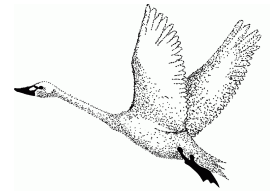


WILLAPA WHISTLER

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November / December 2009



Photo: Mike Baird

Snowy Plover

Leadbetter Point Habitat Restoration 2009 Update

By Ann Musché

2009 was a year of evaluation. This was the third season of effort towards creating inviting habitat for the potential nesting of the coastal Western Snowy Plover and the Streaked Horned Lark. Our Audubon Volunteers, from Willapa Hills, Grays Harbor, Portland and Seattle Audubon chapters, continued to survey for plants and animals in the 5 treated plots and the 5 control plots, each a little smaller than an acre, in the trough between the foredune and the next dune inland. Volunteers joined Kathy Gunther of WDFW for a survey in May and one in July. (Kathy also did various surveys on her own, of course.) None of our target birds were seen in the plots. Some tracks of birds: passerines, shorebirds, and corvids, were observed during these and a subsequent survey which we Auduboners undertook on our own. We have not observed the plovers nor larks using these plots for nesting, which has been the goal of the project. A final survey for the year has been postponed since I am reluctant to survey in the sand following an ankle injury.

We were treated to views of Brown Pelicans, Caspian Terns, Heerman's Gulls, and Pacific Golden Plovers, as well as other birds along the beach. Kathy Gunther, kindly again this year, took volunteers with her onto the federal lands to the north where volunteers were able to observe the rare pink sand verbena as well as Snowy Plovers (including some chicks), a Horned Lark and a Snow Bunting..

Work with vegetation was limited this year. One reason is that there was an extremely limited amount of vegetation visible in the plots. (Another, quite sad, reason was a mix-up between agency staff and myself which had 6 of us volunteers waiting early one morning at the Leadbetter State Park parking lot while the staff folks thought we were meeting the next week. Yikes, that was not a good development!)

From the outset, a goal has been to create spaces which were much clearer of vegetation than they had been at the start (this area, like most of the dune area along our coast, was covered with nearly 100% thick thatch of European beach grasses at the start of this project.)

(continued on page 4: Habitat Restoration Area)

Update on Audubon Washington, Our State Office

By Charlotte Persons

At the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) meeting October 9 to 12, Charlie Kahle, the interim executive director of Audubon Washington, announced that Audubon Washington will no longer have funding from National Audubon Society. Because of decreased donations and lower returns from investments, National Audubon Society has fewer resources and has decided to devote them to education and outreach, such as the magazine and Audubon Centers. The only staff at Audubon Washington will be Christi Norman, who has federal grant funding for the Birding Trail project, and Miguel Perez-Gibson, our lobbyist, and Don McIvor, our scientist, at part-time. They will be sited in the Seward Park Audubon Center.

After our initial shock and grief, the chapter representatives at ACOW got to work to find solutions to losing the state office services. Two volunteer "disappearing" committees were formed. One will help Rainier Audubon organize the next ACOW in Kent on March 19—21 because there is no state office to assist them. The other group came up with a plan to survey Washington chapters to find out their priorities on how to structure Washington State Audubon Conservation Council (WSACC), ACOW meetings, and the state-wide presence. Chapters were also asked to volunteer representatives to be on a state-wide task force of 6—8 members. This short-term task force will collate the results of the surveys and come up with proposals for re-organizing our efforts. These proposals will be discussed at the Spring ACOW.

(continued on page 6: Audubon WA Update)

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Check type of Membership:

- ☐ New Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
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☐ I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society.

Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____.

Membership includes 6 issues of our newsletter *WILLAPA WHISTLER* annually.

If you are also interested in the membership in the National Audubon Society, please visit <http://www.audubon.org/>.

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We will not share your contact information with anyone.

**To allow members to announce and discuss items of general interest.

* To announce **occasional** reminders and to communicate last minute schedule changes due to weather or other issues for WHAS programs and field trips.

Clip-_____ -Clip

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WHAS Board News and Announcements

By Charlotte Persons, *President*

After serving on the board for seven years, Richard Wilson resigned last month. We will miss his contributions—besides creating and maintaining our web site until last March, Dick offered his house for our meeting place and contributed many good suggestions in our board discussions.

The WHAS board met on October 19 in Cathlamet. Our new goals for 2009 to 2010 are:

- 1) Evaluate current fundraising strategies and plan in advance cash flow from investments
- 2) Organize rotation of chairs of committees
- 3) Support our ongoing stewardship jointly with Columbia Land Trust at Nelson Creek property, Cathlamet
- 4) Have a voice in the organization of a new statewide (Washington) Audubon structure
- 5) Focus on projects which support local birding, particularly in backyards.

The board completed the surveys about our priorities and preferences for the state-wide Audubon re-organization (see update in a separate article). Because the re-organization will be voted on at the ACOW meeting on March 19—21, the board voted to pay for the expenses of a representative from our board. We set a tentative date for the Annual Meeting--March 27. Please put this on your calendar as we hope to see you there!

We need **new** folks to help support WHAS activities.

If you would like to help, **contact** a committee chair, or call Charlotte Persons at 360-578-3949, or email president@willapahillsaudubon.org.

Looks Most Encouraging!

By Gloria G. MacKenzie

Oregon & Columbia River Estuary:

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality along with National Marine Fisheries Service sent a joint letter to Bradwood in September saying that NorthernStar's analysis of the dredging impacts of the liquefied natural gas terminal is flawed and that they must conduct new data collection and modeling.

Findings from a third party review by Dr. Antonio Baptista, a hydrology expert at Oregon Health & Science University, have suggested that NorthernStar needs to substantially revise its study of the river flow, including simulations of at least two spring tidal cycles. Dr. Baptista has done extensive research on the Columbia River estuary and computer modeling of river-to-ocean circulation.

This request by state and federal regulators for substantially more data and analysis on water quality impacts must be made before they can decide whether the proposed Bradwood Landing project meets clean water and endangered species standards. This will require a minimum of one to two years.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission:

The Senate approved the appointment of John R. Norris as the newest commissioner with FERC. He was the chairman of the Iowa Utilities Board, working to improve renewable energy. However, Commissioner Suede Kelly has decided to step down.

Encouraging news that Riverkeepers and our WHAS challenge to the Federal Court regarding Bradwood is moving forward. The 9th Circuit Court has ordered FERC to produce all documentation relating to Bradwood by November 12, 2009 (and the opening brief is due January 11, 2010).

In the separate case FERC wants the 9th Circuit Court to reverse a district court ruling under the Freedom of Information Act that FERC has been required to produce. The FOIA request seeks mailing lists used by FERC to notify landowners along the planned route of the proposed Palomar pipeline, which is associated with the proposed Bradwood Landing project.

Locally in Clatsop County:

Astoria residents are currently voting to recall the county commissioners who approved of the proposed project. NorthernStar has also frustrated local students by discontinuing the welding scholarship program without notice.

Columbia Riverkeeper has challenged Clatsop County's decision to allow LNG-related pipelines through an area near Westport Slough where pipelines are prohibited. Columbia Riverkeeper filed its Notice of Intent to Appeal to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) on October 14, 2009. Last year, 67% of the voters passed a referendum prohibiting pipelines from this very land.

Do you know ...the Oregon State Bird?



Western Meadow Lark -- Photo: USFWS

The Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) was chosen state bird in 1927 by Oregon's school children in a poll sponsored by the Oregon Audubon Society. Native throughout western North America, the bird has brown plumage with buff and black markings. Its underside is bright yellow with a black crescent on the breast; its outer tail feathers are mainly white and are easily visible when it flies. The Western Meadowlark is known for its distinctive and beautiful song. Meadowlarks are open-country birds. They inhabit grasslands, shrub-steppe, and agricultural areas and are resident throughout much of their range, but when deep snow covers food sources they may move into sheltered valleys. Some populations appear to be long-distance migrants.

In winter they flock in single-species groups, or with other blackbirds and starlings. Meadowlarks forage mostly on the ground, running or walking, and probing the soil with their bills. In early spring, Western Meadowlarks sing continually from shrub tops, fence posts, utility poles, or any other high structure in their open-country habitat.

(Source: bluebook.state.or.us and birdweb.org)

For more information about the Western Meadow Lark check www.birdweb.org.

Habitat Restoration Area (HRA) for Snowy Plovers and Horned Larks on State Lands at Leadbetter Point 2009 Willapa Hills & Grays Harbor Audubon Societies

(Continued from page 1)

We aimed to create an area of much-reduced plant coverage desired for nesting (and foraging) by the two species of concern. To achieve this, European beach grasses were bulldozed and subsequent regrowth sprayed with herbicide. In addition the foredune (closest to the sea) was cut through with a bulldozer in several places in order to allow sand to flow into the plots. All of these strategies were extremely 'successful', in that the treatment plots are now VERY sandy and clear of vegetation. (Be careful what you wish for....) Over a foot of sand has flowed during each of the past two winters (seasons of exceptionally big storms) over a major portion of the plots. Unfortunately, both the exotic, thatch-forming grasses and the natives have been inundated.

During the May survey, our volunteers noted that the hundreds of native plants we had covered the last fall, in anticipation of staff spraying of herbicide on the beach grasses, seemed to have disappeared; they were no longer to be seen in the plots. How did this happen? All concerned think that a major contributing factor has been the extreme amount of flowing sand mentioned above. (By September a few more of the plants were visible as small 'sprouts' poking up above the sand.) Another contributing factor may be the action of the herbicide used on the invasives, spreading beyond the target plants and affecting (even killing) the natives. This was discussed during the conference call mentioned below.



Photo: Ann Muschè and Alan Richards

Don McIvor, Science Coordinator, Audubon Washington, visited our site, observed it carefully and has made some excellent suggestions. He and I joined in a meeting (via conference call) in early September in which agency folks from WDFW, USFWS and ST PKS evaluated and discussed the future of this project. It was agreed that the plots as currently constituted may be too small and create too much of a 'fishbowl effect' (that is,

they would concentrate nesting birds in a very small area, easily searched and approached through the thick adjacent grasses by predators.)



Photo: Alan Richards

On the nearby federal HRA, snowy plovers nest and hatch young, but the young generally do not survive to fledge (28 days, flying strongly on their own.) It has been thought that an important factor in this lack of success is the extreme pressure from intelligent predators, particularly ravens and crows, who learn to check the HRA and in particular its 'cages' (wire exclosures) for the tiny hatched plovers. The refuge which administers this federal HRA (Willapa NWR) is going through a planning process in which they may request permission to control some of the predators. Predator control has been strongly shown to be the factor which has turned around the plover numbers in Oregon, from dropping in numbers to rising. If/when the federal HRA begins to produce fledged young, the overflow may begin to look slightly southward to the state lands for nesting spots. That continues to be our hope. WDFW biologists will supervise careful work to expand and improve the HRA on the state lands. Some of that will occur this fall, winter and early spring.

Many thanks to all who worked on this project in 2009:

Fieldwork: Tom Finn(WHAS), Don McIvor (Audubon WA), Carolyn Norred (WHAS), Alan Richards (WHAS), Randy Robinson (Seattle AS), Mary Ann Spahr (GHAS), Janet Strong (GHAS), Shawn and Mike Schmelzer (Portland AS), Ann Muschè (WHAS), Kathy Gunther (WDFW)

Administration: Charlotte Persons, Arnie Martin, Diane Schwickerath, Charlie Kahle (Audubon WA), Lynn Tennefoss (NAS), Dave Hays (WDFW), Scott Pearson (WDFW), Lisa Lantz (ST PKS)

Thanks to Ludger Woehrmann and R.D. Grunbaum for articles published over the timespan of this project. Thanks to National Audubon and to Hewlett-Packard for the grant which supported this work, and especially for extending the grant through this final year of '09.

Recent Activities

Nelson Creek Update

By Russ and Ann Kastberg

We have been busy at Nelson Creek this last summer.

Pam Wright headed up a Vegetation survey crew with Andrea Berkley, Columbia Land Trust, establishing permanent vegetation plots throughout the Nelson Creek property. These inventory plots will be monitored to document the change due to our restoration efforts.

The Nelson Creek committee met in July to update everyone as to what has been completed and what still needs to be done. We welcomed Kris Parke to the committee. Kris has been involved for several years monitoring upper Nelson Creek for fish populations. He volunteered to head up a fish survey in Jack's Slough. Andrea reported that CLT now has funding to proceed with restoration projects that will include site preparation and replanting with native species. We expect to get started this winter.



Photo: Ann and Russ Kastberg

In August, Louis LaPierre led a mammal trapping event. This was a follow-up verification survey to last year's survey. The group put our traps in the evening and came back the next morning to inventory the catch. (Ann camped out on site to guard the traps) Several deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) were trapped. Louis has been monitoring large animals with motion cameras this past year. Elk, deer, coyote, birds, (and people) have been photographed. Sadly, the cameras were lost in last winter's high water event. The cameras worked right up until they were inundated. It is amazing how much water can move in there following a heavy snow/rain event.

Kris and Ann headed up a fish/tadpole survey in Jack's Slough in August. There was mass of various water insects, lots of tadpoles, but, no trout or salmon found. It was a very interesting and fun day.

Columbia Land Trust will be holding a volunteer appreciation evening on October 27th. Ann will be presenting her experience with amphibian surveys. A notice has gone out to committee members and volunteers. Everyone is welcome to attend. We really appreciate all the great help and time donated by our volunteers.

Lake Sacajawea Sign Project

By Margaret Green

Local artists, Lorena Birk and Debby Neely, have completed the art for the two interpretive signs to be placed in Lake Sacajawea Park in Longview. The graphic work is also completed and we are now in the final phase, the production of the panels themselves. These should be installed by the end of the year, when they can be enjoyed by all. The sign committee believes that WHAS members will be very proud of our partnership with the Longview Parks Department to bring this educational and artistic project to pass. The final unveiling of this lovely tribute to Ruth Deery will be very exciting.

Green Computer Paper for Sale

By Ann Musché

Your chapter purchased, in order to resell it to members, a case of multi-purpose (printer, fax, photocopy) paper, chlorine-free and acid-free. It is white paper, 8 1/2 by 11 inch, made of 100% post-consumer recycled content. It has the certification of the Forest Stewardship Council and Green-e Energy certification from the Center for Resource Solutions. It is smooth and works well in all the machines on which I have tried it. At \$5.50 per ream, it is quite competitive in price with many other papers, that are much less environmentally friendly. If you would like to buy a ream of this paper, please call or e-mail me at 360-484-7119 or Ann.Musche@gmail.com, and I will arrange to bring it from my home in Naselle to your area.

2009 Christmas Bird Counts

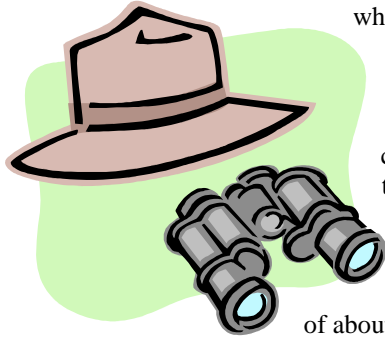
By: Alan Richards

Saturday & Sunday -- October 10-11, 2009

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is citizen-science at its best. You can help with this effort, whether you have ever gone bird watching or not. More eyes are needed for that day. You can point out where you see birds and experts in your group can do the identifying. If you do know some of the birds in your area, so much the better. This is your chance to help collect the information which will direct decisions in future, decisions

which will affect how much natural beauty, including birds, remains for future generations.

If you happen to live within the Count circle you can count birds at your feeder that day.



For the **Leadbetter Point CBC**, on the east side of the peninsula, for example, that includes the area north of about 180th Street, as well as Nemah and

Palix River areas along the bay. In the field you have chances to socialize with your fellow counters, and when the counting is through, all counters (feeder watchers included) are invited to the Count-In Supper, a no-host dinner and compilation of everyone's results. This joyous event begins at 5 p.m. at the Hunters' Inn, Highway 4 at the east end of Naselle, on the evening of the Count.

For the **Wahkiakum CBC**, that includes portions of the Skamokawa, Puget Island, Cathlamet, and Brownsmead areas.

For the **Cowlitz-Coweman-Columbia CBC**, that includes portions of Kelso, Longview and the surrounding area.

Contact the Count leader for more exact boundary descriptions, to advise them that you wish to take part, and for the specifics of after count gathering. (see the table on the right for contact informations)

Bring your binoculars if you have some, boots, warm clothes and a lunch, and join us for a day outside, looking closely at some of Nature's most interesting creatures, sharing the day with people who have similar interests.

Leadbetter Christmas Bird Count:

Sponsored by Willapa Hills and Discovery Coast Audubon chapters

Saturday, December 19th, 2009 Dawn to Dusk

To be placed in a group for the day, or to volunteer to count at your feeder, call:

Alan Richards, 360-484-7119. or, send e-mail to: birdcounts@willapahillsaudubon.org

Willapa Hills Audubon Society chapter supports two additional Christmas Bird Counts, run in approximately the same way:

Wahkiakum CBC

(date TBA),

contact Andrew Emlen (360-795-8009);

Cowlitz-Columbia CBC:

January 1, 2010

contact Bob Reistroffer (360-636-5125).

Waterfowl Class in January

Doug Robberson will teach a multimedia (including photos, vocalizations, and video) class on Southwest Washington waterfowl. The class will be taught on January 13th with a field trip to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge on January 16th. Class location and time to be determined.

Doug has been teaching birding classes for Portland Audubon Society, Tualatin River keepers, and the Friends of the Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge for over 10 years and has been birding for 18 years. The cost for the class will be \$8 and space is limited. To register, or for more info, contact Carlo Abbruzzese at (puffbird@juno.com) or at (360) 425-6133.

Audubon WA Update

Continued from page 1

My personal view is that this situation will create difficulties, but if the chapters grab this as an opportunity, we can get back some of the autonomy we have been missing, and can create a stronger and more participative grass-roots, bottom-up structure. Our long-term plan should be to pull our horns in during a difficult economic time and to wait for better days to re-emerge stronger than before.

The Whistler Online

Did you know that you can read the Whistler online at our website? To see the **pictures in color** or in case you missed a previous issue just go to <http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org> and look for the *Whistler*.

Birding Bits

By Russ Koppendrayer

Russ is out birding...



...but will return with stories of Birding Bits in soon.

Book Review

By Carolyn Norred

Mind of the Raven, Bernd Heinrich; Harper, 1999.

Hiking Portland's Forest Park Wildwood Trail with a couple of friends recently, we stopped off at the Portland Audubon center. There we met Aristophanes, an eighteen-month-old raven who had been raised in captivity and now lived under the care of the Audubon volunteers. Big, beautiful, and bold, he sat on his keeper's gloved arm and pulled at the folds of her sleeve as we talked. Each time he lightly tugged at her shirtsleeve, she used her bare finger to tap the underside of his most impressive beak, and he would quit for a moment, and then begin again. She explained that he knew he wasn't supposed to be doing what he was doing, but he wanted her full attention.

I had just finished enjoying Bernd Heinrich's *Mind of the Raven*, (Harper, 1999) and I couldn't help notice how delicate and vulnerable that bare finger looked beside the powerful beak. Heinrich lists some of the uses of the raven's bill: offense, defense, shoveling, picking, cutting, gripping, ripping, prying, crushing, holding, caressing, combing, and *breaking limbs*.... The catch here, of course, is that his entire book is dedicated to his amazement at and respect for the Raven's mind. Somehow this Audubon volunteer, who had, by the way, also read Heinrich's book, was comfortable in the knowledge that although Aristophanes was tugging at her shirt when he knew she wouldn't like it, he wasn't going to reach down and snap her finger when she tapped his bill in reprimand. Somehow she had confidence in his ability to differentiate between bad habits that were OK and bad habits, or impulses, that were not so much.

The thrill of getting to observe a shining, vigorous, young adult raven at such close proximity was multiplied many-fold by having just read *Mind of the Raven*. Author Bernd Heinrich is professor emeritus of biology at the Univ. of Vermont, author of many other books, and a dedicated student of ravens. This book is a lively account of his years of association with the ravens he has observed in the aviary behind his cabin in the Vermont woods, and in the wild, and includes his collection of other's studies, both anecdotal and scientific, of these marvelous birds.

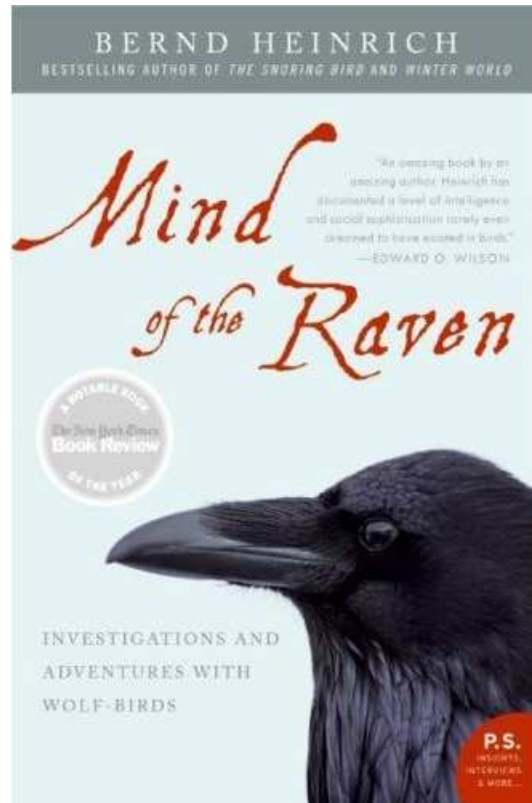
"I have become skeptical that the interpretations of all ravens' behavior can be shoehorned into the same programmed and

learned responses-categories as those of bees. Something else is involved, and I wanted to make some sense of it." (xxi)

Heinrich's narrative style is both analytical and anecdotal.

He addresses such issues as socialization, reproduction, communication, and intelligence as it occurs in a bird's world. For me, one his more fascinating studies is the ability of the raven to problem solve on an individual basis – beyond instinct. He explains,

"In effect, the fundamental capacity to develop strategy requires a capacity to visualize that which is out of sight, and that which has not yet happened but can happen. To ravens, that which is out of sight is, as with us, also not necessarily out of mind, as can be seen even in trivial examples."



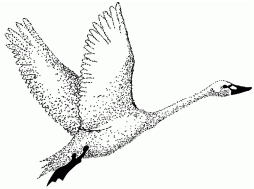
One of my favorite examples of this capacity for individual problem solving that he gives us is an anecdote about an oil worker on the North Slope of Alaska who had been sitting and sharing his doughnuts with a local raven. After watching the raven take the doughnuts off to cache each of them and immediately return in hopes of another, the worker decided to have a bit of fun with him and toss two doughnuts at once. This raven was not to be frustrated. He shortly hit upon the solution to his dilemma: he poked his bill through the hole in one doughnut and picked up the second with the end of his beak, securing both at once in a way that then enabled him to fly away to cache them both.

The topic of this book, a raven's mind, is a puzzle probably impossible to solve, yet endlessly challenging as Heinrich, himself, admits. The challenge for him was, *"...hard but the results have been deeply satisfying...and there is no end to the mind....More important, I have come to touch the world and the travails of a totally different yet kindred being that*

makes me less alone"(351).

This book is a slow read, easily read in short bits. There were times when I became overwhelmed by the details and put the book aside to let it work a bit. Nonetheless, the style is sweet and smooth enough, that when I read a section aloud to my grandsons, Grandpa soon joined us and was also engaged with the story. It is a book written by a man who knows, and clearly loves, his subject, and it will change the way a reader looks at all birds, particularly ravens, and maybe even intelligence itself, forevermore.

Carolyn Norred is a retired English instructor who lives in Longview, WA, and enjoys both birds and books.



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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 artwork are welcomed. The deadline for inclusion of material in the *Whistler* is the 15th of each even-numbered month. Send your contributions to WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632 or to newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org.

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.

WHAS Programs and Field Trips

For more information and further details check the WHAS Web site: www.willapahillsaudubon.org

Programs for November and December are suspended so that WHAS members can enjoy the holidays. Stay tuned to the web site, WHAS email alerts, and the next Whistler for announcement of a program in late January or early February. The January program on gulls has been canceled due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts for the speaker. We hope to reschedule that program next fall. .

Annual Lake Sacajawea Morning Bird Walk

Saturday – December 5, 2009. The Greens will be hosting the annual Lake Sacajawea Morning Bird Walk. After a stroll along the lake shores, we will retire to the warmth of the Green house for backyard birding, snacks, warm beverages, and good cheer. It will be important to dress appropriately for inclement weather. To sign up, call John Green at 360-575-9238 or email jgreen2317@aol.com.

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.

Check out our website at www.willapahillsaudubon.org