

Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY *A chapter of the National Audubon Society*



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Thoughts from a Refuge Visitor: Seeking Refuge

By Susan Setterberg



Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

I love our National Wildlife Refuges. Fifty years ago this April I started birding for the first time. I went back to my old undergraduate college and took the Ornithology class. There were a lot of field trips. I pulled out my journal from that class and looked at the list of places I had visited. Among them was the Oliver Brothers Salt Company on the east side of San Francisco Bay. The area had a long history of salt production, 50 or 60 years preceding my visit in modern times, but also salt harvesting through evaporation was practiced there by the Ohlone Indians before European settlement. What I saw was a patchwork of evaporation ponds and sewage “treatment” from local jurisdictions along the edges of San Francisco Bay. My notebook comments about habitat quality included “disturbances by active work done in the salt ponds and aeration with possible chemical treatment for the sewage being processed before dumping into the bay.” This was the 1970s.

A year later, I participated in a Golden Gate Audubon walk-through of the same area, by then a proposed National Wildlife Refuge, led by my previous ornithology class professor Dr. Howard Cogswell, a stellar supporter of conserving lands for wildlife. It was the starting point for Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, a place I would come to love for birding. There is a series of federal, state and

locally managed lands along the bay that have been, over the last 50 years, preserved and returned to viable wetlands providing nesting and feeding areas for birds and other wildlife. In the salt company days, there was little access to the bay. Now there are extensive bay and wetlands walking trails for fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing. I moved out of the Bay Area in 1982, but I never failed to visit Don Edwards NWR whenever “home” to see family. Each visit showed improvements in habitat richness and variety until recently.

That ornithology class was my spark moment for birding. I didn’t really have a “spark bird” as many say, it was more a dazzle of birds. I have never stopped birding. I have 31 notebooks of varying quality that document my sightings. So many of those sightings have been on National Wildlife Refuges. I have driven cross-country three times. Each route a little different. Each route winding through a few National Wildlife Refuges. Each refuge showcasing different habitats and different species of concern or special interest. Each refuge always in-process of habitat improvement and reclamation.

On my 2002 cross-country drive I had two wonderful stops. Loess Bluff NWR, near Mound City, MO was first. There I met 80-year-old volunteer Helen who told me how to find the Yellow-headed Blackbirds. That’s when I decided I wanted to be like Helen when I retired. I was going to live next to a NWR and volunteer (and that is why I am living in Ridgefield next to the Wildlife Refuge now). At Helen’s suggestion, I drove west to Colorado to find the Pawnee Grasslands NWR. The next morning, I headed out the back of a sleepy Sunday town going due west



Notebooks



Pawnee National Grasslands

toward the Rockies. About 60 miles later, on the two-lane road, I made a right turn at a spot called Briggsdale, that's all it was, a right turn off a two-lane road in the middle of the prairie. Never actually saw Briggsdale. Following the road as instructed, I turned left opposite the big white fence gate a couple of miles north of the "town". I was in the rolling hills of short grass prairie via gravel and dirt roads. I was immediately distracted by the birds and that was what it was like for the next five hours. Other than running into a group of hang gliders, I was on my own. It was vast, singularly colored, and surprising for its numbers of birds and lovely pronghorns.

I have had the good fortune to see several of our 573 National Wildlife Refuges in pursuit of my birding hobby. I've been to the well-known Ding Darling NWR on Sanibel Island in Florida, created in 1945, 6,470+ acres of mangrove forest, submerged seagrass beds, cordgrass marshes, and sub-tropical hardwood. Amazing place to see birds up close and personal. Living in New Jersey for almost 17 years, the Brigantine unit of the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR was my go-to refuge. More than 48,000 acres of Atlantic coastal habitats, 82 % of which is wetlands, the majority being salt marsh, interspersed with shallow coves and bays. Being along the Atlantic Flyway's most active flight path makes it great for bird migration watching. An hour from my home, after a stressful week of work as a federal civil servant, I would visit my refuge to unwind. Like the dedicated people who work on our refuges, I was often working long, unpaid hours to fulfill the mission of my agency. Yes, I am not happy with the disparaging narrative of the current administration who have zero appreciation for the work that federal employees accomplish. Certainly, FWS staff are among those. Not only did I find peace and relaxation on those trips to my refuge, but over the many years I visited, I learned so much about migration, habitats and habits of all the wildlife that visited or lived there.

In 2010, along with three friends, we headed to the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. My goal was to find life birds and tip my 598 North American Species list into the 600s. That choice was a no-brainer (*continued on Page 9*)



Brigantine, Edwin B Forsythe NWR

Have you renewed your membership? Are you interested in joining our group? Help protect birds and their habitat in southwest Washington by donating or volunteering to help birds locally. Visit our [website](#) to complete a secure transaction using your credit/debit card or PayPal account and/or look for opportunities to volunteer. Annual dues are \$30 for local membership. You can donate an additional amount as well. Welcome!



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

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Vancouver Lake Management Plan Phase II Wraps Up

Lake Flushing Enhancement Options Would Require Big Investments for Water Quality Benefits

In 2024, the Washington Legislature provided \$330,000 for Clark County to implement recommendations from the Vancouver Lake Management Plan adopted in 2023 for beach algaecide treatment at Vancouver Lake Regional Park and lake flushing enhancement options. On May 14, 2025, Herrera Environmental Consultants provided a final report at a stakeholders meeting.

Vancouver Lake Regional Park Beach Management Plan

In a pilot study, two algaecide treatments were applied to the water in front of the swimming beach on July 25 and August 2, 2024. Permitting issues prevented use of a boom to keep the algaecide applications near the beach, but the treatments were determined to be effective. Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) were reduced by 75 percent. An algae tracker located in the lake offered real time monitoring. Future recommendations include use of a barrier (boom) during treatments, earlier seasonal monitoring and proactive treatments.

Vancouver Lake Flushing Enhancements

Existing conditions include a hyper-eutrophic lake system with an average 226 cyanobacteria “bloom days” in the summer, a high amount of algae biomass and a lack of oxygen in the water due to the high temperature of the water and decomposition of algae biomass.

Recreational users of Vancouver Lake have been advocating for improvements to lake water quality. The consultants developed a model to simulate lake and river water quality under different flushing options using the Flushing Channel and Lake River, including how the options will decrease peak and average algae growth in Vancouver Lake and how they will effect water temperature and dissolved oxygen in the water.

The consultants evaluated four options: (1a) Replace the culverts with a bridge and allow bi-directional flow in the Flushing Channel (\$21 million); (1b) Replace the culverts with a bridge and install a backflow prevention device (\$34 million plus \$14,000 annual); (2a) Install six pumps in the Flushing Channel to achieve a constant flow of 300 cubic feet per second from the Columbia River to Vancouver Lake from May 1-September 30 (\$19 million plus \$426,000 annual); (2b) Install pumps with an outlet control structure on Lake River (\$40 million plus \$464,000 annual).

The model revealed that none of the options had much effect on water temperature. Option 2a showed benefits from more Columbia River water with the least cyanobacteria bloom days but Option 1b had the least dissolved oxygen violation days.

The consultants lacked data on fish and bird use of the lake to conduct an ecological review or biological assessment of the alternatives that would be needed for federal, state and local permits and to inform option selection.

Many questions still need to be addressed:

- Which flushing enhancement options should move forward?
- What are the environmental benefits and impacts?
- What are the public benefits and impacts?



Blue-green algae in Vancouver Lake on July 27, 2024. Photo by Clark County Public Health

Conservation News

- How is climate change impacting the Columbia River and Vancouver Lake?
- Who will take the lead for any future projects?

Who will pay for any future projects (beach management, milfoil treatments, flushing enhancement, etc.)

Clark County Goose Management

Clark County is using some of the funds from the Legislature to conduct research and develop recommendations for geese deterrence at Vancouver Lake Regional Park's swim beach and to identify solutions for geese poop problems. The county also is providing funding to conduct follow up invasive species surveys and mapping to assess the effectiveness of previous Eurasian milfoil treatments.

Vancouver Audubon's Role as Bird Advocate

Vancouver Lake and its surrounding habitats have been internationally recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) since 2001. Vancouver Lake and the Lowlands are a critical link on the Pacific Flyway, a natural freeway in the sky for migratory birds. The lake and surrounding wetlands and farm fields host thousands of migrating and wintering geese and ducks, shorebirds and several thousand sandhill cranes. Vancouver Lake's shoreline and island provide feeding and night roost areas for shorebirds, sandhill cranes, gulls and American white pelicans. During the day, the lake provides a safe place for cranes to drink, rest and feed. The lake has a significant western grebe population, a species in decline across its range, while osprey nest along the shoreline and feed in the lake.

Make Your Voice Heard

There are so many changes being proposed by the Federal government that would adversely affect our public lands, wildlife research, monitoring, and protection, wetland protection, migratory bird protection, and public education. Our National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and other public lands are being defunded and devalued. You can write the following people to let them know how important public lands are to you and to the birds and wildlife that depend on them for habitat.

[Representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez](#)

[Representative Dan Newhouse](#)

[Senator Patty Murray](#)

[Senator Maria Cantwell](#)

WA 2025 Legislative Session Ends

While many of Washington Audubon's desired bills did not pass in this session, here are a few that did:

SB 5391 - Adjustments to the Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program was signed into law on April 22.

SB 1409—Improved investments in the Clean Fuels Program was signed into law on May 21.

SB 5444—Increases fees for special license plates and personalized license plates to support WDFW signed into law on April 27.

HB 1631—Establishes Bull Kelp forests in Puget Sound as official Marine State Forests. Signed into law May 21.

HB 1150 / SB 5284 —The Recycling Reform Act was signed into law on May 21.

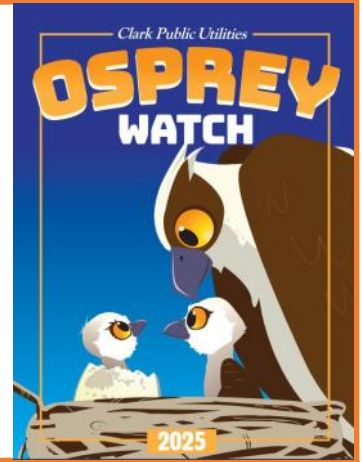
HB 1670 / SB 5450 —Requires the Department of Ecology to establish a public-facing website with maps and searchable sewage spill records. Signed into law on May 21.

Probably the biggest disappointment was a reduction in the biennial budget for WDFW's Restoring Washington's Biodiversity budget by \$2 million. Other bills concerning the acceleration and access to clean energy and community solar did not pass.

Osprey Watch 2025 is Live

Clark Public Utilities reports that the latest season of [Osprey Watch](#) is live on its website. Streaming live feed video offers a real-time view of a pair of nesting osprey as they relax at home, dine on freshly caught fish and maybe raise a chick or two. As of May 19, three eggs are being incubated.

The camera is live around the clock. Since it is live streaming, Clark Public Utilities is unable to filter the images and at times the content may not be suitable for sensitive viewers. While we're all hoping for a wholesome and positive outcome, it's also possible that the nestlings may not survive or there may be a number of unpleasant endings.



VAS Program

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

The Three B's of the Backyard: Birds, Bees, and Bats—Speaker Brandon Burger, Backyard Bird Shop Vancouver

Brandon Burger is a wildlife enthusiast and lifelong conservationist with a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Eastern Washington University, focusing on mammalogy, botany, and ornithology. He has worked at Backyard Bird Shop for 10 years.

The next program will not be until September of 2025.

Are you interested in becoming involved in providing education to Vancouver Audubon members? We are in search of a new Program Chair for the Vancouver Audubon Board. The position is responsible for lining up speakers at 9 meetings each year that present topics of interest to bird-loving members. Please contact Tom Tinsley at President@vancouveraudubon.org if you are interested or have questions.

MEETING LOCATION:

[Evergreen Public Schools Administration](#)
[13413 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive](#)

Vancouver, WA

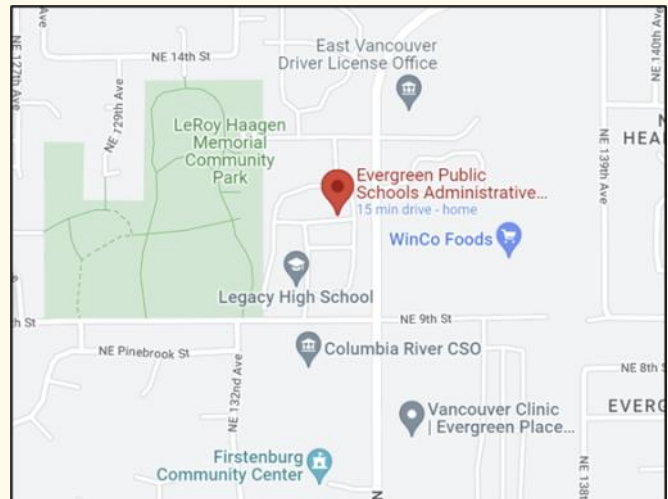
6:30 pm – 6:45 pm - Social time, share bird sightings.

6:45 pm – 7:00 pm - Announcements

7:00 pm – 8:15 pm - Program

Programs are held the first Tuesday of the month except Jan, July, & August. All are welcome, we hope you will join us!

Contact our Program Chair for more information at meetings@vancouveraudubon.org. Have ideas for a speaker? Please send all topic, speaker, and program suggestions to the above address.



Enter the parking lot on the LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive side. (If you navigate to LeRoy Haagen Park, your Google Maps should take you to the correct road).

Please visit the [VAS website](#) for up-to-date field trip details and requirements. Interested in getting field trip announcements in your inbox or as a text? Send a message to vas@vancouveraudubon.org to be added to those lists. Please specify if you prefer email, text through GroupMe, or both.

Thursday, May 29 (NOTE THE DATE!)

Almost First-of-Month Bird Walk

Hockinson Meadows Community Park

Meeting time: 7:30 am

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Register: Cindy at vas@vancouveraudubon.org

Meeting Location: [Hockinson Meadows Park \(parking area on the first right turn after entering the park\)](#)

Apologies! Due to scheduling conflicts, the June first-of-month bird walk will actually take place on May 29th. Still a great time for birding!

We will meet at the playground/dog-park/disc golf parking lot (take the first right after entering the park). We will plan on heading towards the disc golf area to walk the perimeter of the fields first, then continue along the interior park loop. Area has open fields, oak woodland, evergreen forest, and some wet meadow. Excellent area for Lazuli Buntings! Trails are a mix of paved, gravel, and packed dirt. Mud not likely unless there are recent rains. Dress for the weather and bring water. Port-a-potties available on a few areas of the trails.



Lazuli Bunting
Fotofest 2024

Photo by Beth Marlin Lichter,

Pelagic Trip September 21 Westport, WA

There is still one slot left for this pelagic trip out of Westport, WA. This is the last year this trip will be available. Contact Randy Hill at 360-975-2573 for more details if you are interested in going.

Naturalist led bird walks at Ridgefield NWR

Birding with Robert Vanderkamp—Saturday June 14th, 8 am.

Upcoming walks meet at the [Carty Unit of the Refuge](#) and are limited to 12 people. These generally last two to three hours but you are welcome to stay as long or short as works for you. Walks are free but the \$3 refuge daily fee does apply. For more information about the fee and rules of the refuge [click here](#).

Birding with Ron Escano - Saturday June 7th, 8 am

Ron has years of experience guiding local birding groups. Whether you are new to birding, are looking to sharpen your skills, or just hope to find a group to bird with, Ron is a great person to spend a morning with. His pace is relaxed, but thorough, making sure everyone has seen or heard each species. Ron will help new birders focus on key identification points to build their bird knowledge while sorting through the nuances of sparrow calls for more advanced birders.

VAS Bird Walks & Field Trips

Field Trip—Sunday, May 25, 2025

Vancouver Lowlands and Shillapoo Lake

Meeting time: 7:00 a.m.

Leaders: Randy Hill and Bob Flores

Register: Randy Hill (randy.hill.98642@gmail.com, text 360-975-2573)

Meeting location: Vancouver Lake Flushing Channel ([45.669393](tel:45.669393), [-122.743506](tel:-122.743506))

Target species are a wide variety of waterfowl, waders, migrating shorebirds, raptors and songbirds. This period could produce interesting migrant waterbirds, terns, and songbirds that visit the Columbia River corridor and one of a very few managed emergent freshwater marshes in Clark County.

Itinerary: Meet at 07:00 at the Vancouver Lake flushing channel to view the lake, then carpool to Frenchman's Bar Park (Clark County Parks pass or daily fee required) for a walk through bottomland forest and more open mixed grass-shrub-cropland for late migrant and breeding songbirds. The Shillapoo Wildlife Area access trail is opposite the north trail to Vancouver Lake, about a mile north of the flushing channel on SR-501 extension. Trip will end by noon. Spotting scopes highly encouraged for Shillapoo, and bring Discover Pass if you have one.

Limit of 15 total participants.



Virginia Rail at Shillapoo Lake in May 2024

Photo by Don Rose, Fotofest 2024

Upcoming Bird Festivals in Washington

Interested in exploring new areas for birds and possibly making some new friends in the process? Washington State has many opportunities to attend bird festivals each month, both east and west of the Cascade Range. Here are some to choose from in the near future, including the annual Audubon get together at Wenas.

May/June

[Wenas Creek Audubon Camp-Out](#)

[Rainier Audubon Nature Festival](#)

[Puget Sound Bird Fest](#)

August

[Swift Night Out](#)

September

[Wings over Willapa Festival](#)

60th Wenas Campout 2025

Friday, May 30 - Sunday, June 1

Please follow us on these sites for updates

<https://wenasaudubon.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/wenasaudubon>

For a full list of Bird Festivals throughout the year go to [Audubon Washington Bird Festivals](#).

Submission Deadline for Youth Photography Contest May 31st

By Ken Pitts

The Vancouver Audubon [Youth Photo Contest](#) will be finishing up over the next month. Five things you should know:

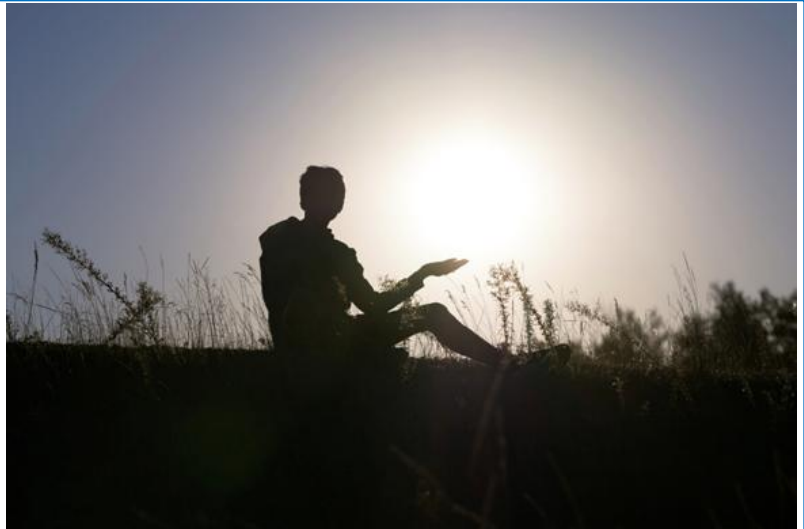
- 1) Youth ages 8 – 18 years old can still visit Steigerwald and submit up to five photos in four different categories. The deadline for submitting is May 31, 2025, at midnight.
- 2) Voting on the People's Choice Awards in each of the categories begins June 1st and will continue through June 7th at midnight. Each category has a \$100 prize. Follow the links to both see photos already submitted and then to vote for your favorite beginning on June 1st.

[SmartPhone/Mobile Device Camera](#)

[Plants, Animals, and Fungi](#)

[Landscape](#)

[People in Nature](#)



2nd Place in People and Nature category 2024

Photo Credit: Shalaka Deshpande

- 3) If you are interested in being a judge for the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place prizes and are available to answer emails from June 1st – 15th, then contact Ken Pitts (kenp@vancouveraudubon.org).
- 4) You are invited to the awards ceremony at the Cascade Park Community Library on June 25th at 6:00 pm. Come and meet the youth and their families. They will likely be proudly standing beside their high quality 12 X 18 aluminum print of their photo (donated by [HD Aluminum Prints](#)). Vancouver Audubon will proudly team with [Columbia Credit Union](#) to hand out \$1,800 in prize money checks to the winners.
- 5) VAS is offering free memberships to all families who entered the contest. We are hoping some of them will be interested in joining our Young Birders group with an emphasis on nature photography.

VAS Field Trip

Solstice Twilight Picnic June 24, 2025

Meeting time: Dinner time or after, but before 8:30 pm.

Leader: Randy Hill

Register: Randy Hill (randy.hill.98642@gmail.com, text 360-975-2573) Note: There might not be service at the meeting site.

Meeting location directions: Turn left (west) at the DNR L-1300 Road junction with the DNR L-1000 Road (Coordinates 45.759814, -122.323966). This is the Cold Creek campground turnoff approximately 2 miles north of the (now closed) Larch Mountain Correctional Facility where pavement turns to gravel.

Itinerary: Stay as long as you want to enjoy constellations, planets and more satellites than you'd think where city light effects are diminished.

Target: Common Nighthawk. Other species occur, with several breeding songbirds still singing and/or feeding young. Approaching dusk or darkness, owls are possible.

No limit of participants, although roadside pullouts are limited. Rocky road conditions vary but accessible to most low clearance vehicles along a dusty road.

Seeking Refuge (cont)

because Laguna Atascosa NWR is known for the biggest bird list of any national wildlife refuge. Not far away we also visited Santa Ana NWR. Being along the central flyway and adjacent to the border with Mexico has its perks. Many species seen in Mexico and farther south, find their way to favorable habitat across the river into the US. Fortunately, the birds could still fly over the border walls back then. We know there are some issues impacting animal movement and degrading habitat there now. I did get the needed birds and ended that trip at 616 ABA species on my life list. I couldn't have done that anywhere else in the US in the six days we were there.



Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

In 2023, I took an organized birding trip to the prairies of North Dakota and Montana. Among our stops were Des Lacs, Medicine Lake, Lostwood, Bowdoin and Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuges. I am hard pressed to say I had a favorite. What sticks in my mind is the breathtaking views of the Mis-



Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge

souri Breaks from a high point at the Russell NWR. It's not just about the birds for me. To be able to stand in the middle of these open spaces, be they small like our local 392-acre Pierce NWR or as huge as the 1.1-million-acre Charles M Russell and its encompassed UL Bend NWR in Montana, is soul strengthening. Close your eyes, listen only to wildlife. Take a breath and smell the essence of the plants, the decay and regeneration around you. Feel the warmth, cold, damp and dry air upon your skin in our deserts, mountains, and tundra or along our lakes, streams and coastal marine refuges. Yes, **OUR** lands. The National Wildlife Refuges, like National Parks, are **ours**.

The formation of the National Wildlife Refuge System has been complicated. The origins of thoughtful people who recognized the need to save and set aside lands for species such as the American Bison go back into the mid-1800s. You could say the current system is 150 years of a work in progress. It has grown out of initial executive orders and eventually congressional legislation which included most recently the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 and then the 1997, National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The latest legislation provided a new statutory mission statement and directed the management of the refuges as a national system of lands and waters devoted to conserving wildlife and maintaining biological integrity of ecosystems.

Yes, I love our National Wildlife Refuges. I am thrilled to visit a new one anytime I travel, but like Don Edwards, Brigantine and our own Ridgely NWR, I love getting to know a place. The return of the Yellow-headed Blackbirds in March (they were late this year, but they are back now), waiting for the Sandhill Cranes to come in October, watching coyote pups try to catch field mice and voles, seeing ice covering tree branches in winter are all anticipated annual events I look forward to. After 12 years of visits and volunteering, I know our Refuge well like an old friend.

But yes, I am worried about the refuges. All 573 of them. I learned more about the current state of our refuges during a National Wildlife Refuge Association April webinar with guest speaker **Cynthia Martinez**, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The situation is dire and has been for a while as FWS continues to adjust in a variety of ways to budget and staffing shortfalls while trying to maintain an outdated infrastructure, with growing environmental pressures. And, they still don't know what will happen after they have been completely "doged". (My word for the current government downsizing actions.)

Some facts from the webinar about the state of the refuge system:

- *In FY2010, the budget for FWS was just under \$503 million; today, 15 years later, it is \$527 million with added refuges.*
- *There are 95 million land acres in the system requiring care.*

Seeking Refuge *(cont from page 9)*

- *Refuges protect 760 million acres of marine environments with 181 coastal refuges*
- *3.3 million acres of service lands are infested with non-native species, a 30% increase since 2005. Currently available resources only allow successful control of 7% of these lands.*
- *350 refuges provide habitat for threatened and endangered species. Only 27% of T&E species can be monitored on refuges at this time. How will we know if they can survive.*
- *There is at least one refuge in every state and territory.*
- *491 refuges welcome 70 million recreation visits a year. (Some refuges, such as our Pierce and Franz Lake, are not open to visitors, which enables them to be focused on recovery or stabilization of plant or wildlife populations.)*
- **NONE** of the 573 refuges are considered sufficient to have full staffing and full funding to achieve mission goals and provide permitted compatible uses by visitors. That is worth repeating....**NONE**.
- *57% of the refuges have limited resources – usually where the office is in a complex as is Ridgefield. They are operating with only a portion of their needed staff and funding, only partially achieving goals, so public access becomes contingent on available staffing and safety. They are heavily supported by volunteers.*
- *35% are considered insufficient – staffing limitations are such that they receive varying levels of attention with little or no maintenance or management.*
- *Finally, 8% are labelled shuttered. They lack staff or funding to achieve any goals. Public access previously compatible is no longer possible.*



Peregrine Falcon

If you love them too, keep the National Wildlife Refuges in your sights. Tell your friends about what refuges mean to you and what they can do for them. Write to your newspapers, congressional representatives and the White House. Make noise for what you love. I know there is so much need developing for actions or lack of proper actions from our government on many fronts right now. We have much to keep an eye on. Make National Wildlife Refuges, **our Refuges**, one of those places to continue as a wonderful work in progress for us and future generations.

Public Engagement—Volunteer Opportunities

We had a great day at the Columbia Springs Kids Fishing Day on May 17. We interacted with approximately 260 kids and adults at our table and provided them with birding information and lots of gooey peanut butter for their fir-cone bird feeders. Next, we will host a table and visit with attendees at the Vancouver Pollinator Festival on June 21. We seek to inform them about who Vancouver Audubon is, what we do, and share information about regional birding, bird habitat and conservation efforts. We also offer a few activities at these events, which can include building a bird-house, coloring a bird picture, and making bookmarks with bird stamps and/or stickers. We'd love to see you as an attendee or volunteer!

Volunteer commitments are generally 2 hours. Event times are listed, but we also have set-up and take down to do, which is usually 30-45 minutes before and after the event. If you're interested in volunteering with us, please email Tom Tinsley at tinsley@vancouveraudubon.org and he will add your name to our list and can address any questions.

Date	Event	Where	Event Time	# volunteers
June 21, 2025	Vancouver Pollinator Festival	Marshall Community Center Park	9a – 3p	9-10
July 26, 2025	Nature Days	Columbia Springs	10a – 1p	3-4

50th Anniversary Story

An Interview With Our Conservation Chair Susan Saul

Picture and Story by Don Rose

Susan Saul's father told her that her first sentence as a child was "birds all gone" after he had knocked on the window of their home in Springfield, OR and the birds outside flew away. It seems she has been working to prevent that from happening ever since. Susan Saul is the Conservation Chair for Vancouver Audubon Society (VAS) and has been working on the conservation of birds for over 50 years.

Susan first became interested in birds in 1974 when she moved to Longview, WA where she was offered her first job in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) out of college. She was living in Longview in 1975 when she saw an advertisement in the local newspaper for a meeting to organize a new Audubon chapter. She decided to attend and joined what became Willapa Hills Audubon (Willapa Hills) at one of its first meetings. This was one of many Audubon chapters founded in the state of Washington by Hazel Wolf and Helen Engle during that time.

With Willapa Hills, she served in every Board role except Treasurer. One of the major efforts she was involved in occurred after the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980, she and others worked towards having the area designated as a National Monument. These efforts were successful with the establishment of the monument in August of 1982 by Ronald Reagan.

In 1983, Willapa Hills enlisted the help of Congressman Don Bonker to successfully negotiate a significant land-for-timber exchange between USFWS and Weyerhaeuser Company, resulting in the Willapa Bay Wildlife Refuge acquiring over 1,600 acres of land, including a 119-acre old-growth Western Red Cedar grove on Long Island in Willapa Bay. Willapa Hills Audubon members, including Susan, had surveyed the island and highlighted the contribution of its habitat to survival of migratory birds, Bald Eagles, Marbled Murrelets, and other wildlife.

Susan's first interactions with VAS were while she was still with Willapa Hills in the late 1980s. Washington State Parks proposed to develop Leadbetter Point State Park on the Long Beach peninsula with a campground and other facilities. VAS and Willapa Hills met together and eventually hosted a Leadbetter Point conference with conservation and naturalist speakers. They invited Washington State Park leaders to the conference where they learned about the importance of the habitat for birds and other wildlife. Eventually, they decided to create the first State Park natural area and additional acres have been added several times.

Susan moved to Vancouver in the early 1990s when she was offered a job working in external affairs as a Public Affairs Officer in the USFWS Regional Office in 1993. While she kept a low profile as an Audubon member until she retired in 2006, she did have significant experiences in conservation in her job. She has a picture shaking hands with President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore from when she worked at the NW Forest Plan conference in 1994 (the plan that is being reconsidered now by the Federal government). She was working in the basement at the convention center during the conference. She and others knew where Clinton and Gore's limousines were parked so they waited for them



Susan Saul on the left talking with Nathan Ulrich, Conservation Lead for Columbia Land Trust at the Klickitat property VAS helped fund for conservation.

Susan Saul (continued)

to come to their limousines. Clinton and Gore came out with charisma, talking and shaking hands, they both thanked her for her involvement.

During the 1990s, huge die-offs of Eared Grebes and American White Pelicans near the Salton Sea in southern California lead to an assignment working on a management and restoration plan. Congress approved money for restoration in 1998, and Susan helped lead meetings to come up with a plan. A Salton Sea Management Plan was agreed to, but it was never really implemented. Susan also had the opportunity to work on issues surrounding Bull Trout after it was listed as a Threatened species in 1999.

After retiring from her job in 2006, Susan helped Gretchen Starke, the Conservation Chair for VAS, for many years. She was co-chair with Gretchen for several years and eventually took over as Conservation Chair when Eric Bjorkman was President of VAS.

Susan says her biggest accomplishment as Conservation Chair has been her work with Vancouver city staff and the Port on bird-friendly buildings. Terminal One is the first bird-friendly building on the Vancouver waterfront and is widely advertised as such. Jack Burkman, a big bird watcher, is on the Port Commission and was Susan's main contact. She had made a pitch to the Port Commission and an existing contract was changed to add Dark Sky lighting and Bird-friendly glass. "Future buildings will be bird friendly" says Port Commissioner Eric LaBrant, who brags about being bird friendly. Now, Port of Camas is consulting with Susan on the proposed Steigerwald Commerce Center with 2 out of 3 Port Commissioners supportive of bird friendly measures.



Willapa Bay near Leadbetter Point on the Long Beach peninsula. Susan contributed to keeping this area wild.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
June 2025 Events Calendar						
May 25 Field Trip— Van- couver Lowlands, Shillapoo Lake, Frenchman's Bar	26	27	28	29 Bird Walk— Hockinson Meadows Park	30	31
1	2	3 Program Mtg Birds, Bees, and Bats	4	5	6	7 Ridgefield NWR Bird Walk
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 Ridgefield NWR Bird Walk
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Volunteer Pollinator Festival
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

No Program meetings in July or August. Consult the VAS webpage for updated news on field trips and bird walks. Check your emails for volunteer opportunities. But most of all, get out there and bird.

