

WILLAPA WHISTLER

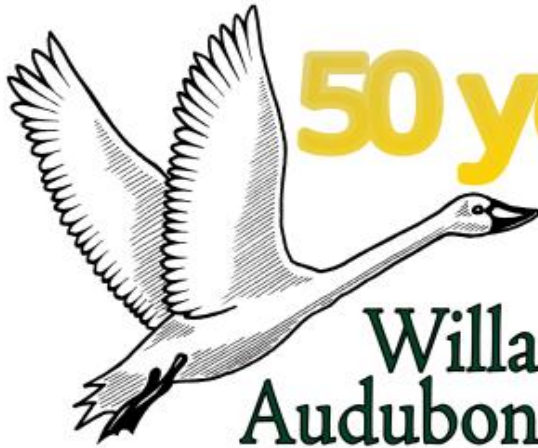
A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 51 // Issue 3

Fall 2025

Celebrating

50 years



Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Happy Birthday! Willapa Hills celebrates Fifty Years!

By Steve Puddicombe

Young folks, old folks, current WHAS members, former members, birders, wildlife lovers and conservationists: come and help us celebrate our founding anniversary, **Saturday, September 13, 2025 at the Skamokawa Grange** just off SR 4 and next to the Wahkiakum County fairgrounds at 18 Fairgrounds Rd, Skamokawa Valley, WA.

All the events are free and the public is welcome. If you can RSVP president@willapahillsaudubon.org to help with food and drink needs.

The Grange will open at **1 pm** if you want to arrive early and meet current board members, volunteers and other early arrivals. We'll have newsletters, some taxidermy mounts, other memorabilia, and conversation with other members.

From the Grange you can easily walk to and explore **Vista Park**, bordering the Columbia River and with a nature trail that runs a mile through mature forest. Or you can walk over to Redmen Hall, that explores the history of the area and also hosts some WHAS

taxidermy specimens. Across the highway is the Skamokawa Paddle Center where you can rent kayaks for the day (make sure you check with them in advance), and from there the Julia Butler Hansen NWR is only a short walk away.

At 2 pm Russ Koppendrayner will lead a field trip to the JBH refuge where there are often many species of ducks and geese, as well as songbirds and maybe some early migrants. Russ has covered the refuge during the CBC here for over 20 years. **Meet at the Grange Hall** for carpooling.

Then at 4 pm until 5 pm back at the Grange there will be food and drink (BYO beer and wine) and special entertainment provided by locals **Andrew Emlen and Kyleen Austin**, both accomplished musicians and birders. Andrew is the founder and leader of the Wahkiakum CBC and promises some "bird songs" as part of the repertoire.

And then at 5 we'll meet some of the **founders of our chapter** and introduce **Robert Michael Pyle**, well known local naturalist and author, who will round out our celebration with his program, **"50**

WHAS Memorabilia

The WHAS Board is looking for old Whistlers and artifacts from the past to share at our 50th anniversary celebration, and to save for the future.

If you have any items of interest regarding the founding of WHAS, our conservation efforts over the years, and even memories of the earlier years of our outfit, please contact Steve Puddicombe at president@willapahillsaudubon.org

Years in the Willapa Hills: A Naturalist's Reflections in Poetry and Prose."

We hope that some of you will visit from afar to see old friends and renew acquaintance with the beauty of the Willapa Hills and lower Columbia Estuary. If you do **there are many local B & Bs to choose from or you can camp or rent a yurt at Vista Park**, conveniently connected to the Grange by a bridge over the creek. **For any information needs contact Steve at president@willapahillsaudubon.org**

Also in this issue of the Whistler:

- Membership Form
- NW Birding Events
- Photo Impression from Recent WHAS Events
- Wilson's Warbler: Charismatic Flirt
- WHAS History is a Legacy of Civic Engagement and Love of Nature
- Christmas Bird Counts Dates for 2025

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://www.willapahillsaudubon.org/join-renew-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 _____ Phone _____

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

OFFICERS

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 for questions contact President Steve Puddicombe

Field Trip: vacant

Membership: vacant

Finance: vacant

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OTHER

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Please indicate any **new** information:

I prefer you contact me by:

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Mail

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 \$ _____**

Christmas Bird Counts 2025

Save the dates:

This is a fun event for seasoned and new-be birders alike. All dates and events are preliminary as there might be changes and adjustments. We will have all the details on our website and in the Winter Whistler - published in early December.

- Leadbetter (Pacific County) – December 13
- Wahkiakum – tbd (week 52) Coordinator: Andrew Emlen
- Cowlitz-Columbia – December 28 Coordinator: Becky Kent

Friends of Willapa Refuge Fall Migration

September 19-20, 2025

This birding and nature event is a celebration of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge's many species and diverse habitats.

More info at <https://friendsofwillaparefuge.org/Events>

BirdFest & Bluegrass Festival

October 4, 2025

BirdFest and Bluegrass is the main event every year that the Friends & the City of Ridgefield put on to bring awareness to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, and all that it has to offer. We celebrate the Sandhill Crane returning to the Refuge, a huge stately bird that is endangered in Washington State, and we celebrate everything the Refuge is and what it brings to the community.

More info at <https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/>

WHAS History is a Legacy of Civic Engagement and Love of Nature

By Steve Puddicombe

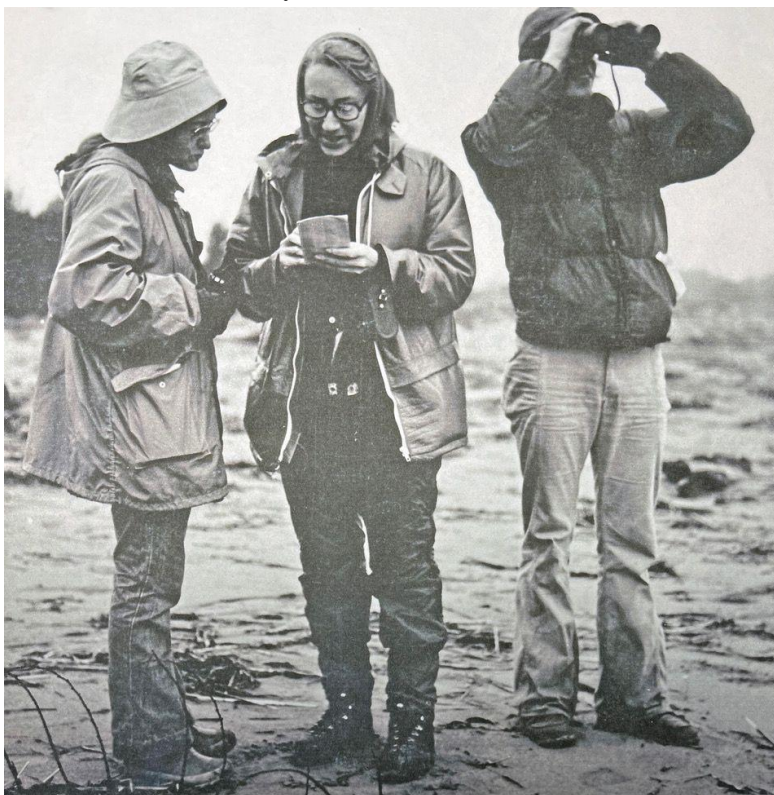
When I asked Darrel Whipple to recall for me the founding of WHAS, one name immediately flew out: Hazel Wolf. She is famous in Washington Audubon lore, as she helped found up to 12 chapters from her perch at Seattle Audubon, traveling around the state in the 70's, bringing the local environmentally conscious folks, conservationists, citizen scientists, and of course birders, together to form more localized, representative Audubon chapters in all the various regions of Washington State. (Today there are some 23 chapters here, while states like Arizona have only a few, all based in the major cities).

"Rick and I met Hazel Wolf at the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs Annual Convention in the Fall of 1974. We were the delegates of the Mt. St. Helens Hiking Club. Hazel told us she was organizing an Audubon chapter in Vancouver. Would people from Longview be interested in being part of that? We said probably not. So the idea was hatched of organizing a group in Longview."

--Judy Davis

Among those assembled at an organizing meeting, besides the Davises were Darrel and Judy Whipple, Phil and Shirley Lutz, Ruth and Harold Deery, Bill Smith, and others. By June 1975 they had met Audubon's requirements and were off. Rick Davis was the first president.

Darrel recalled for me some of the highlights over the years:



Three WHAS founders taking part in the 1974 Leadbetter Point Christmas Bird Count. L to r: Judy Whipple, Ruth Deery, Bill Smith. Photo by Harold Deery.

WHAS absorbed and sponsored the Leadbetter Point CBC that had been established circa 1972. Bob and Pat Reistroffer established a Cowlitz count later and then Andrew Emlen organized the Wahkiakum Count.

As the only conservation-oriented group in the SW Washington region WHAS has been instrumental in several important preservation efforts such as the land swaps with Weyerhaeuser in order to protect the Long Island cedar groves; and in the eventual establishment of Mt St Helens National Monument. Members such as Irene Bachhuber, Susan Saul and Darrel Whipple have won awards for their conservation efforts; Whipple, the Helen Engle award given by Audubon Washington.

In the early 90's member Kathleen Abbott

left her estate to the chapter. The sale of her home is the endowment that still today allows a very small chapter like WHAS to maintain itself without worrying constantly about fundraising, and to contribute to local conservation causes on the bargain.

These are just a few of the names and events that have shaped WHAS and just a brief look at the history. What's missing here are the countless interesting programs, instructive field trips, the great friendships and fun developed over 50 years of commitment by all the many members and volunteers. More to come!

Editor's note: Washington State Audubon has [this](https://wa.audubon.org/news/willapa-hills-audubon-society-celebrates-50-years-birding-community-and-conservation) to say on the history of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society:

Let's Go Birding at Fort Stevens State Park

Join a Park Ranger on a guided walk to look for and identify birds • No birding experience is required. Binoculars are recommended; there are a few binoculars to share.

For more information contact Dane Osis
971.338.8030 or dane.osis@opr.d.oregon.gov

Battery Russell Bird Hike

Friday Sept 12th 9:30am-10:30 am, - Meet at Battery Russell

Fort to Sea Trail Birding

Friday Sept 19th 9:30am-10:30 am - Meet at Sunset Beach

Old Fort Stevens Bird Hike

Friday Sept 26 9:30-10:30 am - Meet at Historic Area Museum

Wilson's Warbler: Charismatic Flirt

By David Slater

Wilson's Warblers chatter and flit around alder and willow thickets, often near water. They seem to call for attention and if I were a bird, I would be interested. This "egg yolk" yellow warbler with a black cap is one of the smallest warblers in the U.S. They motor between shrubs in the understory, grabbing goodies (insects) from leaves, and jumping up on low perches to sing their heart out. They breed mainly in the far north, but there are breeding populations in the coastal areas of Washington and Oregon and in the general area surrounding northern Idaho and western Montana.

Wilson's Warblers have long, thin tails, small, thin bills and they appear round bodied. They are larger than a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and smaller than a common Yellowthroat. While the males have a distinctive black cap, adult females are similar in color but show variations in the amount of black on the top of the head. Our western populations tend to be brighter yellow than Eastern populations.

Most often, Wilson's Warblers nest on the ground, though populations in Coastal California and Oregon nest up to 5 feet off the ground. Birds that nest in the understory lay fewer eggs than birds that nest on the ground. Like a high school graduate who wants to leave home, but doesn't quite feel ready, when Wilson Warbler fledglings leave the nest, they sometimes head back to the nest for a night or two

after fledging. In contrast, most songbird nestlings leave the nest and don't return.

Wilson's Warblers pick larval insects, spiders, beetles, and caterpillars off leaves and twigs. They also "fly-catch" to grab flies, bees, mayflies, aphids, and other insects from leaves or in the air. While wintering, they shift their foraging strategy to take advantage of a unique available food source. They hover near scale insects as they feed on oak trees and drink the sugary liquid excreted by these insects.

Wilson's Warbler males select and defend nesting and foraging territories. When another Wilson's Warbler enters their territory, they display territorial behavior by dropping their wings and cocking their tails upwards while hopping between branches and giving harsh calls. Only females incubate and brood eggs and nestlings, but males help feed nestlings and

fledglings. If an adult detects a predator near the nest, like the distraction display of the Killdeer, the parent may perform a broken-wing display to distract the predator. Nest predators include Steller's Jays, mice, squirrels, chipmunks, domestic cats, and snakes.

Constantly moving, Wilson's Warblers can be a challenge to view through binoculars. Hold your binoculars up to your eyes and be ready to glance directly at the bird as they flit from your field of vision. Briefly note their immediate surroundings, then quickly refocus your binoculars on them as these likeable birds seem to flirt for your attention. Repeat.



Photo: Brad Imhoff / Macaulay Library

WHAS Field trips and programs

September 13th

Bird walk at Julia Butler Hansen NWR

Becky Kent and Russ Koppendrayer will lead a bird walk at Julia Butler Hansen NWR as part of the WHAS 50 Year Celebration on September 13th.

We will meet at the Skamokawa Grange for carpooling. We'll plan to leave there at 2PM, so be sure to arrive before then so we can organize the carpooling. There is no need to sign up as we will go with whoever is there. We will return to the grange about 4PM to enjoy the rest of the festivities.

September 21st

Annual Vaux's Swifts Viewing Supper

Willapa Hills invites members and the public to join us for dinner at El Tapatio Mexican Restaurant at 6 pm in Rainier, Ore, afterwards we will view the Vaux's Swifts roosting at Riverside Church, West 3rd street in Rainier.

Throughout September

If you can't make it on the day of the dinner, you can watch the Swifts and meet our volunteers from the corner of W D St and W 3rd St near Fox Creek during the first few weeks of September.

The Riverside chimney continues to be one of the top sites on the migration south, with numbers of Swifts increasing each year. One night last year there were nearly 25,000.

Come join us and learn more about Vaux Swifts. You can also **view them on our Swift Cam** by going to willapahillsaudubon.org.

Photo Impression from Recent WHAS Events



Top:
Participants of the 2025 Picnic at the Turner
residence in Rose Valley
Image provided by Ann Kastberg



Right:
Longview Fire Department inviting kids to sit in
the firetruck on First Responders' Day,
August 2 at the Children's Discovery Museum
Image provided by Ann Cordero

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.

Saturday, September 13th, 2025

WHAS 50th Anniversary Celebration,

See details on page one

Saturday, September 13th, 2025

Bird walk at the Julia Butler Hansen NWR

See details on page four

September 21st

Annual Vaux's Swifts Viewing Supper

See details on page four

Through September

Watch Vaux's Swifts and meet our volunteers from

the corner of W D St and W 3rd St near Fox Creek in Rainier, Ore

during the first few weeks of September.

See details on page four

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>

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 for this and past issues.

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

Please recycle your *Whistler*
or pass it on to a friend.



WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632
or email them to newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org.

contributions to:
of February, May, August and November. Send your
most welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the 15th
Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are

Send in your stories & photos

public.

Most WHAS activities and programs are open to the

available for free on our website.
National Audubon Society. Complimentary copies are
Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), a chapter of the
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Willapa Hills
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