



# Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

January 2010

VOL. 39

#5

## General Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 7:00 – 8:30 pm  
First Presbyterian Church

### The Oregon Coast Birding Trail

*A presentation by Dawn Grafe*

Dawn Grafe will present highlights from the Oregon Coast Birding Trail, including the best destinations and specialty birds, at our monthly general meeting on January 21. Dawn is the Visitor Services Manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Her work involves K-12 marine education, volunteer coordination, natural resource interpretation, community outreach and anything else that involves the public. Dawn has an affinity for anything with feathers and is passionate about sharing it with people of all ages.



The Oregon Coast Birding Trail is a new self-guided route highlighting the premier locations for observing birds along the Oregon coast and into northern California. Local birders, wildlife professionals and tourism specialists produced this trail - essentially, a comprehensive guide to hundreds of birding hotspots - to help you make the most out of your bird-watching experience.



When you follow the Trail, the stunningly beautiful Oregon coast landscape will compete for your attention as you search for the more than 450 birds that have been recorded in its habitats. On the outermost part of the trail where land meets sea, explore sandy beaches, coastal dunes, tidal estuaries, and rocky tidepools. From the mainland, view birds nesting on coastal islands. Join a boat tour to go farther west for



pelagic birds on the open Pacific. Travel inland to round out your coastal birding experience where you can survey river valleys, freshwater lakes, marshes, and old-growth forest. Birdwatching on the Oregon coast is productive throughout the year, and it is exceptional during the seasonal drama of spring and fall warbler and shorebird migration.

Doors open at 6:30 pm for refreshments and visiting. The chapter meeting commences at 7:00 pm, followed by the guest lecture at 7:30 pm. Questions about the series can be directed to Dave Mellinger at [David.Mellinger@oregonstate.edu](mailto:David.Mellinger@oregonstate.edu) or 757-7953.

### Directions

The chapter meeting is in the meeting hall of the First Presbyterian Church (upstairs), 114 SW Eighth Street.

*Dave Mellinger*

### In this issue:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Invasive species alert                 | 34    |
| Homer Campbell Award nominations due   | 34-35 |
| Snag Boat Bend NWR tree planting       | 35    |
| Wildlife Watch Program reactivated     | 35    |
| Christmas Bird Count 2009 results      | 36    |
| Steelheading                           | 38    |
| A CBC interesting find                 | 38    |
| Native plant sale                      | 38-39 |
| Who's Being Seen? Finding nearby birds | 39    |
| Green Tip of the Month                 | 39    |

## Preserve Witham Oaks?

Friends of Witham Oaks are attempting to purchase 94 acres for the enjoyment of all



Witham Oaks is a property that sits between the west end of Circle Blvd. and Harrison Blvd. This 94-acre property spans a variety of habitats, including woodlands, shrub areas, and grassland, and offers an easily accessible area for recreation and peaceful reflection. Cooper's Hawks have nested there in recent years, hundreds to thousands of robins roost there in winter, and many other birds can be seen. Wildflowers are abundant in the spring and early summer. The area has the potential to be a close-in wild area that will help connect present and future generations with nature. Many people use the walkway there, especially during evenings and weekends—my rough estimate is that as many people go to Witham Oaks as go to Bald Hill, simply because it is so close and convenient to existing houses.

Once slated for development, the property is now headed for auction on January 29 and could become a unique natural wild area within our city. A group called Friends of Witham Oaks is raising money to purchase the property at auction on Jan. 29, 2010 and donate it to the City of Corvallis for preservation as open space.

For more information, see the web site <http://www.withamoaks.org>. If you can help, either by donating or by helping organize the conservation effort, please contact [withamoaks@comcast.net](mailto:withamoaks@comcast.net) or the treasurer of FOWO: Linda Tracy, 3800 NW Harrison Blvd., Corvallis, OR 97330.

*Dave Mellinger*

## Invasive Species Alert

### Emerald Ash Borer threatens local ash trees

The emerald ash borer (EAB), *Agrilus planipennis*, is a member of the family of flat-headed, metallic-colored woodborers, often called jewel beetles. It is native to Asia and is known to occur in China, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Russian Far East and Taiwan. It was first discovered causing damage to ash trees in North America in 2002, in Southeastern Michigan, and research has shown that it represents a significant threat to all 16 true ashes (*Fraxinus sp.*) that occur here. Unlike the majority of woodborers, it readily attacks and kills vigorous, healthy ash trees of all size classes, and thus poses a tremendous ecological and economic threat to both urban and natural ash resources of many states, including Oregon.

The Emerald Ash Borer is thought to have arrived in the United States in the late 1990's on solid wood packing materials located aboard cargo ships or airplanes originating in Asia.

Since its discovery, EAB has shown the ability to rapidly spread to new areas and is responsible for killing millions of ash trees in those areas where it has become established. The adult beetles feed on ash foliage but cause little damage, while the larvae (the immature stage) feed on the inner bark tissues, disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients.

EAB initially causes dying limbs or branches to appear in the upper crown, with symptoms progressively worsening to entire tree mortality, often in as little as 1-3 years.

If you see anything out of the ordinary, such as intensive woodpecker activity, please report to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Plant Division at 1-866-INVADER (866-468-2337).

*Helmuth Rogg*

## Call for Nominations

### Submit Homer Campbell Award nominees now—due January 31

The Homer Campbell ASC Environmental Award, established in 2005, recognizes a local (Linn, Benton, Lincoln & Polk Counties) individual or organization that has made significant contributions in the areas of environmental stewardship, awareness, and outreach. Contributions worthy of recognition might include, but are not limited to:



*The emerald ash borer, adult*



*The emerald ash borer, larva*  
Several woodpecker species feed on EAB larvae and pupae. The woodpeckers peck outer bark while foraging, creating large holes when extracting the larvae/pupae.

- promotion of environmentally sustainable practices
- leadership on local environmental issues
- classroom education of environmental stewardship
- restoration or preservation of habitat

Both long-standing (life-long) and short-term but significant contributions will be considered for this award. A committee from the Audubon Society of Corvallis will recommend one of the nominees for approval by the entire Board. The selected awardee will then be presented with an engraved plaque at the April ASC General Meeting. The awardee's name will also be engraved on a permanent plaque that hangs at Hesthavn.

Nominations should consist of a letter that describes how the actions or activities of the nominee fit the criteria described above. Nominations should include contact information for both the nominee and the nominator and are due by January 31st, 2010. Email submissions may be sent to Linda Campbell at [lcampbell@peak.org](mailto:lcampbell@peak.org), or Karan Fairchild at [alderspr@peak.org](mailto:alderspr@peak.org). Snail mail submissions should be sent to ASC, Attn: HC Enviro Award Committee.

Previous awardees of the Homer Campbell-ASC Environmental Award:

- 2005- Elzy Eltzroth
- 2006- Bob & Liz Frenkel
- 2007- Wally & Mary Eichler
- 2008- Bill & Carla Chambers, Stahlbush Island Farms
- 2009- Elsie Eltzroth

*Karan Fairchild*

## Tree Plantings

### Come help plant trees at Snag Boat Bend and Finley National Wildlife Refuges

On January 9th and February 6th, the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge would like to invite volunteers to come plant trees at Snag Boat Bend. The planting contributes to the restoration of riparian woodlands.

Volunteers should meet at the Snag Boat Bend parking area, off of Peoria Road, at 10 am. A light lunch will follow the plantings at noon.

An additional tree planting will happen at Finley Wildlife Refuge on January 23rd, from 10 am to noon. Volunteers should meet at the Cabell Marsh trail parking area. For more information, please contact Katie Folts at [katie\\_folts@fws.gov](mailto:katie_folts@fws.gov) (541) 757-7236.

*Katie Folts, Finley NWR*

## Wildlife Watch Program

### ASC Reactivates dormant Wildlife Watch program after Mallard prank

Almost 30 years since inception, our local Audubon chapter has reactivated its Wildlife Watch program. The Wildlife Watch Program was designed to discourage people from harming or killing wildlife, but it has been inactive for at least a decade. After the recent prank painting of the Mallard duck on the LBCC campus in Albany, the conservation committee, which had been working toward reinstating the program, sprang into action. ASC held a meeting with

Chintimini Rehabilitation Center after viewing the duck. Shortly thereafter a meeting was held with Theresa Novak of the Corvallis Gazette-Times newspaper, during which ASC offered a \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the party that painted the duck. The duck is struggling and is still desperately trying to preen off the paint, but it appears to be stable and is eating lightly. Local residents have donated several hundred dollars to increase the reward monies. A meeting with law enforcement officers who deal especially with abused animals is planned for January 7th at the Benton Co. Commissioner's office at 10:00 am. Channel 8 news and KGAL radio have held interviews concerning the abused duck.

*John Gaylord*

## Field Trip Schedule

### Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

Jan 9: Meet at the Benton Center at 7:30 am  
Feb 13: Meet at the Benton Center at 7:30 am

Our Saturday morning local field trip meets the second Saturday of every month at the Benton Center parking area, 757 Polk Ave, Corvallis at 7:30 am. This field trip is especially interesting for beginner birders and birders new to Oregon's mid-valley area. We spend a lot of time identifying local birds by sight and song. We visit the valley national wildlife refuges—Finley, Baskett Slough, and Ankeny, as well as other birding areas throughout the year. Contact Rich Armstrong at [richarmstrong@comcast.net](mailto:richarmstrong@comcast.net) or 541-753-1978 with questions.

### Spring 2010 Weekend Field Trips

Mar 19 – 21: Bandon/South Coast  
Apr 16 – 18: Klamath Basin  
Apr 30 – May 2: Rogue Valley  
May 20 – 23: Malheur NWR  
June 18 – 20: Summer Lake/Ft Rock/Fremont NFS

Fred Ramsey leads all the spring weekend trips. Fred has been leading these field trips for ASC for over 35 years. He is an amazing field trip guide, sharing his knowledge about finding birds in their habitat and pointing out wild flowers, butterflies, mammals, and reptiles. The field trips fill up early in the fall. Sign-up sheets are available at the general meeting or email Fred Ramsey with your requests at [flramsey5@comcast.net](mailto:flramsey5@comcast.net).

#### Please note:

The Rogue Valley and Malheur trips require deposits by February 28, 2010.

The Rogue Valley trip includes a play at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. The play this year will be Hamlet. A deposit of \$40 is required for the play.

The Malheur deposit is \$50. Each deposit must be made payable to Fred Ramsey at 3550 NW Glen Ridge Pl., Corvallis OR 97330.

*Rich Armstrong*

# Christmas Bird Count 2009

## The 2009 Corvallis CBC is a Wrap

*Note: see the area key, below, and the list of birds on the insert.*

A total of 39 field observers and 8 parties of feeder watchers participated in the 49th Corvallis CBC on Tuesday, December 22, 2009. Participants enjoyed a pleasant day, dry and above freezing, as they spread out to count all the birds in the 15-mile diameter circle.

The final species total is 123, which is a bit above average, but a bit below the previous three years. There were no new species or particularly unusual birds; however, there were no bad misses, either.

Several species set new highs or tied the previous high including Eurasian Wigeon, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Common Raven, Horned Lark and Savannah Sparrow.

I've defined unusual species as those seen on one-quarter or fewer of the counts. This group includes several species undergoing range expansion: Red-shouldered Hawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Barred Owl and Black Phoebe; and one whose range has declined: Spotted Owl. Other unusual species are Greater Scaup, Golden Eagle, Gray Jay, Townsend's Solitaire and Chipping Sparrow.

Other interesting birds include a Slate-colored Junco, which graced the feeders of one of the feeder watchers, a hybrid American x Eurasian Wigeon at the HP pond and a leucistic Fox Sparrow in south Corvallis.

Gulls were in short supply with one Mew Gull and one Ring-billed Gull being the only gull species identified. Shorebird numbers were also low.

Count week birds were Long-billed Dowitcher, Barn Swallow and Swamp Sparrow.

I'd like to thank everyone who participated. Thanks also to Rana Foster who prepared the chili for the potluck.

### CBC Area Key

- 1A: Oak Creek; NW Corvallis (west of Kings Blvd)
- 1B: NE Corvallis (east of Kings Blvd)
- 2: Orleans (Tangent Dr. to Riverside Dr.)
- 3: Oakville
- 4: Peoria
- 4R: Willamette River and Snagboat Bend by Kayak
- 5: SW Corvallis, Neabeck Hill
- 6E: S. Corvallis east of 99W to Kiger Is.
- 6W: S. Corvallis west of 99W to Herbert Ave.
- 7: Airport
- 8: Greenberry
- 9: Finley, Eureka Rd.
- 10: N. Philomath, West Hills
- 11: S. Philomath, Evergreen
- 12: Beaver Cr.

*Marcia F. Cutler, Corvallis CBC Compiler*

# Field Notes

28 November 2009 – 1 January 2010

Early December brought an extreme cold spell, which froze most standing water. More than 98% of Cabell Marsh, McFadden Marsh, and even the Philomath sewage ponds were frozen. Milder and rainy weather returned in mid-December; the Corvallis CBC, on 22 Dec, had outstanding weather. Rain returned for the last 10 days of the month, flooding many fields and refilling lakes and marshes. Overall, not many unusual birds were discovered, but a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at EE Wilson was certainly noteworthy.

*Abbreviations and Locations:* m.ob. = many observers. Observer names are noted in parentheses after their reports. Observations without a name (or with WDR) are the editor's. ASC indicates observations made by Audubon Society of Corvallis field trips. EEW = E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis. ANWR = Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge in Marion County. FNWR = Finley National Wildlife Refuge, and includes Cabell, Cheadle, and McFadden marshes. STP = sewage treatment ponds; Philomath STP are off of Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath. Knoll Terrace STP are off of Elliot Circle in Corvallis. Stewart Lake is at Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis. Toketie Marsh is the remedial wetland for Coffin Butte landfill north of Corvallis, just off of Highway 99W. The Bellfountain Wetland along Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath is also sometimes called the Evergreen Mitigation Bank. The Diamond Hill Road wetland is in Linn County.

Few geese, other than the white-cheeked varieties, have been present lately. Two immature **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at FNWR in mid-Dec and were detected on the Corvallis CBC.

**Tundra Swans** gathered in excellent numbers at Cabell Marsh. The high count was 900 there, 19 Dec. **Trumpeter Swans** socialized at their usual spot near Airlie (see photo). The high count was 38 on 10 Dec (J. Geier).



*This mixed group of Trumpeter and Tundra Swans foraged in their customary location near Airlie, 4 Dec (photo by Rita Snyder).*

The deep freeze of early December reduced open water on Cabell Marsh, McFadden Marsh, and the Philomath STP so much that many waterfowl spent their time sitting and sleeping on the ice instead of trying to squeeze into the limited amount of unfrozen water. Both the north and south ponds at Philomath STP were more than 98% frozen; when that water freezes, you know it has been very cold for a while.

High counts of ducks were exceptional, perhaps because most waterfowl were concentrated around the few sections of open water instead of being scattered all over the region. On 8 Dec, 23,000 **Mallards** and 19,000 **Green-winged Teal** were at FNWR. **American Wigeons** topped out at 1,100 that day, although numbers climbed higher and reached 2,348 at FNWR, 30 Dec. Numbers of **Eurasian Wigeons** continue to be low this winter. A female and a hybrid male were at Stewart Lake, 22 Dec (J. Simmons). Typical high counts at FNWR have been of 2 or 3 individuals per day.

323 **Northern Shovelers** were at Philomath STP, 8 Dec (WDR); 200 at Stewart Lake, 17 Dec, was a high count for that site (J. Simmons). Numbers of **Northern Pintails** were fairly low until late Dec when a noticeable influx appeared; 5,000 were at FNWR, 30 Dec.

The high count of **Lesser Scaup** was 74 at Philomath STP, 1 Jan. **Ruddy Ducks** moved out of the region during the deep freeze, with numbers at Philomath STP dropping to 28 on 8 Dec. They returned rather quickly, however, and numbers climbed back to 171 on 31 Dec.

No **Western** or **Clark's Grebes** were reported. A local concentration of 48 **Pied-billed Grebes** near Corvallis airport was interesting.

A **Golden Eagle** visited FNWR, 22 Dec (F. Ramsey, M. Monroe). **Red-shouldered Hawks** were reported regularly from Corvallis, FNWR, and EE Wilson (m.ob.). A male **Merlin** appeared at Stewart Lake, 3 Dec (J. Simmons).

Randy Campbell reports a brief look at a white-phased **Gyr Falcon** flying south over Peoria, 13 Dec. The species is rare locally, but a white-phased bird seems unprecedented.

A flock of 30 **Black-bellied Plovers** were seen along Smith Road in Linn County, 8 Dec (T. Snetsinger).

No large concentrations of **Dunlin** were reported.

Another late **Red-necked Phalarope** was found, this time at Adair Village STP, 14 Dec (B. Altman)

A **Wilson's Snipe** sought shelter and food under the eaves of Elsie Eltzroth's house in Stonybrook Village, 9 Dec.

Two **Short-eared Owls** were across the Willamette River from Peoria, 1 Dec (R. Campbell). Three were at Corvallis airport, 22 Dec (R. Moore, A. Kotaich, WDR)

**Barred Owls** are now regularly encountered in our area, but rarely nicely photographed. One at EEW, 3 Dec, posed for photos (see photo).



*Barred Owls continue to increase in numbers in our area. This one was at EE Wilson, 8 Dec (photo by Bill Proebsting).*

Now for the tale of the **Ivory-billed Sapsucker**. Rich and Nannette Armstrong, along with Tristen Gholson, got fleeting glimpses of a sapsucker at EE Wilson during the Airlie-Albany CBC, 20 Dec. That glimpse suggested the bird was a **Red-naped Sapsucker**. The uncooperative bird evaded close inspection for several days, disappearing just as binoculars or cameras were raised. Fleeting glimpses in foggy weather showed field marks associated with adult Red-naped Sapsuckers. A blurry photo suggested the bird was indeed a sapsucker, although it was tough to conclusively eliminate the alternative identification of a clump of moss. Parallels with the epic searches for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the southeastern U.S. were emerging. Was there really a Red-naped Sapsucker? If not, what was it? Enter Cheryl Whechel

and her photographic skills. She was the first to finally secure photos that showed the bird was not, after all, a Red-naped Sapsucker, but a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, probably a juvenile male (see photo). Once pictures were obtained the bird became very cooperative and was seen by many through at least 1 Jan.



*Evasive at first, this Yellow-bellied Sapsucker eventually posed nicely for pictures, here 26 Dec (photo by W. D. Robinson).*

Rare during winter, a **Townsend's Solitaire** along Hope Drive in Corvallis, 21-22 Dec, was a nice find (R. and N. Armstrong)

A group of 8 **Western Bluebirds** visited Elsie Eltzroth's neighborhood from 9 Dec onward. Flocks of 25 or more were reported regularly from FNWR (m.ob.).

A **Barn Swallow** showing field marks consistent with those of Asian subspecies foraged over Cabell Marsh on 8 Dec. The bird had a broad blue band of nearly equal width across its breast and white underparts.

**Horned Larks** made a good showing on the Corvallis CBC when 315 birds were detected; they were in two groups, one in Linn County and the rest at Corvallis airport (R. Moore, J. Fleischer).

A few **Swamp Sparrows** were discovered. One was at Ankeny NWR, 4 Dec (J. Notis). Two were at EEW along the Canal, 13 Dec. One was at Cabell Marsh, 19-26 Dec.

Joel Geier reported 2 **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** in a grassy field at EE Wilson, 7 and 9 Dec. Unfortunately, they avoided detection by others.

Howard Bruner reports finding a **Western Tanager** along Jefferson Ave, 17 Dec. The species does seem to leave a few stragglers in western Oregon in some winters.

Numbers of **Pine Siskins** at feeders have been comparatively low this winter, but a few flocks have been reported in the Coast Range. A flock of 125 was along Llewellyn Rd, 22 Dec, and a flock of 80 was in McDonald Forest near Baker Creek, 1 Jan.

Forty-two **Evening Grosbeaks** were on top of Marys Peak, 26 Dec. Elsewhere, they have been uncommon to absent, so four detected on the Corvallis CBC marked a good find (K. Fairchild, N. Strycker).

#### Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 28 January.  
W. Douglas Robinson  
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## Steelheading

The peach-colored fingernail-sized corky ball and sharpened hook on the end of my line arcs over dark-green water, and lands with a plop in the fast current near the opposite stream-bank. The lead weight, also on my line, pulls the corky down near the river bottom, and is swept downstream by the rapids.

I feel a bump...bump...bump...through my graphite fishing rod as the weight and little peach ball travel downriver over the gravelly bottom. When my line reaches downstream at about a forty-five degree angle with the near bank, I begin to let line out to extend the drift.

The intensity of my focus shuts out any awareness of the sights and sounds around me. The only thing happening in my life lives at the business end of my fishing line.

Suddenly the line and bouncing weight hesitate almost imperceptibly—something feels different. I snap the tip of my rod up, the water explodes, and liquid silver and green shatter the silence.

I've chosen a friendly fight with an athletic, chrome-bright, twelve-pound wild, winter steelhead in Oregon's Siletz River. He's not so friendly and leaps two feet out of the water, dances across the surface, and shakes his head to rid himself of the nasty hook. The powerful fish darts downstream, pulling my line out; he jumps again, and swims angrily upstream toward me. I reel in the slack line quickly, keep it taught, and hold the struggling opponent out in the current near me.

Eventually the exhausted fish surrenders and floats peacefully on the water's surface near the bank. I wade out to the beautiful creature, reach into his mouth, and pull the hook from his upper jaw. I gently point the steelhead upstream and give him a push into the current; the liberated fish swims gracefully back into the safety of deeper water.

I feel great—I've come closer to the primordial nature of myself and a wild part of my life that makes me who I am.

*Gary Gibson*

## An Interesting Find on Christmas Bird Count Day

On December 22, Mary Garrard and I were paired by CBC organizer Marcia Cutler to cover a suitably oddly-shaped territory that included a good part of southwest Corvallis (including a southern slice of the OSU campus) and stretched to Philomath's east-most housing development. Owing to reasonable weather which provided rainless cloudiness and a temperature that rose to 40 by mid day, we proceeded to capture glimpses and up our numbers of birds typically seen this time of year. Unlike some of the other teams who told of their discoveries later, we did not sight any rare or even uncommon birds during our foray in the field. But we certainly had fun and as luck would have it, happened upon an unusual surprise at the end of the day. In the late afternoon we had worked our way to our portion of the campus and decided to take a good look at the non-native oaks which can be seen on the north side of Gill Coliseum. Not surprisingly, several Acorn Woodpeckers were observed flitting about. But as we watched their action we noticed that periodically one or more of their number would leave the cover of the trees and head for

a wooden light pole which is found on the southeast corner of the intersection of Washington Way and 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Walking over for a closer look, we saw three industrious woodpeckers tending to an acorn granary constructed within the top five feet of the pole, just above the projecting lamp. I invite any interested woodpecker lovers to make a visit to this easily found and observed congregation point!

*Karl Hartzell*

## Olympic BirdFest 2010

**Come Bird With Us at Sequim, WA on April 9-11**

Grab your binoculars and join the Olympic BirdFest 2010 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, April 9-11.

The stage is set... quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, and Northern Pygmy-Owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours; and a traditional salmon bake at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center.

Come bird with us and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula... you just might go home with a new bird for your life list! Check out the offerings by going online (<http://www.olympicbirdfest.org>), or calling for a brochure.

Also this year! Follow your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two night birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 11-13, 2010. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort. Get program information and registration forms online at: <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org>.

Or contact us by phone, at 360-681-4076, e-mail us at [info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org), or write to:

Dungeness River Audubon Center  
P.O. Box 2450  
Sequim, WA 98382

*Bob Hutchison*

## Native Plant Sale

Orders for the Benton Soil & Water Conservation District's annual plant sale are due January 22

Over 60 species of native conifers, broadleaves, shrubs, flowers, and grasses are available for purchase from the Benton Soil & Water Conservation District during their annual native plant sale. Prices range from just 50 cents to \$4.00.

A great way to stock up on plants that will create natural habitat for birds, the profits from this event go toward scholarships and other projects related to conserving natural resources.

People interested in ordering native plants can go to our web page [www.bentonswdc.org](http://www.bentonswdc.org) (or call 541-753-7208). Click on Native Plant Sale in the left-hand margin. There are two ways to order. The first option is to download an order form and mail it in with a check; the second is to go to the PayPal site (find a link on the Native Plant Sale home page) and order online. The order deadline is January 22, 2010. Plant pick up

day is February 6th (times to be announced). If you would like to receive an annual email that announces the sale or a quarterly newsletter that also includes an order form, contact Teresa Matteson at 541-753-7208.

We are also looking for volunteers to work three-hour shifts on the day of the pick up. Nice people, lots of fun, and pizza to be had by all.

*Alice Fairfield*

## Who's Being Seen?

### Winter Open Ground

It may get cold, wet and miserable at times in the Willamette Valley, but to many birds the weather is just right. The Willamette Valley is a valuable wintering ground for many migratory species because the ground remains unfrozen. There are occasional cold spells that freeze things over, but it tends to thaw within a week.

Looking for birds in large fields can yield some productive birding adventures. And not just at formal wildlife areas or refuges—you can look for some good areas in town. Parks, ball fields, airports and empty lots are important to wintering birds.

### Large Fields

Well-maintained grassy areas in parks, ball fields and golf courses are favorites of ubiquitous robins and starlings. You may also find Killdeer among them too. The Willamette Valley is a champion of winter Killdeer numbers with some of the highest in nationwide Christmas Bird Counts. The best fields are the ones some people don't like to have in the neighborhood—patchworks of weedy clumps and pockets of bare dirt. These fields offer a good variety of the soil invertebrates for robins, starlings, Killdeer and bluebirds. In such fields you can commonly see Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets hunting voles. Where there are voles, there may be raptors. In town you can look for American Kestrels and the occasional Red-tailed Hawk. On the edges of town and in the country you can look for Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks. Some species are less common but reliable in some fields and prairies, such as Horned Larks, Western Meadowlarks and American Pipits. Bald Eagles and Common Ravens gather when sheep are birthing. The birds feed on afterbirth or stillborn lambs. In some places it's possible to find occasional species like Short-eared Owls, Burrowing Owls, White-tailed Kites and Northern Shrikes. Then there are rarities, like Snowy Owls, Gyrfalcons and Snow Buntings that lucky birders find in winter fields.

### Flooded Fields

Some fields turn into wetlands for significant periods. These mucky areas may get overlooked by binoculars. Sometimes the water isn't visible from a distance due to the grass. Put on your waterproof boots and do a little exploring. These spots can harbor the Wilson's Snipe, a bird whose commonality may be underappreciated by some birders. These seasonal wetlands also attract common dabbling waterfowl like Mallards, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers and more. In a few select areas you may find flocks of Tundra Swans. Be sure to scrutinize these flocks for the uncommon Trumpeter Swans.

## Places in or Near Corvallis

In Corvallis: Bald Hill Park, Marys River Natural Area, Willamette Park, Alan B. Berg Park, Orleans Natural Area, Herbert Farm and Natural Area, OSU Campus Way Covered Bridge path and Owens Farm and Natural Area. Just outside Corvallis: E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area and William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. Roads to travel south of Corvallis: Greenberry, Llewellyn, Airport, Bellfountain, and Decker roads. Roads east of Corvallis: Peoria Road, Tangent Drive and Fayetteville Drive. North of Corvallis: Independence Highway, Airlie Road, and Springhill Drive. These are good places to start but there are other suitable spots not listed. Get out there and explore!

*Don Boucher*

## Chat Editor Still Needed!

The ASC is looking for a volunteer or volunteers to edit the Chat. This is a fun job that takes about a half-day of work, once a month. The Chat editor collects submissions (usually emailed) and enters them into a Microsoft Word template. It isn't necessary to know how to format the newsletter for publication, or print or distribute the issue – other volunteers perform those tasks. The Chat editor selects the stories that will run in each issue and performs any editing required to make everything fit. If you have any questions, please give us a call at 754-3120.

*Joan and Neil*

## GreenTip OF THE MONTH

Audubon Society of Corvallis has taken a "green" pledge to do what we can to recycle, cut energy use and support programs that encourage a healthy planet. Using cloth shopping bags, energy efficient florescent bulbs and not using foam or paper cups for meetings may seem like small potatoes, but it is a step in the right direction. I recently received a bulletin from the company I worked for some 30 years, Continental Airlines, which has also taken a green pledge. They reported from their Houston, Newark, and Cleveland terminal operations an increase in recycling projects of 800% in one year. In 2009 they recycled more than 462 tons of plastic and aluminum and 1300 tons of cardboard. In 2009 the November Continental Airlines Daily News Update indicated that this is enough aluminum to build 20 Boeing 777 airplanes, save more than 584,000 trees and save enough water to serve the needs of 106,900 homes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35,208 metric tons. Thank you, Continental and Audubon Society of Corvallis.

*John Gaylord*

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Dave Mellinger, Karan Fairchild, Katie Folts, John Gaylord, Rich Armstrong, Douglas Robinson, Marcia Cutler, Gary Gibson, Karl Hartzell, Bob Hutchison, Dave Hewitt, Alice Fairchild, Lisa Millbank and Don Boucher.

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the **CHAT**

Renew your membership before the date on the mailing label to avoid missing issues of the Chat.

**Calendar**

- Jan 9 Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am
- Jan 9 Tree planting, Snag Boat Bend NWR, 10 am
- Jan 14 Board meeting
- Jan 21 General meeting
- Jan 22 Benton Soil & Water Conservation District plant sale order deadline
- Jan 23 Tree planting at Finley NWR, 10 am
- Jan 28 Field notes submission deadline for Feb Chat
- Jan 28 Article submission deadline for Feb Chat
- Jan 31 Homer Campbell Award submission deadline
- Feb 6 Tree planting, Snag Boat Bend NWR, 10 am
- Feb 12-13 Winter Wings Festival in Klamath Falls\*
- Feb 13 Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am

\*see December 2009 Chat



Double-crested Cormorant photo by Sue Powell

The Chat is published 10 times a year by the Audubon Society of Corvallis, PO Box 148, Corvallis OR 97339. Annual ASC memberships are \$25 for an individual, \$35 for a family, \$15 for a student. Chat-only subscriptions (email delivery only) are \$15.

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