

Columbia Flyway

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



Volume 51 Number 2

March 2026

vancouveraudubon.org

"Lights Out for Birds" is Coming to Washington!

By Susan Saul

Following up on a resolution unanimously adopted by Washington state's chapters at last year's annual Audubon Council of Washington, Audubon Washington has convened a work group to create a statewide "Lights Out" campaign to provide safe passage for night-migrating birds and promote bird safe glass to reduce window collisions. The campaign promotes turning off or shielding outdoor lights, especially during key migration periods (Mar–Jun & Aug–Nov) each year.

Susan Saul is representing Vancouver Audubon in the work group. Our success in getting DarkSkies lighting and bird safe glass adopted by local governments is a model for other Audubon chapters.

The Lights Out campaign has produced a social media image to use in communications campaigns and a tool kit of resource materials for chapter use.

Audubon chapters across the U.S. have been instrumental in convincing cities to turn their lights out for migrating birds. What started as a grass-roots effort now has country-wide reach, with several states now having state-wide programs, including *Lights Out Texas*, *Lights Out Georgia* and *Safe Passage Great Lakes*.

Collision Monitoring

Many of the Lights Out programs established around the country are coupled with collision monitoring

programs and efforts to find and help birds that

have collided with buildings/windows. Data collected through this process is increasing our understanding of these collisions, including timing, species involved, and areas of cities or characteristics of buildings that are problematic. In many cities, volunteers and partnerships with local wildlife rehabilitation centers, zoos, and museums have been integral to these efforts. Several databases to capture bird collision data are available, including dbird.org, iNaturalist (including specific projects for a region/city), and the Global Bird Collision Mapper. If you choose to collect bird collision data, let Vancouver Audubon know where you are recording your findings so we can use local science data in our outreach.

Legislative Opportunity

Senator Marko Lias (D-21) introduced legislation this year to proclaim Washington Lights Out during Apr-May and Sep-Oct each year, but the bill did not get a hearing. With the short session and many competing priorities, it ultimately didn't make the cut. Senator Javier Valdez (D-46), chair of the State Government Committee, promised that a reintroduced bill in 2027 would get a hearing, giving us valuable time to build broader support for success.



Vancouver Audubon Society Elections in April

Coming up in April are Vancouver Audubon Society (VAS) required elections. There are four elected positions that serve for two-year terms starting in May of the election year. The President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer are the elected positions that serve on the VAS Board of Directors (Board) that control and conduct all business related to VAS. It is suggested that the elected officers serve for a maximum of three (3) terms in any one position.

The Board determines the policies and activities of VAS. In addition to the elected officers, the Board may include standing committee chairs and/or members-at-large appointed by the President. Our current Board consists of:

Tom Tinsley as President	Don Rose as Vice-President and Newsletter Editor
Joan Durgin as Treasurer	Jean Avery as Secretary and Membership Chair
Sam Cable as Programs Chair	Susan Saul as Conservation Chair
Randy Hill as Field Trips Chair	Ken Pitts as Website and Photography Contest Chair
Isaac Lang as Young Birders Chair	Becky Boley as Community Outreach Chair
Shaunak Deshpande as Camraderie Chair	

As you can see, some Board members are doing double duty in their roles. With over 200 members, we are seeking new candidates to step forward. If you have a passion for birds and would like to be involved in assuring their future, serving on the Board in any capacity that interests you is a great opportunity. It looks good on your resume as well!

The required commitment is to attend the 2-hour Board meetings one week before scheduled membership meetings plus one summer planning board meeting. The rest is however much you want to put into it. Talk to any of the Board members if you are interested and email Tom Tinsley (ttinsley@vancouveraudubon.org) and Jean Avery (javery@vancouveraudubon.org) to express your interest.



Be Wise and Join the Board
Ferruginous Pygmy Owl
Photo by Becky Boley, Fotofest 2022



PO Box 1966 | Vancouver, WA 98668-1966
Website | vancouveraudubon.org
Facebook | [@Vancouver Audubon](https://www.facebook.com/VancouverAudubon)

**Vancouver Audubon Society is a non-profit organization
under US IRS Code Section 501(c)(3).
Chartered December 18, 1975**

*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).

THE COLUMBIA FLYWAY 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.

Appeals Court Revives Our Lawsuit to Protect Western Gray Squirrel

Vancouver Audubon and fellow environmental groups will get another chance in court to challenge the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) failure to identify and protect critical habitat for the state-endangered Western Gray Squirrel.

The Washington Court of Appeals issued its opinion on February 9, 2026, reversing Clark County Superior Court's 2024 dismissal of our case challenging DNR's failure to propose a list of squirrel critical habitats as required by state law. We were joined in the lawsuit by Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, Friends of the White Salmon River, Center for Biological Diversity and WildEarth Guardians.

In essence, the Court held (a) that we have standing, and (b) that we can pursue our case alleging a failure to perform mandatory duties under the Washington Administrative Procedure Act.

DNR now has 30 days to decide whether it wants to seek review in the Washington Supreme Court. If not, then the Court of Appeals will issue its mandate to the Superior Court and we will be going back to that court to litigate the merits of our claims.

The lawsuit alleges DNR failed to identify and protect habitat for the Western Gray Squirrel after it was placed on the state's endangered species list in 2023.

"The western gray squirrel is an indicator species for the health of rare oak woodland habitat in Washington. Given the lack of protective regulations, the species' numbers have continued to decline statewide for decades," the lawsuit states. "Today, it is widely believed fewer than 1,500 western gray squirrels are left in Washington."

The Western Gray Squirrel (*sciurus griseus*) is the largest tree squirrel in the Northwest, a relative of the introduced Eastern Gray Squirrel commonly seen running around parks or people's backyards in Vancouver and Clark County. The Western Gray Squirrel ranges from northern Mexico through California, Oregon and Washington.

Probably the best chance of seeing them is in Klickitat County, where the state's Klickitat Wildlife Area protects and manages habitat for them. Columbia Land Trust also has purchased substantial Western Gray Squirrel habitat in Klickitat County.

Clark County Superior Court Judge Derek Vanderwood dismissed our case in 2024 because he ruled that Vancouver Audubon and the other environmental groups lacked standing to sue the state agency. However, the appellate court said the standing of a nonprofit corporation to challenge government conduct that threatens to damage the environment is firmly established in federal jurisprudence, which the state has adopted.



Do Something Now!



To find out what you can do within the State of Washington, visit [Audubon Washington Advocacy](#) page.

You can also join the [National Audubon Action Network](#) to be notified when your input is needed on a critical bill or issue at the National level.

Current efforts include advocating for the [Local Communities and Bird Habitat Stewardship Act](#) still under consideration in the House of Representatives and [supporting climate action](#) to support green energy projects.

A male Dickcissel keeps his head up and scans his surroundings

Photo by Ken Pitts, Fotofest 2025



Vancouver Audubon at future events (and volunteer opportunities)

By Becky Boley

Vancouver Audubon will be at two upcoming events. We will host a table and visit with attendees to inform them about who Vancouver Audubon is and what we do, and share information about regional birding, bird habitat and conservation efforts. We also offer a few activities at these events, which may include building a birdhouse, coloring a bird picture, and making bookmarks with bird stamps and/or stickers.

We'd love to see you at any of these events as an attendee or volunteer! Volunteer commitments are generally 2 hours – and we're happy to accommodate your schedule for shorter or longer times! Event times are listed, but we also have set-up and take down, which is usually 30-45 minutes before and after the event.

If you're interested in volunteering with us at any of these events (or want to receive email about other volunteer opportunities), please email Becky Boley at bboley@vancouveraudubon.org and she will add your name to our list and can address any questions.

Date	Event	Where	Event Time
April 25, 2025	Water Center Bio Blitz	Water Resources Education Center	10a – 1p
May 16, 2026	Kids Fishing Festival	Columbia Springs	8a – 3p
June 6, 2026	Grand Opening: Curtin Creek Park	Curtin Creek Community Park, Brush Prairie	TBD
June 20, 2025	Vancouver Pollinator Festival	Marshall Community Center Park	9a – 3p

Build Fellowship

If you are interested in finding out more about how you can help on conservation issues, you can sign up for and attend the Environmental Advocacy Brunch taking place on March 1, 2026 at 11:00 am.

Whether you are a long time advocate or newly engaged in environmental issues, this brunch offers an opportunity to:

- Meet fellow environmental and politically active community members
- Strengthen relationships across organizations
- Share ideas and build momentum for the year ahead

Brunch food will be provided.

This event is hosted in partnership with Sierra Club Washington State, Save Our Wild Salmon, Washington Conservation Action, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and Vancouver Audubon Society.

You can RSVP [here](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY BRUNCH

Come build community with fellow advocates working for a healthier and more sustainable Southwest Washington.

March 1 11am

Hidden House Event Space, Vancouver, WA

RSVP HERE

Nest Box Season

By Don Rose

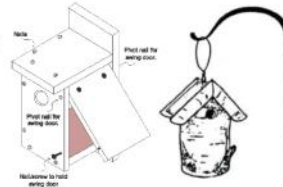
It is that time of year. You can hear it in the increased bird song and chatter. You can see it as various birds are seen grabbing bits of lint, twigs, leaves, twine, and other materials in their beaks and claws. The days are getting noticeably longer. Daylight Savings Time starts in early March!

It is time to consider cleaning and preparing your existing nest boxes or putting up a nest box or two. You can either buy one from any number of sources, or for a fun project, build one yourself or as a project with your kids. The table below has the specifications for a variety of local bird species. Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a [NestWatch](https://www.nestwatch.org) site to investigate more about choosing and managing your bird house.



Vancouver Audubon Nest Box Specifications

P.O. Box 1966 Vancouver, WA 98668-1966
www.vancouveraudubon.org



Species	Floor of Cavity	Dept of Cavity	Entrance above Floor	Size of Entrance	Height above Ground	Suggestions for Placement
American Kestrel	8" x 8"	15" - 18"	12" - 14"	4"	10' - 30'	Place in open areas near fields or water areas
Barn Owl	10" x 18"	20" - 24"	4"	5"	12' - 18'	Locate near buildings, barns or open fields
Barn Swallow (shelf)	6" x 6"	6"	Shelf unit with 2 or more sides open		8' - 12'	Place a number of shelves together under the eaves of buildings near water
Bluebird	5" x 5"	8"	6"	1-1/2"	5' - 10'	Place in open sunlit areas on fence posts or trees
Chickadee	4" x 4"	8"- 10"	6" - 8"	1-1/4"	6' - 15'	Prefers "rustic" houses; place along wooded areas or in old orchards
Downy Woodpecker	4" x 4"	8"- 10"	6" - 8"	1-1/4"	6' - 20'	Same as flicker; "rustic" houses will probably be more acceptable
Flicker	7" x 7"	16" - 18"	14" - 16"	2-1/2"	6' - 20'	Open wooded areas on dead trees above surrounding foliage; add wood shavings inside
Nuthatch	4" x 4"	8"- 10"	6" - 8"	1-1/4"	12' - 20'	Prefers "rustic" houses; place along wooded areas or in old orchards
Purple Martin	6" x 6"	6"	1"	2-1/2"	15' - 20'	A colony of houses together will attract these birds near a pond or stream
American Robin (shelf)	6" x 8"	8"	Shelf unit with 2 or more sides open		6' - 15'	Place in shaded parts of trees or under eaves of house or shed
Screech Owl	8" x 8"	15" - 18"	12" - 14"	4"	10' - 30'	Same as Downy Woodpecker; add wood shavings to bottom
Tree Swallow	5" x 5"	6"	1" - 5"	1-1/2"	10' - 30'	Place several boxes together on a post or dead tree near water
Violet-Green Swallow	5" x 5"	6"	1" - 5"	1-1/4"	10' - 15'	Same as Tree Swallow
Wood Duck	8" x 10"	24"	16"	4"	15'	Place facing toward water & add four inches of wood shavings; provide drain holes in bottom
Wrens	4" x 4"	6" - 8"	1" - 6"	1"	6' - 10'	Any partly sunlit spot: these houses may be hung from a tree limb



Left: Chestnut – backed Chickadees nest in nest boxes with sawdust

Photo by Mick Thompson, Audubon Photography Awards

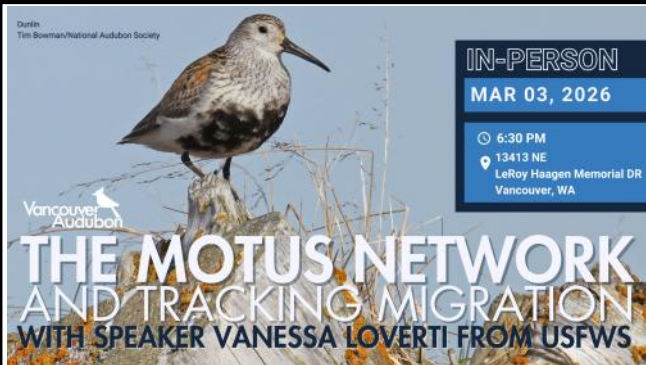
Right: A Barn Owl peaks out from its home

Photo by Craig Wallace, Fotofest 2023



Craig Wallace Photography

VAS Programs



Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Speaker: Vanessa Loverti

MOTUS Network and Tracking Bird Migration

All are welcome to our in-person Program & Meeting!

We are excited to have Vanessa Loverti speaking about the MOTUS Network and Tracking Bird Migration. Vanessa is a Shorebird Biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service where she works tracking the movements and habitats of shorebirds.

Every year, millions of birds migrate up and down the Pacific Flyway, yet there are still huge information gaps about how these birds use estuaries, beaches, and coastal wetlands throughout their lifecycle. MOTUS is a global research network that uses automated radio telemetry to study the movements of birds, bats, and large insects with tiny, digitally encoded tags. The information gathered through Motus provides ecological insight of a bird's demanding and delicate migration journey. In turn, this helps scientists identify key factors for survival such as healthy stopover sites with critical habitat and food resources which birds need to rest and refuel.

April 7, 2026—Tufted Puffins in the California Current. Speaker Katherine Luscher.

Tufted Puffins in the Pacific Northwest are experiencing a dramatic decline. Katherine Luscher, National Audubon Society's Tufted Puffin Conservation Coordinator, will discuss a new collaborative effort that seeks to halt the decline of our iconic seabird. From population monitoring to habitat assessments, come learn what is being planned by key-players throughout the region. Based in Oregon, Katherine seeks to provide support and coordination to the researchers, agencies and nonprofit organizations working collaboratively to halt the decline of Tufted Puffins in the California Current.

Katherine has over 25 years' experience working in the conservation field as a community organizer, project manager, and outdoor enthusiast. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, cycling, whitewater rafting, baking imperfect loaves of sourdough, and – obviously – birding.

MEETING LOCATION:

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

Vancouver, WA

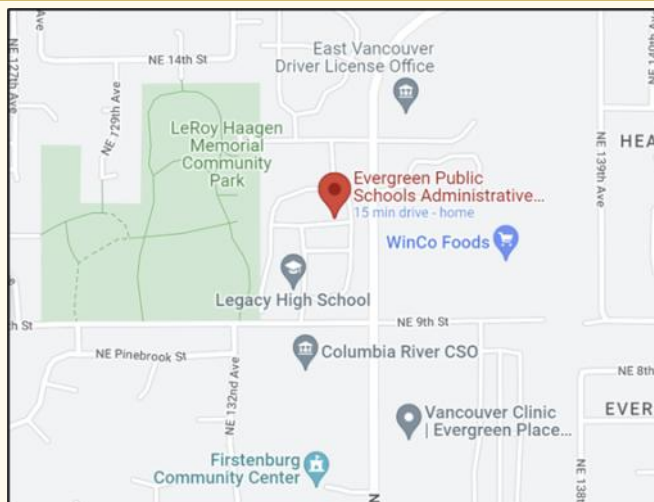
6:30 pm – 6:45 pm - Social time, share bird sightings.

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 scable@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.

Sunday, March 1— Salmon Creek Greenway First-of-Month Bird Walk

Meeting time: 7:30 am

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Register: Cindy at vas@vancouveraudubon.org

Meeting Location: Salmon Creek Greenway, west end ([roadside parking](#))

We are in the late winter phase of birding with a few of our earliest migrants trickling in and many of our wintering birds still lingering. The anticipation of spring birding! The west end of Salmon Creek

Greenway is usually excellent for viewing water birds and enjoying a variety of woodland species. We should encounter our resident bird in full song.

Meet at the west trailhead (parking available along the roadside of NW 36 th Ave, just south of the bridge crossing Salmon Creek.

Bird Walks are meant to be a casual, local morning of birding. They are a great time to enjoy birds with others, find new areas to visit, and/or work on bird identification by sight and sound or to practice your eBird app with help when needed. These walks are usually easy to join or depart at any time during the morning, no commitment to participate in the entire walk if you have limited time.



Tundra Swans are likely

Photo by Mark Boyd/Audubon Photography Awards



Short-notice field trips

Keep your eyes out for a notice from Randy about a short notice trip to check out the diver flock (sometimes 5,000 birds) in the Cowlitz river chasing after the smelt run.

Another potential short notice field trip is another try up Larch Mountain (depending on snow) likely the first week of March. If the trip up to 'Migration Corner' still has too much snow, the alternative route goes north along the L-1000 road through Dole Valley and toward Moulton Falls/Yacolt.

Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) Weekend is 3/27 through 3/29, and VAS will have some space (with a vehicle limit) depending how many WOS sign-ups there are. The weekend field trip would include Friday morning around Kalama River Road, and a noon start for Woodland Bottoms. Saturday is Ridgefield and areas west of I-5 down to Vancouver Lowlands. Sunday will be areas east of I-5. In the past the Sunday group has been low (including a snow barrier), but instead of the first weekend of March it will be the last weekend of March when the snow threat will be diminished. That could include the Vancouver waterfront, and a hike at Steigerwald NWR or a trip up to Yacolt Burn SF.

Let Randy know if you are interested. Randy Hill, randy.hill.98642@gmail.com; phone/text 360-975-2573).

eBird Hotspot Spotlight

Downtown Vancouver/Columbia Waterfront

By Don Rose



Long-tailed Duck male Photo by Barbara Saffir
Audubon Photography Awards

The [downtown Vancouver/Columbia waterfront](#) area boasts several miles of Columbia River waterfront. This area can be productive for a variety of waterfowl and gulls. The 4+ mile Renaissance walking trail can take you from Esther Short Park, through the popular new Vancouver Waterfront development, along the river east to Marine Park, the Water Resource Center, and Wintler Park. A detour to the north just east of the I-5 bridge will take you over the pedestrian Land Bridge (over SR-14) to Fort Vancouver. The Fort Vancouver Historical Site is a large patch of green in the middle of an urban area which can be a great place to find migrants and vagrants, so migration and winter tend to be the times this park shines! Keep an eye open for Acorn Woodpeckers here.

Some of the less common birds spotted this winter from the Renaissance trail include Eared and Horned Grebes, Pacific and Common Loons, Brandt's Cormorant, Black and White-winged Scoters, Cocos Booby, and recently, a beautiful male Long-tailed Duck.

Check out any of the hotspots in our area for some great birding and the use the [descriptions found on our website](#) and plan out your birding agenda. With over 300 species identified in Clark County, there are plenty of options of birds to find.

Young Birders Group

Saturday, February 28 - Washougal River Greenway Trail

Meeting time: 8:30—11:30 am

Leader: Isaac Lang

Register: [Sign up](#) is required.

Meeting Location: [Beaver Park, Washougal River Greenway Trail](#)

Come join Vancouver Audubon's [Young Birders](#) on an educational walk to identify bird species on Washougal River Greenway by their characteristics, sounds, and behaviors. This is the second walk of the new group after an outstanding walk at Vancouver's Burnt Bridge Creek Greenway Stewart Glen Trail on January 31st.

Ways to be prepared:

- 1) [Sign up](#) is required.
- 2) Download free app called [Merlin](#) onto your smartphones to help you identify species by sound.
- 3) Sign up for a [free eBird.org account](#) so we can share our combined eBird list with you.
- 4) Dress in layers and be ready for changing conditions.

Upcoming Birding Opportunities and Festivals

Raptor routes began in November and run through March. There are openings for fill-ins and recorder, second observer and ride-along opportunities. Contact Randy Hill.

[Wings Over Water](#) is March 13-15 in Blaine, Washington.

[Othello Sandhill Crane Festival](#) is March 20-22 in Othello, WA.

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

A Day of Sunshine on the Willow Grove Field Trip on Feb. 10

By Randy Hill and Don Rose

Photos by Don Rose and Beth Marlin Lichter

Our day started foggy upon meeting to carpool at Salmon Creek Park and Ride, but cleared by the time we reached our destination in Longview. In Longview, Randy's car spotted a pair of White-fronted Geese that flew over just before they reached the SR432 turnoff, a promising start. A quick pit stop followed before we continued to our first stop where we met co-leader Russ Koppendrayer, our local resident expert.

We met on Barlow Point Road, a short road off Willow Grove Road that is bounded by a levee lined with mature cottonwoods along the Columbia River and a quilt of open agricultural crop/pasture/grazed area with a few wetlands surrounding the road. We crept along the road in blazing morning sun with binoculars pointed. Highlights here included two American Barn Owls tucked deep in a barn where a photo was impossible, a White-throated Sparrow, a Rough-legged Hawk, and a beautiful



Tom Tinsley points toward a bird from Willow Grove on the Columbia River. There were thousands of Scaup visible from here.

Red-tailed Hawk preening in the morning sun as we walked to get a picture of the RL Hawk. Next, we drove the Willow Grove Road, a loop that parallels Coal Creek Slough and the Columbia River. This route included a few feeders, open agricultural areas that produced a nice variety of "blackberry patch passerines", and a variety of waterfowl along the slough and river. A pair of Purple Finch were spotted at the Willow Grove boat launch as well as near and distant views of large numbers of diverse waterfowl, dominated by Greater Scaup on the Columbia River. We finished at the old Longview wastewater ponds where a Canvasback flock and upper elevation raptors were out mingling among each other. All-in-all, a nice day outside of Clark County was spent with Vancouver Audubon members Tom, Becky, Don, Beth, Lynne, Cheri, and Teresa. Thanks to Russ for spending the day with us. A total of 49 species were spotted.

A pair of Purple Finch were spotted at the boat launch. This male Purple Finch posed for his photo.



*A Red-tailed Hawk lounging in the morning sun
Photo by Don Rose and Beth Marlin Lichter*

Red-tailed Hawk preening in the morning sun as we walked to get a picture of the RL Hawk.

Next, we drove the Willow Grove Road, a loop that parallels Coal Creek Slough and the Columbia River. This route included a few feeders, open agricultural areas that produced a nice variety of "blackberry patch passerines", and a variety of waterfowl along the slough and river. A pair of Purple Finch were spotted at the Willow Grove boat launch as well as near and distant views of large numbers of di-

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
March 2026 Events Calendar						
Feb 22	23	24 VAS Board Meeting	25	26	27	28 Young Birders Field Trip Washougal Greenway 8:30—11:30
1 First-of-Month Field Trip— Salmon Creek Greenway	2	3 Program Mtg MOTUS Tracking with Vanessa Loverti	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	31 VAS Board Meeting	April 1 First-of-Month Field Trip— TBD	2	3	Raptor Surveys are ongoing. Contact Randy.

backyardbirdshop.com



**8101 NE Parkway
Vancouver, WA
98662(360) 253-5771**