

WILLAPA WHISTLER

A Publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society

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Bullock's Oriole - Image courtesy of Royce Craig

Bird Listening

By Steve Puddicombe, President

When I first began observing birds it was pretty simple: I bought a bird book and was given a pair of cheap binoculars by my parents for my birthday. It was in anticipation of an adventure on an Aleutian Island where I would stay for 8 months in a remote, abandoned trapping cabin. At that point I thought of myself as a bird "watcher". It was the term then for an amateur enthusiast, as "Birder" came along later to describe the more intense and systematic search for species and observation of them in daily life without becoming an ornithologist or scientist—in other words, an activity available to everyone.

But just that increased observation as I sought to identify species magnified my understanding of various bird species tenfold. Soon I wasn't just a bird watcher, I was an amateur bird behaviorist, anatomist, and musicologist. It's the common experience of anyone who "birds" regularly.

Over the years I've gotten better binoculars, updated and improved bird books, and even several CDs of bird songs. Identifying bird songs and calls is easy with some common species, say, Northern Flicker, Pacific Wren, Bald Eagle, and even Black Phoebe. But with the migrating songbirds that mostly hide in dense brush and move about frequently it can be nearly

When I first began observing birds etty simple: I bought a bird book given a pair of cheap binoculars arents for my birthday. It was in ion of an adventure on an Aleutian here I would stay for 8 months in a abandoned trapping cabin. At that impossible. I once spent several hours chasing around thick brambles of Salmonberry before finally identifying a Wilson's Warbler, a common bird here at my place. It's been wonderful since then to hear the song in Spring and know they are back.

As one expert birder recently told me, "These days I identify more birds by sound than by sight." Bird listening, in fact, is the best way to know the full catalog of birds in a place, is a lot of fun, and the songs and calls are often so interesting and beautiful.

I still remember the first bird whose song stuck with me and that I learned: it was the Golden Crowned Sparrow. In the tundra of Alaska, they would perch on tall stalks of grass, or any high point, and sing out "Oh Dear Me". It's an indelible memory. Here in Grays River, I learn something new each year. Last week one day I wrote down all the birds I could identify by sound. It came to 25 species including the Pacific Slope Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Wilson's Warbler, of course; as well as Dipper, Black-headed Grosbeak, Song Sparrow, Warbling Vireo and Barred Owl ("who cooks for me").

Bird listening has become all the easier with the Merlin app you can install on your cell phone. This technology,

June 11, 2023 Field Trip to Signal Peak

Russ Koppendrayer and Becky Kent will lead a morning field trip to Signal Peak on June 11th. The route will follow state DNR as well as Weyerhaeuser roads in the Toutle River drainage to Signal Peak. Birds we hope to encounter include Sooty Grouse, Northern Pygmy-owl, and Canada Jay as well as a variety of flycatchers, vireos, warblers and others. We'll be making numerous stops along these well graded logging roads to walk short distances and look and listen for birds.

With an early morning departure, we'll plan to be done between noon and 1pm. Be sure to bring binoculars, liquids and snacks as well as weather appropriate clothing. There will be a limit of 12 people in three cars. To sign up or for more information contact Russ via email at russkope@gmail.com

Meeting time and place for car pool will be given to those signing up.

only in its infancy and sure to get better, is great in connecting a sighted bird to its song. During migration it's a great way to alert you to species moving through. But it is fallible and sometimes inaccurate. One should always verify with a sighting.

Happy Bird Listening!

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Support our mission, join WHAS today!

Membership renewals are due March 1 of each year. If you prefer to pay by credit or debit card use our online form on our website at https://willapahillsaudubon.org/join-us-donate.

Membership includes 4 issues of our newsletter WILLAPA WHISTLER annually. Gift Memberships are available online.

Check type of Membership:

- O Individual Chapter Membership WHAS (\$25 check for annual membership)
- O Family Chapter Membership **WHAS** (\$35 check for annual membership)
- O Lifetime Chapter Membership WHAS (\$750 check for lifetime membership)

We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. All dues and donations are tax deductible Please make your check payable to:

WILLAPA HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY or WHAS and mail to:

WHAS-Membership, PO Box 399, Longview, WA 98632.

- I prefer you contact me by:
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Other options:(Add your email below)

- O I prefer to receive the WHISTLER by email
- O Contact me about volunteer opportunities
- O Add me to your announcement email list*
- O I would like to support the work of Willapa Hills Audubon Society. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$

Name			
Address			Email
City	State	_Zip	Telephone

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

We will not share your contact information with anyone. For membership in National Audubon Society visit https://www.audubon.org/ Chapter# Y14
*) To announce occasional reminders and to communicate last minute changes due to weather or other issues for WHAS programs and field trips.

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Wenas Campout June 2-5

You are invited to a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington. Each year, Audubon chapters and their friends gather for a few days of camping, birding, and exploring the Wenas Wildlife Area near Ellensburg, WA. In 2023, the campout will be held the first weekend in June, avoiding the crowds of Memorial Day. Information on dispersed camping, activities, and what to expect are on the website at https://wenasaudubon.org

Puget Sound Bird Fest

September 9-10, 2023

The Puget Sound Bird Fest is a celebration of birds and nature that happens each fall in Edmonds, Washington. Typically, the weekend-long event offers presentations by local experts, field activities, exhibits, vendors, kid's activities, and workshops and demonstrations. Many Bird Fest activities are free, other activities require a nominal fee and advance registration. Please check http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com for the latest information.

Wings over Willapa Festival

September 22-24, 2023

This annual birding and nature festival is a celebration of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge's many species and diverse habitats. There will be an array of tours, workshops and other events happening all around the Long Beach Peninsula and Willapa Bay. More info at https://friendsofwillaparefuge.org/Wings-Over-Willapa

DFFICERS

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

OTHER

Birders Needed to Identify Marbled Murrelets

By Larry Brandt

Willapa Hills Audubon is looking for two to four volunteers with some very special birding skills for a May/June project. We have an opportunity to stop the harvest of some legacy [near old growth] trees. Lidar surveying indicates many to be as tall as 200-ft. The grove, consisting of douglas fir, hemlock, cedar and red alder, is located in the Grays river watershed north of Naselle WA. This is Washington Department of Natural Resources managed forest. No private property would be included in the survey.

Determining the presence of marbled murrelet would cancel logging operations and preserve this habitat for murrelets, spotted owls and deep forest wildlife. We learned of this cutting too late in the year to employ radar identification, hence, our need for feet on the ground.

Volunteers must have some experience identifying marbled murrelets during their dusk and dawn flights between

the forest canopy and the ocean. Positive identification may include call recognition as well as visual sighting. We propose to cove at least three day of observations (dusk and dawn) but any would be of benefit and more would be superb.

An exceptional viewing location overlooks the entire site and then as far west as the Pacific ocean. Access to the viewing location is via nine miles of unlocked DNR logging road off of highway #4 at Salmon creek east of Naselle. Mile-by-mile directions are available including several formats of mapping. Elevations range from 640-ft. to 1760-ft. The viewing team may allow inexperienced birders wishing to learn.

Vaux Swift Dinner and Roost Viewing

By Steve Puddicombe

WHAS hosted another dinner and roost viewing on May 21 in Rainier, OR. We met at the El Tapatio restaurant at 6 p.m. and then joined Teri Williams and Carolyn and Art Norred, who monitor and catalog the Vaux Swift presence each day during both Spring and Fall migration. The event was well attended. We had several new members who





came and joined in the banter about birds in general and the Vaux Swifts in particular. 112 Swifts entered the chimney at the Riverside Church, a slight number, but augmented by sightings of a local pair of Osprey, Red Tailed Hawks, White Pelicans and other denizens of the air.

There is concern this year as the Vaux Swift numbers are way down from last year's counts and so the daily count is critical in following the health of the population along the Pacific coast.

Stay tuned for the Fall migration. These dinners and viewing sessions have become a popular event and we're planning another one for September/October.

Photo's courtesy of Lynne Phelps

Birding in Oaxaca, Mexico

By Robert Sudar

Oaxaca is an historic city in Mexico located about 300 miles south of Mexico City – about a six hour drive but only 45 minutes by air. It's known for its cuisine, especially its mole – a flavorful sauce that can be made many different ways and is

featured in many of the regional dishes. My wife Lisa and I were in Mexico in April to visit our oldest son, Sam, who is living in Mexico City for a year since he is able to work remotely for his job with Substack. Sam said we had to make a side trip to Oaxaca for the great food – and for the birding! Both were well-worth the trip.

Sam is an avid birder and had made a trip or two already to Oaxaca. He met a local nature guide – Benito Hernandez of "Discover Oaxaca Tours" – who can provide various local tours and is a native Oaxacan. He has an excellent knowledge of birds, but also of plants and the history, culture and traditions of the area. Oaxaca is at 5000 feet above sea level (Mexico City is at over 7000 feet!) and the tour Sam and Benito planned would take us up to about 9500 feet by the end of the day.

Benito picked us up at 6:30AM and drove us out of town and into the hills. He knew of several good spots to stop, and his choices were always spoton. There were some species that we saw that are common here in parts of the NW, such as Northern Rough-winged and Violet-green Swallows, Hutton's Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Steller's Jay, American Robin and Cedar Waxwing. But there were far more that we don't see here, such as the brilliantly colored Elegant Euphonia, Red Warbler, Blue-throated Mountain-gem Hummingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Mountain Trogon, Olive Warbler and Slate-throated Redstart. And we also saw some birds that Benito said were rare to see (or just rare for the area) such as the Red-headed Tanager, Squirrel Cuckoo, Dwarf Jay and Zone-tailed Hawk.

A lot of the lower elevation was brushy with shorter deciduous trees, while the higher elevations were covered in pine forests with some cedar and deciduous trees mixed in. At one of the forested areas we were hearing a variety of calls but one more prominent call mixed in that we couldn't figure out.

Sam can be a very persistent birder at times and he started heading up the slope from the road to identify the singer. Meanwhile the variety of calls continued – towhee, wren, kinglet? They all seemed to be present but we couldn't spot any of them. Finally Sam said he'd found the bird he was looking for. It was a Black Thrush, and it was making all of those calls! It wasn't at all afraid of us and allowed us to get good lucks, and Benito even took numerous photos. A rather plain bird, but what a singer!

As I said, we ended up at around 9500 feet by 5PM and even found a good variety at that elevation, including some we didn't see below. The air was thin, but the weather had been warm and not too hot, the skies were clear and it was a wonderful





day of birding in an area I never expected to visit.

Overall, we'd seen 66 species. I think that Benito's favorite sighting was the Red-headed Tanager (we actually saw two) and the Squirrel Cuckoo because they weren't supposed to be there, Lisa the musician really liked the very vocal Black Thrush, Sam was taken by the White-collared Swift and I thought that the Elegant Euphonia and the Red Warbler were particularly stunning.

One of the commenters at Benito's website

(https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction Review-g150801-d7109397-Reviews-Discover Oaxaca Tours-Oaxaca Southern Mexico.html) said that the whole trip was worth it to them because they'd seen their "number one target – the Red Warbler." And we were lucky enough to see that stunning bird numerous times during the day. My suggestion - if you ever have the opportunity, I'd definitely recommend a day of birding in the mountains around Oaxaca, Mexico.

Birds Seen in Oaxaca on April 22, 2023, by Sam, Lisa and Robert Sudar

- Greater Pewee
- Western Wood-Pewee
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow
- Boucard's Wren

- Blue Mockingbird
- Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush

- Elegant Euphonia (M & F)
- · White-throated Towhee
- Spotted Towhee
- · Bronzed Cowbird
- Townsend's Warbler
- Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater
- Squirrel Cuckoo
- Berylline Hummingbird
- Greenish Elaenia
- Dusky-capped Flycatcher
- Slaty Vireo
- Cassin's Vireo
- Violet-green Swallow
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Brown-backed Solitaire
- Rufous-backed Robin
- Cedar Waxwing
- House Finch
- Lesser Goldfinch (M & F)
- Oaxaca Sparrow
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- MacGillivray's Warbler

- Red-headed Tanager
- Blue Grosbeak
- Northern Pygmy-Owl (heard)
- Olive Warbler
- Crescent-chested Warbler
- Wilson's Warbler
- Red Warbler
- Hutton's Vireo
- Dwarf Jay (M & F)
- Steller's Jay
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- House Wren
- Russet Nightingale-Thrush
- Hermit Thrush
- · White-throated Thrush
- Black Thrush
- Yellow-eved Junco
- Mountain Trogon (M & F)
- Golden-browed Warbler
- Blue-throated Mountain-gem

- Rufous-capped Brushfinch
- White-Collared Swift
- Vaux's Swift
- Black Vulture
- Zone-tailed Hawk
- Gray-barred Wren
- American Robin
- Gray Silky-flycatcher
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- Collared Towhee
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Slate-throated Redstart
- Warbling Vireo
- Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
- Clav-colored Thrush
- Black-vented Oriole
- Baltimore Oriole

DEAR FRIEND

You write often of Trees Dogs Birds she says and I feel disappointed

because I wish her to tell me You challenge us to consider justice and love in all sorts of ways.

Maybe my friend doesn't remember how the Hummingbird has nested

on our front porch three years running though this Winter Luca—I call her—raised

only one Chick and the solo babe flew much sooner from her cradle

without a sibling to keep her warm so the mother was set free

no more food-service delivery all duties done by mid-March.

And I wonder does she feel anguish or joy? Will she go on to build another nest

on someone else's front porch or a Branch in the Cedar

in our side yard? And what does my friend find here besides more domestic-Bird wonder

when protesting the scarring of our Earth swaths of Evergreens plowed down for profit

bald Hills for miles as I drive north along I-5 must be questioned? I should be persuading

my reader to root for the threatened Western Snowy Plover to see value in protecting the Columbian White-Tailed Deer

from extinction how they matter—Loggerhead Sea Turtle Canada Lynx Marbled Murrelet Northern Spotted Owl

the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo Malone Jumping Slug.

Debra Elisa

... is a Portland based writer.

Invitation to Willapa Hills Audubon Annual Picnic

By Larry Brandt

We're all looking forward to our annual picnic scheduled for **Saturday, July 9** weather permitting. And we're excited by two recent events and hope to share these with picnic attendees: First, our resident ospreys have hatched their chicks. The nest is visible from the yard and a telescope puts you right in the nest. The noise from the talking parents can be heard for blocks! I guess they're happy parents! Second, we have an acorn woodpecker in the neighborhood. I have seen him at the suit cake a number of times this spring and summer. This siting makes 64 species found at our home!

As in previous years, the picnic will be held at the Brandt residence, 18 Island View Lane in Cathlamet, WA. Hours are 2:00pm to 5:00pm. Attendees are asked to bring one covered dish (a salad, entree, dessert or snack) to feed 4 to 6 people. Each person should bring their own plates, cups and tableware. Ice, water, iced tea, napkins, paper towels, tables and chairs will be provided. Sun and rain protection is available if needed.

The Brandt residence is located on the east edge of Cathlamet on the south side of State Hwy 4. To get to the picnic from Longview, look for the yellow 40-mph speed sign as you enter Cathlamet. Turn left onto Island View Drive 50-yards past the speed sign. To get to the picnic from the west, drive through Cathlamet on Hwy 4. As you are leaving Cathlamet look for a yellow 55-mph speed sign. Immediately turn right onto Island View Drive. Stay in the right lane and drive all the way back to the end of the road (0.1-mi.). There is lots of space for parking.

So, mark your calendars for July 9.

An Invitation to Explore the Legacy of John James Audubon

By Ann Cordero

The board of WHAS has formed a committee of three members-- Steve Puddicombe, Robert Sudar, and Ann Corderoto investigate changing our name and removing Audubon from the title. The board agreed that part of that process will involve educating ourselves about John James Audubon's life and work in the light of history rather than myth. And therein lies the difficulty: how do we evaluate a person who lived 200 years ago without judging or condemning him through the lens of our 21st century perspectives?

John James Audubon (1785-1851), artist and author of the book of 435 life-sized paintings The Birds of America and of the voluminous Ornithological Biography, displayed great talent and persistence in describing and portraying all the birds known in America in his time. But to paint these birds he had to kill them, and in his lifetime he shot thousands of birds. His story is interesting and complex and reveals much about life in the early 1800's in America and England where he pioneered ornithology. It is further complicated by exaggerations and fiction he wrote to portray himself as the American woodsman.

His fascinating story is told in several biographies and on two PBS videos, "Audubon" by Al Reinert, and "John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature, "by Lawrence R. Hott. We are hoping to have a showing of the latter at the Longview Public Library, and when we present it, we will invite you to attend. This summary gives an introduction:

https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/john-james-audubon-drawn-from-nature/106/

But, like many figures in history, Audubon's personal ethics and behavior were sometimes questionable. We encourage you to read "The Myth of John James Audubon" by historian and biographer Gregory Nobles: https://www.audubon.org/news/the-myth-john-james-audubon

His racial attitudes as displayed in his writings, particularly in this Episode titled "The Runaway" in his Ornithological Biography, have been criticized. Read the story for yourself:

 $\underline{\text{http://www.classroomelectric.org/volume1/price/texts/audubon.h}}\\ \underline{\text{tml}}$

An article in the Spring 2021 edition of Audubon magazine by black ornithologist J. Drew Lanham, "What do we

do about John James Audubon?" expresses objections to Audubon's views, but notes that what we can do about them is to raise our awareness to a more accurate historical picture of the man himself.

 $\underline{https://www.audubon.org/magazine/spring-2021/whatdo-we-do-about-john-james-audubon}$

For comparison, the following link describes a similar case of name change at the excellent natural history museum at the University of Puget Sound. The museum had been named for Professor James R. Slater until research revealed that he had taught a course in eugenics. It is an illustration of the risk involved in naming a public place or entity to honor an individual. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/university-of-puget-sound-to-remove-name-of-eugenics-professor-frommuseum/

The controversy over the Audubon name for the organization has been under consideration for several years. Seattle Audubon opted to remove the name from their organization and has renamed itself Birds Connect Seattle. The National Audubon Society voted to retain the name Audubon, causing several board members to resign. Willapa Hills Audubon Society has voted to consider a name change in the interest of a future membership with growing diversity. As a committee we have agreed to send out a questionnaire later regarding the name change so all our chapter members will have the chance to provide input. In the meantime, education about John James Audubon will help us make an informed decision. We are searching for alternative names, if needed. We may want to choose a name that fits our present organization better than the name of one ornithologist from the 1800's. Suggestions include Willapa Hills Birding Society, Willapa Hills Avian Society, or Willapa Hills Conservation. If the name is changed, we would be likely to mention that we are an Audubon Chapter, perhaps with a statement like "Founded in 1975 as Willapa Hills Audubon Society."

Please send your suggestions and comments to Steve Puddicombe pudfella@willapabay.org, Robert Sudar fallcreek734@gmail.com, or Ann Cordero flnatureniche@gmail.com. Join us in this exploration.

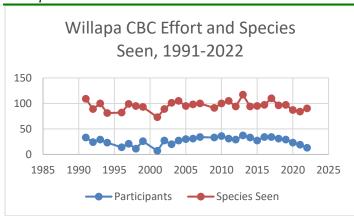
2022 Willapa Bay Christmas Bird Count Results

By Robert Sudar, Compiler

December 17, 2022 didn't bring the intense storm to Southwest Washington that the Willapa Christmas Bird Count participants saw in 2021, but it did provide the usual variations in conditions and abundance that make bird counts interesting. A modified "pandemic approach" was again employed by Alexander Birk, the new count organizer, to minimize any mingling of households within the counting groups. Even so, Covid-19 had an impact as I came down with the dreaded virus the day before the count and there was no time to find replacements for my family's count sector. Even so, 15 counters spread amongst the remaining 8 sectors of the count circle, plus

two feeder watchers, spent the day collecting bird numbers for this year's Willapa CBC.

Overall, 17,769 individual birds comprising 90 species were seen and recorded. The total number of birds is a little less than the 18,000+ seen in 2021 but the number of species is an increase of 6 over 2021. I've been wondering about the trend in total species from year to year and whether or not we are seeing a decline over time, so I looked over the count records I could find back to 1991 and assembled the graph below:



The orange (top) line is the number of species seen and the blue (bottom) line is the number of counters in the corresponding year. The only real trend I see is that more counters can result in more species seen, and vice-versa. But even that isn't an absolute standard. Weather also plays a role, and the decline in counters the last few years is at least partly because of the changes we had to make because of the pandemic, when some circles cancelled their counts but we were able to still hold ours. I was actually encouraged to see that our number of species has held fairly stable over the last 30 years, though I also know that the species mix has evolved a bit over that time. As you can tell, I like to graph things - hopefully some of you reading this article found this graph intersting, too!

Last year, I lamented that we didn't have any Gray Jays, Northern Shovelers, owls, Coots or Bitterns and with the

exception of a few Northern Shovelers that were spotted along Stackpole Road, those species were again absent in 2022. We also didn't have any Brants, White-fronted Geese, or Black Turnstones and the Black Phoebe that was seen in 2021 was nowhere to be found in 2022 on count day, though that species is becoming more regular in SW Washington in recent years. But the count of Snowy Plovers was up to 11, counters spotted four species of woodpeckers, and an American Dipper was again seen. 72 Semi-palmated Plovers and 4 Great Egrets were high counts for this circle, and 40 Lesser Yellowlegs seen on the east side of the bay were an unusual sighting. Dunlins again led the way with a total of almost 6400 individuals and there were 2578 American Wigeons, 3 Eurasian Wigeons and 1640 Northern Pintails so some species were again abundant.

Looking back a little further at what I said last year and comparing things to the latest count, Peregrine Falcon and Northern Harrier were back on count day, as were Ring-necked Duck, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Bewick's Wren and the aforementioned Great Egret. Hence the increase in count species total. As I said, every year is different!

Many thanks to the counters who came out to collect another year of valuable data, and especially to Alex Birk who worked with Suzy Whittey to take over as organizer and helped make the count happen. Next year's count will be on December 16th so mark your calendars – it's guaranteed to again combine the expected and the unexpected!

Earth Day 2023 Recap

Willapa Hills Audubon had again a booth at this year's Earth Day celebration held at Lake Sacagawea on April 27th. We got a lot of questions from many and even made some connections with community. Pictured are Steve Puddicombe, Ann Cordero and



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.

June 11, 2023

Field Trip to Signal Peak - see page one for the details and signup information

July 9, 2023

WHAS Annual Picnic – see page five for the details

The Whistler Online

Did you know that you can subscribe to the Willapa Whistler on our website? All the links are easy to follow.

Go to whistler.willapahillsaudubon.org for this and past issues.

Membership Renewals

WHAS made changes to membership by switching to a yearly renewal date.

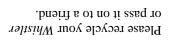
All **membership** renewals are **due in March** of each year.

You can renew online by using a credit card or by mailing a check.

See page 2 for the details!

Other programs and field trips will appear on our website and will be announced through our email alert system. More information about the alert system here: https://willapahillsaudubon.org/get-involved/member-services

Find us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/willapahillsaudubon/





WHAS Whistler, PO Box 399, Longview WA 98632 or email them to newsletter@willapahillsaudubon.org.

contributions to:

Articles, information, wildlife sightings and artwork are most welcomed. The deadline for submissions is the 15^{th} of February, May, August and November. Send your

Send in your stories & photos

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Most WHAS activities and programs are open to the

available for free on our website.

The Willapa Whistler is the quarterly publication of the Willapa Hills Audubon Society (WHAS), a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Complimentary copies are

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