

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Young Robins

Image: John Green

WHAS Annual Bird-A-Thon

By Margaret Green

May 15 began very early for the “Green-winged Wisecrackers” who launched at 5:45 AM in Seaside, Oregon. The team of John and Margaret Green and Larry Brandt began what would be an epic journey of 300 miles in search of sea and shore birds that would give them a “wing up” on Darrel Whipple, Denise Caldwell, Cheryl Chambers, Danny Mjelde, Henry Horvat and Lona Pierce, “Darrel’s Distinctive Dodo’s”, the team covering more inland terrain. Steve Puddicombe hung close to home in Grays River, but added some very impressive birds to our overall list.

A cold drizzle fell steadily on the coastal team, and was enough to dampen spirits, but the competitive juices were flowing so we forged on to prove our competence and make those trusting pledges proud. The Wisecracker’s found Tufted Puffin and Black Oystercatchers at Haystack Rock, 3 Scoter species at the Cove in Seaside, and an exciting target bird, the Wren Tit at Lake Coffenbury at Fort Stevens State Park.

We then headed for Tokeland but bombed with only 7 species after 4 hours of driving, but forged on to Altoona for White Pelicans, to no avail. The songbirds were not showing themselves either, but when wandering for 15 hours in a day, you are bound to find birds. We were having fun – birding, even in these conditions, is a fabulously enjoyable pursuit. The only break in the clouds all day hit at 7:45 PM and we picked up 5 new species (including Yellow Warbler) just before dusk. It is amazing what a little bit of light will do to heighten the spirits of bird and birder alike.

The “Green-winged Wisecrackers” ended the day with 99 species. “Darrel’s Distinct Dodos” found 95, including two rails, Ring-necked Pheasant, California Quail, some great woodpeckers, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. Then came a really pleasant surprise from Steve Puddicombe over in Gray’s River. Just hanging out near the home front, Steve got over 40 species adding some super ones to the overall list, including American Dipper, Peregrine Falcon, Barn Owl, Bank Swallow, and Gray Jay. Steve’s 5 additional gave us a chapter Bird-a-thon total of 130! Not bad for our very first year. Next year’s mantra: more teams, more folks, more birds, more fun, and more money!

To see a complete species list of birds found go to our website at...

...continued on page 4- WHAS Bird-A-Thon

Last Whistler Mailing for National-Only Members

The WHAS Board of Directors recently made a difficult decision regarding publication of the *Whistler* newsletter. Due to the rising costs of mailing and publication, we will soon be sending the *Whistler* only to members who contribute to our local chapter. Currently we spend many more dollars on mailings to National-only members than direct chapter members, many of whom are now opting to receive the newsletter via electronic link.

A decision by National Audubon Society (NAS) to have none of your NAS dues share go to local chapter programs and efforts, is forcing us to focus the use of our financial resources on the local efforts. National-only members* are still part of our chapter and invited to partake of the newsletter at our web site www.willapahillsaudubon.org and to join in any of our activities. You can still subscribe to our electronic version by going to the above WHAS website and sign up for it on the *Whistler* page. Even better, to continue receiving the *Whistler*, join the local chapter (see page 2) and support our local education, conservation and other activities.

We welcome your participation.

**You are a National-only member if your Whistler mailing label is without an expiration date on the first line. You also receive the “Audubon Magazine”, whereas chapter-only members do not.*

In this issue of the Whistler:

- 2 Member Form, WHAS News;
- 3 Birding Steigerwald NWR
- 4 Wildlife Sightings; Tid Bits
- 5 Book Review: Sandhill and Whooping Cranes
- Making your Windows safe for Birds
- 6 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.
We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible
For membership in National Audubon Society visit <http://www.audubon.org/>.

Please make your check payable to:
WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or **WHAS** and mail to:
WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632.

Name _____ Telephone _____
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Thank you for supporting your local Audubon chapter -- Willapa Hills Audubon Society!

We will not share your contact information with anyone.

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

) **Not active at this time -- To allow members to announce and discuss items of general interest.

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Please indicate any **new** information:

I prefer you contact me by:

- Phone
- Email
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Other options:

- I prefer to receive the *WHISTLER* by email
(Add your email address below)
- Contact me about volunteer opportunities
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- ~~Add me to your discussion email list**~~

- | | |
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| OTHER | |

WHAS Board

Highlights of WHAS Board Meeting June 11, 2011 at Julia Butler Hanson Wildlife Refuge

By Charlotte Persons

The WHAS Board made the difficult decision to stop sending hard copies of the *Whistler* newsletter to National Audubon Society (NAS) members who do not also contribute to our WHAS chapter (see the article in this Whistler issue). This will save money, but also the volunteer time it takes to track these members. New NAS members and those who renew membership will receive a complementary hard copy so they have the opportunity to see chapter activities and decide to join our chapter.

Other board action was approval for recommendations to Columbia Land trust by the Indian Jack/Nelson Creek committee regarding buildings there to be salvaged or destroyed.

The board also expressed appreciation for the work of many committees, including educational presentations, the recent many and varied programs, an inventory of WHAS equipment, the 2012 WHAS calendar, an application with Longview School District to NAS for a Toyota Green Innovation grant to restore habitat at Wake Robin Outdoor Education facility, and our first annual Birdathon in many years.

Receive the *Whistler* by email

Willapa Hills Audubon Society now offers delivery of the *Willapa Whistler* newsletter by email. The "*eWhistler*" offers enhanced viewing with color photos and graphics as well as live links to referenced websites and emails. You will receive an email 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. Send your full name and e-mail address to our Membership Chair, Gloria Nichols at jgnt@comcast.net.

Birding Steigerwald NWR Area

By Wilson Cady, Vancouver Audubon Society

The protection of the Steigerwald Lake area was the first conservation project taken on by the Vancouver Audubon Society when the chapter was formed in 1975. Ten years of work led to it becoming a National Wildlife Refuge, and in 2009 it was opened to the public. This formerly seasonal floodplain lake, located on the eastern boundary of Washougal, in Clark County, is the southernmost spot in the state. With its location at the mouth of the Columbia Gorge and at the foot of the Cascade Mountain Range a migration crossroads is created. Birds following along the foothills and those traveling through the near sea level break in the mountains may be encountered here. Over 200 species have been recorded on this 1,049 acre refuge including White-faced Ibis, Surf Scoter, White-tailed Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk, Gyrfalcon, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Gray Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Sage Thrasher, and Lesser Goldfinch.

The first birding stop is at Steamboat Landing Park just east of milepost 16 on the Lewis and Clark Highway (Highway 14). This park on the Columbia River has a floating fishing dock from which you can scan the Columbia River for loons, grebes, and diving ducks over the rocky reef just downstream. The parking lot here gives you access to the west end of the dike that now separates Steigerwald Lake from the Columbia River. There is a road on top of the dike that is open to the public for about 3.5 miles as a walking, biking, and equestrian path, do not cross any fences onto Refuge or private property. You can also access the dike from several other spots to reach the birding spots with much shorter walks.

To get to these access points return to the Highway and drive east to the 32nd Street entrance into the Port of Camas/Washougal on your right. Right after you turn off the Highway there is a pull-off on the right side of the road that affords views of a remnant channel of Gibbon's Creek. On the right side of the road the creek is tree and brush lined, check for Green Herons and Wood Ducks on the floating logs and overhanging branches. Across the road the creek goes through a large marsh where bitterns and rails are common. Continue south on 32nd Street to the dike where there is a parking lot and a trail over the dike to Capt. William Clark Park on Cottonwood Beach. Between the dike and the sandy beach there is an extensive riparian forest of cottonwood, ash, and willows. This forest is excellent in migration for passerines and Bullock's Orioles are conspicuous nesters. Camping is allowed here with a permit from the Port of Camas/Washougal, 24 South A St. Washougal, 835-2196.

To walk the dike you can either leave your vehicle in the beach parking lot or park at one of the two other road accesses that are farther east. As you head east, off shore is Reed Island, an undeveloped State Park with a Great Blue Heron Rookery. Check the shallow protected waters between the island and the dike for loons, grebes, and diving ducks and the open fields for geese, cranes, and raptors. Along the dike there are white posts with mileage marks on them, the barns at mile 1.25 often have wintering sparrows around them. Just past these barns the refuge property begins, and there is a shallow Red-tail Lake

which is good for nesting American Bittern and wintering waterfowl. The Gibbons Creek Art Trail goes from here across the refuge to the visitor's parking lot on Highway 14. A description of the Art Trail is given below starting from the Highway 14 parking lot. At milepost 2 is the Gibbon's Creek Fish Ladder which allows salmon and steelhead to pass over the dike. The east entrance to the Northern section of the Gibbons Creek Art Trail is here too, be aware that this section of the trail is closed from October 1st to May 1st to protect wintering geese from disturbance. A large Purple Martin colony near the fish ladder has produced enough birds that they have re-colonized the snags on refuge, one of the few spots in Washington that they use natural cavities for nesting. The cottonwood forest on the refuge is in long rows parallel to the river and mark what were the tops of sandbars when this area flooded on an annual basis. Here you may find nesting House Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Lazuli Buntings. In another .5 mile you will come to a fence across the dike marking private property where you will have to turn around and return to your vehicle.

Drive past the park to the west end of the road where you can climb the dike to check for shorebirds on the Columbia River sandbars, when exposed during low water. From the dike looking North you can see part of the old creek channel with a bridge-like weir that keeps debris from reaching the pumps that help keep the industrial area dry. Green Herons perch on this weir and can sometimes be seen roosting on the crossbeams beneath it.

Go back to 32nd St. and North to the highway and turn right. At milepost 17.5 are the Washougal Sewage Lagoons, you can view these from the entrance road or from the highway shoulder. Wood Ducks are abundant in both spring and summer; other birds seen here have included White-faced Ibis, Tufted Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Black Phoebe, and Palm Warbler.

Along the highway as you travel east the shoulder is wide enough that you can safely park to scan the refuge fields. The entrance to the Refuge Visitor's Parking lot is at milepost 18.1. There is an informational kiosk where you can read about the refuge and pick up maps and checklists. Here you can see how Gibbon's Creek was put into a raised aqueduct to get it across the wetlands at a height sufficient to clear the dike at the Columbia River. From the Visitor's Parking Lot the Gibbons Creek Art Trail goes through the wetlands to the dike. The total round trip on the trail is about 2.75 miles, even when the trail along the North side of the creek is closed from October 1st to May 1st. The Fish and Wildlife Service and the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards are working on removing non-native plants and replacing them with native trees and shrubs. Cattail patches have reappeared and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a species that formally nested here are being seen again. Thousands of geese and ducks use these fields and the ponds during the winter. Back on Highway 14, just past the railroad overpass at milepost 18.9, is a large viewing area, a spotting scope is a necessity from this vantage point. Gyrfalcon, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet and Short-eared Owl have been seen from here.

(Editor note: Reprint from the Columbia Flyway with permission from the author.)

WHAS Bird-A-Thon

... continued from page 1

To see a complete species list of birds found go to our website at www.willapahillsaudubon.org and look for the article about the 2011 Birdathon: [2011 Willapa Hills Audubon Bird-a-thon--A Wisecracker View](#).

The Bird-a-thon participants and the WHAS board want to extend a great big **THANK YOU** to all those who joined in the enthusiasm and supported our effort with pledges. It was a great success and earned money to contribute toward native plant and habitat restoration projects. (You will find more on that subject in the September Whistler).

Many thanks to our sponsors:

Stephen & Irene Bachhuber, Charles & Suzanne Canfield, John

& Irene Castillo, Cheryl Chambers, Tobie Finzel, Lorraine Fosberg, Stephen Glucoft, John & Margaret Green, Janet Spike-Kenna, James & Lori Miller, Linda Nelson, Gary Nece, Gloria Nichols, Art & Carolyn Norred, Lynne Phelps, Lona Pierce, Barb Puddicombe, Rosalie Raudsep, Larry Rea, Bruce & Teri Satterlund, Mary Steller, Charles Stenvall, Darrel Whipple, Pamela Wright and Louis LaPierre.

We appreciate your support.

It's not too late if you are interested in making a donation. Please make checks to Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), mark "for bird-a-thon" and mail to PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632. Your donation is tax-deductible.

Unusual Wildlife Sighting

By John Green

Royce and Beth Craig of Kelso recently reported an very unusual bird in their yard. A Lewis's Woodpecker, which is normally found in drier climes and east of the Cascades Mountains, visited their feeder and yard for several days the week of June 6th.

Here is one of Royce Craig's photographs of the bird.



Lewis Woodpecker

Image by Royce Craig

Tid Bits

By John Green

Update:

Last issue, we reported that Wisdom, the 60 year old Laysan Albatross had survived the tsunami that devastated Japan. Now we can report the good news that US Fish and Wildlife Service has confirmed that Wisdom's chick also survived the tsunami. Apparently Wisdom had enough wisdom to nest on high ground.

Evolution?

It was reported in National Audubon Magazine that Red Crossbills specialize in feeding on different species of conifers. The birds' bills have consequently evolved to open the cones to get at the seeds and as many as 10 bill shapes adapted to various cone species have developed on this continent.

How to receive the WHAS Alert/Announcement e-mails

Willapa Hills Audubon has set up an email list to facilitate occasional communications with members. The purpose of this list is to announce or send reminders about programs, field trips and mission-related actions that may interest members. It is also used to help communicate last minute schedule changes for programs or activities due to weather closures or other issues.

This email list is designed to convey information only,

and will not permit discussion, as the goal will be to keep communications brief and occasional.

If you are not receiving these occasional emails yet and would like to be included, please send an email to whasalert@gmail.com with "subscribe" in the subject line and we will add your email address. Of course, we will not share your contact information with anyone.

Book Review

By Margaret Green

***Sandhill and Whooping Cranes: Ancient voices over America's Wetlands*, Paul Johnsgard
Bison Books March 2011**

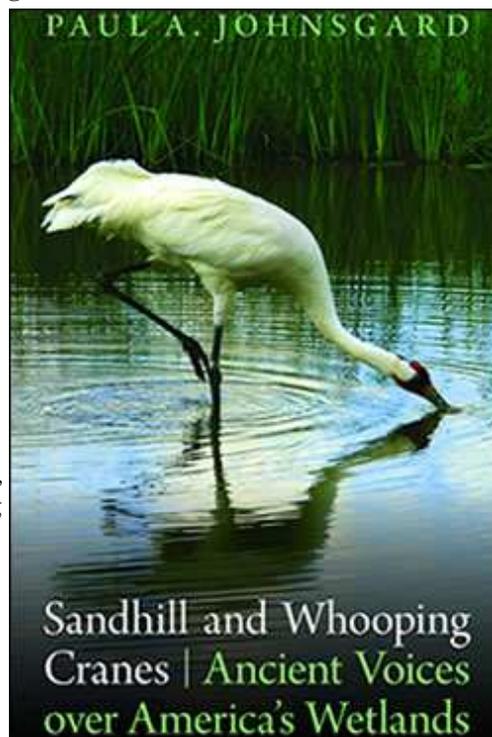
Paul Johnsgard's descriptions of the Platte River in Nebraska in middle March are vivid, and compelling enough for most readers to pencil in a week or two in a not-so-distant March to make that pilgrimage. One must experience this phenomenon before it becomes recorded history. Up to 500,000 sandhill cranes, a smattering of whooping cranes, and a million waterfowl use this stopover site to replenish energy stores before winging to breeding grounds further north, as far as Siberia and the arctic tundra. The Preface of this little book, alone shows Johnsgard's appreciation of the aesthetic beauty and power that cranes offer the world. His love of these creatures echoes in the dedication:

"To those for whom crane voices speak a language that resonates more strongly and more personally than any voice and whose messages change their lives."

For avid birders who want to learn of the biology and ecology of a species, this book is one that satisfies with the newest information of the habits, threatened habitats and migratory routes of the many crane populations. Lesser, greater, Canadian, Mississippi, Florida, and Cuban Sandhills as well as the rare and endangered Whooping Crane are discussed. Cranes travel by day and up to 500 miles a stretch. The Platte Valley offers ideal conditions with sandy bars devoid of vegetation, and at least 6" of water for roosting to avoid predators, though flock partners stand watch. On the breeding grounds, they will "divorce" if their union is unsuccessful. The details in this book are fascinating and the author's beautiful line drawings grace the pages.

We learn of the failed as well as the more successful efforts to save the rare whooping crane from extinction. A dismal report that sandhill numbers are declining though many states on the ancestral migratory routes allow an estimated 30,000 fall to hunters' bullets. Our ignorance of the fragility of these populations could ultimately be their demise.

The book ends listing 150 places to view sandhills and whoopers, both wild and captive. Cowlitz County, Ridgefield, and Suavie Island of the Lower Columbia River are listed as significant. Maybe we don't have to travel to Nebraska after all.



Making Your Windows Safe for Birds

Excerpt from http://nc.audubon.org/files/Audubon_North_Carolina/documents/windows_and_birds.pdf

You hear a loud thud at your living room window. Looking up, you see a few tiny feathers stuck to the glass. Others drift slowly to the ground. One more bird has been struck down in a collision with a plate-glass window. Bird-window crashes are an all-too-common phenomenon. These collisions usually involve small birds, such as finches, that fall unnoticed to the ground. Sometimes the birds are merely stunned and recover in a few moments. Often, however, they die. The number of birds killed by collisions with windows is staggering—estimates range as high as 100 million per year. Does this mean that you should stop feeding birds? Not at all. It means that if you notice birds striking your windows, you should take steps to eliminate the problem.

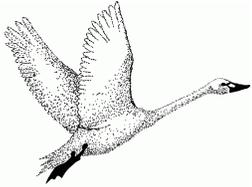
Some Solutions

- Move feeders to new locations. Usually bird strikes occur at just one or two windows. Moving feeders away from them may solve the problem entirely.
- Place feeders closer to the glass. If a feeder is just a foot or two from a window, panicked birds may still fly into it, but probably won't have enough momentum to injure themselves.
- Alter the windows' appearance. If you don't want to move your feeders, or if relocating them doesn't solve your problem, you'll need to alter the appearance of the

offending windows. But to do this, you'll need to figure out why the collisions are occurring.

Are birds confused because the window is reflecting the landscape behind it? Is the glass so transparent they think it isn't there? To find out, you'll need to get a bird's-eye view. Go to your feeder and look at your window. Can you see through it? If so, the birds can, too. Is there a plant inside the house that might be attractive to birds? If so, try moving it. Is there another window on the opposite side of the house, creating the illusion of a fly-through passage? Try making your windows less transparent by changing the lighting inside the house—pull a shade or open or close a door.

You can also make glass less transparent by taping paper to the inside of the panes. This is unsightly, but it's a good temporary measure until you can find a better solution. Hawk silhouettes are effective at deterring window strikes, as long as you use several. They work not because they look like hawks, but because they break up the window's appearance. Another solution is to put up a decal that is a replicates the white zig-zag from the center of an orbital spider's web. It is thought that spiders create the highly visible zig-zag so birds and large insects will avoid flying into and destroying their webs. Note: Do not attach objects directly to thermopane windows without consulting the manufacturer.



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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.

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 15th of each even-numbered month. Send your contributions to:

WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632

or email them to

newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org

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TEMP -- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Please see the important note to all of our National Audubon-only members on page one.

WHAS Programs and Field Trips

WHAS events are free and open to the public (Unless otherwise noted). Check the website for the latest information and updates.

Summer is a quiet time for organized WHAS activities. We expect our members to disperse and pursue their own fantasies within the natural world. This is a time when the powers of observation are rewarded with the beauty of the season.

We hope you encounter nesting birds, blooming wildflowers, and lovely flutter-bys (the delicate damsels, powerful dragons, and wispy butterflies tickle the imagination).

It is also a time for wonderful wandering, solo or with like-minded friends.

Enjoy.

Field Trips and Programs will resume in the early Fall.

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