



# WILLAPA WHISTLER

*A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society*

*Volume 52 // Issue 1*

*Spring 2026*

WHAS membership is based on a yearly renewal date.  
**All membership renewals are due in March, see page 2 for the details.**



*Yellow-headed Blackbird - Image by John Green*

## Annual Meeting, Banquet and Program

**By Steve Puddicombe**

It's nearly time once again for Willapa Hills Audubon's **annual meeting and banquet on Friday, March 27, 2026, at the Catlin Senior Center, in Kelso at 106 Eighth avenue** (East of JoAnn's fabric store and north of Ocean Beach Hwy).

Our annual board meeting will begin at 4:30 and is open to all WHAS members. We'll be counting ballots and seating the newly elected board among other agenda items.

**The banquet will follow at 6pm** with a potluck supper and program. All in the community are welcome. Bring a salad, main dish, veg or desert to feed 6-8 people. Also bring your own table ware and serving implements, as well as a preferred beverage. Paper plates and napkins and cups will be provided.

### Popular Local Presenter To Give Program

At 7pm popular local presenter and field trip leader **David Slater** will host

a program, "**Legs, Bills and Behavior: Cracking the Shorebird Code**". The program is interactive with the audience and lasts about an hour followed by a question/answer period.

Naturalist David Slater earned an M.S. degree in zoology and has had careers as a marine biologist, radiobiologist, environmental chemist, and aerospace project manager. He has collaborated to publish research on Bowhead whale feeding, studied the adaptive strategies of a crustacean and led marine intertidal field trips for zoology students. Dave has taught or assisted in teaching five university zoology courses and has presented at many professional and community gatherings. He and his wife, Yvonne, live in Long Beach.

Dave gave an excellent program 2 years ago at our 2024 banquet. We're looking forward to another.

## A Message to Our National Members

**By Steve Puddicombe**

Welcome to National Audubon and the regional chapter of SW Washington, Willapa Hills Audubon. We are the local chapter in your area, comprising Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and most of Pacific counties in Washington, and Columbia County, Oregon.

Willapa Hills, WHAS for short, has been a voice for conservation in the lower Columbia estuary for 50 years now, and a venue for citizen science and advocacy for bird life and related plants, animals and habitats.

With this introduction we invite you to check out our chapter's activities, connect with birders and local wildlife conservationists.

And do consider joining WHAS. National members are not automatically chapter members, and we rely on our membership to maintain WHAS now and into the future.

*...continued on page 3*

### In this issue of the Whistler:

- Membership Form
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  - The Clever Adaptations of Warblers
- Wahkiakum Wild Bird Fest 2027

**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.

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<b>Membership:</b>	<b>vacant</b>	
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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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Othello Sandhill Crane Festival**

**March 20-22, 2026**  
 Celebrate their return and discover why nearly 35,000 sandhill cranes choose Othello.  
 More info: <https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

**Olympic BirdFest**

**April 16-19, 2026**  
 The April dates of Olympic BirdFest are timed to overlap wintering birds such as Harlequin and Long tailed ducks, songbirds, and seabirds with spring migration.  
 More info and BirdFest registration at [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

**Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival**

**May 1 - 3, 2026**  
 Celebrating the natural world and the spring shorebird migration  
 More info: <https://www.shorebirdfestival.com>

**Get Intimate with the Shrub Steppe**

**May 8 - 10, 2026**  
 Join the Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN) for the 27th annual Get Intimate with the Shrub-Steppe (GISS)—a community event celebrating the rare and endangered shrub-steppe habitat of Central Washington.  
 More at <https://www.ycic.org/giss>

**Wenas Audubon Campout**

**May 29 – June 1, 2026**  
 You are invited to attend a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington!  
 Information on dispersed camping, activities, and what to expect are on the website, <https://wenasaudubon.org>

## 2025 Cowlitz/Columbia Christmas Bird Count Wrap Up

By Becky Kent

I just want to give a big Thank You to everyone for helping out this year. We finished with 103 species and 11,727 individual birds for the day, along with another 2 for count week. Our total of 103 species is higher than the average of the last 10 years of 97, but our individual birds of 11,727 is lower than the 10 year average of 13,354.

We did not add any new species to the list this year. Purple Finch was our only notable miss.

Considering our low individual birds, we still had 9 species with high counts: Wood Duck 37 (30 previous), Rock

Pigeon 952 (664), Anna's Hummingbird 60 (56), Cooper's Hawk 6 (5), Northern Flicker 94 (71), Canada Jay 6 (4), Common Raven 189 (126), and Barn Swallow 12 (5). We also had 4 species tie their high count: American Kestrel 33, Merlin 4, Peregrine Falcon 3, and Black Phoebe 6.

We had 28 people out in the field and 3 feeder watchers for a total of 287 miles of driving and walking, during 66 hours of birding!

I hope to see everyone again next year!

### ...continued from page 1

WHAS is the smallest chapter in Washington State so no matter your experience level, there is a place for you. And children are welcome.

It's easy to join: go to our website [www.willapahillsaudubon.org](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org) and find the "join WHAS" link. You can use a credit card or use the membership form on page 2 and mail in with a check.

At our website you'll have access to our newsletter, the Whistler, where you can see what we've been up to both in past years and recently. There are activity links, a link for volunteering, announcements of field trips and programs, and you can sign up to our alert list to be kept abreast via email.

Some of our accomplishments include:

- we host 3 Christmas bird count circles
- installed and monitor Purple Martin boxes at Ilwaco Marina
- installed signage at Lake Sacagawea
- conservation efforts to prevent industrialization of estuary
- installed chimney camera to monitor Vaux Swift

Once again, welcome to Audubon. Join us. We hope to see you at an event soon!

### We need you!

By Steve Puddicombe, President

This issue of the Whistler is chock full of information for our local chapter members and the national Audubon members in our area, as this is our annual edition sent to all. If you are a chapter member, please note it is time to renew your membership. All should note we have our annual banquet and program coming up at the end of March.

**For chapter members we have a ballot insert for our biannual board elections. Please Vote!**

Finally, WHAS still has need of committee members and volunteers. We need program and field trip coordinators, a membership chair, and our vice president chair is now empty. Beyond that we can always use volunteers for educational programs and other events. Consider helping this worthy organization with some of your time and energy!

Contact a board member at [willapahillsaudubon.org/about-whas/contact-us](http://willapahillsaudubon.org/about-whas/contact-us) if you can help. Happy Birding!

### Call for Earth Day volunteers

By Ann Cordero

This spring Willapa Hills Audubon Society will join with other organizations for Earth Day at the Children's Discovery Museum, 404 Long Street, Kelso, WA (Catlin school) on Saturday, April, 25th.

We will be comparing the arm spans of children to our wooden sets of bird wings, displaying mounted bird specimens, and inviting families to explore our Nature Niche exhibit of natural objects.

Please consider volunteering with us to greet the Earth Day visitors.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Gloria Nichols at (360) 636-3793 or [jgnt@comcast.net](mailto:jgnt@comcast.net) or contact Ann Cordero at (415) 622-8764 or [FLNatureNiche@gmail.com](mailto:FLNatureNiche@gmail.com).

### Field Trip: Legs, Bills and Behavior: Cracking the Shorebird Code

By David Slater

**Saturday, May 2, 12-1pm for presentation. 1:30-4:30 for guided walk**

Presentation + Field Trip: Legs, Bills and Behavior: Cracking the Shorebird Code

**Presenter/Walk Leader:** Dave Slater

**Habitat:** Sand and mud flats. Forested areas

**Birds we'll look for:** Late April and early May is a great time to find birds on the Sandpiper Trail. We'll keep an eye out for all birds during the boardwalk hike

**Presentation Location:** Hoquiam Middle School (200 Spencer St., Hoquiam). After the presentation, we'll ride the bus together to the Sandpiper Trail

This event is part of the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival, no registration required.

## Wahkiakum Wild Bird Fest 2027

By Sandra Staples-Bortner

Following the success of Willapa Hills Audubon Society's 50th anniversary celebration last fall in Skamokawa, a group of Wahkiakum County community organizations and public entities is working to launch Wahkiakum Wild Bird Fest as an annual birding extravaganza on the Lower Columbia River.

**Goal:** The goal of Wahkiakum Wild Bird Fest is to bring lovers of birds and nature to Wahkiakum County, Washington for a weekend in March to enjoy the amazing numbers and diversity of waterfowl and other birds that winter on the Columbia River Estuary and nearby wetlands, including the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge. The intent is to make this an annual event that showcases birds and boosts the local tourism economy during the slow winter months.

**Target Audience:** Our target audience is people who love birds and nature, including both casual and dedicated birders, waterfowl hunters, and nature enthusiasts from throughout the state and region. While the focus of activities will be on adults, the program also will welcome families, many of whom we expect to be from the local area.

**Date:** Wintering waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans) are abundant in the Columbia River estuary from about mid-September through mid-March. The date is not yet confirmed, but it is expected to be in early March 2027. This is a time when spring migrants from further south, including songbirds, shorebirds, and others, will begin to arrive increasing the variety of birds that may be seen. By that time of year, the weather also is beginning to turn toward spring, making for more comfortable conditions for visitors. The festival will be timed to avoid overlap with competing birding events.

**Program and Location:** The festival will include field trips (both guided and self-guided), independent-operator boat tours, hands-on activities, speakers, and musicians. Wahkiakum County's vibrant business and nonprofit communities are expected to host associated events showcasing the region's cultural attractions. The festival will be centered in charming Cathlamet and at Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge—both situated on the Columbia River, giving visitors ample opportunities to explore and enjoy this dynamic and beautiful ecosystem.

**Festival Committee:** Many community partners already are collaborating to organize the festival, including Wahkiakum County Marine Resources Committee, Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge, Wahkiakum Chamber of Commerce, Willapa Hills Audubon Society, Columbia Land Trust, Wahkiakum Port District #1, Wahkiakum Port District #2, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Other groups and individuals are welcome to join the committee, which meets monthly.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** The festival provides a range of volunteer opportunities for community members to be involved in this unique event showcasing Wahkiakum's natural and cultural heritage. We will need experienced and newbie birders as well as folks who are able to assist with onsite logistics and visitor communications on festival weekend.

For More Information or to Volunteer, Contact: Sandra Staples-Bortner, Vice Chair, Wahkiakum County Marine Resources Committee, (360) 931-0037, [sstaplesbortner@msn.com](mailto:ss Staplesbortner@msn.com).



**Black-bellied Whistling Duck** - Image courtesy of Steve Puddicombe

On a recent sojourn to New Orleans and Mississippi, I visited Audubon Park in the "Big Easy" and saw thousands of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, a first. The cacophony never stopped and would disturb the concentration of anyone within hearing distance. These ducks also have the habit of roosting in trees above the water.

## Field Trip: Oysterville West Beach Access and Leadbetter Point State Park

**Date:** Saturday, April 25

**Time:** 8:30 ~ 11:30 AM

**Leader:** Dave Slater

**Habitat:** Open coast sand beach, estuarine sand/mud beach, beach grass, forested areas

**Birds we'll look for:** While shorebirds will be a focus of this field trip, we will look for all birds. Late April is a great time to find shorebird and other migrants. Insert this E-bird URL in your browser address window for possibilities,

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L109538/bird-list?m=4>

**Meeting Location:** Near the public toilet at 602 Oysterville Rd, Ocean Park, WA 98640. Note that this is at the far west end of Oysterville Rd. We will bird at this location for ~30-45 min, then caravan 5.4 miles (12 min) to Leadbetter Point State Park. The Leadbetter trail head is reached by traveling due east on Oysterville Road from where we will start our field trip, until you arrive at Stackpole Road. Turn left (north) and travel to the very end of Stackpole Road. There will be restrooms and a paved parking lot that fits about 20 cars. From the trail head, we will walk through riparian forest about ¼ mile to the Willapa Bay Estuary.

**Group size:** Limited to 12

**Walk/Drive**

- Distance: ~.75 mile total
- Pace: Easy, frequent stops
- Terrain: Mostly flat, some sand, some packed gravel
- Accessibility: Some uneven surfaces and sand

### What to bring

- Binoculars + optics cleaning/drying clothes, especially if there is a chance of rain
- Spotting scopes welcomed
- Warm layers, gloves, hats and rain protection. It can be windy. You can always take it off.
- Field guide
- Water and sack lunch (leave in car) for a casual lunch during our group review of all birds seen and heard

**Weather & cancellations:** Trip will proceed in light rain. Heavy rain or unsafe conditions may result in cancellation and registered participants will be notified of the cancellation by email.

**All are welcome:** All skill levels are welcomed. If you are a beginner, great! If you are intermediate or advanced and can help identify birds, terrific!

**Click here to register or visit our website at**

<https://willapahillsaudubon.org> for the link.

<https://forms.gle/eePGV98nPXW81tGx5>

## Field Trip: Julia Butler Refuge

**Date:** Friday, May 22

**Time:** 7:45 ~ 11:30 AM

**Leader:** Dave Slater

**Habitat:** Forested tidal swamps, brushy woodlots, marshes and sloughs along the Columbia River. Diverse habitats that support the endangered Columbian white-tailed deer and also benefit a large variety of birds, including nesting bald eagles, great horned owls and osprey.

**Birds we'll look for:** May is a great time to find birds at Julia Butler Hansen. Insert this E-bird URL in your browser address window for birds we might see,

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L163495/bird-list?m=5>

**Meeting Location:** Julia Butler Hansen Visitor's Center, 6 Steamboat Slough Rd, Cathlamet, WA 98612. Restrooms are available at the visitor's center Mon-Fri. Refuge phone: (360) 795-3915. Depending on your GPS and familiarity with the area, it may help you to travel to 46 Whitetail Road, Cathlamet, WA 98612, then to the visitor's center at 6 Steamboat Slough Rd

**Group size:** Limited to 12

**Walk/Drive**

- Distance: ~1 mile total. If we decide to walk part of the dike.

- Pace: Easy, frequent stops. Lots of pull outs to stop and get out of the car. Carpooling from the visitor's center is strongly preferred
- Terrain: Mostly flat, packed gravel on the dike trail
- Accessibility: Some uneven surfaces

### What to bring

- Binoculars + optics cleaning/drying clothes, especially if there is a chance of rain
- Spotting scopes welcomed
- Warm layers, gloves, hats and rain protection. You can always take it off.
- Field guide
- Water and sack lunch (leave in car) for a casual lunch during our group review of all birds seen and heard

**Weather & cancellations:** Trip will proceed in light rain. Heavy rain or unsafe conditions may result in cancellation and registered participants will be notified of the cancellation by email.

**All are welcome:** All skill levels are welcomed. If you are a beginner, great! If you are intermediate or advanced and can help identify birds, terrific!

**Please visit our website at <https://willapahillsaudubon.org> for the sign-up link.**

## 2025 Leadbetter Christmas Bird Count Results

By Robert Sudar, Count Compiler

The Leadbetter Point Christmas Bird Count on the Long Beach Peninsula was held this year on Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. The weather was a pleasant change from the winter storm and king tides that greeted the counters in 2024. It wasn't perfect, a mix of showers and sun with moderate wind. Pretty typical, really, for December in the Northwest. All of the primary sectors of the 15 mile diameter count circle were covered by the 19 counters who took part this year. It's been decades since we've had anyone on the portion of Long Island that falls within the circle, and quite a few years since anyone braved the weather and the tides to do Leadbetter Point itself, but you never know. Maybe next year!

The species count this year was 106 on count day and one more – a Great Horned Owl – during count week (3 days either side of count day) for a total of 107. That's the best total in quite a while. We've been in the 90s in recent years so this was a big improvement. The total count of individual birds was 27,165.

As usual, there were good numbers of species we expect to see like Mallards, Pintails and American Wigeons (plus four Eurasian Wigeons!), and lots of Dark-eyed Juncos, American Crows, Chestnut-backed Chickadee's, European Starlings and several shorebird species. In fact, the top individual count was again Dunlin at 9582 individuals, though we've had twice that many in years past. Unexpected absences were Pine Siskins, which had been so abundant in recent years but not seen at all this year, along with Great Egrets, Black Brants, Northern

Shovelers and Black Turnstones, all of whom failed to make a showing on count day. Of course, that doesn't mean they weren't there somewhere, they just weren't seen. And American Coots, which used to be a regular on the count, continue to be a no-show.

Back to the positive side of the sightings, all five species of Woodpeckers common to the area were seen (a rarity on count day, actually), 11 White-throated Sparrows, 43(!) Wilson's Snipe (a record for this count), a Black Phoebe for the 4<sup>th</sup> count in a row, a Ruffed Grouse, a Virginia Rail and an American Dipper, another uncommon species that's been seen several years in a row.

There was also a new species to the count – a Red-shouldered Hawk. In fact, there isn't a record of it ever being seen on the peninsula in the past, though it has been reported in the valleys to the east. It was seen at the end of the day by a party whose members were conflicted about whether to look a little more or just call it a day. Agreeing to stop after driving down a short dead-end road that ended at a pond, the hawk obligingly flew up into a tree and posed for photos. The local neighbor got a chance to look at it, too. A birding convert, perhaps? You just never know.....

In summary, it was a good day for birding. Tolerable weather, cooperative birds, the expected, the unexpected, and very little exactly like it was in previous years, which is what makes birding a fun, and a challenging, undertaking.

## 2025 Results for the Wahkiakum CBC

By Andrew Emlen

On December 29, 2025, 25 field counters plus two feeder watchers participated in the 27th annual Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count.

Weather was mostly clear, with a low temperature of 34 degrees F and a high of 46 degrees F. Wind was from the east at 3-12 mph.

34,618 individual birds of 114 species plus one hybrid and two additional count week species plus one hybrid were tallied.

The most abundant species within the circle was Greater Scaup at 6507 (3238 Greater/Lesser Scaup were recorded, most of which were probably Greater). After that were 3880 European Starling, 2998 American Wigeon, 2342 Cackling Geese, and 1073 Canada Geese.

Unusual species included a Redhead at Whites Island, a count week Northern Mockingbird at the Julia Butler Hansen refuge viewing station, three Barn Swallows in Brownsmead, and a count week Mallard x Northern Pintail Hybrid on Puget Island. Turkey Vultures have continued to winter in the circle, and American White Pelicans have appeared on the count for the second year in a row. Five of the endangered "Streaked" Horned

Larks were found on Whites Island, and this year one was also found on Lark Island. A notable miss was Peregrine Falcon, missed for only the second time. They have declined rapidly in Washington in recent years due to avian flu, as examined by Stephen Carr Hampton in this article:

<https://schampton.substack.com/p/where-have-all-the-peregrines-gone> .

Other misses, such as Hutton's Vireo and Ruffed Grouse, are more attributable to not having enough effort spent in forested areas.

No species new to the count were found, though there were new high counts for 15 species. Previous high counts are in parentheses:

Eurasian Wigeon 5 (4), American Wigeon 2998 (2089), Ring-necked Duck 311 (302), Bufflehead 1056 (991), Pied-billed Grebe 106 (56), Long-billed Dowitcher 177 (144), Spotted Sandpiper 8 (7), Double-crested Cormorant 247 (213), American White Pelican 7 (2), Bald Eagle 113 (104), Northern Flicker 81 (74), American Kestrel 46 (43) Pacific Wren 76 (70), Spotted Towhee 147 (139), and Orange-crowned Warbler 11 (6).

## Tiny Dynamos: The Clever Adaptations of Warblers

By David Slater

Warblers are tiny, hyperactive birds—most weighing less than a handful of paperclips—are among the most colorful and adaptable songbirds in North America. Members of the warbler family (Parulidae) thrive in habitats ranging from misty coastal forests to dry desert canyons, thanks to a remarkable set of adaptations. Despite their size, they're evolutionary overachievers.

**Color as Communication (and Camouflage).** Warblers are famous for their bold colors: lemon yellows, jet blacks, flame oranges, and icy blues. These hues aren't just decorative. Bright plumage—like the striking face of a Townsend's Warbler or the yellow throat of a Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)—signals health and genetic quality during breeding season.

Yet many warblers perform a seasonal wardrobe change. Outside the breeding season, their colors fade into olives and grays, helping them blend into foliage and avoid predators. This dual-purpose plumage balances the need to stand out when courting and the need to disappear when survival is paramount.

**Specialized Beaks and Feeding Behavior.** Warblers' thin, pointed beaks are designed for delicate insect-hunting, and subtle differences in shape support different feeding styles. This allows multiple species to forage in the same tree without competing directly.

**Black-throated Gray Warblers** often probe along branches, Hermit Warblers focus on the outer canopy, and Wilson's Warblers dart through shrubs in the understory. By dividing up the insect buffet vertically and behaviorally, warblers maximize food access while minimizing conflict.

**Migration: Epic Journeys.** One of the most astonishing warbler adaptations is long-distance migration. Focusing on our many western species, they travel thousands of miles each year between breeding grounds in the western U.S. and Canada and wintering areas in Mexico or Central America.

The Orange-crowned Warbler, for example, can migrate from Alaska to southern Mexico. To make these journeys, warblers rapidly accumulate fat—sometimes nearly doubling their body weight—which serves as fuel for nonstop flights over mountains and deserts. They navigate using a mix of stars, Earth's magnetic field, landmarks, and possibly even scent, an impressive feat for birds with brains barely larger than a pea.

**Songs Designed for the Landscape.** Western warblers adapt their songs to their environments. In dense forests, species

such as MacGillivray's Warbler use lower, richer notes that travel effectively through thick vegetation. In more open pine woodlands, Grace's Warbler relies on higher-pitched songs that carry across space without distortion.

Some warblers even adjust song volume or frequency in response to background noise like wind or running water.

**Habitat Specialization.** Many western warblers are habitat specialists. Yellow Warblers thrive in riparian corridors and wetlands, and Black-throated Gray Warblers are closely associated with dry oak and juniper woodlands.

This specialization reduces competition and allows warblers to exploit specific food sources efficiently. However, it also makes them vulnerable to habitat loss, highlighting the importance of protecting diverse ecosystems.

**Molt Strategies.** Feathers wear out, especially when birds migrate long distances. Warblers have evolved efficient molting strategies to keep their plumage functional. Some species molt completely after breeding, while others spread the process across seasons or locations.

The adaptable Yellow-rumped Warbler again stands out, with flexible molt timing that helps it survive in a wide range of habitats. This adaptability

contributes to its success across much of the continent.

**Dietary Flexibility.** While most warblers specialize in insects, some species show surprising dietary flexibility. Yellow-rumped Warblers can digest waxy berries like juniper and bayberry, allowing them to survive when insects are scarce.

This ability lets them overwinter farther north than most other warblers, sometimes in snowy conditions. When bugs disappear, berries keep them going—a simple but powerful adaptation.

**Evolution in Action.** In western mountain ranges, Hermit Warblers and Townsend's Warblers form hybrid zones where their ranges overlap. These zones shift over time, shaped by climate, forest composition, and competition. Studying them gives scientists a rare look at how species boundaries form and change.

Warblers may be tiny, but their adaptations are impressive. From marathon migrations and specialized songs to dietary tricks and habitat mastery, they reveal just how inventive evolution can be.



Common yellowthroat- image courtesy of [wikimedia](#)

## 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.

### Friday, March 27, 2026, at 6pm

Annual Banquet and Program, find all the details on page one

### Friday, March 27, 2026, at 7pm

Program: *Legs, Bills and Behavior: Cracking the Shorebird Code* by David Slater  
more info on page one

### Saturday, April 25 8:30-1130

Field Trip: Oysterville West Beach Access and Leadbetter Point State Park  
more info on page 5

### Saturday, May 2, 12-1pm for presentation. 1:30-4:30 for guided walk

Presentation + Field Trip: *Legs, Bills and Behavior: Cracking the Shorebird Code*  
more info on page 3

### Friday, May 22, 7:45 ~ 11:30 AM

Field Trip: Julia Butler Hansen Refuge  
more info on page 5

### Throughout May 2025, 1hour before sunset

Vaux's Swifts Viewing at W 3rd Street at the Riverside Community Church in Rainier Oregon.

**Don't forget to vote for  
WHAS Board Officers!**

**See ballot included in this  
issue for all local WHAS  
members!**

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

**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>**

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

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



contributions to:  
WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632  
or email them to [newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org).

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

### 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  
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