# Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY A chapter of the National Audubon Society

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## Don't Forget—Migratory Bird Celebration 2025 This Saturday!

Vancouver Audubon Society is hosting an event in celebration of the spectacular feat of bird migration Saturday, September 27. We will be at Klineline Pond in the Creekside Picnic Area at the east end of Salmon Creek Greenway. This day is also an opportunity to learn about the conservation needs that support bird migration: clean and available water sources, plants, insects and habitats.

Joining us will be The Water Resources Education Center and WSU Vancouver Master Gardener representatives.

Our day will include bird walks, Nature Bingo, and our own Migration Game (created by Ken Pitts and a BIG hit last year!), where you are the bird facing obstacles trying to reach your destination. Other interactive activities include binocular use, bird spotting with scopes, and making cone feeders. This is a family-friendly event, with food, games, prizes, and more!

There's no cost to attend and no registration necessary. All ages are welcome. We hope to see you there! Please know that the closest parking lot does have a \$3 county parking fee. Parking at the Clark County Girls Softball fields parking lot is free.



#### Do Something Now!

There have been many calls to action to protect birds, bird habitat, and funding for important programs recently. We are starting this new column to highlight current and ongoing local, State, and Federal actions that impact birds. You have pent up energy? Get going!

Protect Public Conservation Progress on Public Lands - Earlier this month, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to overturn resource management plans for some of our public lands using a procedure known as the Congressional Review Act. <u>Urge your U.S. Senators to oppose this action and support balanced stewardship of our nation's public lands.</u>

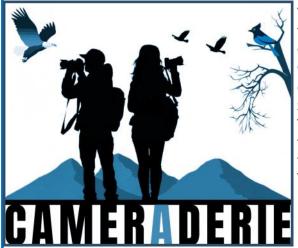
Congress is debating the budget right now for next year. Tell Congress to save vital conservation programs. Urge Congress to advance and safeguard key conservation priorities that restore and protect the lands and waters that birds and people need.

Take action to protect habitat for birds and people. Act now and urge your U.S. Representative to support the Local Communities and Bird Habitat Stewardship Act.

1



#### **New Youth Group to Meet on September 28th**



walk leaders and photographers join to share their

knowledge of finding and recognizing wildlife.

The September 28th walk will be focused on finding and framing wildlife. Photos taken by participating youth will be eligible for entry into the VAS 2026 Youth Nature Photography Contest. The <u>first 15 youth to sign up</u> will be able to attend. If they are under 18, then a parent is required to accompany them. All interested youth who sign up can join the follow-up Zoom meeting on Sunday, October 12th, from 6-7 p.m. to share nature photos they have taken and get and give feedback. The goal of this group is simply to go deeper with understanding both wildlife and photography.

Vancouver Audubon has a new group beginning and meeting for the first time on September 28th, 3-6 p.m. at Klineline Pond on the Salmon Creek Greenway in Vancouver. **CAMERADERIE** is a group focused on wildlife/bird photography for youth ages 10-18 years of age.

CAMERADERIE was started by two VAS <u>Youth Photo Contest</u> winners, Shaunak Deshpande (group leader & organizer) and John Mendoza. They acknowledge their participation and success in the photo contest has been enhanced both by having parents support and mentor them, and participating in VAS sponsored bird walks over the years. This group seeks to combine the expertise of both John and Shaunak in photography to mentor other youth, and have seasoned VAS bird



Photo: John Mendoza, 1st place in 2025 VAS Youth Photography category of "Plants, Animals, & Fungi"



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Vancouver Audubon Society is a non-profit organization under US IRS Code Section 501(c)(3).
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Vancouver Audubon believes in the wisdom of nature's design and promotes this through education, involvement, stewardship, enjoyment and advocacy.

The Columbia Flyway is published monthly September through June (except January). Vancouver Audubon Board Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month, August through May (except December). Membership meetings and programs are held on the first Tuesday of the month, September through June (except January).

<u>THE COLUMBIA FLYWAY</u> is the monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Publication deadline is the 20th of the preceding month unless otherwise posted.

2



### Conservation News

Susan Saul Conservation@vancouveraudubon.org

## Forest Service Seeks Public Comment on Spirit Lake Safety Improvement Project

by Susan Saul

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is seeking public comment on a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Spirit Lake Outflow Safety Improvement Project. The project is part of a long-term effort to manage the water level in Spirit Lake to keep downstream communities safe from flooding.

Following the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, the largest landslide in recorded history created a natural debris blockage across Spirit Lake's outlet. In 1985, an emergency tunnel was constructed to safely manage lake levels. Since its construction, geological pressures on the tunnel have caused rock heave, compression, cracking, and support failures that have required two extended tunnel closures for repairs. Today, that tunnel—while still functional—requires rehabilitation to continue serving its role effectively into the future.

Congress established the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument in 1982, designating the area for research, recreation, and education. The area inside the Monument has been left to naturally respond to and recover from the eruption. The Pumice Plain and Spirit Lake have been the focus of 45 years of ecological research. Today, a unique assemblage of species is present and closely associated with the open, early seral habitat conditions of the Pumice Plain and blast zone.

The DEIS examines nine alternatives for management of Spirit Lake's outflow. The USFS has identified two preferred alternatives: a full repair and rehabilitation of the existing tunnel or a new pressure tunnel. In addition to the no action alternative which would continue routine inspections and required maintenance of the existing tunnel, the DEIS analyzes seven other alternatives for public review and comment. The USFS seeks comments on all the alternatives and the analysis, but particularly on the two preferred alternatives.

Controversial issues associated with the project include construction of a permanent access road across either the Pumice Plain or Johnston Ridge; impacts to recreation, wetlands, scientific research and visual resources; potential for increased downstream sedimentation; and desire for an alternative to restore fish passage and hydraulic connectivity of Spirit Lake to the North Fork Toutle River. Cost estimates are not provided.

Dozens of scientists took advantage of the research opportunities created by the 1980 eruption, establishing hundreds of studies. Their work resulted in hundreds of research articles about succession (including plants, mycorrhizae, and lichens), animal community assembly (including insects, mammals, and fish), disturbance ecology, hydroecology, soil ecology, ecosystem management, evolution of the origin of life, trophic interactions, and landscape ecology. Several long-term research projects continue today and into the future. Impacts from the alternatives include potentially irretrievable loss and/or degradation of a research site such that existing research would no longer be able to be conducted.

Birds species that have been identified on the Pumice Plain include 72 species which could be impacted by the alternatives: cackling goose, Canada goose, Barrow's goldeneye, cinnamon teal, great blue heron, osprey, northern harrier, bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, American kestrel, Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, American goshawk, turkey vulture, common raven, American crow, Wilson's snipe, killdeer, spotted sandpiper, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, Anna's hummingbird, rufous hummingbird, horned lark, black swift, Vaux's swift, tree swallow, barn swallow, bank swallow, violet-green swallow, northern rough-winged swallow, mountain bluebird, Townsend's solitaire, American robin, Swainson's thrush, common nighthawk, rock wren, northern house wren, Stellar's jay, American pipit, willow flycatcher, olive-sided flycatcher, willow flycatcher, warbling vireo, Cassin's finch, gray -crowned rosy finch, pine siskin, fox sparrow, Lincoln's sparrow, chipping sparrow, dark-eyed junco, white-crowned sparrow, golden-crowned sparrow, song sparrow, savannah sparrow, red-winged blackbird, yellow warbler, orange-crowned warbler, MacGillivray's warbler, Wilson's warbler, yellow-rumped warbler and black-headed grosbeak.

There is no immediate threat that the Spirit Lake outlet tunnel will fail; this project is part of a deliberate effort to ensure the lake's outflow infrastructure remains reliable for generations to come. (continued on next page)

3



## Conservation News (cont)

The analysis within the <u>Spirit Lake DEIS</u> and the associated programmatic plan amendment will result in two separate decisions, which consequently requires two separate but concurrent public comment periods. Both comment periods will close on October 30, 2025.

An in-person public comment meeting will be held at the Cowlitz County Event Center located at 1900 7th Avenue, Longview, Washington from 4 to 7 pm on Tuesday, October 7, 2025. Written and oral comments will be accepted during the meeting.

The Spirit Lake Outflow Safety Improvement Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) with programmatic plan amendments will be available for review and commenting on August 1, 2025. Please see the attached Press Release and Legal Notice for information on where to find the documents and how to comment. An in-person public comment meeting will be held at the Cowlitz County Event Center located at 1900 7th Avenue, Longview, Washington from 4 to 7 pm on Tuesday, October 7, 2025. Written and oral comments will be accepted during the meeting.

#### WDFW Plans Shillapoo Wildlife Area Habitat Restoration Project

By Susan Saul

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is in the early stages of planning a habitat restoration project that would reestablish a channel between the Columbia River and the floodplain wetlands on the Shillapoo South Wildlife Area Unit that would recreate more natural hydrology.

Project goals include reestablishing access for anadromous fish, reducing invasive vegetation and enhancing native vegetation, and improving and maintaining habitat for waterfowl and sandhill cranes.

WDFW's 2,341-acre Shillapoo Wildlife Area was established in 1952 for habitat protection and bird hunting. Subsequent acquisitions, primarily in the 1990's, were directed at protecting and improving waterfowl and wetland habitat. The wildlife area also supports long-standing public hunting and birding.

Historically, Shillapoo Lake was seasonally flooded with water from the Columbia River, providing high-quality habitat for salmon and wildlife that depend on wetland and riparian ecosystems. The lake was diked and drained in the 1950's for agriculture. These modifications disconnected the area from the Columbia River.

Although a substantial portion of the former lake is still in private ownership, WDFW is moving forward with plans to reestablish wetland conditions on its lands. The Shillapoo Wildlife Area is also a part of the Bonneville Power Administration's mitigation program for the Columbia River hydropower system, which currently funds almost all operations and enhancements.

As part of the planning process, WDFW is establishing a new working group that will help inform plans for the habitat restoration project. The working group will support WDFW in evaluating design concepts and project alternatives. Members will share their diverse perspectives and work collaboratively to explore options, identify shared goals, and

4

develop consensus recommendations to inform the project.

Randy Hill, a retired wildlife biologist, and Cindy McCormack, a wildlife monitoring scientist, are Vancouver Audubon leaders who have applied to participate in the working group. WDFW will select working group members based on their experience with and knowledge of waterfowl hunting, outdoor recreation, agriculture, conservation, salmon recovery, or related fields. Applicants will be notified of their selection by November 15, 2025.

The planning process is expected to last from January 2026 through March 2027. You can follow the project at its <u>website</u>.



Greater White-fronted Geese in the fields at Shillapoo



## VAS Programs

## Tuesday, October 7, 2025 Photography Tips from Jon Pugmire and FOTOFEST 2025

We will have two parts to this program:

- 1) Local photographer Jon Pugmire will be our guest to share his ideas on how to do outstanding bird photography,
- 2) A show of member-only photographs from the current year, concentrating mostly on birds, but could be land-scapes or other wildlife.

I encourage VAS members to submit your favorite pictures taken in 2025 (Jan. 1 to present) from anywhere you have been in the world (including your backyard).

#### Please submit your photos to drose@vancouveraudubon.org by October 1 to be included.

I will collect the photos into a slideshow to be presented at this live meeting and each photographer will present their pictures with a few words about the shot/ story/location behind them. If you don't want to present your own photos, provide me the information and I will gladly give the rundown. Number of photos per person will depend on the total number submitted and the number of participants. Photos will be used in future newsletters.

**November 4, 2025—Vanessa Loverti, U.S. Fish and Wildlife. MOTUS presentation.** Vanessa is a Regional Shorebird Coordinator with US Fish and Wildlife Pacific Region who will be talking about the MOTUS bird tracking system—what it is, how it works, and who does it track.

**December 2, 2025—50th Anniversary Celebration!** All members should keep their calendars open for this celebration of 50 years of accomplishments as an Audubon Chapter in Washington state. There will be speakers, refreshments, and recognition of past presidents. Stay tuned for more information.

5

#### **MEETING LOCATION:**

Evergreen Public Schools Administration
13413 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive

Vancouver, WA

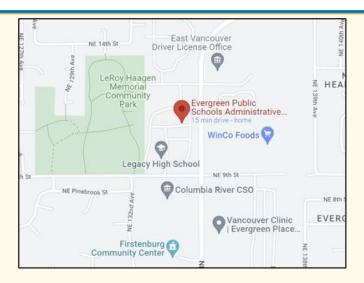
6:30 pm - 6:45 pm - Social time, share bird sightings.

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).



Randy Hill Randy.Hill.98642@gmail.com

## VAS Bird Walks & Field Trips

Please visit the <u>VAS website</u> 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.

#### Monday, October 1—Shillapoo

First-of-Month Bird Walk

Meeting time: 7:30 am Leader: Cindy McCormack

Register: Cindy at vas@vancouveraudubon.org Meeting Location: Shillapoo Lake

We will plan on walking the dike trail to check for migrating shore-birds, look for arriving Sandhill Cranes, and look for the regular waterbirds in the area. If lake levels allow, we will return and cross over to view the north end of Vancouver Lake from the North Bridge Trail.

Dress for the weather. Sunscreen and a hat may be a good idea if the warm, sunny weather continues. Waterproof boots are recommended if the grass on the dike trail is wet.

We will meet at 7:30am at the Shillapoo Lake NE access (across from Van Lake north bridge trail) on NW Erwin O Reiger Memorial Hwy (near the north end of the road, past the rumble strips).



Sandhill Cranes

Photo by Steve Bredthauer, Fotofest 2024

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#### Naturalist led bird walks at Ridgefield NWR

Birding with Robert Vanderkamp—Saturday October 11, 8 am.

Upcoming walks meet at the <u>Carty Unit of the Refuge</u> and are limited to 15 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 <u>click here</u>.

#### Birding with Ron Escano - Saturday October 4th, 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.

6





Vaux's Swift captured from the bridge across the Klickitat River at Wahkiacus, WA. Photo by Ken Pitts.

The southward migrating Vaux's swifts have abandoned Chapman School in Portland, but that does not mean you are without viewing opportunities.

Down the Columbia River from Vancouver, the chimney at the Riverside Community Church in Rainier, Oregon, has hosted up to 25,000 Vaux's swifts during migrations since the chimney was uncapped and opened in 2019. It has become one of the largest Vaux's swift roost sites in the Pacific Northwest.

Your best viewing is from onehalf hour before sunset until one half-hour after sunset. You can watch the swifts from the lower parking lot accessible from the corner of West D Street and West 3rd Street on the north side of Riverside

Community Church. Willapa Hills Audubon Society has volunteers stationed at the street corner to count the birds and provide information.

#### **Upcoming Bird Festivals and Birding Opportunities**

<u>Birdfest & Bluegrass, Ridgefield National Wildlife Area</u>—**October 4, 2025**. VAS involvement is 9:00 am—2:00 pm with scopes at the Hunter gate (stop 4 of the River S auto tour route). There is also a family bird walk on the Kiwa Trail (stop 8) from 11:00 am—12 noon.

VAS birding trip to Woodland Bottoms—**October 9, 2025**. Meeting time, location and duration will be announced on the website. Waterfowl hunt season opens on 10/11.

VAS birding trip along the Vancouver Waterfront from the I-5 bridge east in segments toward Tidewater Cove Marina. **October 17**.

First-of-month field trip with Cindy. **November 1**. Location to be determined.

Birding north to Pierce and Thurston Counties —**November 20**. We will join the monthly bird walk at the Eagles Pride golf course at the south end of Pierce County, which begins at 9:00 am and might go until noon. Then we will drive around the corner into Thurston County for a walk around the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR.

**Christmas Bird Counts** are scheduled to run from **December 14 - January 5**. Dates for all counts are usually determined in November. The count period includes 3 Saturdays and 4 Sundays that do not conflict with Christmas and New Years Day so there will be plenty of opportunities to count an area or be part of a group. The Ridgefield-Sauvie count is typically on a Sunday to avoid established waterfowl hunt days.

7

For a full list of Bird Festivals throughout the year go to Audubon Washington Bird Festivals.



## Washington and Oregon issue recall for wild birdseed containing invasive quarantined weed seeds



The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) have issued a recall of Signature Pet Care Songbird Blend Wild Bird Food 7 LB, sold at Albertsons, Safeway and Haggen stores in WA and OR, and manufactured by Global Harvest Foods. The recalled product carries UPC 021130037629 and a sell-by date code 01/10/2027 M3D S3501.

Palmer amaranth was first detected in WA in 2023, and it was added to the state's plant quarantine list on Aug. 9, 2025. According to WSDA and ODA, this plant is highly invasive; can grow more than 10 feet tall; is resistant to many herbicides; and a single plant can produce hundreds of thousands of seeds. Left uncontrolled, it can choke out crops such as corn, soybeans, and small grains; reduce harvest yields; and drive-up weed-control costs for farmers. It also threatens native plant habitats and can quickly spread beyond managed areas.

This recall was initiated after a Spokane County Noxious Weed Board employee observed Palmer amaranth growing in a Safeway parking lot landscape area. The employee learned that birdseed from the store had been spread in the area and collected samples for testing. Genetic analysis confirmed the seed contained Palmer amaranth.

Albertsons, Safeway and Haggen in WA and OR have voluntarily recalled the affected birdseed and removed it from store shelves. Global Harvest Foods is cooperating fully with WSDA and ODA to ensure all affected products are removed from the market and to help prevent further spread of this invasive plant.

## Customers who purchased the recalled birdseed are advised to:

- Remove any remaining seed from bird feeders.
- Return any unused seed to the store for a refund.
- Double bag and dispose of any loose seed in the trash do not compost.
- Clean bird feeders thoroughly before reuse to remove remaining seeds.

Inspect areas under and near bird feeders for sprouted weeds, carefully remove any plants, place them in black plastic bags and dispose of them in the trash to prevent seed spread.

Detailed information on identifying Palmer amaranth is available on WSDA's Palmer Amaranth Pest Alert, which can be found

8





### **Birdseed Recall (cont)**

online at the link below. Information is also available on WSDA's website.

#### **WSDA Palmer Amaranth Pest Alert Information:**

Alert information is available here:

https://cms.agr.wa.gov/WSDAKentico/Documents/Pubs/769a-PestAlert-PalmerAmaranth-10-23-FINAL.pdf

#### **Retailers contact**

Customers should contact their local Safeway, Haggen or Albertsons store for assistance or refund information. Refunds are available for any unused recalled product returned to the store.

#### State contact

Washington State Department of Agriculture Plant Services Program: 360-902-1874

General WSDA Information: 360-902-1800

#### **Consumer contact**

Global Harvest Foods Customer Support: cs@ghfoods.com

## **National Audubon Celebrating 120 Years**

As Vancouver Audubon celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, National Audubon is also celebrating its 120th anniversary.

National Audubon was formed in 1905 after two decades of grassroots action for the protection of birds. Concerned about the destruction of heron rookeries, two concerned women spread the protects against using bird feathers for fashionable hats and were instrumental in the formation of Audubon. The most targeted bird, the Great Egret, was later chosen as the symbol of the National Audubon Society.

Another landmark was the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918. Advocated for by National Audubon, it protected all migrating birds.

Fast forward to the 1970's, when Audubon's advocacy helped pass the Endangered Species Act (1973) and championed Rachel Carson's work to ban DDT (1972).



**Great Egret** 

Candy Childrey/Audubon Photography Awards

Today, National Audubon has nearly 500 affiliated chapters that work to protect birds and their natural habitats throughout the western hemisphere. For 120 years, the National Audubon Society has put birds at the center of conservation—because when birds thrive, people and the planet thrive too.

Today, as our world faces the interconnected crises of climate change and habitat loss, Audubon—together with our community of partners and supporters—leverages the power of birds to drive lasting conservation impact across the hemisphere.

From backyard feeders to global migratory flyways, Audubon members carry forward a legacy of bold action and collective hope, rising to meet this moment with the same passion that launched our movement over a century ago. Key milestones of Audubon's 120-year history are highlighted in this illustrated review.





Randy, Tom, Bill, Cindy, and Doug finding birds

Despite the cancellation of the pelagic boat tour out of Westport due to rough seas, the field trip to the coast 9/20-22 was both exciting and relaxing. The first day included visits to the Hoquiam sewage treatment ponds and airport, then on to Ocean Shores to the jetty and Oyhut Wildlife Area. It was at the jetty we spotted lots of Black Turn-

stones, a lone Ruddy Turnstone and a couple of Wandering Tattlers. Oyhut was very exciting as Redthroated and Common Loons were close

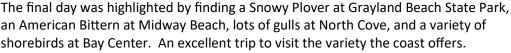


Red-throated Loon near shore at Oyhut

Day two dawned with crystal clear skies after rain during the night. The first stop at Westport Marina revealed all three Cormorant species, Brown

to shore, and a Merlin was spotted.

Pelicans, Surf Scoters, a variety of gulls, and a Common Murre in the marina. American Pipits were found on the shore at Westhaven State Park, as well as Rhinoceros Auklets and White-winged Scoters out at sea. A variety of shorebirds (Least Sandpipers, Whimbrels, and Greater Yellowlegs), sea birds, and land birds were found at Bottle Beach State Park, the first State Park designated specifically to protect bird habitat in 1995. The group continued to North Cove and then Tokeland Marina, where the highlight was a couple of Bar-tailed Godwits amidst the thousands of Marbled Godwits.





Brown Pelican goes vertical

## Public Engagement—Volunteer Opportunities

We had great days at the Battle Ground Pride Festival in August and the Vancouver Pollinator Festival in June interacting with visitors, kids and adults alike. 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 birdhouse, 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 <a href="mailto:ttinsley@vancouveraudubon.org">ttinsley@vancouveraudubon.org</a> and he will add your name to our list and can address any questions.

Date	Event	Where	Event	# volunteers
			Time	
Sept. 27	World Migratory Bird Day	Klineline Pond Park	9a – 2p	12-15
October 4, 2025	Ridgefield Bird Fest	Carty Unit or River 'S' scopes	8a – 1p	3-4



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		
October 2025 Events Calendar								
			First-of-Month Field Trip— Shillapoo Lake	2	3	4 Ridgefield NWR Bird Walk  Volunteer Ridgefield Birdfest and Bluegrass		
5	6	7 Program Mtg Jon Pugmire and Fotofest 2025	8	9 Field Trip— Woodland	10	Ridgefield NWR Bird Walk		
Cameraderie Field Trip	13	14	15	16	Field Trip— Vancouver Waterfront	18		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
26	27	VAS Board Meeting	29	30	31	Nov 1  First-of-Month Field Trip— TBD		



