

# WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

Volume 36 // Issue 2

March / April 2010



Have you ever wondered how owls are able to capture prey in complex environments and in the dark?  
Photo: Megan Amaral

## Annual Dinner / Meeting with a Program on Owls

**Date:** March 27, Saturday  
**Place:** Cowlitz County PUD Auditorium, 961 12<sup>th</sup> Ave., Longview, WA  
**Cost:** Dinner \$10 for a member and \$15 for a non-member  
**Time:** Dinner at 6:00 Program at 7:15

Come enjoy a pleasant social gathering at which we will install our new board officers and learn more about the secret lives of owls. WHAS member Carlo Abbruzzese will discuss some of the amazing adaptations that have allowed owls to hunt at night as well as other interesting aspects of owl biology and behavior. Carlo will share stories of his graduate work on Eastern Screech-owl hunting behavior as well as seasonal work with Northern and Mexican Spotted Owls in Oregon, Washington and New Mexico. You will hear tips on how to identify the owls (by sight and sound) that are found in southwest Washington. Carlo is a natural areas manager for the Washington Department of Natural Resources and has been fascinated with owls (he suggests even obsessed) for over 20 years.

This year the WHAS Annual Dinner will be catered by a local women's service group, Amalak. The menu will include beverages, salad, vegetable, and dessert, with a choice of either a vegetarian lasagna or chicken entrée. RSVP is required by March 24. Please contact Gloria Nichols at 360-636-3793 or [membership@willapahillsaudubon.org](mailto:membership@willapahillsaudubon.org) to reserve your spot and indicate your entrée preference. Contact Charlotte Persons at [president@willapahillsaudubon.org](mailto:president@willapahillsaudubon.org) or 360-578-3949 for carpool information.

## New Option to Receive the Whistler by email

Willapa Hills Audubon Society now offers delivery of the *Willapa Whistler* newsletter by email. The "eWhistler" arrives several days before the snail-mail version and offers enhanced viewing with color photos and graphics as well as live links to referenced websites and emails. If you elect to receive your *Whistler* electronically rather than by postal service, an email will arrive announcing the availability of the *Whistler* on the WHAS website with a link to the webpage that will open in your default web browser. You can read the *Whistler* online or save it to your computer for later browsing. Archived *Whistlers* are available on the WHAS website. Please consider signing up for electronic delivery to reduce paper waste, mail box clutter and expenses associated with printing and mailing of the *Whistler*. If you would like to elect to receive the *Whistler* by email, please send your full name and e-mail address to our Membership Chair, Gloria Nichols at [membership@willapahillsaudubon.org](mailto:membership@willapahillsaudubon.org).

## Primal Warblings

By Carolyn Norred

"...we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down..." (from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *The Poet*)

April is National Poetry Month, and David Wagoner's poem, "*The Poets Agree to Be Quiet by the Swamp*" is a personal favorite and seems perfectly suited to stand in honor of poetry in general. If you would enjoy a poem a day, as some of us do during April, you might want to check out the Black Hills Audubon Bird Poetry list, <http://www.blackhillsaudubon.com/poetry/poetry-index.htm>.

### *The Poets Agree to Be Quiet by the Swamp*

They hold their hands over their mouths  
And stare at the stretch of water.  
What can be said has been said before:  
Strokes of light like herons' legs in the cattails,  
Mud underneath, frogs lying even deeper.  
Therefore, the poets may keep quiet.  
But the corners of their mouths grin past their hands.  
They stick their elbows out into the evening,  
Stoop, and begin the ancient croaking.

-- David Wagoner (1964)

Reprinted by author's permission from *Traveling Light: Collected and New Poems*, Univ. of Ill. Press, 1999.

## In this issue of the Whistler:

- 2 Member Form and WHAS News
- 3 Birding Bits, Recent Birding Class
- 4 LNG Update, Earth day, Fox Creek
- 5 Citizen Science Amphibian Survey
- 6 Christmas Bird Count Updates
- 7 High Lakes, Backyard Birding
- 8 WHAS Programs and Field Trips

## Support our mission, join WHAS today!

**Check type of Membership:**

- New Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- Renewal Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$20 check for annual membership)
- 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.

- I prefer to receive the *WHISTLER* by email (Add your email address below)

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

Please make your check payable to: WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to:

**WHAS, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632**

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

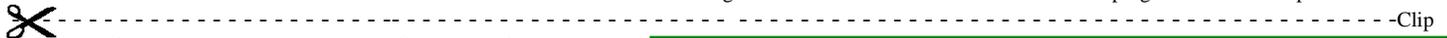
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Y14:7XCH rev. 2007

**Thank you for supporting your local Audubon chapter -- Willapa Hills Audubon Society!**

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.



**President:** Charlotte Persons  
360-578-3949 president@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Vice President:** Steve Glucoft  
360-577-7720 sglucoft@comcast.net

**Past Co-President:** Betty Mayfield  
503-556-6841 finance@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Past Co-President:** Steve Puddicombe  
360-465-2205 conservation@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Secretary:** Ann Musché  
360-484-7119 secretary@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Treasurer:** Pamela Wright  
360-560-3772 treasurer@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Director at Large:** Russ Kastberg  
360-274-7091 director-a@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Director at Large:** Gloria MacKenzie  
503-556-8253 director-b@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Director at Large:** Russ Koppendrayer  
306-636-3245 director-c@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Programs:** vacant

**Education:** Darrel Whipple  
503-556-9838 education@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Newsletter:** Ludger Wöhrmann  
newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Field Trips:** John Green  
360-575-9238 jgreen2317@aol.com

**Conservation:** Steve Puddicombe  
503-465-2205 conservation@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Publicity:** Steve Glucoft  
360-577-7720 sglucoft@comcast.net

**Finance/History:** Betty Mayfield  
503-556-6841 finance@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Bird Counts:** Alan Richards  
360-484-7119 birdcounts@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Willapa Bay Issues:** Miranda Wecker  
360-484-7128 mwecker@willapabay.org

**Wildlife Sightings:** John Green  
360-795-8009 jgreen2317@aol.com

**Membership:** Gloria Nichols  
360-636-3793 membership@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Website:** Ludger Wöhrmann  
360-423-7004 webmaster@willapahillsaudubon.org

**Nelson Creek Stewardship:** Russ & Ann Kastberg  
360-274-7091 nelsoncreek@willapahillsaudubon.org

**OFFICERS**

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

I prefer you contact me by:

- Phone
- Email
- Mail

Please:

- contact me about volunteer opportunities
- add me to your announcement email list \*
- add me to your discussion email list \*\*

### WHAS Board Member Elections

**This *Whistler* issue contains the ballot for our bi-annual board officers' elections.**

**All members are encouraged to cast their votes and mail their ballot to show their support for the board candidates.**

**Our board will be stronger if many of you endorse the volunteers running for the WHAS board.**

**Ballots are due in the WHAS mailbox by Tuesday March 23.**

### Upcoming Events

*March 26-27-28*

13th Annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival, Othello WA  
More info: <http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

*April 30 - May 2*

14th Annual Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival  
More info: <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>

*June 11-14*

22nd Washington Ornithological Society Conference in Wenatchee  
More info: <http://www.wos.org/>

### The *Whistler* Online

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

## Birding Bits

By Russ Koppendrayer

On January 16<sup>th</sup> I was landing with the blue surf of the Pacific Ocean on my right and the small airport of Manzanillo, Mexico on the left. After deplaning there was a short walk in the warm sunshine to the terminal and the customs line. Not much later, I was booking a taxi for the half hour drive to the hotel in Barra de Navidad where I was to meet my group for the next eight days of birding. What a taxi ride! Passing in town between speed bumps with sudden braking for the bumps, the driver had me on the edge of my seat at first but I soon kicked back to enjoy the different approach to rules of the road.

Birding started in the pre-dawn hour the next morning with a brief look at a Mottled Owl as we heard a pair calling to each other across the dirt road through the forest that we were going to hike. Later the walk was highlighted by stunning looks at a singing Happy Wren, which can be quite a skulker at times. We also were treated to three great species of hummingbirds as well as a flock of colorful San Blas Jays. Lunch was at an ocean front restaurant under an awning with a wonderful view of the beach and the bay at Barra de Navidad. Brown Boobies, foraging in the surf directly in front of us, entertained. There were also scope views of a Blue-footed Booby out perched on a rock as well as soaring Magnificent Frigatebirds. The week was off to a great start and the excitement would only continue as we birded some coastal wetlands and thorn forests before moving inland to the highlands and volcanoes with the town of Colima as our base.



One non-birding memory was a big belch of ash from the active Volcan de Colima when we were just below it late one afternoon and enjoying views of a Laughing Falcon. I almost felt at home, being used to birding in the shadow of Mt. St. Helens, but for some of my companions it was a first.

Other avian highlights included huge flocks of Icterids (blackbirds) with large numbers of Orchard Orioles as well as Bullocks and Baltimore Orioles in the wetlands. The pine/oak forests of the volcano's lower slopes were home to beautiful Gray Silky-flycatchers, which are closely related to our waxwings. Also present was a Golden Vireo and the stunning Elegant Euphonia and some wood-warblers species new to me. The higher elevations brought the best birds of the trip from my perspective.

Green-striped Brush-finch, Collared Towhee, Red Warbler, Red-faced Warbler were all exciting finds, but the treat of the week for me was the colorful with an attitude Chestnut-sided Shrike-vireo. The birding was capped in the pre-dawn of January 24<sup>th</sup> with knockout looks at a Balsas Screech-owl, a bird whose range is limited to two river drainages that we'd missed on two previous attempts that week. This meant that the next twenty-three hours would be spent in vans, airports, and planes. I'll never understand why I arrived home with such a nasty cold! I can't wait for the next opportunity to bird till I drop; it was such fun.

*Good birding.*

## January 16, 2010 Field trip to Ridgefield Reserve

By Carolyn Norred



Marsh Wren

Picture: Roy Seiber, Kalama, WA

After a Thursday evening introduction to western Washington's waterfowl, our group met instructor Doug Roberson at Washington's Ridgefield Reserve for a Saturday field trip through the River S Unit. The folks in each car kept in contact via a set of two-way radios.

In the lead car, Doug identified not only the waterfowl we observed, but any bird we saw. I kept a list of 34 species observed. The birds ranged from a magnificent pair of trumpeter swans to an elusive marsh wren. One of the highlights of the morning for me was getting to observe two hawks in two separate trees. As they were both visible from a single point, it was easier to identify the significant differences in them. One was a red-shouldered hawk and the other, the more commonly seen red-tail hawk. The weather favored our purpose, as the rain held off until we completed our tour and all expressed our gratitude for benefitting from Doug's extensive knowledge of the birds.

## LNG Update

By Carol Carver

After several years' effort, Gloria McKenzie has asked to pass on the work of doing the LNG Update column and I've agreed to write. The Whistler comes out every two months. Frequently, there are important opportunities for activism in the interim. Be sure to check the "current issues-LNG" on [www.willapahillsaudubon.org](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org) for interim announcements. Wahkiakum Friends of the River (WFOR) also maintains a current website at [noLNG.wahkiakum.info](http://noLNG.wahkiakum.info). (Note: there is no "www" on the address) If you enter your email address on the left, you will get a brief Feedblitz email message alerting you whenever new articles are posted.

### Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

**Lawsuit:** The States of Oregon and Washington, Columbia Riverkeeper and the coalition of which WHAS is a member, and the Nez Perce Tribe are appealing federal approval of the Northern Star permit for Bradwood in the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The U.S. Department of Justice filed a motion on February 16<sup>th</sup> saying NOAA Fisheries was dismissing its petition in this suit. While this is disappointing, NOAA was in the awkward position of suit against another federal agency (FERC). NOAA Fisheries will still be issuing a biological opinion determining whether the project may threaten the survival of salmon in the river.

Fifteen other states, in addition to Oregon and Washington, have filed Amicus Briefs with the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court in support of our suit. These states agree that the permit should be voided because FERC used a faulty process by granting a permit before the states and other federal agencies had given their required permits/approvals. A decision from the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court is expected in about one year.

## Mid-winter Bald Eagle Survey Yields Six Adults

By Darrel Whipple

WHAS has conducted a mid-winter Bald Eagle survey each January since 1979, covering two latitude-longitude blocks along the Cowlitz and Columbia rivers (Lat.-Long. 460-1225 and 461-1225). The vehicle route follows roads in the area between the I-5 bridge over the Cowlitz near Toledo and the Kalama Marina.

On January 23, 2010, David Miller and I conducted the survey between 7:30 am and 3:00 pm., traveling up the West Side Highway to Castle Rock, then Pleasant Hill Road viewing Sandy Bend, then Headquarters Road to Silver Lake and Mt St. Helens Visitor Center. We found one adult in a tree near the railroad track at Sandy Bend, one adult on the wooded island in Silver Lake, and one adult along Mandy Road between Wallace Sand & Gravel and the I-5 bridge over the Cowlitz. These are all locations where Bald Eagles were found on previous years' surveys.

In the southern block we found two adults at Kress Lake and one adult overlooking the Upper Kalama Fish Hatchery, again places where we have found them in the past. Besides the six Bald Eagles, which is a better-than-average count for this route, we tallied 21 other species, including one Great Egret.

**Washington Department of Ecology:** DOE just issued its 4<sup>th</sup> public notice related to the 401 Water Quality Certification needed by Northern Star for Bradwood. If you have commented before, those comments will roll into this process. New or additional comments may be added until March 6<sup>th</sup> and can be sent via email. See [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/fed-permit](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/fed-permit). Click on Southwest Region Public Notices.

A draft State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is due in late spring. The SEPA is a state environmental impact statement that has been deemed necessary because of the gaps in information in Bradwood's federal EIS. DOE will hold an open house to educate about commenting on the SEPA and will hold two public hearings, in Wahkiakum and Cowlitz Counties.

**Clatsop County Land Use Board of Appeal (LUBA):** Columbia Riverkeeper (CRK) has filed a re-appeal of Clatsop County's decision to continue to say that Bradwood is a "small to medium project" that does not negatively impact salmon. Oral arguments will be heard on March 4<sup>th</sup> in Salem with a decision expected sometime in April. CRK has also filed an appeal this February to a Clatsop County decision to change OPR zoning in Westport, which would allow the Northern Star pipeline to move across the OPR property despite 67% of Clatsop voters passing a referendum two years ago to prohibit this from happening.

## Earth Day Help needed

By Pat Reistroffer

Earth Day will be celebrated in Longview at the Expo Center on **Saturday, April 17**. Audubon will host a booth. We will have the bird wings available along with some other exhibits for adults. There will be a bird feeder making station set up for the children. As in the past they will be making bird feeders out of TP rolls, peanut butter and bird seed. ANY and ALL help will be welcome. I will be there all day working with the children and I could use someone to help me. I also need someone to talk with the adults who are interested and share information that is available to them. You can contact me at 360-636-5125 or email me at: [preistrof@aol.com](mailto:preistrof@aol.com)

I would appreciate hearing from you by April 5 at the latest. THE SOONER THE BETTER!!!

## Friends of Fox Creek Ivy Eviction Party at Fox Creek in Rainier

Join Friends of Fox Creek and fellow Auduboners for a morning of removing invasive English Ivy on Saturday April 24, 9 am to 1pm. Wear sturdy shoes or boots and bring leather gloves (there are briars in some areas) and clippers or loppers. Tools will be available if you aren't able to bring your own. Park in the Riverside Community Church parking lot on C Street near 2nd Street West in Rainier. Walk to the trailhead, 100 feet south from the parking lot, near the creek where you'll see the welcoming crew. For more information, contact Darrel Whipple at [education@willapahillsaudubon.org](mailto:education@willapahillsaudubon.org) or show up. Refreshments will be provided at the end of the work event.

## Willapa Hills Citizen Science Amphibian Survey Project Starts Strong

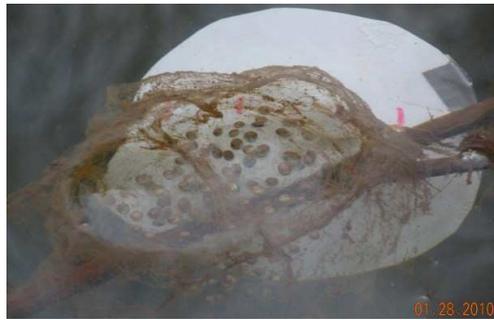
By Ann Kastberg

Success! Sweet, sweet success. Thanks to WHAS sponsorship and Marc Hayes's<sup>1</sup> riveting presentation on January 16, about 50 people are now trained amphibian egg mass surveyors. Many surveyors have grabbed frog waders, donned barn boots, chest waders, and even jeans and tennis shoes to track down slimy, firm and fresh-laid masses. And masses have been found!

We can thank Castle Rock Boy Scout Troop 313, led by Cameron Sharpe, for making the frog waders and WHAS for providing the parts. Well done.

### Around the area:

On January 19, we scouted the **Edmonson's** property in Rainier. It looks like promising habitat, and on Feb 5, Ruth and Don found a beautiful, clear, newly-laid, red-legged egg mass.



Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, "both as larvae and as adults, newts have seemingly endless appetites. They regularly eat the eggs out of the masses of Northwestern Salamanders ... We know of several ponds with hundreds of newts but no other amphibians (and not even ducks)." At Fox Creek we found only one thoroughly chomped egg mass. Two newts were eating on it when we spotted it, and it took some sleuthing to determine it was a red-legged

frog mass, because the newts had whittled it down quite a bit. Darrel Whipple and John Byrd plan to check out more places around Fox Creek and do more surveys.

Long-toed egg masses and salamanders frequent the **Mint Farm**. On February 7 three survey teams headed by Lynn Simpson completed the first survey on three ponds and adjacent wetlands. A few hundred long-toed egg masses were found, and Margaret Green found the second northwestern of the season. So

the northwestern are out there now, along with long-toeds and red-leggeds. (They're starting to find chorus frog egg masses in Clark County. We can't be far behind.)

On Feb 6, Maxine Neiman took an energetic and curious 4H group, ranging from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through high school along with their parents, to a pond in **Kalama**. They found red-legged egg masses, too, along with a long-toed egg mass. They have a second survey planned for Feb. 20.

Russ had an exciting find on Feb. 9. He found three very small ponds near the **South Nemah**, left over from days of steam donkey

logging, which had northwestern salamander egg masses in them. He said it took some time to key them out, because they were very small. Maybe the salamanders adapted to their small ponds by having smaller egg masses.

More surveys are planned. Carlo Abbrusseze plans to survey **Merrill Lake** once the weather improves. Cam Sharpe takes Boy Scout Troop 313 to survey **Boy Scout Camp** north of Castle Rock on Feb. 20. Mary Ann Gillespie hopes to survey **Lynn Point** soon.

Reporter Tom Paulu hopes to join 4Her's in Kalama and Boy Scouts in Castle Rock as they look for more egg masses. So watch "The Daily News" for more information.

*Surveying is amping up. Fun? Absolutely.*

Call me at 360-431-1129 or email [acwikman@cni.net](mailto:acwikman@cni.net) if you



We're excited to hear how their surveys go. Were we ever surprised on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. We didn't expect to find much at **Oak Point**, because it was so early. But Sally Martineu and her nieces and nephew found the Mother Lode for red-leggeds in two small, relatively shallow ponds. A separate beaver pond some distance away turned up oodles of newts. It'll be interesting to hear what they find as the season progresses.

Russ and I checked out **Nelson Creek** behind the barn on January 24 after the WHAS board meeting. The red-leggeds, not ones to disappoint, had laid en masse. On January 28, Tom Finn took us scouting on **Germany Creek** and turned up the first northwestern salamander of the season. Since the critters were laying, we conducted a survey, finding red-leggeds, the one northwestern, and a lonely long-toed. The second survey on Feb. 13 had a lot more red-leggeds – egg masses and adults – as well as a few northwestern egg masses.

A trip up **Fox Creek** on Feb. 3 turned up plenty of newts. According to Corkran and Thoms in *Amphibians of*

<sup>1</sup> Marc Hayes, Senior Research Scientist with WDFW is currently Coordinator for Adaptive Management Research in Headwater Streams for Forests and Fish Agreement in Washington State.



want more information or to join us.

## 2009 Christmas Bird Count Results from Wahkiakum County

By Andrew Emlen

On December 29, 2009, 21 volunteers participated in the twelfth annual Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count. Though the temperature rose into the low 40's from the morning's freezing temperatures, a cold east wind blowing over 20 mph in many parts of the circle made it hard to find birds. Some afternoon rain and snow didn't help either. The count of 104 species is three below our average. Two species were new to the Wahkiakum CBC. Eurasian Collared-Doves are now well-established on Puget Island, where 10 were found on count day. An *Empidonax* sp. flycatcher was found near the east end of East Birnie Slough Road, Puget Island. I attempted to relocate it, but did not succeed. Other uncommon finds for our circle included an Eared Grebe, a Red-shouldered Hawk and 31 Snow Geese in Brownsmead, a Clark's Grebe in Knappa, a Savannah Sparrow on the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge, a Great Egret on Tenasillahe Island, and a beautiful dark morph Rough-legged Hawk on Puget Island.

Two Streaked Horned Larks were seen on Pillar Rock Island; White's Island, their other stronghold within the circle,

was not covered. The most abundant bird in the circle, for the twelfth straight year, is Greater Scaup with 10,434 recorded. That number is about 5000 below last year, which had similar coverage. Low numbers were recorded for many species. Only 23 Western Grebes were found, the lowest number in the history of the count. The average is 105. The average number of Marsh Wrens for the first ten years of the count was 24; last year we found four, and this year, one.

We missed Tundra Swan for the first time; our average number is 88. Also missed for the first time were Mew Gull and Western Gull. Gulls of any kind were few and far between during this count. Other misses included Red-throated Loon, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Hutton's Vireo, and Red Crossbill. An irruption of Pine Siskins gave us a count of 1547, more than double the previous high count. A count of 266 Gadwall more than doubled the previous high for that species as well. New highs were also recorded for Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, American Robin, European Starling and Brewer's Blackbird.

## 2009 Christmas Bird Count Results for Leadbetter Point

By Alan Richards

For the Leadbetter Point Christmas Bird Count (CBC), on December 19, 2009, we noted **91 species**, including one species new to the Count. Number of individuals: **29,508**. Temps: low 38F, high 54F. Winds: 0 to 10 mph. Cloud cover 90% to 100%, light rain or mist at nearly all times, 95% of day, 0.5 inches total. Low fog hampered views of water birds, and shortened visibility significantly. At least the wind wasn't blowing! Many very low counts or groups of species missing which are noted nearly every year: scoters, loons, grebes, cormorants, finches.

Our number of participants, **37**, was the highest ever for our count. Our CBC circle is more than an hour's drive for many of our people, and for some it is three hours just to get to the edge of the circle. There are often overnight accommodations to consider, treacherous weather on local roads, and so forth. Congratulations and thanks to all who made the trip once again this year!

New for our CBC was one species, Lincoln's Sparrow, seen by Randy Robinson, in the SW Bay area, SW of Nahcotta. Three other species were notable: (a) White-fronted Goose (flock of 5; noted by NE Bay Group, near Palix River); (b) Snow Goose (1; seen by eight observers of SE Bay group, near Lynn Point); (c) Western Scrub-Jay (1; noted by portion of Oceanside group, in a residential area). Two additional species for Count Week, not noted on Count Day: Eurasian Wigeon, Great Horned Owl.

In the analysis below, I have compared the count for 2009 with the average for 1978-2008. These species were at or below half their overall average for 1978-2008: Green-winged Teal, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Horned and Western Grebe, and even Double-crested Cormorant. Perhaps these are not indicative of long-term trends, but only difficult viewing weather.

Peregrine Falcons continue to flourish, with this year's count of 5 at nearly twice the overall average. The first year our CBC noted a Peregrine was 1981. During years 1981-1988, the

count range was 0 to 2; this compares to recent years 2002-2009, when the range was 3 to 11. Anna's Hummingbirds continue to be more numerous, with the last three years averaging about twice the previous three years, and before 2003 there were none on our count. Some may point to global climate change as responsible for this increase in numbers. Others, however, say much is caused by increased plantings in yards which allow hummingbirds to find nectar more frequently.

Crows seem to be fewer now than 10 years ago, a gradually declining population, with this year's count (321) about half of the 30-yr average in our CBC circle. The population of ravens, on the other hand, seems to be holding steady (12 noted this year is close to the CBC average). Black-capped Chickadees were less plentiful than in earlier years, with this year's count of 23 about two-thirds the average. Chestnut-backed Chickadees were about twice as plentiful as the long-term average, with a count this year of 149.

Robins count of 85 is nearly twice the norm; Varied Thrushes, about one-third our average, with this year's count of 30. I imagine this could be attributed to our milder winter this year, allowing more robins to stay around at lower and more Varied Thrushes at their usual higher elevations.

Our Starlings count this year (557) was about two-thirds of the 30-year average. Golden-crowned Sparrows, our highest count ever: 76, three times our average. Brewer's Blackbird: despite the overall average for this species at 34, there are only four years with totals of a hundred or more: 1978, 1994, 1996, and this year, with exactly 100. No trend that I can easily identify, with about two-thirds of the counts below the average. Purple Finches (2 which is 0.08 of average), continue a downward trend from highs of 88 in 1991, with the species missing from our CBC in 5 of the last 15 years. House Sparrows continue to increase in our rural and semi-rural settings: our count of 66 this year is twice the overall average, continuing a gradual upward trend. **Thanks again to all; see you next year!**

## Sign Petitions to Protect the High Lakes and Merrill Lake

By Charlotte Persons

WHAS Board of Directors recently approved two petitions that will be circulated among the public. Both have the aim of preserving timberland near the Gifford Pinchot National Forest for public access for hiking, birding, fishing, and hunting. This spring the coalition of hunting, fishing, hiking, and conservation groups that hope to keep this beautiful land open to the public will be gathering as many signatures as possible to show public support in Cowlitz County for the purchase of these lands. One petition asks the U.S. Forest Service to buy the High Lakes area, and the other petition asks the Washington State Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife to buy Merrill Lake.

**Background on High Lakes Petition:** Previous Whistler articles described the proposal by a developer to sell half the land in the High Lakes area, timberland previously owned by Weyerhaeuser Company. This area is on the boundary of the Mount St. Helens National Monument and includes Elk, Hanaford, Forest, and Fawn Lakes. Now most of those lots have been sold. The lots are still classified as “timber management” for tax purposes, which means that only one residence can be built on each lot. While this means that most of the habitat will remain, there is no longer public access.

Now that there are many private landholders, it is hard to meet the criteria for private of state organizations to buy land or easements. Our best bet to preserve public access is for the area to be bought by the U.S. Forest Service. The High Lakes property was originally part of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and was proposed to be part of the National Monument formed in the 1980's BUT was swapped with Weyerhaeuser for other lands. This means there is a precedent for U.S. Forest Service to protect these lands for public use, one of their considerations when making these decisions.

**Background on Merrill Lake Petition:** Merrill Lake (near Cougar Lake) has recently been put up for sale by Weyerhaeuser. It has traditionally been used for fishing, hiking, etc., by the public. Part of it is a Conservation Resource Area managed by Washington DNR to protect aquatic species. DNR

has evaluated this property and says that there is not enough timber value to make it worthwhile for their purchase, BUT DNR and Fish and Wildlife could purchase it jointly, i.e., DNR could buy the timbered land further from the lake's shoreline while Fish and Wildlife could buy the lake and near-lake area. Because Merrill Lake's value as habitat has already been recognized by both state agencies, this petition has a good chance of success.

Please take the time at upcoming programs and field trips to add your signature to the petitions. Show your support for continued public access to these beautiful areas.

### Backyard Birding

By Larry Turner

The WHAS Board of Directors is developing a new ad hoc committee on Backyard Birding. This is an exciting opportunity to promote an activity that includes more than 65 million people in the U.S, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Many WHAS members have much knowledge and experience that they can share. Who knows where it will lead? That will be the first subject that the committee will address. There are so many possible topics from which to choose, including education on plantings and habitats, backyard bird counts, certification, techniques on feeding and watering, and sharing of ideas.

We are looking for volunteers to lead the effort and we have already received some great ideas from members. If you would like to participate or have ideas/suggestions, please contact me at 360-423-3556 (leave message if not home) or email me at [Lturner2@aol.com](mailto:Lturner2@aol.com). Although there is not much time between this newsletter and the annual meeting, perhaps we can have an initial get together before the annual meeting.

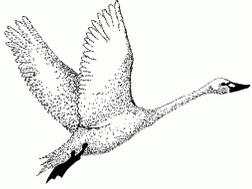
## Celebrate the Columbia River Estuary as a Site of Regional Importance

Save the date: Saturday, May 1, 2010  
 Location: Fort Stevens State Park –  
 15 minutes West of Astoria, OR  
 Time: 9.30 a.m. - until 3 p.m.

The Columbia River estuary hosts more than 20,000 shorebirds during spring migration. The newly designated Site of Regional Importance includes the shore line and islands, beginning at river mile 60 at Crims Island—near Mayger, Oregon, and across from Stella, Washington. It extends to the mouth of the Columbia River Estuary in both Washington and Oregon. This new Regional WHSRN site will help to promote shorebird conservation through increased coordination among landowners, greater emphasis on shorebird habitat conservation, and new education opportunities.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network is a conservation strategy begun in 1986 that aims to protect key habitats throughout the Americas in order to sustain healthy populations of shorebirds. Today, 29 million acres of shorebird habitat, made up of 77 sites in 12 countries, have been brought under the auspices of WHSRN. See more information at <http://www.whsrn.org/about-whsrn>

The celebration will begin in Parking Lot D, at Fort Stevens State Park, with a short ceremony and VIP speakers. WHSRN will be sending out an official invitation with sign-up information for field trips, including a bird walk guided by local shorebird biologists, narrated boat tour to view shorebirds and tern colony within the Columbia, and a guided boat tour to Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge islands. For more information contact: Vanessa Loverti, [Vanessa\\_loverti@fws.gov](mailto:Vanessa_loverti@fws.gov), 503-736-4497.



**Willapa Hills Audubon Society**  
**PO Box 399**  
**Longview, WA 98632**

**Non-Profit Organization**  
**U.S. Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Permit No.8**  
**Longview WA 98632**

The *Willapa Whistler* is the bi-monthly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Complimentary copies are sent to organizations and prospective members. All WHAS activities and programs are open to the public.

Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are welcomed. The deadline for inclusion of material in the *Whistler* is the 15<sup>th</sup> of each even-numbered month. Send your contributions to:

**WHAS Whistler**  
**PO Box 399**  
**Longview WA 98632**

or email them to

***newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org***

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](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org)

### **Climate Change and Arctic Ecosystems**

**Friday – May 7, 2010** 7pm Lower Columbia College Rose Center Auditorium, Longview

George Divoky has spent the last 34 years above the arctic circle on Cooper Island, studying the behavior and arctic world of the black guillemot, a small seabird. Divoky has witnessed the habitat change over 3 decades of research. From his web site:

<http://cooperisland.org>: "What seems like a long, long time ago, black guillemots on Cooper Island had the best of all possible worlds. The summer snow-free period was increasing annually, providing breeding birds with more time to raise their young, and the Arctic pack ice was close enough offshore that there was a readily accessible supply of Arctic cod to feed the nestlings. The only real dark cloud on the horizon was the realization, slow in coming over the past three decades, that the warming planet that had given the guillemots their "salad days" in the 1970s and 1980s could cause increasing melt of the pack ice, making Arctic cod less accessible and causing problems for parent guillemots provisioning their young in August and early September."

Lower Columbia College Biological Society joins WHAS to bring this world-renowned scientist to share with us reports of his observations and stories of his adventures. George Divoky is a sincere and captivating speaker. His program will be one you won't want to miss.

### **Shorebirds**

**Sunday -- May 2, 2010**

Russ Koppendrayner will lead this year's annual WHAS shore bird field trip. We will be heading to the great shore bird hot spot at Bottle Beach and other points on the Southwest Washington Coast. The weather at this time of year can be very unpredictable so please come prepared. This will be an all day event so bring lunch, snacks, and water. The trip will be limited to 3 cars and 12 total people. To reserve a spot, please sign up early with John Green at 360-575-9238 or email [jgreen2317@aol.com](mailto:jgreen2317@aol.com).

### **Annual Meeting and Program about Owls**

**Saturday March 27, 2010** Cowlitz County PUD Auditorium Longview, Dinner at 6pm, Program at 7:15pm (See page 1 for more)

*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](http://www.willapahillsaudubon.org)**