

Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

vancouveraudubon.org

Chartered December 18, 1975

April 2011

Calendar

***BIRDING CLASS ... Tuesday, Apr. 5, 6:45 PM before the meeting.

***Tuesday, Apr. 5, 7:30 pm: Vancouver Audubon Society's General Meeting at the Genealogy Society at 717 Grand Boulevard (Grand & Evergreen) in Vancouver, WA

***Monday, Apr. 4, 6:30 pm: VAS Board Meeting hosted by Marilyn Hall, 10806 NE 89th St., Vancouver 360-253-6865

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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

PROGRAM:

India

by Bjorkman's & Hagen's

In November, Eric & Tammy Bjorkman, Arden & Sherry Hagen, and 2 other lady birders from San Diego joined Adrian Binns, the leader from **Wildside Nature Tours**, on a loop trip in northern India. Come watch and listen as they present their exciting adventure through a slide show and tell stories of the places, birds, animals and people they encountered. They visited several forts & palaces including one where they rode elephants up a hill to reach it, 7 visits to Ranthambhore NP in search of tigers, animals & birds, several other birding areas including Keoladeo NP. The last day was spent at the beautiful Taj Mahal before heading back to Delhi.



May: Peru from Habitats Peru

June: Gulf Oil Still Response Coordinator

FIELD TRIP

Tillamook, OR

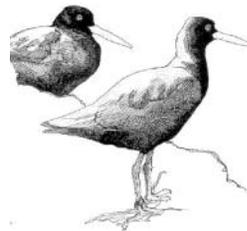


Leader: Arden Hagen, 360-892-8872

When: April 16, Saturday

Time: 8:00 AM

Meet at: Red Lion Inn at the Quay at the south end of Columbia Blvd, Vancouver, WA. West side parking lot.



This will be an all day trip so bring snacks/lunch & drinks. The shorebird migration should be underway along with some passerines as well.



SUMMER FIELD TRIP

**Pelagic Trip from Westport, WA
along with birding
the area for
shorebirds & others**



Aug. 26, 27 & 28 Westport, WA

See details on the next page.

Treasurer's Report:

Revenue for February \$213.67
Expenses for February \$354.89

Conservation:

Gretchen gave update on her trip to Olympia where she was able to meet with 7 of 9 legislators. She also attended a listening session on Columbia River Crossing. Gretchen sent an OpEd piece to the Columbian regarding Land & Water Conservation Fund.

Respectfully submitted, Tammy Bjorkman



Family Friendly StreamTeam Earth Day Celebration EcoFair!

Sat, April 23, 10am-2pm

Where: Salmon Creek Greenway, Vancouver, WA

Description: Bring the family down to enjoy some Eco-Fun at the EcoFair! Enjoy live entertainment and FREE children's activities. Learn how to lessen your impact, save money and support the environment! For more information please contact Lisa Beranek, StreamTeam Coordinator at 992-8585. www.StreamTeam.net

StreamTeam projects are funded in part by the Department of Ecology's Centennial Clean Water Grant.

Volunteer Home & Garden Show April 29 - May 1, 2011

VAS will have the VAS Booth again this year. Volunteers are needed to man the booth. This is a lot of fun. If you are interested in helping call Arden Hagen for more info at: 360-892-8872

Third Annual "Funky Nests in Funky Places" Contest

Cornell Lab challenge spotlights wacky avian real estate

For the 2011 Funky Nests in Funky Places challenge, participants may take photos, do a painting, write a story, or shoot a video showing a bird's nest built

You wouldn't believe how many people showed us bird nests in barbecue grills, garages, garden tools, and signs. We've seen bird nests on statues, windchimes, a cannon, and even on bathroom fixtures.

Prizes include bird feeders, nest boxes, sound CDs, guides, posters, and books including [Nests: Fifty Nests and the Birds That Built Them](#), by Sharon Beals. The first 50 entrants will receive a copy of our "Silhouette" poster and selected images and videos will be posted on the Celebrate Urban Birds website.

Deadline for entries is June 1, 2011

Visit the [Celebrate Urban Birds website](#) for more information.

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/challenge/funky-nests-2011>

Summer Field Trip:

Pelagic Birds & Shorebirds

Aug. 26, 27 & 28 Westport, WA

Come for any part of this loosely organized outing. We will drive down on Friday, take a pelagic trip on Saturday and look for migrant shorebirds and more on all of the days. There are numerous hotels and campgrounds in the area to choose from and we will meet each morning to carpool and explore the area. For those who do not go out to sea, this is peak migration time for shorebirds and other species and there are plenty of places to bird in the Gray's Harbor area. On Saturday there is a Westport Seabirds Pelagic Trip that will go about 35 miles off shore in search of albatrosses and more. To take part in the pelagic trip you will need to reserve a spot by calling Westport Seabirds (360) 268-9141 (leave a message and time of day for call back, after 5:00 p.m. PST is the best time to call), or by e-mail (pmand001@comcast.net). The cost of the pelagic trip is \$130 per person.

For more information contact Wilson Cady at:
360-835-5947 or gorgebirds@juno.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

New Members: Sharon Aldridge • Melinda Bell • Yvonne Brannon • Eugene Brown • Patricia Burk • James Cowdrey • Pam Curtis • James Fenstermaker • Pat Gorman • Laura Hale • Meredith Hardin • Shirley Hawley • Linda Hollingsworth • Helene Horton • Beth Keeth • Sarah Killinger • Theodore Kobernick • Gwen Lakey • Phalla Nou • Michael Patronick • Bette Piette • Kibbey Rock • Ray & Cathy Steiger



Lobby Day and the Legislature

Lobby Day brought the grim reality of our state's situation home. The combination of the disastrous economy and the elections last fall means that it will be difficult to hang on to the environmental achievements of the past few years, let alone make advances. But, we must continue to try.

As of this writing (and the situation could be quite different by next week) the status of some of the bills Audubon is interested in is as follows. The House bill to strengthen oil spill prevention and response passed the House and sent to the Senate. For Clark County representatives, the vote was along party lines. Both stormwater clean up bills, House and Senate, are in their Ways and Means Committees. Our lobbyist, Neil Beaver, says that these bills are budget related, so are not subject to the cutoff. The cutoff refers to the deadline in which bills must clear the house of origin. The Senate coal bill is on the floor for the second reading. Senator Pridemore is one of the co-sponsors. The House bill appears to still be in the Committee on Environment. One big point of discussion is the year the coal-fired plant must close.

Growth management is not one of the big priorities, but protecting what we have is always a matter of concern. There are a couple of troublesome bills. One is a direct attack on the Growth Management Act (GMA). It would allow four counties in eastern Washington to opt out of GMA. What with the popularity of ranchettes, no part of the state is immune from unplanned sprawl, besides it being a bad precedent. The other bill would increase the number of categorical exemptions under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). This means that fewer proposed developmental activities could be reviewed by local governments.

The biggest issue is the budget. As an example, Audubon has always supported the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program that gives grants to local governments for recreation and conservation projects. In Clark County, the Washougal Oaks project is our highest priority. Now, the issue isn't necessarily lobbying for certain projects -- it's keeping the program alive. The governor's budget had suspended it.

The Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund

Speaking of government funding to obtain land for conservation: the Federal equivalent of the state program is the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), also at risk, because, in their zeal, many of the newly elected members of Congress want to cut everything in sight.

The LWCF has been in existence since the late 1970s. It is funded by revenue from off-shore oil leases (*not* taxes) and the money is used by Federal agencies, the Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service, to buy land for conservation and recreation pur-

poses. Some of the money has been made available for grants to state and local governments. There are projects in southwest Washington that have benefitted from grants from the LWCF. The county expected to use a grant from the LWCF to help purchase land for the Tukes Mountain project (the project that the presenter at our last meeting spoke about). Full disclosure: from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, my late husband administered the LWCF for the Region 6 (Washington and Oregon) of the Forest Service, so I have a soft spot in my heart for the program. During that time my husband acquired land for the Rogue River Wild and Scenic River, the Cascade Head Research Area, and the Hells Canyon Recreation Area, among other lands.

Anyway, the House in Congress voted a series of amendments cutting programs right and left and sent the bill, House Resolution 1, to the Senate. The LWCF was one of the amendments voted on. It was saved by a tiny margin. Unfortunately, our newly elected representative, Jamie Herrera Beutler, voted to eliminate the LWCF. The Senate will probably not agree to most of the House budget cuts nor will most of the senators allow LWCF to die. Still, in this political climate, we can't say what will happen. Washington's two senators, Patty Murray and Marie Cantwell do support the LWCF. We need to educate our representative, Jamie Herrera Beutler.

Congress Comes to Our Town

And it turned out to be nothing that was expected -- probably not even by our representative, Ms. Herrera Beutler, who had asked the chairman of the House Transportation Committee of which she is a member to come to Vancouver. It was billed as a listening session in which local residents could sound off on their feelings on the Columbia River Crossing, the proposed replacement for the I-5 bridge. Didn't happen. The chairman wanted to hear only about how to improve transportation across the whole nation. Anyone on the panel or the audience who tried to bring up the I-5 bridge, tolls, or local light rail was told not to talk about that, but only about transportation in general. It was amusing, if a three hour waste of time. I did leave a couple of written comments on the need for rail transport and on the need for maintaining regulations.

A Note on the Danger to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

I had a chance to exchange a few words with Representative Herrera Beutler. Regulations are under attack. The EPA is under attack. Herrera Beutler complained about the number of employees hired in the last two years. From other sources, some from Audubon National, I hear that the Republicans want to prevent the EPA from regulating green house gases. (*Sorry about the party reference, but that is the truth.*)

Gretchen Starke



•Feb. 3, 60-70 swallows, mostly **TREE SWALLOWS**, were seen by Randy Hill at the Ridgefield NWR. There were **10 BARN SWALLOWS**, a species that normally is one of the last of the swallow species to return.

•Feb. 6, A **NORTHERN SHRIKE** was reported from Grass Valley, in Camas, by James Stevenson.

•Feb. 14, The flock of **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** being seen by Bob Flores at the intersection of N. 10th St and NE 10th Ave, in Ridgefield, is now up to 18 birds.

•Feb. 19, Susan Saul was doing the Great Backyard Bird Count at Chenoweth Table, in Klickitat County, among the birds counted was a flock of 16 **WESTERN BLUEBIRDS**, which may have been wintering birds rather than early migrants.

•Feb. 20, Randy Hill and Bob Flores went to the northeast part of Clark County and found a few good birds. A **NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL** was calling along Sunset Falls Rd, near Yacolt. And they then found a single **GRAY JAY**, about a mile north of the Larch Mountain Honor Camp. A **DIPPER** was seen at the bridge crossing over Rock Creek.

•Feb. 21, Susan and I birded up the Columbia Gorge and found one **COMMON LOON** at Underwood in Skamania County and 1 **ACORN WOODPECKER** at their granary tree near Lyle, in Klickitat County.

•Feb. 22, A **BARNACLE GOOSE** was found at the Ridgefield NWR in the company of **CAACKLING GEESE** and two apparent Barnacle x Cackling Geese hybrids. The Barnacle Goose is apparently an escaped bird as they are not known to occur in the wild this far from their closest nesting grounds in Greenland. That it had hybridized with the Cackling Goose points to this bird having survived long enough to make it to the nesting grounds in the Arctic and back. Prompt sharing of this bird's presence by Refuge Biologist, Alex Chmielewski, allowed many people to see this gorgeous little goose, even if it is not a "countable" bird. -Randy Hill spotted an adult **GOLDEN EAGLE** flying over the visitor's contact station while everyone else was concentrating on the Barnacle Goose. -Jim Johnson saw a **TURKEY VULTURE** fly over the Public Service Center in downtown Vancouver, Washington. This was the first one reported in Clark County this year.

•Feb. 23, Randy Hill picked up a car struck **BARRED OWL** that he thought it was a road kill but when he got to work it was standing up in the back seat. It was taken to a care center but did not survive.



•Feb.26, Shawneen Finnegan, Ann Nightingale, Jim Danzenbaker and Dave Irons spent the entire day birding in Clark County. They failed in their primary mission (relocating the Barnacle Goose), but saw lots of birds otherwise. The dark-morph "**Harlen's**" **RED-TAILED HAWK** was near the last big curve of the far end of the Ridgefield NWR tour loop and they also saw an adult **NORTHERN SHRIKE** near the entry kiosk. Their most interesting finds were at Vancouver Lake late in the afternoon. At the flushing channel they had a first-year male **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER**, a flyover **AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN**, and a distant **EARED GREBE** way out on the lake. While there, Scott Carpenter showed up and told them about three **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS** at the Vancouver Lake Park main parking area. A couple of young women alerted them to a **RED-BREASTED SAP-SUCKER** that was hanging out near the parking area.

•Feb. 27, Jeffrey St Clair, walked the Dike Trail at the Steigerwald Lake NWR, and counted the following raptors. **10 BALD EAGLES**, of which 6 were sub-adults, **6 NORTHERN HARRIERS**, **6 RED-TAILED HAWKS**, **5 AMERICAN KESTRELS** and **1 MERLIN**. -Les Carlson went on a Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) field trip to the Okanagan area in mid-February and added three life birds, **WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER**, **NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL**, and **LONG-EARED OWL**. Other birds he saw of interest were: **LONG-TAILED DUCK**, **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**, **SNOW BUNTING**, and **GRAY-CROWNED ROSY FINCH**. WOS is a great group to join if you would like to explore other areas of our state on free trips led by experienced birders.

This has been a very strange spring with early returning swallows and late leaving snow. As I write this the first week of March our home is still covered in snow, I have had Rufous Hummingbirds at the end of February on warmer years. The cold and windy weather has kept people from birding much in Skamania County so the County Year List for there is only at 78 species reported while warmer and more heavily birded Clark County has had a total of 148 species reported so far this year. You can check this list online at: <http://www.wabirder.com/> If you can add any species seen in either Clark or Skamania County in 2011, please contact me. By April many of the waterfowl will have left and the first of the migrant species will become common, this will include birds such as Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Band-tailed Pigeons, Common Yellowthroat and American Goldfinch. As you see these and other birds please record their arrival dates for this column. February was a slow month for receiving sighting reports and I did not get out enough to add much to the column.

Wilson Cady gorgebirds@juno.com

Birding Steigerwald NWR area

by Wilson Cady

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.

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Vancouver Audubon
believes in the wisdom
of nature's design and
promotes this through
education, involvement,
stewardship, enjoyment
and advocacy.*



April 2011

THE COLUMBIA FLYWAY is the monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Publication **deadline** is at the board meeting each month.

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*** This will **not** include *The Columbia Flyway* ***

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