

# Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

Member of the National Audubon Society

vancouveraudubon.org

Chartered December 18, 1975

May 2009

## Calendar

\*\*\*NO BIRDING CLASS DUE TO THE POTLUCK

\*\*\*Tuesday, May 5, 6:30 pm: Potluck at 6:30 PM / 7:30 PM Vancouver Audubon Society's General Meeting at the Genealogy Society at 717 Grand Boulevard (Grand & Evergreen) in Vancouver, WA

\*\*\*Monday, May 4, 6:30 pm: VAS Board Meeting at the home of Don & Sue Cannard at 2303 NE 45th Cir., Vancouver 360-694-4033

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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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## PROGRAM:

### From Ridge to Reef in Tompotika:

Saving the maleo bird & other conservation success stories from Indonesia

by Marcy Summers

Marcy Summers, native Washingtonian & a former senior scientist for The Nature Conservancy, was living & working in Indonesia when she stumbled across a very special place & people on Indonesia's island of Sulawesi. The Tompotika peninsula is home to one of the last remaining communal nesting grounds for the culturally-important yet

endangered maleo bird, as well as the world's richest coral reefs, pristine tropical forests, unique & endangered wildlife, & many other natural wonders. When local people asked Marcy for help to conserve the maleo bird, The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation, or "AITo" was born.



Since 2006 AITo (independent non-profit organization) has been bringing Indonesians & Americans together in support of conservation. In its first year, AITo's community-based alliance was able to reverse the maleo bird's decline and stop all poaching; since then AITo's work has expanded. Come and learn how.

## FIELD TRIPS

### JOIN THE BIRDATHON FUND RAISER

See page 5 for details

### AUDUBON WASHINGTON WENAS CAMPOUT

Friday evening, May 23, and run through Monday, May 25

[www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org)



## ANNUAL POTLUCK

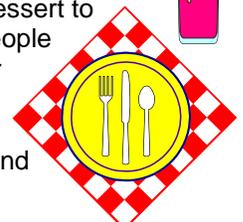


When: May 5, 2009

Time: 6:30 PM

Where: Genealogy Society at 717 Grand Boulevard (Grand & Evergreen) in Vancouver, WA

Please bring a main dish, salad or dessert to serve at least 10 people to share. Bring your own table service (plate, utensils, cup, napkins, etc) and your own drinks.



Treasurer's Report. Income for March was \$181.30 and included \$165 in donations and newsletter subscriptions. Expenses were \$583.36 with \$100 each going to the Columbia Land Trust and Columbia Springs. Cash and Investments are \$20,788.63. The Community Foundation Fund was \$199,311.46 as of 31 December.

Education. Nothing.

Field Trips. Hanford 5-7 June. IMBD is 8-10 May but nothing has been heard from the refuge. Bend area will be late June or early July. Sherry will not be doing Birdathon any more. Few people participated. So we will have to find another money maker.

Membership. The Post Office has changed a lot of the rules. Our newsletters will be addressed to the person or current occupant.

Programs. May will be Marcy Summers on Indonesia, June is John Silliman, September will be a movie, October Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement group, November Show & Tell.

Conservation. Ridgefield NWF planning. We prefer Alternative 1. It would move some of the hunting to Bachelor Island, keep the entire auto tour route open and have a new entrance to River S from the town. Camp Bonneville is still up in the air as far as further clean-up and public use. There is apparently another Peregrine Falcon nest in the gorge besides the one on Beacon Rock.

Old Business. Nothing.

New Business. We had a grant application for \$3,000 at Steigerwald which was approved by the committee. However, the Community Fund has fallen to below \$200,000, which is our baseline. The grant will be honored when the fund goes back up.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Ellifrit

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**New Members:** Virginia Adlington • Daniel Armstrong • Brian Barrett • Ginni Christensen • David Gordon • Robert Holczer • James Hubbard • Lavonne Hummels • Mary Lackaff • Lori McAllister • Ruth Morrison • Sarah Munson • Kent Penter • Joan Pesheck • Ann Robinson • Carin Schienberg • Gary Spencer • Elaine Turley • Dagmar Wolfereck **Transferred members:** Kim Cantwell Gab • Sara Lovendahl

## VAS Upcoming Programs:

*Africa* by John Silliman (June)

## The Backyard & Beyond...

Arden & I have been "officially" birding for almost 30 years now. My mother gave us an anniversary gift in 1979, a Golden Guide: Field Guide to Birds of North America. We began adding birds to our "Life Lists", slowly at first then we started taking vacations to add to that list. Our adventures have taken us to some very special places in the states. Since the 30 year mark was approaching in September of this year, we decided to try and reach the **GOAL OF 700 SPECIES** by that date. We were getting close and did a pelagic trip last summer off the New Jersey coast to get closer to that goal. I was sitting at 699 species with Arden a close 698 behind. (You can ask him why the difference.) We did a spur of the moment trip to Arizona in March but failed to add the secretive Mexican wren species being seen on occasion down there. So in early April we flew to Denver, Colorado in search of two species. The first morning we got up way

700th  
North American  
Specie



before dawn and went to a lek where the **GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE** come to do their mating dance. Sure enough they were there and I was able to count my **700TH SPECIES!!!**

We had planned on working our way to the Cimarron National Grasslands just over the border in Kansas a couple days later but changed plans and headed there that day. We arrived in the early evening and dropped by the lek of the **LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN** to make sure where it was for our morning adventure. We also knew that sometimes Prairie-chickens visit the lek in the evening so we were hoping we'd get lucky. We did. There were at least 20 males dancing away. **Arden got to count his 700th species too and we celebrated again.** As it turned out, it was a good thing we changed our plans and went after this species the same day for the weather changed and it snowed the next two days. We finished the trip birding here and there, including the Rocky Mountains as we looped back to Denver.



Can we make it to 800 species? I doubt it. Most of the species left for us to see are going to be really hard to see. Many are pelagic birds, many would be rarities and it would take lots of traveling, lots of endurance and lots of money. But we will keep adding as many as we can in the years to come.

Sherry Hagen, Happy Birding ☺



## Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Plan

Many of our members have enjoyed birding the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, especially driving the loop at the River S Unit during the winter months. We have taken friends and family to view the stunning sight of ducks, swans, geese, sandhill cranes and many other species of birds. So, Vancouver Audubon was stunned to find out that, under two of the proposed alternatives for the preliminary draft comprehensive plan, the refuge would close part of the loop road in the River S Unit for the winter months – at the very time that the greatest number of species and birds are here.

Congress has required the wildlife refuges to update their management plans. The process also includes an environmental assessment. This spring, the Ridgefield NWR released the document that is the third stage of their update. Comments on the preliminary version were due in April. Next, the preliminary alternatives will be analyzed in detail with the completed draft plan due in the summer. As presented in the March update, two of the alternatives propose to close part of the River S auto tour for the winter. Instead, there would be a road cutting across that would shorten the loop. The rationale is to protect the dusky Canada geese from disturbance.

Any federal environmental assessment must include a broad range of alternatives, including a do-nothing alternative. The two alternatives that propose closing off part of the auto tour loop are only two out of four proposed. The preferred alternative, Alternative 1, does not close the loop or shorten the length of it. To reduce accidental take of the dusky Canada geese, that alternative closes the south end of the River S Unit (where as the duskies like to hang out) to hunting, but opens Bachelor Island, thereby increasing the total acreage available to hunting.

Except for the do-nothing alternative, improving and increasing habitat is an important feature. The biggest difference among the three is the number of acres to be planted in crops to benefit sandhill cranes and waterfowl. Other habitats to be improved and expanded under the three do-something alternatives are ash and oak woodland and riparian. The feasibility of restoring native wet meadows would be studied.

Hiking access in the River S Unit would still be available under all alternatives. The existing trail, the Kiwa Trail, would continue to be open May through September during the time the wintering birds are not there. In addition, under two alternatives including the preferred alternative, an additional trail would be constructed along the top of the dike at the north end of the Unit S. It would be open the same months as the Kiwa Trail.

One problem for the public at the River S Unit is the access. We have to drive across the railroad tracks on that rickety one lane bridge. All alternatives call for replac-

ing the bridge and two of them, including the preferred alternative, would move the access point to downtown Ridgefield.

Vancouver Audubon supports Alternative 1, the refuge's preferred alternative. We want to keep the auto tour available and we know of no evidence that cars driving slowly by or stopping to observe the wildlife disturb the birds (but, don't get out of your car except at the blind). We also support the improvements to habitat proposed under the three alternatives (the do-nothing alternative continues current policies). It must be understood, however, that nothing will happen whatever alternative is selected if Congress fails to appropriate the money to fund the changes and improvements.

## Dusky Canada Goose Management

We all have seen lots and lots of Canada geese around here. So why is the Fish and Wildlife Service concerned about the dusky Canada geese? The dusky goose is a subspecies of the Canada goose and it is in trouble. It nests in Alaska in the Copper River delta and winters here at Ridgefield and in the Willamette Valley. Dusksies were doing okay until the Alaska earthquake in 1964. The quake lowered the ground where the dusksies nest, which allowed predators, especially Arctic foxes, to get at the eggs and chicks. The population of dusksies has continued to drop since then. The big problem is that the dusksies



winter here, along with the flocks of other subspecies of Canada geese. Lots and lots of Canada geese. So many geese that they are causing problems for people, especially farmers. Besides, hunters like to hunt geese and, not counting dusksies,

there are lots and lots of Canada geese. Hunting is a management tool that can reduce a population of wildlife that is getting out of hand – which some Canada geese are. So wildlife managers want to increase the population of dusksies and reduce the population of some of the other Canada geese and the dusksies will mix in with other geese. What to do?

Goose hunters must take a course on identifying the subspecies of Canada geese. Dusksies have a darker breast than do the other Canada geese that winter here. Whenever a hunter leaves a hunting area, he or she must pass a checkpoint so that wildlife managers can keep track of how many of what species are taken. If a hunter accidentally takes a dusky, he or she loses hunting privileges for the rest of the season. There is also a total limit on the number of dusksies that can be taken a year in Washington. Once the limit is reached, that is the end of goose hunting that year for everyone.

*Gretchen Starke*



While there were plenty of bird sightings since last month's column I lost the ones that I had saved from the Internet when I upgraded my email system.

March 18, Our first of the year RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD at our home east of Washougal was about an average return date for our location.

March 23, A early CLIFF SWALLOW at the Ridgefield NWR River "S" Unit was well seen many observers including George and Cindy Mayfield, Will Clemons and myself.

March 24, After a SAY' PHOEBE was reported from the mouth of the Wind River, Susan and I drove up to add it to my Skamania County bird list. There were only two prior records of this bird to my knowledge from this county and it was a species I had looked for unsuccessfully for years.

March 26, The first of the season BONAPARTE'S GULLS for Clark County were nine seen by Sallie Jones at the Steigerwald Lake NWR in Washougal.

March 27, The first Osprey of the year was reported by our son from the Columbia River near the 205 Bridge.

March 28, We had an excellent turnout of participants for the VAS Gorge Field Trip but less than favorable weather. The wildflowers were showing well and we did find some nice birds including a first of the season CASPIAN TERN and two ACORN WOODPECKERS in Klickitat County. On the way back home, Barry Woodruff and I stopped at the mouth of the Wind River where the SAY'S PHOEBE was still present.



April 3, Another west side SAY'S PHOEBE was spotted at the Sandy River Delta by Bob Rowe.

April 5, A YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD was at the Washougal home of Steve Clark and Cheri Kearney. Bob Flores had a CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD visiting his feeders in Ridgefield. Another first of the year species for Clark County.



While I was outside doing some gardening a PEREGRINE FALCON flew over our property and the first two warblers of the migration were in the trees, one ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER and a YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER.

April 6, Jim Danzenbaker was surprised to hear a calling NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL from his home in Battle

Ground. During March and April these small owls can be found throughout the area as they migrate through.



April 7, Arden Hagen reported that a CASPIAN TERN was near the 205 Bridge and that they had four TOWNSEND'S WARBLERS visiting their feeders in Cascade Park.

April 8, We had a MERLIN fly over our feeders, our first for the year in Skamania County.

The month of May will provide some of the best birding and weather of the year. There will be migrants arriving all through the month and into the first weeks of June. Among these flocks of returning birds will be a few out of place birds to spice things up.

### A great place to see a wide variety of birds is at the annual Washington State Audubon Wenas campout held every Memorial Day Weekend.

This free campout is attended by members and guests of all of the Audubon chapters in the state, the native Plant Society and the Mountaineers Hiking Club. The weekend features numerous daily field trips covering many aspects of the site including birding, wildflowers, insects and other natural history subjects. The organized events start on Friday evening, May 23, and run through Monday, May 25, although some people show up earlier and stay later to enjoy this wonderful spot near Selah, in Yakima County.

For more information visit the Wenas Campout web site at: [www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org)

Please continue to send me your sightings for this column and the county cumulative sightings project, so far this year people have reported seeing 133 species in Clark County and only 81 in Skamania County from where fewer people report bird sightings.

And remember to contact either Arden and Sherry Hagen or myself as soon as possible if you come across anything you consider unusual.

Wilson Cady [gorgebirds@juno.com](mailto:gorgebirds@juno.com)



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# Vancouver Audubon 2009 Birdathon

## FUND RAISER

May 8, Friday through May 10, Sunday, 2009 (3 days)

Information and forms are available at the May Meeting or online:  
[www.vancouveraudubon.org/birdathon.html](http://www.vancouveraudubon.org/birdathon.html)

To Donate without participation please use this form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation:

\$

Mail to: Vancouver Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1966  
Vancouver, WA 98668-1966

### Birdathon 2009 Fund Raiser Birds of Clark County May 8 - 10

Participants need to fill out a reporting form for each place you bird. You can bird as much or as little of 72 hours as you can give.

Report sheets & Checklists  
are available online at:

[www.vancouveraudubon.org/birdathon.html](http://www.vancouveraudubon.org/birdathon.html)

If you need a form sent to you please call  
Sherry Hagen at: 360-892-8872

*Editor, Sherry Hagen &  
Birdathon Coordinator*

1. A "Clark County Birdathon" where anyone can count species as long as it is in Clark County and on the chosen 72 hour period. You **do not** have to bird the whole 72 hours though.
2. We will add all the species seen together to get the total number seen.

Participants may bird different areas within the 72 hour period **BUT** the area **MUST BE** in Clark county. Since we are looking for species and mapping where birds are seen, it doesn't matter if people report the same birds.



Participants can gather pledges per species from sponsors or ask for a set amount. Each participant will be asked to make a donation in the amount of their choice, remembering that this is our fund raiser.

Backyard bird watching is a place to start then you could venture out to a near-by park or trail for a second report. Then try venturing out to the wilderness areas of our county and do another report.

**This is  
your chance  
to help  
support  
VAS**

**VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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



**May 2009**

**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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I wish to subscribe to Vancouver Audubon's newsletter "The Columbia Flyway" for \$10/year.

I wish to support Vancouver Audubon with an additional donations of \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Renewals:** please send your renewal directly to National Audubon with the forms sent to you. Thanks!

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

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