



# WILLAPA WHISTLER

*A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society*

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March/April 2006

## Large Copper Mine Proposed Near Mount St. Helens

*By Ryan Hunter, Gifford Pinchot Task Force*

The Mount St. Helens area is nationally recognized for its unique and significant recreational, scientific, and ecological features. A mining company out of Spokane, Washington, however, is proposing a mine that could occupy as much as 3,000 acres near the mountain and harm this unique treasure in our own backyard.

Idaho General Mines Inc. (IMGI) is seeking a lease from the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service for land in the Green River valley below Goat Mountain, which lies just north and east of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. IGMI's President has stated that they hope to mine the site to extract copper, gold, molybdenum, and silver. Much of the land the company wants to lease was purchased in 1986 by the Forest Service from the Trust for Public Lands using Land and Water Conservation Funds. These funds were intended by Congress to be used to purchase lands for recreation and conservation, not for mining.

The area under consideration for a lease also enters the Tumwater Inventoried Roadless Area, which would have been protected from this mining proposal by President Clinton's 2001 Roadless Rule had President Bush not backtracked on the popular policy.

Mine development at Goat Mountain could have enormous impacts on the threatened salmon and steelhead runs in the Green River, the drinking water supplies of Kelso, Longview, and Castle Rock, old growth forest habitat, and numerous recreation destinations. Fish runs of the Green River could be devastated by a chemical process resulting from mining activity, known as acid mine drainage, that would leach sulfuric acid and other toxic substances into surrounding water bodies. Once this chemical process begins, it is nearly impossible to manage and it could persist for thousands of years.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

## PROGRAM SCHEDULE

### A Visit to Bhutan, a Buddhist Kingdom in the Himalayas

**Thursday, March 16, 2006, 7:00 PM**  
**Cowlitz PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue, Longview**

By choice, Bhutan is preserving their natural heritage, a rich one, indeed. The eastern Himalayas boast extraordinary biodiversity, both plants and birds. Naturalists Andy and Ellen Stepniewski visited this kingdom, the size of Switzerland in April 2005. They will share their experiences, both of the culture and natural history of this country, which hosts more than 800 species of birds. We will expand our horizons with the Stepniewskis!

### Arctic Scientist George Divoky

**Thursday, April 13, 2006, 7:00 PM**  
**Cowlitz PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue, Longview**

George Divoky will return! This world-renowned arctic scientist will come back to Longview to provide an update of his research on Cooper Island. This is sure to be a wonderfully entertaining and informative presentation.

### Dr. Eugene Kozloff

**May 16 and 17, 2006**

Dr. Eugene Kozloff, professor emeritus and wildlife author will be giving lectures on a variety of subjects. This will be an opportunity to hear Dr. Kozloff speak in his many areas of expertise.

May 16, 1:30 PM – LCC Student Center, "Symbiosis – Interesting Permanent Relationships between Species."

May 16, 7:00 PM – Longview Public Library, "Bigfoot's Flower Garden – The Hills and Valleys of the Siskiyou Mountains"

May 17, 10:00 AM – LCC Student Center, "Native Plants for Northwest Gardens"



## **Copper Mine** *(Continued From Page 1)*

At the Summitville gold mine in southern Colorado, for example, a bankrupt Canadian company, Galactic Resources, has left the nation's most costly mine cleanup. It will take 100 years and cost \$235 million to clean up the release of cyanide and acid mine drainage that has left 17 miles of the Alamosa River devoid of fish and other aquatic life. The Alamosa is also a water source for irrigated crops downstream. The abandoned mine is now a Superfund site. The company mined a total of \$130 million worth of metals at Summitville and was permitted as a "zero discharge" mine.

Moreover, a dam that would need to be constructed to hold back stored waste material could fail in the seismically active region, releasing in a flash tons of toxic substances into the Green River. At least 20 miles of new road construction could also add smothering sediment to streams and rivers.

Any toxic substances released into the Green River would eventually flow down stream to the Cowlitz River where it could have serious implications for the drinking water supplies of communities such as Kelso, Longview, and Castle Rock. Agricultural water users would have to cope with contaminated water supplies as well. Developing a mine in the Green River valley would also impact recreation destinations such as hiking trails, popular lakes, and the Green River Horse Camp, a popular destination for backcountry horse enthusiasts.

Mine development could in fact penetrate so deep underground that it impacts the ground water, altering the hydrology of the area in such a way so as to potentially dewater streams and popular lakes in the area.

If Idaho General Mines is successful in obtaining a lease from federal agencies, it could be the crucial first step they need to develop the mine at Goat Mountain. Fortunately, we've learned about their proposal early in the process and have a real opportunity to stop it. But we can't do it without your help.

Please take a moment and write a letter to decision makers at the BLM and Forest Service asking them not to grant Idaho General Mines a lease. Mine development would be too costly to vulnerable fish runs, drinking water supplies, popular recreation areas, and wildlife. Please write a letter today to both of the following decision makers!

Claire Lavendel  
Forest Supervisor  
Gifford Pinchot National Forest  
10600 NE 51st Circle  
Vancouver, WA 98682  
clavendel@fs.fed.us

Robert DeViney  
Chief of Lands & Mineral Resources  
BLM Oregon State Office  
333 SW 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204  
Robert\_DeViney@or.blm.gov

## **February 6 Presentation on Proposed Mining Exploration for Copper/Silver/Gold/Molybdenum Near Mt. St. Helens**

*Report By Charlotte Persons*

### **Success of the Program**

Willapa Hills Audubon Society arranged for this program at Lower Columbia College, which featured Ryan Hunter of Gifford Pinchot Task Force, and Matthew Russell, Vice President of Idaho General Mines, Inc. (IGMI) Each presented his view of the proposed mine at the Margaret site in the Green River Valley just north of the Mt. St. Helen's National Monument. The program was presented twice in the same day so that LCC students could attend as part of their chemistry, earth science or biology classes. There were large audiences—about 85 attended in the afternoon and 65 in the evening. This was the first time that the mining company had discussed the proposal in public, so out-of-town members of the public and Washington State governmental agencies attended, and there was regional press coverage. The work that went into arranging this presentation was worthwhile as it brought public attention to this proposal and revealed many details of IGMI's mining plan. The most easily accessed articles are OPB at [http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/opb/news.newsmain?action=article&ARTICLE\\_ID=875894](http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/opb/news.newsmain?action=article&ARTICLE_ID=875894) and Longview's *The Daily News* archived front page article from February 7.

### **An Urgent Appeal—Write NOW!**

Many people at the presentation commented to me that "this may be our ANWAR," referring to the decades-old fight to prevent oil drilling in the Arctic National Refuge. *(Continued on Page 7)*

## Field Trip Schedule

### Ellsworth Creek Preserve Sunday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Are you ready for an early spring walk in the Willapa Hills? Have you longed to see the wonderful Ellsworth Creek watershed on the edge of Willapa Bay? Here is a chance to visit this area with Tom Kollasch, Ellsworth Forest Manager for The Nature Conservancy of Washington, who helps to manage this grand landscape. Tom will show and tell us of current activities on the Preserve, including the decommissioning of roads, a valuable assistance to water quality and thus to salmon and other wildlife. The Preserve, comprising 7000 acres, including the 5000-acre Ellsworth Creek watershed, is the largest Nature Conservancy land-holding in Southwest Washington and has at its center 300 acres of very old forest. Some trees here are 35 feet in circumference and thought to be 800 years old! This area has the highest amphibian species diversity in the state. They've found six millipede species new to science! Marbled murrelets nest here and chum and coho salmon abound. We will meet at 8:45 a.m. in Naselle. Please call for details. This trip will include some walking, mostly on gravel roads but some on steep uneven paths.

Please call Ann Musché at 360.484.7119 or Pam Wright at 360.560.3772 to sign up for the trip, and to learn of meeting place and carpooling plans. Tom Kollasch can be reached during some business hours (he spends a lot of time on the Preserve) at the Nature Conservancy office in Astoria: 503-325-3896.

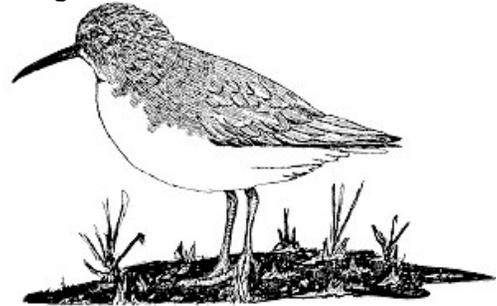
### Shorebird Identification Class and Field Trip Saturday and Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006

*The restlessness of shorebirds, their kinship with the distance and swift seasons, the wistful signal of their voices down the long coastlines of the world make them, for me, the most affecting of wild creatures.*

—Peter Matthiessen

When reading that quote, I think of Wandering Tattlers. In winter the world's 10,000 Wandering Tattlers are scattered on shores across the wide Pacific from California and Peru to Australia and New Guinea. All those birds find their way to Alaska, northwest Canada or northeast Siberia, where each pair will pick a small stony island in a fast-flowing creek for the purpose of raising young on caddisfly larvae. Only for a short time in between do we have the chance to hear their piercing whistles repeated over the sound of surf

on a rocky Washington or Oregon shore. Each kind of shorebird has a story, and I'm going to do my best to tell them on Saturday April 29 at 7:00pm at the River Room, Tugboat Alley, Cathlamet. Nothing fancy – just slides, a few taped calls, and stories. We'll spend some time on identification, but more on behavior, unusual facts, and conservation. Identification is something we can spend time on in the field the next day. On Sunday April 30, meet me at Skamokawa Center, 1391 W. SR 4, at 8:00am. We will head towards the coast to hit some prime shorebird areas during the peak of the migration. Possibilities include Grays Bay, Leadbetter Point, Tokeland, and other points along Willapa Bay. We'll make an effort to visit different types of habitat to find a high diversity of shorebirds. Bring a lunch, and don't forget footwear suitable for a mudflat.



Tom Kelley, USFWS

Anyone interested only in the field trip or lecture is welcome to come for just one. Questions? I'm at 360-795-8009, or [aceasp@pacifier.com](mailto:aceasp@pacifier.com). You may also call Pam Wright at 360-560-3772, or Ann Musche at 360-484-7119 for more information or to sign up.  
-Andrew Emlen

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### About WHAS Fieldtrips

*Field trips are free.*

*Field trips are open to anyone interested in birding, wildlife and conservation. Bring your friends - they don't have to be Audubon members to participate.*

*Dress for the weather - warm clothing in layers, rain gear or sun protection and water proof footwear are advisable. Avoid wearing white.*

*Bring birding gear if you have it - binoculars, scope, field guides, 2-way radios.*

*Bring lunch, drinks and snacks for trips scheduled beyond midday.*

## Field Trip Reports

### Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

*By Carlo Abruzzese*

On October 15, Ruth Deery, John and Margaret Green, and Carlo Abruzzese spent the morning enjoying fall birds at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge during the refuge sponsored Birdfest. The group drove the lower loop stopping to look at waterfowl like Mallards, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Wood Ducks and even a few Cinnamon Teal. There were also good number of Sandhill Cranes, Northern Harriers, Red-Tailed Hawks and 3-4 Great Egrets, which are uncommon in the area. The highlight of the morning was getting good looks at the rare, Slender-billed race of the White-breasted Nuthatch.

The group also visited a replica of a Chinookan cedar plank house and listened to a talk by a local archeologist about the native peoples that once inhabited the area. Afterwards they viewed a raptor show sponsored by the Oregon Zoo and a wildlife art show.



Ruth Deery and Margaret and John Green looking at a mixed flock which included the rare Slender-Billed White Breasted Nuthatch, which is known from only 3-4 sites in Washington. (Cedar Plankhouse in background).

### Washougal Oaks Natural Area

*By Carlo Abruzzese*

Ten Audubon volunteers spend a stunning late October morning helping to restore an area of rare Oregon white oak forest east of Vancouver. The preserve, which is managed by Washington Department of Natural Resources, was established to protect this disappearing forest type as well as several rare species like the small-flowered trillium, Larch Mountain salamander, and Peregrine Falcons. The group started out with a tour of a section of the preserve and learned about management goals. While most birds were either high up in the canopy, or inactive the group did

see a Winter Wren, Red-tailed Hawk and had good looks at a Brown Creeper. Also heard were Song Sparrows, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets and Western Scrub Jays. In only around 2 \_ hours the group planted a respectable 135 oak trees, which were then protected from deer browsing and surrounding weeds. The group also saw a western red-backed salamander and Pacific Chorus Frog, which had both fallen in holes dug for the oak seedlings a few days prior to the outing.



Audubon volunteers helped restore a globally imperiled Oregon white oak forest at Washougal Oaks Natural Area. The group planted 135 trees in a few hours.

### Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

*By Pam Wright*

Ten Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge field trip participants enjoyed a rare break in the rain on January 22 for a shower-less bird search in which 51 species were observed. We were rewarded with excellent views of bald eagles, tundra swans, numerous waterfowl, common snipe and a red-breasted sapsucker among many others. Trip leaders Alan Richards and Andrew Emlen taught us to distinguish cackling and Canada geese and how to attempt to differentiate the ghostly gulls. (The leaders seemed quite at ease with these tasks even if some of us participating weren't.) We were reminded that what constitutes an interesting bird can be subjective as two cars watched a meadow lark while a third, with newer residents to the area, chose to linger with the sandhill cranes. And we observed an unusually large flock of great egrets (estimated at 47) in a field across from Vancouver Lake Park despite the crowds of race running two-legged folk gathering at the finish line at the park. The trip was a great opportunity for improving our skills and observing some beautiful birds.

*(Continued on Page 6)*

## Field Trip Reports *(Continued From Page 5)*

### Jewel Meadows Wildlife Area

*By Anne Musche*

On a crisp and sunny Saturday morning in February, a dozen of us wended our way on winding country roads to the Jewell Meadows Wildlife Reserve southeast of Astoria for a WHAS field trip. In the headquarters parking lot we were treated to views and calls of seven Evening Grosbeaks, but the real focus of our day was on the abundant Roosevelt Elk.

We humans rode in a sturdy wooden wagon out into two large meadows where we tipped hay flakes onto the grass first for a herd of 50 female and yearling elk, and then for a herd of 30 of the biggest and oldest bulls (aged perhaps 3-8 years). The view of the animals was ideal! While we stayed quiet, the elk approached to eat within 40' of us. Focused on chewing, they appeared to be the passive ruminants of a farm scene. But now and then the males lightly challenged one another, their antler racks clacking. A volunteer, on the wagon with us, told us basics of elk life and answered our questions. This was an interesting trip for families, and it was not only the 3- and 4-year-olds who were thrilled to be there!

## Birding Classes

### Beginning Birding

This class is for people who are either completely new to bird watching or who have watched birds for a short time and would like to know more. The class is designed to provide new birders with the techniques and skills to help them identify unfamiliar local birds. This class will include one lecture on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, from 6pm to 8pm and a field trip on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 7:30am to 9:30am. The lecture will be taught at the Cowlitz County PUD which is located at 961 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Longview.

Instruction will include information on birding equipment, reference materials and field guides, identification techniques, field marks and some avian natural history. This class will be taught by Willapa Hills Audubon Society member and biologist, Pam Wright, who has been watching and researching birds for more than ten years. The cost for the class is \$7 and class size will be limited to 15 participants. Proceeds from the class fee will go to Willapa Hills Audubon Society.

### Birding By Ear

Because birds can be difficult to see in dense foliage or can be shy and skulking, learning to be able to associate a bird's song with its maker is a valuable skill to have. In this class students will become familiar with local bird songs and learn tips and techniques for listening for and remembering bird songs and calls. We will also discuss the function of bird song.

Birders of all skill levels are welcome. The cost for the class is \$ 7 and class size will be limited to 13 participants. Proceeds from the class fee will go to Willapa Hills Audubon Society. This class will be taught by biologist Carlo Abbruzzese who has been watching birds for over 15 years. The class will include one lecture on Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, from 7-9 pm and one field trip on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, from 7:30am to 10am. The lecture will be taught at the Cowlitz County PUD which is located at 961 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Longview.

To sign up for either class, contact Carlo at ([puffbird@juno.com](mailto:puffbird@juno.com)) or at (360) 425-6133.

## Wildlife Sightings

*By Andrew Emlen*

Alan Richards and Ann Musché found an Anna's Hummingbird nectaring on the sweet box plant in their yard Jan 14. Their Wood Duck box went up Feb 8 and was getting interest from Common and Hooded Mergansers within days. On Feb 10, they went with John & Margaret Green to the Columbia north jetty, where they endured 60mph winds for 20 minutes and saw 4 early swallows, including a Barn Swallow.

Shirley Lutz reported an immature Cooper's Hawk in her yard Feb 7.

Norma Larsen has had several Anna's Hummingbirds at her yard on the Coweeman River. In December they witnessed a Red-tailed Hawk swoop down onto a gull and carry it in its talons quite a distance before dropping it.

In January a Clark's Grebe was found off Ostervold Road, Puget Island. At least two Black Scoters have been seen in Jan & Feb in the Grays Bay area, well up the Columbia for this species.

An early Turkey Vulture was on East Birnie Slough Road, Puget Island, on Feb 13.

## February 6 Mine Presentation *(Continued From Page 3)*

I fervently hope that we do not have long years ahead of us of fighting this proposed mine. To prevent this, **it is crucial that we each take the responsibility to write now to the two addresses given in Ryan Hunter's article.** Officially, allowing the mineral exploration lease does not create an "irreversible or irretrievable" commitment by the government to final development of the mine. It is the first of three approval steps over the next five to eight years before mining would actually begin. However, Ryan Hunter mentioned that one BLM staffer told him that in practice the government will treat allowing the consignment lease as a commitment to developing the mine. This makes sense because the government does not like to encourage companies to spend money only to have their investment go to waste. (Matt Russell estimated that the drilling exploration will cost from \$5 to 15 million in this case.) **Don't let momentum toward mining development begin. Stop the first step, the approval of the consignment lease for mineral exploration.**

### My Thoughts

Because the world needs these metals, I tried to keep an open mind about this issue until I heard the presentations. After thinking about all the information presented, I am convinced that the Margaret site is not suitable for a copper mine. First, while it appears that Matt Russell is sincere in his commitment to using new mining techniques that may prevent environmental problems, both the government and IGMI investors will have to be convinced to use technology that has never been used before on this scale in copper mines. In fact, some of the processing techniques have not been applied outside the laboratory. In the face of this uncertainty, either the government or company investors could choose to use more conventional mining methods; both pit mining and block cave underground mining methods have acknowledged environmental problems. Second, a "shell" company like IGMI may have no input at all into the final mine development because its interests may be bought out by a larger company. Finally, even if these new technologies are used, there is no guarantee that they will be successful.



## Mid-winter Bald Eagle Survey

*By David Miller*

This was Darrel Whipple's 24<sup>th</sup> annual mid-winter bald Eagle Count. Four people participated: Darrel Whipple, David Miller, Kent Whipple and Ransom Whipple. A total of 32 species of birds were identified, including seven mature bald eagles.

## All-Audubon Memorial Day Camp Out will be Held at Wenas Creek, near Naches, Yakima County, WA Friday, May 26th-Monday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006

*By Anne Musche*

Come join Auduboners from around the state for a wonderful social and natural history study experience! In this creekside campground studded with tall ponderosa pines and cottonwoods, you may put up your tent or park your camper. Multiple field trips each day explore the area within the campground and nearby forests, canyons and coulees. You can see and learn from some real experts (for free!) about a great many birds. You can also learn about insects, mammals, and more. A yearly display of dozens of native plants, kept 'fresh' in water and posted for study at the campground can help you distinguish one daisy from another.

A nightly count-in adding bird species seen for the day to the list of those for the whole weekend provides excitement as the tally mounts. Around the campfire we sing a bit, roast marshmallows, (especially if we are under a certain age), and generally hear a short talk on some fascinating natural history topic. Can I forget to tell you of the traditional Talent Show held at one evening campfire? (You might want to get practicing....) The only facilities are porta-potties, so bring all other necessities, including tables and chairs, and especially water. More detailed information will follow in the May Whistler. Until then, call Ann Musche with questions: 360-484-7119.

## Birding Trail Funding

Thank you for your help! WSDOT selected the Great Washington State Birding Trail project in the statewide Enhancement funding category for an award of \$643,823. This means we can create maps for the last three loops and put up signs at all the sites too. A press release and more information will be coming soon. *From Christi Norman, Audubon Washington*

**Spring Forward With Audubon  
Council of Washington  
Fort Worden State Park, Port Townsend  
Kitsap Audubon Society  
MARCH 24th, 25th and 26th 2006**

Mark your calendars now and join us together with members from the other Audubon Washington Chapters for an exchange of ideas on topics of conservation, education, and Chapter building. This spring's conference will be held at historic Fort Worden State Park in the Victorian town of Port Townsend.

Washington Audubon's State Conservation Committee and the State Education Committee are scheduled to meet on Friday afternoon. Our speakers on Friday night will be representatives from Swarovski Optics on the topic of "Optics and Photos" and they will lead a field trip for us on digi-scoping as one of the Saturday field trip offerings. Chapter reports and seminar sessions are planned for Saturday afternoon and the evening dinner presentation will be "From the Field to the Studio - The Wildlife Art of Bart Rulon". Bart is a well-known local wildlife artist and his programs are spellbinding.

A boat trip around Protection Island will be offered as one of the Saturday morning field trips, as well as birding trips and a docent conducted tour of the Marine Science Center and the Natural History Museum, both located on the Fort grounds. Accommodations will be available on site including campsites and RV parking and we will be holding our Saturday night dinner and program in the new Commons Building, which houses the food services for Fort Worden.

Registration information will be going out to WA Chapters and will also be available for downloading from the Kitsap Audubon Society's website at [www.kitsapaudubon.org](http://www.kitsapaudubon.org) by the 13th of February. A detailed agenda should also be available at that time on our website.

See you there!

For additional information please contact Nancy Ladenberger at [nladenbe@aol.com](mailto:nladenbe@aol.com).

**Come Bird With Us  
Olympic BirdFest 2006  
Sequim, Washington, March 31 - April 2, 2006**

Grab your binoculars and join the Olympic BirdFest 2006 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, March 31 - April 2, 2006.

The stage is set...quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready ... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, and Pygmy owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat and kayak tours; a traditional salmon bake at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center, and more.

Come bird with us and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula ...you just might go home with a new bird for your life list! Check out the offerings by going online or calling for a brochure.

Sequim is just a ferry ride and short drive from Seattle...in two hours you'll be in the rain shadow of the Olympics...it's worth the drive.

Program information and registration can be found online at: <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org>.

To contact us by phone, call 360-681-4076,  
E-mail us at [rivercenter@olympus.net](mailto:rivercenter@olympus.net),  
Or write to us at:  
Dungeness River Audubon Center  
P.O. Box 2450  
Sequim, WA 98382

**Would You Like To Help Direct The  
Future of WHAS?**

The offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Directors-at-Large are now open for nominations for 2006. We would love to have some new faces and ideas on the board. To nominate yourself or someone else who is willing to serve, contact either of our Co-presidents (contact information on page 2) by April 5<sup>th</sup>. An election ballot will be included in the next issue of the Whistler.

## Refuge Photo Blind Available to Birders

*By Shelly Pollock*

*Reprinted From Willapa Tidings, the Newsletter of the Friends of Willapa Refuge*

Supported by a grant from the North American Nature Photography Association, volunteers from Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge installed a photography blind for public use at the Tarlett Slough unit off Sandridge Road near Long Beach, WA.

Wildlife photography enthusiasts can schedule use of this new facility (located off Lone Fir Cemetery Road) through the Willapa Refuge Headquarters. "This photography blind is the first of its kind in Pacific County and we hope the community of wildlife photographers will enjoy the excellent viewing of marsh and forest edge areas," commented Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader for the Willapa NWR. "Access to this blind will not interfere with the birds natural behavior, and the birds need for protected habitat will not be impacted."

Active birders and volunteers from the Friends of Willapa Bay National Wildlife Refuge, as well as Charlie Stenvall, selected the site, which offers a seasonal view of migratory ducks and geese in the winter, and attracts some shorebirds in from the Bay in the early spring. Special thanks go to Jeff Collins who generously constructed the wildlife photo blind.

The Willapa NWR is home to many of the 300 bird species found in Pacific County, including scores of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl species that depend upon the mudflats and tidelands for food and rest during their spring and fall travels. The Tarlett Slough area, where the blind is located, is at the southernmost end of Willapa Bay. The slough attracts the most number of migrating species because of its diverse habitat, located near tidelands with marsh, forest, and open grasslands. The blind is uniquely designed for wildlife photography with narrow openings for camera equipment, and is not recommended for general wildlife viewing. Telephoto/lenses are strongly recommended to ensure long-distance capture of bird activity. Use is by reservation only. For reservations or more information, please contact Kristine Massin at Willapa NWR office: 360-484-3482 during weekday business hours. There's a short hike to the building, and there's a practical maximum of 3 or 4 people in the blind at one time.

## Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count

*By Andrew Emlen*

On Thursday December 29, 23 volunteers participated in the eighth Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count. The Wahkiakum Count straddles the Lower Columbia River, including the Julia B. Hansen and Lewis & Clark National Wildlife Refuges and the towns of Brownsmead, Knappa & Westport in Oregon and Cathlamet & Skamokawa on the Washington side. Weather was overcast with a high temperature of 48 degrees, an east wind and occasional light showers.

Mild weather and our highest participant number yet (23) helped us set new Wahkiakum CBC records for total number of birds counted at 36,906 and number of species at 115. Several species found were new to the Wahkiakum CBC. The most remarkable was an Ovenbird, captured beautifully on video on count day. Other species new to the count were Blue-winged Teal, White-winged Scoter, Eared Grebe, Pelagic Cormorant, Red Phalarope and Wilson's Warbler. A Say's Phoebe, also new to the count, was found on the last day of count week. "Streaked" Horned Larks were found on Pillar Rock Island but were not found on White's Island, where most of the lark habitat was buried under fresh dredge spoils this fall. Other good finds for our circle were four Eurasian Wigeon, two Great Egrets, 61 Long-billed Dowitchers and a White-throated Sparrow. The most notable miss was Red-breasted Nuthatch.

The Lower Columbia continues to be the most important wintering area for Greater Scaup in the Pacific Northwest. Our tally of 8623, a new high, made it the most abundant species on the count. Unusually high numbers of American Wigeon (2037) and American Coot (2256) more than doubled highs for this count. Wigeon were concentrated in the mainland section of the J.B. Hansen Refuge. They may have been driven from other areas where they are usually found by the unusually high water, a combination of a very high tide and recent heavy rainfall.

Many thanks to all the people who helped count this year, and thanks to Willapa Hills Audubon and Skamokawa Center for sponsoring the count!

A complete list of the results is on the following page.



## Cowlitz-Columbia Christmas Bird Count

By Bob Reistroffer

On January 1, 2006 the 22<sup>nd</sup> 3CBC was held as part of Audubon's 106th Christmas Bird Count. 16 field observers and 5 feeder watchers spent the overcast day searching for some hard to find birds. There were alternating light showers. This was our 21<sup>st</sup> official 3CBC. The temperature ranged from 46° to 52° with winds out of the southwest at 5-20 mph. We had several all-time high counts- they are marked by **H**. We also had an all-time low marked by **L**.

**L. Plan now for the 23rd Annual 3CBC on January 1, 2007.**

Loon, Common - 1  
 Grebe, Pied-billed - 14  
 Western Grebe - 1  
 Cormorant, Double-crested - 84  
 Heron, Great Blue - 32  
**Egret, Great H - 5**  
 Swan, Tundra - 45  
 Goose, Canada - 1221  
 Goose, Canada (Small Forms) - 120  
 Goose, Canada (Large Forms) - 698  
 Duck, Wood - 4  
 Teal, Green-winged (Am) - 34  
 Mallard - 815  
 Pintail, Northern - 4  
 Shoveler, Northern - 209  
 Gadwall - 23  
 Wigeon, Eurasian - 0  
   American - 190  
 Duck sp. - 165  
 Duck, Ring-necked - 126  
**Scaup, Greater H - 289**  
   Lesser - 48  
 Scaup sp - 12  
 Goldeneye, Common - 34  
**Bufflehead H - 157**  
**Merganser, Hooded H - 16**  
   Common - 45  
 Eagle, Bald  
   Adult - 3  
   Immature - 1  
 Harrier, Northern - 2  
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned - 2  
   Cooper's - 1  
   Red-tailed - 20  
 Hawk sp. - 6  
**Kestrel, American H - 25**  
 Virginia Rail - 1

Spotted Sandpiper - 1  
 Coot, American - 47  
 Killdeer - 63  
 Wilson's Snipe - 6  
 California Gull - 4  
 Western Gull - 4  
 W./Glaucous-winged - 66  
 Glaucous-winged Gull - 19  
 Gull, sp. - 156  
 Rock Pigeon - 251  
**Dove, Mourning H - 71**  
 Barn-Owl, Common - 1  
 Owl sp. - 1  
 Hummingbird, Anna's - 2  
 Kingfisher, Belted - 7  
 Sapsucker, Red-breasted - 1  
 Woodpecker, Downy - 2  
 Flicker, Northern - 35  
 Hutton's Vireo - 1  
 Jay, Steller's - 28  
   Scrub - 35  
 Crow, American - 1135  
**Common Raven H - 8**  
 Chickadee, Black-capped - 66  
   Chestnut-backed - 14  
 Chickadee sp. - 1  
 Bushtit - 12  
**Nuthatch, Red-breasted H - 3**  
 Creeper, Brown - 2  
 Wren, Bewick's - 6  
   Winter - 2  
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned - 31  
   Ruby-crowned - 120  
 Kinglet sp. - 1  
 Robin, American - 8  
 Thrush, Varied - 6  
 Starling, European - 1671  
 Townsend's Warbler - 6  
 Towhee, Spotted - 21  
 Savannah Sparrow - 1

Sparrow, Fox - 8  
   Song - 30  
   Golden-crowned - 95  
   White-crowned - 6  
   White-throated - 1  
   Sparrow sp. - 5  
 Junco, Dark-eyed - 312  
 Blackbird, Red-winged - 10  
 Blackbird, Brewer's - 9  
 Finch, Purple - 3  
   House - 74  
   Carpodacus sp. - 4  
 Pine Siskin - 40  
 Evening Grosbeak - 10  
 House Sparrow - 123

**TOTAL INDIVIDUALS, 9198**  
**TOTAL SPECIES, 80**



WDFW, Darrell Pruett

