



WILLAPA WHISTLER



A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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July/August 2006

Update on Proposed Mt. St. Helens Copper Mine

By Charlotte Persons

At a June 1 meeting of groups in opposition to the mine, Ryan Hunter of Gifford Pinchot Task Force said that the U.S. Forest Service had given permission for Idaho General Mines Inc. to go on the proposed lease area to survey the land. The company cannot do anything that would harm the environment, such as drilling. An Environmental Assessment draft will be issued sometime before the end of 2006. This EA must look at “foreseeable future development” of the site. At that point there will be a 30-day comment period for the public—those of us Auduboners who have already written comments or letters will need to write them again!

Because the mountain will be covered with snow when the draft EA is issued, at the meeting the group planned three tours to the Margaret site area (in addition to the already scheduled July 1 WHAS field trip and the July 15 Sierra Club field trip). The three tours, which will be in July and August, will target groups: (1) city officials, especially water engineers, whose cities would be affected by Acid Mine Drainage in the Cowlitz and Toutle Rivers; (2) elected federal officials in the district and state; and (3) representatives from groups in opposition to the mine. Meanwhile, we will keep you posted about any other news.

WHAS Annual Picnic

Ruth Deery has once again invited Willapa Hills Audubon members to have the traditional annual pot luck picnic at her home in Longview. She said Sunday, July 9, or Sunday July 16, would be the best dates. If one of these dates is better for you, please e-mail bmayfield@opusnet.com so a date can be set. Driving directions and the preferred date can come by e-mail later.

Field Trip Report

By Pamela Wright

Special thanks are in order to recent field trip leaders for their time and energy. Andrew Emlen gave a great slide show of area shorebirds followed the next day with an outing to shorebird hotspots full of migratory and resident shorebirds. Special finds included a snowy plover (listed as threatened by the federal government), a male ruddy turnstone in full breeding plumage and a flock of 40+ common loons.

Russell Koppendrayer led a hike to birdie spots of the Mount St Helens area that included a search for an elusive but audible blue grouse. More cooperative (visible) creatures included meadow larks, Barrow's goldeneye, a host of vocalizing warblers (yellow, orange-crowned and Wilson's) and an elk herd.

Finally, Carlo Abbruzzese led hikers to a small ancient grove of trees at South Nemah NRCA where participants pattered looking at plants, insects, snakes and birds and then still managed to fill all of his pots with salvaged plant materials for a road decommissioning. All three field trip leaders managed to pick beautiful days nestled in weeks of rain. Participants enjoyed the expert guidance on identifying characters of different species as well as learning new locations to visit on future outings.

As Audubon activities slow down for a summer breather, consider connecting with other groups that offer outings in our region. Most organizations offer activities open to nonmembers and require participants to register in advance. If the link has changed, just type the name of the organization into your favorite search engine.

(Continued on Page 3)



Drawing courtesy ODFW

Please Join Us!

Support Willapa Hills Audubon Society by paying annual dues directly to this chapter. People who join National Audubon Society automatically become members of WHAS, however, National Audubon Society shares only a very small amount of the total dues money with WHAS—currently less than \$2.00. So, consider joining the WHAS chapter to help provide programs, field trips, bird counts and education projects here in our four-county region.

Chapter Membership

___ \$20 for annual membership dues.
 ___ \$15 for full time students. *Make check payable to Willapa Hills Audubon Society.*

National Audubon Membership

___ \$20 for one year introductory membership in the National Audubon Society with Willapa Hills Audubon Society affiliation. *Make check payable to National Audubon Society*

Combination

___ Yes, you can do both options above, if you like. *Please write a check for each (\$20 to National Audubon Society and \$20 to WHAS.).*

Willapa Whistler Only

___ \$5 for six issues (one year). *No membership is included with this option. Make check payable to WHAS.*

For any of the options above, clip this form and mail it with your check to:

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___ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

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For more information about WHAS, You may call Wayne Nelson at 503-556-9379 or Betty Mayfield at 503-556-6841.

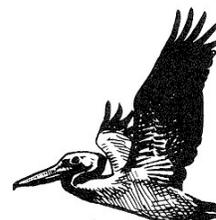
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Drawing by Bob Hines USEWS

Field Trip Reports.....

(Continued from Page 1)

The Loo-Wit Chapter of the Sierra Club offers activities listed under the "outings" link.

<http://washington.sierraclub.org/loowit/main/>

The Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club (The Columbia Group) website includes outings in our region as well as a list of links to other groups who sponsor outings.

<http://oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/columbia/outings/index.asp>

Local botanist Kathleen Sayce lists plant oriented hikes that she and others lead near the coast at:

<http://www.reachone.com/columbiacoastplants>.

The Columbia Land Trust offers project tours and stewardship activities within our region (you must be a member to participate).

http://www.columbialandtrust.org/site_tours.htm

Surf over to the stewardship page for additional outings.

The Washington Ornithological Society offers field trips and conferences with limited availability (one trip per year) to nonmembers. <http://www.wos.org>

The Washington Native Plant Society offers plant oriented field trips, stewardship and presentations. The closest active chapter is the South Sound Chapter located in Olympia, but some of their field trips are closer to our area.

<http://www.southsoundchapterwnps.org>

Friends of the Columbia Gorge offers hikes and stewardship opportunities as well.

<http://www.gorgefriends.org/involve>

WHAS Board Meeting Report

By Charlotte Persons

April 1, 2006

At this meeting Darrel Whipple discussed his plans to spend the grant for \$790 from Audubon WA for cases and taxidermy for the WHAS bird and small mammal collection. WHAS board approved new investments in Edward Jones accounts for treasurer John Green, with hopes of higher returns. At Spring ACOW in Port Townsend, Margaret Green attended the Education Summit and got good ideas for programs in local schools. Three years ago WHAS contributed \$1,000 to buying Reardan's Audubon Lake to protect it from development, and this effort was finally completed by the Inland Northwest Land Trust, which will sell it to the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. WHAS Board approved resolutions for Washington State Audubon Society Conservation Chairs meeting on June 24 on

proposed copper mine at Margaret Site Bordering Mt. St. Helens National Monument and on proposed gasification power plant in Kalama. WHAS membership approved by mail-in ballot proposed change in WHAS Bylaws that "all checks and drafts of the Society may be signed by the Treasurer, the President/s or Vice President or **one additional board-designated board member.**" WHAS Board voted to support Initiative 937 for the November ballot; it will increase wind, solar and other renewable energy and conservation by 15% by the year 2020. Interested members will gather signatures to support the initiative. Board consensus was to continue sending transferred members of Discovery Coast complimentary Whistler newsletters until the new chapter is no longer on probationary status. The goal is to maintain contact until the matter is resolved.

WHAS Annual Meeting/Dinner Was Fun For All

The meeting was held on June 3 at Thyme Square, The Merc Building in Longview, which served soup, sandwiches, salad, and dessert. Twenty-four members attended. We started with Ann Musche and Alan Richards' slides of their recent trip to Malheur in southeastern Oregon, and Gerald Henry's photos of past birding and nature-viewing trips in the Northwest. At a short business meeting, Margaret Green introduced Charles Kingsland and invited all to view the display board about his exhibit of nature paintings at Redmen Hall in Skamokawa until August 1. Also on display was his black-and-white print, "The Return" of an eagle coming to its nest, which will sell there for \$40.00. Half the proceeds of each print will go to benefit the Friend of Redmen Hall and half to WHAS. Annual board election results were also announced: four officers were re-elected--Steve Puddicombe and Betty Mayfield as co-presidents, John Green as treasurer, and Charlotte Persons as secretary. Shirley Bartholomew was re-elected as Director at Large, and Steve Glucoft and Pam Snively were elected as new Directors at Large. At the conclusion of the meeting, Charlotte Persons asked attendees to see information about local and state conservation issues on a display board. After the business meeting adjourned, we were entertained by John and Margaret Green's slides of their stay in Sri Lanka in 2005.

*****Bird Sightings*****

Carlo Abbruzzese saw an eastern kingbird west of Castle Rock on June 16 and John Green saw a crested caracara near Seaside on June 2.

President's Message

By Betty Mayfield

"The friendly cow, all red and white, I love with all my heart. She gives me cream with all her might, to eat with apple tart." Thus wrote Robert Louis Stevenson in 1885.

But in the past year cows have been implicated as a source of air pollution in both Oregon and California. In Oregon the Threemile Canyon Farm (on 93,000 acres just west of Boardman purchased from Boeing in 2000) according to a story in the Oregonian has notified the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that it is releasing at least 850 tons of ammonia a year into the air. The state legislature exempted farms from state air laws before such a large operation existed. The complex has 53,000 cows and is allowed as many as 90,667. In comparison, all of Tillamook County has about 44,000 cattle.

This ammonia combines with the nitrogen and sulfur in the fossil fuel exhaust released by the Portland General Electric coal-burning plant near Boardman, which received an exemption from federal Clean Air Act rules in 1975, two weeks before the regulations went into effect. East winds carry the releases into the Columbia River Gorge, which has become one of the most polluted natural areas in the West.

A different kind of pollution was blamed on cows in the San Joaquin Valley of California last year, when the estimate was raised on the amount of gases called volatile organic compounds (VOC) produced by cows burping while chewing their cuds. These gases combine with other pollutants to form smog. The new figures claim that an average cow produces 19.3 pounds of such gases each year, according to a story in the Los Angeles Times. More dairies will have to apply for permits under a 2003 state law.

Problems seem to arise when numbers, even of good things, become excessive. Cows are good; milk is good; but 53,000 cows on one farm cause problems. Washington has escaped the huge dairy complexes so far, although since 1989, the number of dairies in western Washington has dropped from 1017 to 488. High land costs and urban sprawl have driven dairymen to move cows to the eastern part of the state, but the farms are getting bigger instead of more numerous. Yakima County, with 79 dairies, is the 12th ranked milk-producing county in the nation, and Whatcom County, with 168 dairies, is 15th.

Presentation on Coal Gasification Plant Proposed for Kalama

Report By Charlotte Persons

On May 1, a forum was held at Lower Columbia College for students and the public to hear views held by Northwest Energy Coalition, a group of utilities and other groups which want to plan for environmentally sound energy development, and by Energy Northwest, the joint operating agency for 17 public and municipal utilities which wants to permit the plant now and build it by 2012. Energy Northwest explained that gasification is a cleaner way than conventional plants to burn coal or other carbon-based fuels such as gas, biofuels, and petroleum coke (a by-product of refining oil tars in Alberta, Canada). It may be possible to retrofit the plant to capture the principal pollutant that will be produced--carbon gas--and sequester it deep underground in basalt layers. Experiments to find out the long-term feasibility and costs of this new technology will be completed in the next few years. Retrofitting the plant will depend on both the results of field tests and costs to rate-payers. Nancy Hirsh, policy director of Northwest Energy Coalition, explained the two principal environmental concerns: (1) that sequestration will not take place due to costs and lack of government requirements and (2) that building this 600 megawatt plant will reduce the possibility of creating more of Washington's power needs through conservation and renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar.

Gasification Plant In Kalama—Take Action!

*Sometime in August or September there will be 30-day period for public comment on the proposed coal gasification plant in Kalama. Please be ready to write letters on this proposal as soon as that period is announced.

*Meanwhile, you can write letters to the editor of your local newspaper or to your local public utility district to explain your views. Cowlitz County PUD: John Searing, President, Jmsearing83@cs.com or 961 12th Ave., Longview, WA 98632.

Wahkiakum County PUD, Esther Gregg, President, P.O. Box 248, Cathlamet, WA 98612.

An information sheet and sample letters to the editor are posted on the WHAS web site, or contact Charlotte Persons at cpersons@yahoo.com or 360-578-3949.

Book Review

By Alan Richards

Birds of Washington State

Written By Brian H. Bell & Gregory Kennedy, Lone Pine Publishing International Inc., 2006

It's easy to use; it's informative; it's concise; and it is attractively & accurately illustrated. What more do you want? This book provides a very useful service: it leaves out the many species of birds usually found outside the state of Washington. When you are in our area, looking at a thrush, or a flycatcher, or a shorebird, it is very likely to be in this book. You will probably not have to look further. If it is really not in this book, you might want to get out your camera and maybe your cell phone. But that is another story.

I used this book in the field, on a recent trip to Malheur NWR, in southeastern Oregon, a place to which Ann & I had for 25 years dreamt of going.

Looking up a bird in the book proved easy: not only is it in the familiar taxonomic order, it is cleverly grouped by color tabs dividing the book into taxonomic groups, e.g., waterfowl, falcons, shorebirds & allies, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and so forth. If you are wondering, "What is the taxonomic sequence?", this book explains that, too: "Based on DNA and other evidence, ornithologists arrange all of the [families of birds] in a standard sequence, beginning with species most similar to the evolutionary ancestors of birds and ending with those most strongly modified by evolutionary change." Of course, there are the usual indexes listing each individual species, but there is also a handy 'quick guide' on the back cover, indicating tab color and page number of each bird group. In addition, there is a Reference Guide in the front of the book, showing a small illustration of each species (a thumbnail sketch), again in taxonomic order.

This book will give you a good basis for birding in Washington. The Introduction to this book is valuable not only for summarizing many ways to distinguish bird families and species from one another, it also lists many places to go to find these birds. Maps and descriptions of "Washington's Top 15 Birding Areas" plus a list of the "Top 50 Birding Sites" will certainly be enough to get anyone started. As the authors also mention, there are hundreds, even thousands, of good places to look at birds in Washington.

The Introduction notes that 320 species of birds are regularly found in the State. There is a section covering 33 additional 'occasional' species, and a checklist of the 470+ species on the Washington Ornithological Society's website. More species are added to the state list each year; for some of these, you will need to consult a field guide for birds usually found on some other part of our continent, or perhaps on the other side of the ocean. But that, too, is another story. . . .

Protecting the Northern Spotted Owl

The Northern Spotted Owl has declined in number 40-60% in the last ten years, and over half of all "owl circles" on state lands have been de-certified. The Forestry Practices Board has proposed changes to two WACS to slow down the harvest of old growth and other timber near and in owl habitat and the decertification of owl circles. Margaret Green and Charlotte Persons testified at a Kelso public hearing on these WACS on May 15. Margaret said that she supported the proposed changes. Charlotte said that the proposed changes do not go far enough in protecting the owl's habitat. She asked for a moratorium on all harvest until Federal and State recovery plans are developed and implemented, a permanent moratorium on spotted owl circle decertification, not just until the recovery plans are established in June 2007, and long-term plans, timelines, staffing, and funding plans to revise upland wildlife rules.

Auduboners have been involved in two other efforts to save the owls. In March Audubon WA helped negotiate an agreement with the Board of Natural Resources designed to protect older forest on state lands needed by spotted owls and other species. On April 18, Kittitas Audubon Society and Seattle Audubon Society filed intent to sue Weyerhaeuser Co. and Washington State for allowing harvest of forest near five owl nesting sites. While Weyerhaeuser claims that it goes beyond state regulations to protect the owls, environmentalists says that extensive harvest of big tracts of forest near nesting sites is harmful to the birds. For more information, see the web sites of Audubon Washington, Department of Natural Resources, and Seattle Post-Intelligencer.



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The *Willapa Whistler* is the bi-monthly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Articles, information, wildlife sightings and black-and-white artwork are welcomed. The deadline for inclusion of material in the *Whistler* is the 15th of each even-numbered month. Complimentary copies are sent to organizations and prospective members. All WHAS activities and programs are open to the public. The *Willapa Whistler* is printed on recycled paper using soy based ink.

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.

AUCTION RESCHEDULED

The silent auction, originally scheduled to take place during the annual dinner and program, has been rescheduled for the fall. At that time, it will be open to the public as well as WHAS members and hopefully generate lots of \$\$\$\$ for our many projects and activities. A heartfelt thanks goes to the following generous people who gave donations: Ruth Deery, John and Margaret Green, Dr. James Hulbert, Charles Kingsland, Louis LaPierre and Pam Wright, Charlotte Persons, Barney Wheeler, and Darrel Whipple.

IT'S COUNTY FAIR TIME

If you enjoy meeting and greeting folks, spend an hour or two in the WHAS booth at the Cowlitz County Fair, August 2 - 5. OR, maybe you have a creative flair and would like to help create our display. OR, maybe you just want to lend a hand. Give Margaret Green a call at 360-575-9238, or email jgreen2317@aol.com, soon. We LOVE volunteers!!!