33. Band-tailed Pigeon	56. Turkey Vulture
11. Crow	34. Canada Jay	57. Black Phoebe
12. Western Tanager	35. White-crowned Sparrow	
13. Brown Creeper	36. Yellow-rumped Warbler	Species ID’d by Merlin but not by Lisa
14. Barn Swallow	37. Dark-eyed Junco	1. Red-eyed Vireo (twice)
15. European Starling	38. Chestnut-backed Chickadee	2. Black-capped Chickadee
16. Northern Flicker	39. Brewer’s Blackbird	3. Savannah Sparrow
17. Red-breasted Sapsucker	40. American Goldfinch	4. Dunlin (!)
18. Common Raven	41. Purple Finch	5. Spotted Owl
19. Orange-crowned Warbler	42. Bewick’s Wren	(there was a dog barking)
20. Brown-headed Cowbird	43. Olive-sided Flycatcher	6. White-tailed Kite (!)
21. Osprey	44. Bald Eagle	7. Yellow-breasted Chat (!)
22. Double-crested Cormorant	45. Red-breasted Nuthatch	
23. Black-headed Grosbeak	46. Eurasian-collared Dove	



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 15<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org).



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or pass it on to a friend.

Find us on Facebook at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/willapahillsaudubon/>

## 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.

**Earth Day celebration** at Lake Sacajawea in Longview on Saturday April 29<sup>th</sup>.

### 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](http://whistler.willapahillsaudubon.org) for this and past issues.

### Membership Renewals

WHAS made changes to membership by switching to a yearly renewal date.

All **membership** renewals are **due in March** of each year.

You can renew online by using a credit card or by mailing a check.

See page 2 for the details!

**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>