

Birdathon: Birding Together for a Cause



Northern Pygmy-Owl, photo by Tara Lemezis.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's Birdathon Season!

by Stuart Wells, Executive Director

Hello, Portland Audubon Community. Time seems to have flown by since my arrival just over six months ago. As a newcomer to Portland, I start dreaming of spring as soon as January arrives, and I am already thinking about Birdathon, with registration beginning this month. Unfortunately, I arrived in Portland too late to join a team last year, but can't wait to venture out this spring to watch birds with other Birdathoners, all while raising funds to support our conservation efforts. Birdathon is one of our most exciting fundraising events, and we've been holding it annually for over 40 years. I was so impressed last year when I learned just how many people helped to make our fundraising efforts a success. Last year alone we had 292 participants on 35 teams. It was a great mix of Birdathoners, with 90 participants who had never done it before, and many who have been participating for years or even decades.

You can check out our cover story for how to register, and see a menu of teams you can join—all with punny names, a Birdathon staple. You can create your own team with friends or go birding solo. And if you can't get out there birding with us, you can always donate to a participant or a team right from the comfort of your home. Regardless of how you choose to participate, know that you'll be supporting our core mission: protecting Oregon's birds and their habitats. I hope to see you at the Birdathon Celebration.

IN THIS ISSUE



- 3 Birdathon: Birding Together for a Cause
- 6 Wildlife Care Center Update
- 7 A Voice for Wildlife: Volunteer Wildlife Solutions Counselors
- 8 Introducing Our Interim Conservation Directors
- 9 Portland Audubon Commits to Dropping the Name Audubon
- 10 2023 Legislative Agenda
- 12 Field Notes & Sightings
- 13 Audubon Birding Days & Field Classes
- 14 Classes, Outings & Events
- 16 Ecotours: Travel with Us!
- 17 From the Coast/From Eastern Oregon
- 18 97th Christmas Bird Count Breaks Records!!
- 19 Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Western Ridged Mussel
- 20 Portland Audubon Joins Lawsuit to Protect Streaked Horned Lark as Endangered
- 21 New Free Outings!
- 22 Green Investments to East Portland
- 23 The Nature of Being
- 24 In Memory
- 26 Business Alliance
- 27 Nature Store



BIRDATHON



REGISTRATION
OPENS MARCH 15!

birdathon.audubonportland.org

What Is Birdathon?

It's a fundraiser where participants ask for donations from friends and family, then head out into the field to count birds solo or with a team. Donations can be a flat amount or a per-species pledge where more birds found means more money raised. Everyone who registers for Birdathon receives tips and templates to make fundraising easier. Birdathoners are invited to a celebration in June to recognize their collective achievements, try their best at the traditional bird quiz, and win fabulous door prizes.

Birding Together for a Cause! by Sarah Swanson, Event Specialist

This year will mark my 17th year of Birdathon participation, and I can't wait to get out there with other birders and support Portland Audubon's important work! The joy and camaraderie of sharing a wonderful birding experience with fellow Birdathoners has given so many of us great memories over the years. Birdathon builds community around birds and raises funds to help Portland Audubon protect the birds we love and the ecosystems they depend on. It's also a fun tradition and a great way to revel in spring birding.



We hope to bring in over \$175,000 during Birdathon 2023, and with the help of our Portland Audubon community, this goal is well within reach. Registration begins March 15 and teams will go birding between April 29 and June 4. See birdathon.audubonportland.org for a full list of teams you can join or support. Everyone can play a part in Birdathon, as a donor, participant, or team leader. We have a variety of teams, with options for seasoned birders, new birders, photographers, women, and LGBTQIA+ birders. And, of course, folks can always start their own team!

How can I be a part of Birdathon?

- **Join a team.** See the Birdathon website for a full list with descriptions. Registration begins March 15.
- **Create a team.** See page 5 for the perks of starting a team.
- **Solo Birdathon.** Are you more of a Solitary Sandpiper when it comes to birding? Do a Birdathon on your own! You can register as an individual.
- **Donate.** Can't join Birdathon this year? Support your favorite participant or team with a donation.

Thank You to Our Birdathon Sponsors!





BIRDATHON 2023 TEAMS

These are just a few of the teams that you can join. For a complete list with full team descriptions, see the Birdathon website.

Big Picidae

May 20

A Big Day with a narrow focus: How many of Oregon's twelve woodpecker species can we find in one day? Come birding with Portland Audubon trip leader and woodpecker superfan Brodie Cass Talbott as we explore Wasco County, the only county in Oregon to regularly host all 12 species

Boardathon

May 21

Master Naturalist Candace Larson will guide this team for current and former Portland Audubon board members led by board member Colleen McDaniel.

Clickadees

Date TBA

Grab your camera and join team leaders Angela Calabrese and Tom Myers on a birding treasure hunt as we collectively attempt to photograph as many bird species as possible over a long weekend. Team members can stay close to home or head out to their favorite locations. We encourage all bird photographers of all skill levels.

Crow-Magnons

June 3

Join Portland Audubon Interim Statewide Conservation Director Joe Liebezeit, and expert birder David Mandell on an all-day exploration of Wasco County's incredible birding diversity from the eastern flanks of Mt. Hood down to the pine-oak savanna and sagebrush.

NEW! Green City Swallows

May 6

Interim Urban Conservation Director Micah Meskel will guide you at birding hotspots along the Willamette River in N. Portland while speaking to our urban conservation agenda. The trip will finish at a brewery where we'll talk birds and future conservation work.

Handle-Barred Owls

April 29

Join current and former Portland Audubon staff members Tara Lemezis and Kelsey Kuhnhausen for a bikes, birds, and beer adventure in Portland. We'll bike to birding hotspots to look and listen for our favorite springtime migrants, year-round birds, and hopefully a Barred Owl! The trip will end with a celebratory checklist count and outdoor bevies!

"It was fun meeting new people, seeing new birds, and raising funds from friends and family for an important cause."

-Birdathon 2022 participant

Knithatches

Date TBA plus weekly Zoom check-ins

Join a team of birders who knit and knitters who bird, co-led by former Volunteer Manager Vicky Medley and Erik Brown for a month of knitting and birding. Grab your needles, pick a new or existing project, and start knitting. We'll have weekly Zoom check-ins to report our bird sightings and knitting progress, and then meet up to bird and knit together.

NEW! Marsh Wrens

May 27

Senior Educator Erin Law and birder Jason Law will take their team on a tour of the rich birdlife of the wetlands of Washington County. Search Fernhill Wetlands and Jackson Bottom Wetlands for bitterns, warblers, rails, and waterfowl.

Millennial Falcons

May 28

Calling all young adult birders, photographers, and nature lovers! Join avian enthusiasts Erin Cathcart and Brandon Lampkin for a casual half day of birding at Fernhill Wetlands. All skill levels are welcome as we explore this restored wetland for a wide variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors.



Owl Be Darned ▲

Date TBA (Fri-Sun)

Join Hailey Walls, Christine Jervis, and Kayla McCurry on a three-day Birdathon experience geared toward women birders. We'll plan to bird together by van for those who are comfortable, and keep in close contact over a messaging platform for those who want to bird alone or in pairs. We look forward to racking up a big list of birds with our teammates again in 2023!

Pintailgaiting

May 28

Visit Whitaker Ponds and Force Lake for an accessible Birdathon with Communications and Marketing Director Ali Berman and former Portland Audubon naturalist and educator Ian Abraham. The team will search for songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl galore.

NEW! Plover Yonder

May 6

Join Coastal Community Science Biologist Allison Anholt for a big day of birding on the north coast. You'll enjoy Snowy Plovers, Black Oystercatchers and more beachy birds as you visit a variety of coastal hotspots.

Sage Flight

May 20

Like a flight of your favorite beverages, this team will sample Malheur's finest. Eastern Oregon Biologist Teresa Wicks will lead the team from Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters on a loop through the county, hitting all the hotspots, with a brewery stop to end the day.

Tequila Mockingbirds

May 13

Join the Tequila Mockingbirds on a Nature Store Birdathon adventure! Join Nature Store staff and volunteers to bird together in search of woodpeckers, warblers, waterfowl and more.



Warbling Yogis ▲

May 5

Join the Birdathon team with a twist (or maybe two)! Team leaders Tonya Garreud, Martha Gannett and Christie Galen will combine birding with yoga as we bird our way around a few of Portland's parks and natural areas. No mats or yoga experience necessary—all poses will be done in our full birding gear.

Kickoff Events

We are offering kickoff events again this year to celebrate Birdathon and get off to a great start with registration and donations. The week before Birdathon trips start, April 24-28, we will have a series of free virtual classes. All who have raised or donated at least \$45 for Birdathon 2023 by the time these events begin will be eligible to attend. Two classes will center on this year's Birdathon logo bird, the Northern Pygmy-Owl: a watercolor class and an overview of the natural history of Forest Park's pygmy-owls. Other classes will include birding topics that get you ready for Birdathon.

Birdathon Questions?

Want to start a team? Not sure what team to join? Event Specialist Sarah Swanson has 16 years of Birdathon experience and wants to make your Birdathon experience a great one. Contact her at birdathon@audubonportland.org

The Perks of Starting Your Own Birdathon Team

- **Birding whenever you want.** Birdathon teams can go out anytime from April 29 to June 4. Your trip can be as short or as long as you want—a morning walk or a weeklong adventure.
- **Birding wherever you want.** Take a trip to a local refuge or count birds during an out-of-state adventure—it's up to you!
- **Birding with friends.** Bring your favorite birding buddies or people you'd like to introduce to birding. Create a team with coworkers or family members. Together you can make a difference for Oregon's birds and wild places.
- **Coming up with a fun team name.** Bird puns are encouraged. Need ideas? How about "Veery Good Time," "No Egrets," "Sora Losers," "Huffin' and Puffin," or "Hawkward Pause."



Wildlife Care Center Update: Repairs Underway, Now Operating at Temporary Facility

by Stephanie Herman, Wildlife Care Center Manager

As many of you have heard, on December 24, in the midst of the ice storm and freezing temperatures, Portland Audubon's Wildlife Care Center suffered extensive water damage throughout most of the facility due to broken water pipes. We want to provide an update to the community and thank you for your outpouring of support and offers of help during this time.

First, please know that no patients were injured as a result of the water damage. Knowing our facility would be out of commission for a time, our first priority was to transfer patients to other facilities and release those that were ready to return to the wild. These transfers and releases have been completed.

As for the building, unfortunately the water damage was severe. Parts of the ceiling came down in multiple rooms, water went into the walls, and critical equipment like our x-ray machine was damaged. **The repairs are significant and are expected to take approximately three months. We are not able to care for wildlife in the building until then but hope to return to our Cornell facility and full operations in early April. In the meantime, we have opened a temporary facility in partnership with Oregon Humane Society at 8001 NE 14th Place, Portland.** Here, our specially trained wildlife medical professionals will be able to provide initial assessments and stabilizing care. We will continue to partner with other permitted wildlife rehabilitation facilities including Cascades Raptor Center, Chintimini Wildlife Center, and the Wildlife Center of the North Coast to provide long-term care to our patients.

If you find a wild animal while the building is closed, we encourage you to call Portland Audubon's hotline, 503-292-0304, or email wildlife@audubonportland.org as a first step. We can help determine the best option for you and your situation. Leave a message, and our volunteers and staff will get back to you as soon as possible. We return calls and emails between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. every day, usually within a few minutes of receiving your message.

During our open hours (daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m.) you can bring animals to our temporary facility at 8001 NE 14th Place, Portland. The parking lot is at the corner of NE Argyle and NE 14th Place.

If we are closed, DoveLewis Emergency Animal Hospital will continue to accept wildlife patients between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. every day. Due to the continuing outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, Portland Audubon, DoveLewis, and other wildlife rehabilitation facilities cannot accept ducks and geese for treatment.

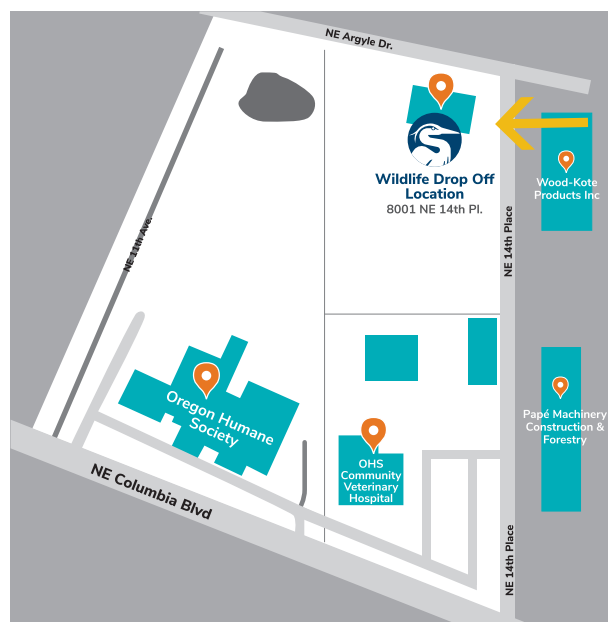
Regardless of where patients are received, they will be immediately evaluated by trained animal medical professionals and provided with medical attention. Once stable, Portland Audubon's team of volunteers will transport patients to other regional wildlife rehabilitation facilities for continuing care and will help bring them back to their original wild homes when they are ready for release.

We know many have reached out asking if we need financial support. While we expect insurance to cover most of the costs, donations are always appreciated: audubonportland.org/supportwcc. We are also in need of volunteers who can provide compassionate wildlife advice to our community. You can read more about this opportunity at bit.ly/WCCSolutionsCounselor. You can also support our partners who have helped bring us through this challenging time, including DoveLewis, who received all patient intakes for a month and a half after our closure, as well as the rehabilitation facilities that have been caring for injured or orphaned wildlife while we make repairs. Those include Wildlife Center of North Coast in Astoria, Cascades Raptor Center in Eugene, and Chintimini Wildlife Center in Corvallis.

We'll keep the community updated as we go forward. Our Wildlife Care Center is the largest and busiest in the region, and our staff take their responsibility as caretakers for injured and orphaned wildlife very seriously. We're

thankful that this happened during our slowest season, affecting the fewest number of patients. Now we're working to get our facility back online and open to the public as quickly as possible.

While all this is happening, Portland Audubon continues to search for land on which to build a new wildlife hospital, in order to continue to serve our wildlife and community for years to come. Stay tuned for more news in the next few months.





Wildlife Care Center, photo by Tammi Miller.

A Voice for Wildlife: Volunteer Wildlife Solutions Counselors

by Vicky Medley, former Volunteer Manager, and Roberta Jortner, Volunteer

Thousands of community members reach out to Portland Audubon each year with questions like “How can I help the goslings trapped on my roof? What can I do about the skunk under my porch?” Answering those questions is the job of a special team of volunteers: the Wildlife Solutions Counselors, who guide callers through the steps to humanely resolve wildlife conflicts. Our Solutions Counselor volunteers serve 365 days a year as a voice for wildlife, providing the public with the information, tools, and support they need to live in harmony with wildlife.

Anyone could answer the phone and provide our address and some simple instructions about where to take an injured bird or animal. But the Solutions Counselor role goes far beyond that. “The heart of the job is both supporting and providing guidance to those in crisis,” says Solutions Counselor Roberta Jortner. “As humans encroach further into wildlife habitat, we will continue to see increases in human-wildlife conflicts and the need to solve issues without harming wildlife.”

The calls come in many furry, scaly, and feathered forms. The most common are about cats attacking or killing birds and about birds hitting windows but frequently include calls to help raptors injured in vehicle collisions, baby birds that are orphaned or have fallen out of the nest, or birds trapped in buildings. Many callers also reach out with questions about living in harmony with wildlife. They may not be in a crisis at the time of the call, but they are growing frustrated with the Great Blue Heron eating the koi in their pond, or the squirrels that have taken up residence in their attic.

Our Solutions Counselors work with callers to not just resolve the situation at hand, but to also collaborate on

ways to prevent the episode from reoccurring. “Providing medical attention to injured animals is a crucial part of the process, and it gets the lion’s share of the attention. But the most impactful work is done by our Solutions Counselors, who save thousands more animals than we will ever know about by helping callers take action and avoid causing harm in the first place,” says Stephanie Herman, Wildlife Care Center Manager.

Our callers often openly share their gratitude for having someone to talk to and for the Wildlife Care Center services that help our native wildlife survive. And our Solutions Counselors have the rewarding opportunity to meet rescuers face-to-face when they first bring a bird or other animal to the Care Center, or when an animal recovers and is ready for release. A happy moment for all!

Would you like to join our volunteer team of Wildlife Solutions Counselors? Our volunteer Counselors commit to one weekly four-hour shift for six months, though many choose to work with us for much longer. The shifts are 8:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m. or 12:45 p.m.-5:00 p.m., same day and time each week. Our Care Center is open seven days a week!

If you enjoy problem solving, learning about wildlife, and educating the public, this is an excellent volunteer opportunity. You don’t need to be a master naturalist or already know the answers to wildlife questions—our robust training and mentorship program will give you a solid foundation. **To learn more about joining our team of volunteer Solutions Counselors, check out the Volunteer tab of our website or reach out to our Volunteer Manager, volunteers@audubonportland.org**



Joe Liebezeit, Interim Statewide Conservation Director, and Micah Meskel, Interim Urban Conservation Director

Introducing Our Interim Conservation Directors

by Stuart Wells, Executive Director

As we begin the search for a new conservation director, we are fortunate to have two existing team members step in to serve in the interim. Joe Liebezeit will serve as interim statewide conservation director, and Micah Meskel will serve as interim urban conservation director. Together they possess over 20 years of experience at Portland Audubon and significantly longer over their careers.

Joe Liebezeit joined Portland Audubon in 2013 as staff scientist and avian conservation manager, and possesses a master's degree in wildlife management. Prior to his position with Portland Audubon, Joe worked for the Wildlife Conservation Society, leveraging on-the-ground science efforts to protect wildlife in the Alaskan Arctic. During his 10 years here, Joe has grown the coastal marine program at Portland Audubon: he helped establish west-coast-wide protections for forage fish species (important prey for seabirds), facilitated the designation of eight rocky habitat protection areas, and worked to uplist the Marbled Murrelet from threatened to endangered under Oregon's Endangered Species Act. Additionally, he has built a statewide community science program coordinating with over 300 volunteers from the coast to the Portland Metro Region. These

community science efforts help support the benefit of habitat restoration to wildlife in the Portland area, contribute to the recovery of the endangered western Snowy Plover, and help minimize impacts on the Black Oystercatcher, a species of conservation concern. Joe represents statewide conservation on the Ocean Policy Advisory Council, which provides the governor with recommendations on management of our state waters.

In Joe's interim role, he will be leading Portland Audubon's statewide conservation and policy efforts, including maintaining his leadership on coastal conservation initiatives and overseeing our eastern Oregon work, statewide forest initiatives, and other relevant work across Oregon. He will continue to oversee the community science program but will be delegating much of that work to our very competent staff.

Micah Meskel came to Portland Audubon in 2010 as a volunteer in the Wildlife Care Center, where he immediately got hooked by the innovative Living with Wildlife conservation program that proactively resolves conflicts with wild animals who share our urban landscape. He transitioned to staff in 2012 and worked in numerous roles within the conservation department and Wildlife Care Center before stepping into his most recent role with Portland Audubon's Activist Program as its manager in 2018. He has been instrumental in supporting the department's ambitious conservation agenda by connecting the organization's members, activists, and broader community to advocacy opportunities. In addition, he has led his own portfolio of urban policy campaigns and on-the-ground collaborative conservation projects, and has represented Portland Audubon in countless community-based coalitions. Micah's experience in multiple roles throughout the organization over more than a decade gives him insight into how inter- and intradepartmental collaboration is instrumental to Portland Audubon's success, and it has helped inform his conservation campaign and program development.

In Micah's interim role, he will be leading Portland Audubon's urban conservation policy and advocacy agenda, managing programmatic staff who oversee the Backyard Habitat Certification Program (co-led with partner Columbia Land Trust), the BirdSafe and Lights Out programs, and the Wildlife Care Center.

Joe and Micah are excited about heading up the conservation program as we search for new leadership to continue our 120-year conservation legacy. They look forward to building on the extraordinary work that Bob Sallinger accomplished during his 30 years at Portland Audubon, as well as the work of the entire conservation team, all of which places us at the forefront of Oregon's conservation efforts.

Portland Audubon Commits to Dropping the Name Audubon

Over the last few years, coinciding with a time of racial reckoning, the birding community has been rethinking its relationship with the John James Audubon name. Many know him as a wildlife artist whose illustrations helped shape the field of ornithology. Some associate the name with fond memories of birding trips, summer camps, and environmental advocacy from organizations like ours. What has been dismissed, ignored, or overlooked until the last few years by both Portland Audubon and the larger Audubon community is the fact that John James Audubon enslaved and sold Black people, opposed the abolition of slavery, and dug up and stole the human remains of Native Americans from their graves.

After a great deal of discussion within our board, staff, and with other Audubon chapters, Portland Audubon's board voted in January to move away from the name Audubon. In order to best achieve our mission as an organization committed to racial equity and the environment, we cannot continue to condone bearing a name that celebrates a slaveholder who embraced white supremacist systems.

Portland Audubon isn't alone in having these discussions. Already Seattle Audubon, Madison Audubon, Chicago Audubon, and the Audubon Naturalist Society have decided to drop the name. In addition, National Audubon Society has spent the last year undergoing a process to examine whether they will continue with the Audubon name. While National Audubon Society hasn't made a final decision, in late February (after our print deadline) an internal task force made a recommendation on

whether National Audubon should embark on a name change. Regardless

of the outcome of the task force's recommendation, we strongly urge National Audubon Society's board to do the right thing and move forward with a collaborative renaming process.

There are more than 450 Audubon chapters across the country, including Portland Audubon. National Audubon Society should remove the name Audubon, as this would make a strong statement toward the network's commitment to racial equity. It would allow the Audubon network to stay intact and help chapters move forward together with a unified voice. If National Audubon decides not to remove the Audubon name, Portland Audubon will begin its own collaborative name change process, which will include input from our members, partners, sister chapters around the state, and the larger community.

No matter what our name, our mission remains the same: to inspire people to love and protect birds, wildlife, and the natural environment upon which life depends. While a name change is never easy, we believe that it's vital to our work if we want to make sure that Portland Audubon is a place of belonging for everyone and every community.

Pictured above: Great Blue Heron, photo by Michael Levine-Clark.

"John James Audubon's name may mean "birds" to some, but to others it means ignoring a legacy of systemic racism. By moving away from the name, we can reduce harm and find a name that reflects the kind of environmental movement we can be proud to be a part of." - Stuart Wells, Portland Audubon Executive Director

Portland Audubon 2023 Legislative

by Joe Liebezeit, *Interim Statewide Conservation Director*, and Micah Meskel, *Interim Urban Conservation Director*

The 2023 Oregon legislative session kicked off its biannual “long session” with thousands of bills in play. As in years past we will be tracking bills to support and oppose for the next several months until the session ends in June. The legislative session can be quite a roller coaster ride, with some bills dying early but then rejuvenating later in the session in the form of riders and amendments on Christmas tree bills as the session nears its end. We are into the first weeks and the pace is already fast, with many bill hearings underway. Portland Audubon is prioritizing several important bills and budget requests that will advance protections for wildlife and habitats and help combat climate change.

Our top priorities for the 2023 legislative session are passing legislation to support Oregon’s Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas through a more robust program; mandating Oregon to move forward to fight climate change while protecting key habitats; and passing legislation to facilitate safe passage of millions of birds during their nocturnal migration. This legislation builds on years of effort by Portland Audubon staff including former conservation director Bob Sallinger, who deserves much credit in moving this work forward. Both interim conservation directors will be leading Portland Audubon’s efforts at the legislature along with a contract lobbyist.

- **House Bill 2903** - Oregon Marine Reserves Program: Builds on current Marine Reserve Program’s decadal assessment and legislative recommendations. Requires ODFW to develop an adaptive management and social monitoring program in an uncertain climate future. Funds three new positions to bolster ecological and socioeconomic monitoring.
- **Senate Bill 530** - Natural Climate Solutions: Positions Oregon to leverage federal funding and private investments in natural climate solutions on working lands (i.e., activities that sequester carbon like protecting mature and old-growth forests, planting more trees in urban areas, etc.). Directs state agencies to develop carbon sequestration targets and provide incentives and technical support to forest owners and farmers to implement natural climate solutions.
- **House Bill 3202** - Safe Night Skies: Directs the State of Oregon to adopt measures to reduce unnecessary, wasteful, and excessive outdoor artificial light on publicly funded projects that may interfere with wildlife, climate, human health and dark sky tourism.



Conservation Priorities

Legislation and budget requests we are supporting in this session either directly or through the Oregon Wildlife Coalition:

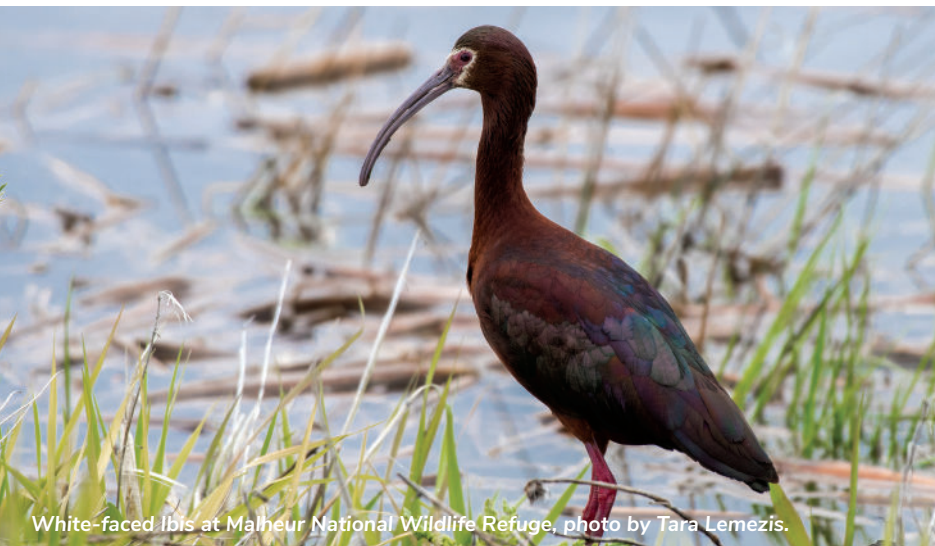
- **ODFW Budget Policy Option Package - Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package:** \$3 million package to promote wildlife stewardship, reduce human-wildlife conflicts, support wildlife rehabilitation efforts, and protect Oregon's wildlife. The proposed Wildlife Coexistence Program would fund five biologists and a communications coordinator focused on stakeholder engagement, the Living with Wildlife educational campaign, and a grants program to support wildlife rehabilitation centers.
- **House Bill 3016** - Creates a new statewide green infrastructure program to plant and protect tree canopy in heat-vulnerable areas across the state. The program includes a grant program to fund community-led projects, native plant nursery support, tree canopy threat mitigation and assistance, and related workforce development.

- **House Bill 3222** - \$2 million legislative request to continue collaborative work in Harney County to move forward innovative initiatives that support this region as a world-class migratory bird staging area while benefiting local ranchers and communities.
- **House Bill 3159** - Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund: Raises the state Transient Lodging Tax by 1.5% to pay for fish, wildlife, and habitat recovery and restoration across the state.

Bills we are opposing that would harm wildlife:

- **HJR 5** - Establishing a new Constitutional Right to Hunt and Fish: HJR 5 could prevent Oregon citizens from using the ballot initiative to protect wildlife.

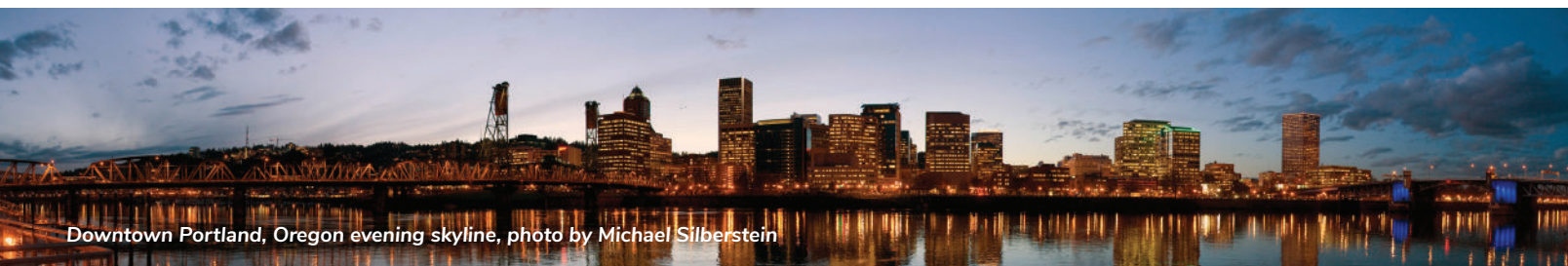
At the time of printing, it appears most of our priorities are advancing, but there could be twists and turns in the road ahead. By the time this issue reaches your mailbox, a third of the session will have passed and we are likely to be in the midst of a push to get our bills and budget requests across the finish line. Stay tuned for a flurry of action alerts, and please send emails to legislators—it will make a big difference in a crowded session with an austerity budget.



White-faced Ibis at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, photo by Tara Lemezis.



Northern Spotted Owl, photo by Scott Carpenter.



Downtown Portland, Oregon evening skyline, photo by Michael Silberstein

FIELD NOTES

by Allison Anholt, Coastal Community Science Biologist

Oregon's Shorebird Superstars

In the famously dreary Oregon Coast winter, many a birder has thought of following the birds to warmer climes. Indeed, many specialist shorebirds—Ruddy Turnstones, Red-necked Phalaropes, and Red Knots—follow this well-known migration story: they spend their summers in the Arctic tundra and their winters in the decidedly warmer California, Mexico, and Central and South America, delighting Oregon birders mostly on their vital coastal refueling stops between breeding and wintering grounds. Many more tundra-breeding shorebirds decide to shorten this journey and feast in our coastal mud fields, saltmarshes, and sandy beaches all winter long—surely we should appreciate these Sanderlings, Dunlin, and dowitchers for their intrepid spirits as well.

However, the true Oregon Coast superstars are those that never leave. Along with coastal birders, a couple hardy species of shorebirds not only survive but thrive



Black Oystercatchers, photo by Wolfram Burner.

in the unrelenting wind of midsummer, the frequent dense fogs that follow in fall, the gales and king tides of winter, and the cold, constant drizzle of early spring. Snowy Plovers and Black Oystercatchers may inhabit different physical spaces—the plovers never leave the sandy beaches, and oystercatchers rely on the rocky intertidal zone—but they both spend their whole lives on the Oregon Coast. In winter, each species gathers in large, loose groups of their compatriots, some flocks numbering up to 100 birds! They flock together because of the old adage “four eyes see more than two”—some individuals watch for predators like Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles, and even coyotes, while the others rest or forage. If you’ve ever wanted to see large groups of these coastal specialists, take inspiration from these birds and spend your winters on the Oregon Coast!

SIGHTINGS

by Brodie Cass Talbott, Educator & Trips Specialist

The 97th Portland Christmas Bird Count is in the books, and, as usual, the several hundred dedicated birders who turned up spotted a few unusual birds. A **Cassin's Vireo** at Alberta Park was a first for the count, as were **American White Pelicans** and **Trumpeter Swans** (both of which were somewhat expected, as they have increased their winter presence dramatically at nearby Sauvie Island), and some much less expected **Brandt's Cormorants** were also found on count day. This is a second record for the county, and region, and remarkably, two have stayed on the Columbia River near Kelley Point Park ever since.

There have been a number of other exceptional finds this winter as well. A **Summer Tanager** was found coming to a feeder in southeast Portland and has remained for at least a month. A **Gray Catbird** found skulking in a Cedar Mill neighborhood was much less obliging.

A **Rusty Blackbird** was finally spotted at the Purina factory in North Portland, where birders have been turning up rare icterids like **Tricolored** and **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** for years while searching for

Rustys. A Clackamas County first-record Tricolored was also reported on New Year's Day in Molalla, just a week after a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was an overdue county first at Clackamette Park.

It has also continued to be an unprecedented year for overwintering **Western Tanagers**, of which at least four individuals have been reported thus far. It's also been a decent year for **Harris's Sparrows**, with individuals in Portland and Woodburn.

And in Monmouth, a state-first **Field Sparrow** was found at the local sewage ponds, where it has remained for weeks, allowing hundreds of birders to see it. This is the second out of the last three state firsts that was found at a sewage treatment plant.

Those are only a few of the rare birds reported across the region. **For corrections, tips, and reports, email Brodie Cass Talbott at bcasstalbott@audubonportland.org, and for a more detailed weekly report, visit audubonportland.org.**

Audubon Birding Days and Field Classes

Audubon Birding Days: Willamette Birding Series

Milwaukie to West Linn: Mar. 5 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Oregon City Hills to Molalla: Mar. 10 | 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Tualatin to Molalla River: Mar. 19 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Visit lesser-known birding spots along the Willamette River south of Portland with Dan van den Broek. Birders of all levels are welcome. Please register separately for each Audubon Birding Day.

Fee: \$65 members / \$85 non-members
 Leader: Dan van den Broek

Field Class: Nature Connection and Writing Workshop Series

March 11, 18, and 25 | 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

In this three-part workshop, Julia will guide participants through sensory-based nature connection, reflective writing exercises and techniques, and community connection.

Fee: \$95 members / \$125 non-members
 *fee covers all three sessions
 Instructor: Julia Waters

Audubon Birding Day: Wildflowers at Catherine Creek and Deschutes River

April 5 | 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Join Stefan for an exhilarating day of wildflowers and birds at Catherine Creek and Deschutes River Canyon!

Fee: \$95 members / \$125 non-members
 Leader: Stefan Schlick

Audubon Birding Day: Deschutes River State Recreation Area and Celilo State Park

April 23 | 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Join Ross for early spring birding along the lower Deschutes River, its mouth at the Columbia River, and the nearby riverside state park.

Fee: \$85 members / \$115 non-members
 Leader: Ross Barnes-Rickett

Field Class: Patching Together: Small-scale Birding for Fun! with Erin Law

Online classes: April 20, May 1, & May 17 6-7 p.m.

Field trips (choose two!): April 23, May 2, and May 21 *location and times vary, please check website for more details

All levels of birders and especially beginners are welcome to join this series of both online meetings and field trips to discover and explore our own patches and the birds that live there.

Fee: \$175 members / \$225 non-members *fee covers all three online classes and two field trips
 Instructor: Erin Law

Field Trip: Why Birds? Beginning Explorations with Erin

April 26 | 9-11:30 a.m.

Join Erin Law to explore our relationship with birds and enjoy the birds found at Wapato Access on Sauvie Island.

Fee: \$45 members / \$65 non-members
 Instructor: Erin Law

Field Class: Forest Bathing for Birders with Dr. Tia Ho

April 29 | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Join Tia on a very slow-paced walk of two hours, exploring invitations and opening our senses to our place in nature alongside the birds.

Fee: \$25 members / \$35 non-members
 Guide: Dr. Tia Ho

Sign up for
trips at
[bit.ly/PA-
Birding-Days](https://bit.ly/PA-Birding-Days)



Yellow-rumped Warbler, photo by Mick Thompson.



Bushtit, photo by Tony Freixas.

NATURE NIGHT & NEW SCHOOL

The Secret Lives of Bushtits

April 11 | 7-8:30 p.m.

Bushtits are adorable, friendly balls of fluff that appear in flocks at bird feeders and birdbaths in backyards throughout the western US. But how much do you really know about these mysterious little birds? All is not as amicable as it appears on the surface. In fact, competition may be the name of the game. Join Dr. Sarah Sloane as she reveals some of the intriguing complexities of bushtit social structure she has uncovered during her long-term research in Arizona and, for the last six years, here in Portland.

Cost: Free, donation suggested



The New School of Birding, Module 3: The Wonders of Migration

Online classes: Wednesdays: April 19, April 26, and May 3 | 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Field days: April 22, April 26, May 6 | 7 a.m. to 12 p.m./4 p.m. (depending on destination)

In this module, we hope to raise your awareness of the subtle cues of nature, and bring you into closer understanding of the lives of our feathered neighbors. We'll explore how and why birds migrate, delving into the mysteries of how birds stay on course, how scientists measure migration, the amazing journeys of long-distance migrants, and much more!

Fee: \$400 members / \$550 non-members
Instructors: Candace Larson and Dan van den Broek



Sign up for classes and trips at
bit.ly/pdxaudubon-classes



Red-legged Frog, photo by Andrew A. Reding.

CLASSES FOR ADULTS

Introduction to Herping: Reptiles and Amphibians of the Portland Area

March 14 | 6-7 p.m.

Join us to learn about the amphibians and reptiles of the Portland area.

Fee: \$20 members / \$30 non-members

Instructor: John Rakestraw



Online Watercolor Painting with Ronna

March 8, The Barn Swallow | 6-7:30 p.m.

April 4, The Osprey | 6-7:30 p.m.

Join these live online classes to paint alongside an experienced watercolor painter, art educator, and bird enthusiast. Register separately for each class.

Fee: \$20 members / \$30 non-members

Instructor: Ronna Fujisawa



Exciting Spring Migrants

March 16 | 6-7 p.m.

Prepare for the best three months of birding! Learn where and how to find and identify some of the most exciting spring birds and more!

Fee: \$20 members / \$30 non-members

Instructor: Brodie Cass Talbott



Bird Journals for Beginners and Beyond

March 18, Suggesting Birds and Their Habitats | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

April 8, Quick Studies of Birds | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Explore tools for recording your bird experiences, both at home and in the field. Each in-person class focuses on a specific aspect of journaling and reviews the basics. Register separately for each class.

Fee: \$55 members / \$75 non-members

Instructor: Jude Siegel





Western Tanager, photo by Tara Lemezis.

CLASSES FOR ADULTS

Birding Oregon Hotspots: A Series with John Rakestraw

March 21, Portland Metro Area | 6-7 p.m.

March 27, Washington County Wetlands | 6-7 p.m.

Join local author and guide John Rakestraw to find out where the best birding hotspots are around the state. Each class will cover species you'll find at each hotspot. Register separately for each class.

Fee: \$20 members / \$30 non-members

Instructor: John Rakestraw



In-Person Watercolor Painting with Ronna

March 25, The Pileated Woodpecker | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

April 29, Our Yellow Warblers | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Join these in-person art classes to paint alongside Ronna Fujisawa, an experienced watercolor painter, art educator, and bird enthusiast. This class is appropriate for intermediate and ambitious beginners. Register separately for each class.

Fee: \$55 members / \$75 non-members

Instructor: Ronna Fujisawa



Beginning Birding by Ear: A Series

April 5, Birdsong Basics | 6-7 p.m.

April 12, Tips and Tricks 6-7 p.m.

April 17, Backyard Favorites 6-7 p.m.

These classes will take you on a deep dive into bird vocalizations, what different sounds mean, and introduce you to the fascinating world of bird calls in your own backyard and beyond. Register separately for each class.

Fee: \$20 members / \$30 non-members

Instructor: Brodie Cass Talbott



Cost Involved

Public Transit Available

FREE Free

Family Friendly

Wheelchair Accessible

Virtual Event or Program

SUMMER CAMP



REGISTER NOW FOR SWIFTS NATURE SUMMER CAMP!

June 26 - September 1
GRADES 1 - 8



Join Portland Audubon for truly amazing, nature-based adventures all summer long! This summer, we've given our camps a name for the first time! **SWIFTS** is an acronym that encompasses much of what makes camp here so unique: **Science, Wildlife, Imagination, Friendship, and Taking a Stand.** Swifts embody so much of what we strive to foster in children. They're collaborative, at home in the city and in the forest and they're both hyper-local and roaming explorers. And they're iconically Portland!



To support working parents, we're offering **aftercare** for the first time, enabling campers to stay until 5:30 p.m. and our **sliding scale fee** structure continues to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience camp with Portland Audubon. Families are invited to pay at the level that works for them!



bit.ly/PA-SummerCamps



Northern Gannet, photo by Stefan Klaas.

Coastal New England: Shorebirds, Seabirds, and Whales

September 3-9, 2023

Bird the stunning coast of picturesque New England with the author of Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching: Eastern Waterbirds in Flight and the upcoming book, Terns of North America: A Photographic Guide. Join Erin Law and Portland Audubon's newest ecotour guide, class instructor, and author Cameron Cox to explore from scenic Cape Cod up to the rugged and beautiful Acadia National Park. On this week-long adventure, we'll enjoy shorebirds, seabirds, and whales with a side of warblers and clam chowder!

Fee: \$3,395 members / \$3,895 non-members

Leaders: Cameron Cox and Erin Law

The Wonders of Oaxaca

December 3-13, 2023

Travel with Portland Audubon to a cultural and biodiversity hotspot of our southern neighbor. On this 11-day trip, we'll travel with our local guide through mountain scrub to tropical deciduous forests. We'll visit cultural sites, search for endemic species, and enjoy a boat ride to see pelagic birds of the Pacific Ocean.

Fee: \$4,295 members / \$4,795 non-members

Leaders: Brodie Cass Talbott and Camelia Zollars

Winter Florida Getaway

January 10-17, 2024

Join Portland Audubon for a getaway to sunny Florida, where we'll travel the southern portion of the state in search of its unique birdlife. We'll visit the famed Everglades and the Florida Keys in search of Limpkin, Snail Kite, White-crowned Pigeon, and many more.

Fee: \$3,295 members / \$3,895 non-members

Leaders: Stefan Schlick and Brodie Cass Talbott



Blue and Yellow Macaw, photo by Faraaz Abdool.

The Best of Trinidad and Tobago: Birding and Wildlife

April 1-15, 2024

From the unforgettable experience of watching thousands of Scarlet Ibis return to their roost, to catching a glimpse of the critically endangered Trinidad Piping-Guan sipping water from a bromeliad, you are sure to have the trip of a lifetime with Faraaz and Erin on Trinidad and Tobago. Read more on page 23.

Fee: \$6,495 members / \$7,095 non-members

Leaders: Faraaz Abdool and Erin Law

Spain: Extremadura, Doñana, and Sierra de Gredos

April 27-May 11, 2024

Join Stefan and Randy to explore Europe's birding hotspot: Spain! The timing is perfect to witness the trailing end of migration and Spain's birds in their breeding glory. Combine fabulous birding with excellent food, fantastic scenery, and ease of logistics, and you have an amazing trip that you won't want to miss!

Fee: \$4,495 members / \$4,995 non-members

Leaders: Stefan Schlick, Randy Hill, and local guides

Ice Age Floods

September 15-21, 2024

Travel the path of the great Ice Age Floods from Missoula to Portland on this always popular geology, birding, and wildlife tour.

Fee: \$2,095 members / \$2,595 non-members

Leaders: Candace Larson and Brodie Cass Talbott

Sign up for Ecotours at
bit.ly/pdxaudubon-ecotours



NEWS FROM THE COAST

It's Nest Monitoring Season!

by Allison Anholt, Coastal Community Science Biologist

Spring is right around the corner, and with spring comes the breeding season of Snowy Plovers and Black Oystercatchers. Portland Audubon Community Science volunteers spend each breeding season (March-August) locating and monitoring as many nests as they can find for these coastal residents. Last year, volunteers conducted almost 1,500 surveys of plovers and oystercatchers, monitoring 44 plover nests in Clatsop and Tillamook Counties, and 79 oystercatcher nests throughout the Oregon Coast. Monitoring involves several tasks. First, community scientists are faced with the tricky but rewarding challenge of finding nests—both species blend in beautifully with their surroundings, the dark oystercatchers melding into the landscape of rocky bluffs and offshore rocks, and the sand-colored plovers practically indistinguishable from sandy beaches. Their eggs evolved to look like seashells, bits of wood, and pebbles, making them difficult to find by humans and predators alike. We train volunteers to see through this camouflage defense to safely find nests. Teams then watch each nest from afar until it hatches. The final phase of monitoring involves watching the young chicks reach fledging, where they are able to fly on their own and no longer need parental care. These moments are rarely seen through casual observation, and our community science monitoring is a great way to witness these special moments. Sound fun? Please join us on one of our upcoming trainings:

- ▶ **Snowy Plover Patrol:** *In person on March 18, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Nehalem Bay State Park, or virtually on March 22-23, 6-8 p.m.*
- ▶ **Black Oystercatcher Monitoring:** *Virtually on May 4, 6:30-8 p.m., or in person on May 7 in Cannon Beach (time TBD)*

For more details, please visit the Community Science page of our website, or email Allison Anholt at aaanholt@audubonportland.org.



Snowy Plovers, photo by Mick Thompson.

NEWS FROM EASTERN OREGON

Drought and Greater Sandhill Cranes

by Teresa Wicks, Eastern Oregon Biologist

Millions of years

they have blown here

[. . .]

where they arrive

with the shine of water,

stories, interminable

language of exchanges

descended from the sky. . .

Linda Hogan, *The Sandhills*

Greater Sandhill Cranes nest across southeastern Alaska and central Canada and south to Cuba. In the Harney Basin, Lesser Sandhill Cranes arrive in early spring, followed by Greater Sandhill Cranes. By late April, the Lessers are headed north to their breeding grounds and Greater Sandhills have started nest building. Their lives are intrinsically tied to water and wetlands. Drought has been found to decrease recruitment—the survival of chicks into adulthood—and thus the breeding population. As part of our efforts to support Malheur NWR in meeting their conservation goals, we conduct sandhill crane pair counts in the spring. These counts help track the number of pairs of cranes returning to the basin over time. In an effort to understand how the worst drought in recorded history is affecting crane recruitment, we are working with Malheur NWR staff to restart sandhill crane recruitment surveys. This year, we are seeking volunteers to come to the Harney Basin for at least a week between July 15 and September 15 to look for and count cranes. This effort will focus on Malheur NWR, but will include some driving off of the refuge in the agricultural area near Crane and Lawen, with the possibility of counting west of Burns. If you are interested in helping Portland Audubon and Malheur NWR staff understand how drought is affecting sandhill cranes in the Harney Basin, please contact Teresa Wicks at twicks@audubonportland.org.



Sandhill Cranes, photo by Hayley Crews.

A photograph of two people in a wooded area. On the left, a person wearing a grey beanie and a light green sweater is looking through binoculars. On the right, an older man with a white beard, wearing a dark beanie and a brown jacket, is also looking through binoculars. They are both holding tripods. The background shows bare trees and a forest setting.

97th Annual Portland Christmas Bird Count Breaks Records!

Photo by Kilee Mendiola.

by Candace Larson, Master Naturalist

On December 31, 2022, Portland conducted the 97th annual Christmas Bird Count under mild and mostly dry skies—a real treat after the icy conditions leading up to the big day. We broke the record on number of field observers at 270, and over 100 joined in from their feeders! Altogether, these intrepid volunteers tallied 125 species (2 more than the 10-year average) and an impressive 83,850 individual birds, all seen or heard within our 15-mile diameter count circle. Tremendous thanks to the area leaders—Brodie Cass Talbott, Joe Liebezeit, Lynn Herring, Carol Murdock, and Colleen McDaniel—who organized the mass of volunteers into dozens of field teams, led their own sectors, and collated the pile of data into a useable tally for the compiler.

The Portland CBC feeds into a data set that encompasses over 2,500 CBC count circles across North America and as far south as Brazil. Observations allow researchers, wildlife agencies, conservation biologists, and others to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across the count area. This was the 123rd year for the CBC, making it one of the longest running large-scale data sets in existence. Hundreds of studies have been published using CBC data, and findings have informed climate-change science as well as important management and conservation decisions that help protect birds across their flyways.

On Portland's count, David Leal detected a Cassin's Vireo in the trees at Alberta Park—a first for our count circle. This is an impressive discovery in December, and it earned David the coveted "eagle eye" award,

bestowed on the birder who finds the most unexpected species of the day. Congratulations, David! Other new birds for our count circle included 2 Brandt's Cormorants, 6 Trumpeter Swans, and 100 American White Pelicans. Keen observers added a pile of uncommon species, including a Harris's Sparrow and a Least Sandpiper, 2 Western Tanagers, and a whopping 8 Acorn Woodpeckers found across 6 different sectors!

The five most-encountered species were Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, American Robin, American Crow, and Dark-eyed Junco. Anna's Hummingbird numbers climbed to a record 944, and 15 Black Phoebes were seen across the count circle, more than doubling the previous high count. Several other species also exceeded their past peaks, including Eurasian Collared-Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch, Bewick's Wren, and both White-throated and White-crowned Sparrow. Lesser Goldfinches continued their rise, and woodpeckers also made a strong showing, with Downy, Hairy, and Flicker numbers all breaking records. On the flip side, we barely squeaked out one Purple Finch and dipped entirely on Greater White-fronted Goose for the third year running.

Heartfelt thanks to all the area leaders, field counters and feeder watchers for making this year's Portland CBC another outstanding success. We look forward to seeing you again next year. If you'd like to help out as a community scientist on the 2023 CBC or another project, please visit our website to check out the exciting opportunities. We'd love to have you join us!



Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Western Ridged Mussel

by Emilie Blevins, Senior Conservation Biologist,
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Oregon is home to a fascinating range of animals, from rare species found nowhere else on earth to iconic creatures like beavers. In this lineup of biodiversity, freshwater mussels are an important yet often overlooked group, supporting many other species in our rivers by burrowing into stream bottoms, filtering water, and improving habitat. They are a diverse group of animals that have a unique association with fish. While adult mussels keep the water cleaner and support the aquatic food web, they also go through a temporary parasitic larval stage associated with specific fish species. For just a couple of weeks, young mussels must attach to a fish's gills or fins and undergo metamorphosis. Once complete, mussels will drop off the fish, landing, with luck, in just the right habitat and spend the next 10, 60, or even more than 100 years quietly filtering water along the river bottom. Where habitat is good, native fish are plentiful, and mussels are thriving, you might find thousands of them in a small area, called a mussel bed.

As rivers and streams have been impacted by human activities, and as other native aquatic species have declined, so have freshwater mussels. At one time, North America was home to more than 300 mussel species. Now, many are extinct or highly imperiled.

As rivers and streams have been impacted by human activities, and as other native aquatic species have declined, so have freshwater mussels. At one time, North America was home to more than 300 mussel species. Now, many are extinct or highly imperiled.

In Oregon, this means that our species—the western pearlshell, western ridged mussel, and floater mussels—are now found in smaller numbers and in fewer places. Drought, pollution, and other pressures are all negatively impacting populations, and as Oregon Conservation Strategy Species, mussels have been recognized by the state as species of greatest conservation need.

Oregon does not have many species relative to other regions in the country; our species are unique to the West. Our most imperiled species, the western ridged mussel (*Gonidea angulata*), is the only member of its genus on earth. As with other mussels, it uses specific host fish, most likely relying on sculpins. However, sculpin have a much broader range than the western ridged mussel, so what factors specifically govern where the mussel is found are still a bit of a mystery.

The western ridged mussel is a bellwether for Oregon's rivers. While we may still find an abundance of animals in some places, such as on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, increasingly the species is dying out, whether slowly, as observed in some streams, or quickly, as in the case of the unexplained die-offs seen in the Crooked River. Even where the species may still be abundant, unexplained die-offs or human activities threaten its future. Little is known about its needs—what water temperatures it tolerates, what time of year it breeds, minimum viable population size—and time is running out. Even now, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing the mussel's status in consideration for listing under the Endangered Species Act.



To learn more about Oregon's freshwater mussels, check out bit.ly/AboutMussels



Western Ridged Mussel

Portland Audubon Joins Lawsuit to Protect Streaked Horned Lark as Endangered

by Joe Liebezeit, *Interim Statewide Conservation Director*

This January, Portland Audubon joined the Center for Biological Diversity and sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to protect Streaked Horned Larks, once abundant in Washington and Oregon, as endangered.

In April 2022, USFWS listed Streaked Horned Larks as threatened instead of endangered, granting the birds fewer protections and leaving them on a path to extinction. This new lawsuit challenges this decision and a rule attached to the threatened listing that exempted all agricultural activities from liability under the Endangered Species Act. This rule was enacted despite the fact that crop conversion is one of the leading threats to the already rare birds in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Streaked Horned Larks are small, ground-dwelling songbirds with conspicuous feather tufts, or "horns," on their heads. Generally pale brown, with a yellow wash on the male's face, adults have a black bib, black whisker marks, and black tail feathers with white margins in addition to its "horns."

Formerly a common nesting species in prairies west of the Cascade Mountains from southern British Columbia through Washington and Oregon, the larks lost most of their habitat to floodplain control, urban development, and conversion of extensive prairies in the Willamette Valley and Puget Lowlands to agricultural fields. The population has now dwindled to an estimated 1,170 to 1,610 birds, possibly far fewer.

Streaked Horned Larks are emblematic of the overall decrease in a number of grassland bird species in western Oregon. A 2010 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife study documented declines in Western Meadowlark and Oregon Vesper Sparrow in the Willamette Valley. Streaked Horned Larks are unique in that they need open ground created by a flood and fire regime that has largely disappeared. In the absence of natural short-grass prairie habitats, the birds are now primarily found in human-modified areas, including grass-seed fields, airports, and the bombing ranges on Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

USFWS first listed the larks as threatened with a special rule in 2013. The agency argued that exempting agricultural activities from the Endangered Species Act, regardless of the harm to larks, was necessary to ensure cooperation from farmers and to avoid incentivizing conversion from grass seed to other crops that don't provide suitable habitat for the larks.

After farmers continued to convert grass-seed fields to other crops, the Center for Biological Diversity successfully challenged the threatened listing in 2019. However, USFWS doubled down in 2022 and expanded the exemption to include Washington, even though grass seed is not commonly grown in the state. In its finding, USFWS acknowledged that the conversion of grass seed to crops that don't support larks continues.

We need to give this bird a fighting chance to recover from extinction's doorstep. Stay tuned for updates on the status of this lawsuit.



New Free Outings!

by *Camelia Zollars, Public Programs & Partnerships Specialist*

As spring begins, we are refreshed by the green buds forming on barren trees. Silence fades into hopeful bird song, and pockets of sun warm our cold bones. The rhythm of this season invites change for all of us.

This spring, Adult Education's free Outings program is getting a fresh update! We have heard from many Outings participants and leaders that you wanted a change, and that feedback has birthed Portland Audubon's new, free, Standing Outings, offered once every month using a lottery-based registration.

Outings are volunteer-led throughout the Portland metro area. They are scheduled on weekday mornings and consistently fill, often with the same faithful folks. These current Outings will still be posted on Meetup and offered by volunteers.

The popularity and timing of Outings historically has limited who else can join. To increase access for new folks, we are offering a monthly weekend Outing. Standing Outings will use a lottery registration instead of the Meetup site, expanding who will get a spot. New participants and past participants who have good attendance on free programs (not a no-show or a last-minute cancellation) will be prioritized to attend.

To increase access for new folks, we are offering a monthly weekend Outing. Standing Outings will use a lottery registration instead of the Meetup site, expanding who will get a spot.

New Outings will be posted every month on the Free Outings page of our website. Registration will close at least one week prior to the event. When you are ready to register, sign up for the date you can attend and complete the inquiry form. One to two weeks before the event, we will randomly select names from the registration list. The folks selected for a spot will be emailed and do not need to confirm their attendance.

Our hope is that this change will welcome fresh faces to join a free Outing for more birding in community with us this spring!

Bird Song Walks are Back!

With new locations, a beginner-specific walk, and returning favorite hotspots. Check our website for the schedule of bird song walks every weekday in April and May.



Bird Days of Summer Dusk Bat Walk, photo by Tara Lemezis.

Green Investments to East Portland

Past Urban Conservation Initiatives Help Bring Funding to Wilkes Creek Headwaters

by Micah Meskel, Interim Urban Conservation Director

Just before the new year, Commissioner Carmen Rubio approved funding for several parks projects in Portland. Included in the list is Wilkes Creek Headwaters, a greenspace in outer East Portland. These undeveloped 20+ acres are within a residential neighborhood and contain the springs that feed the only free-flowing stream in the city that still enters the Columbia Slough. It has also been the epicenter of Greening Wilkes, a multiyear project led by Portland Audubon and community partners. The newly announced public investment allocated by Commissioner Rubio is a testament to her and the broader community's focused reinvestment in East Portland by improving access to nature and community and environmental health.

To fund the project at Wilkes, Commissioner Rubio allocated \$4 million in Parks System Development Charge (SDC) funding to complete a master plan for the site and pay for design and construction of the new park. The SDC, an obscure one-time fee assessed on new development, helps fund public projects to retain quality of life, including growth of the city's parks system, and has its origins in past innovative advocacy by Portland Audubon's urban conservation program. More than a decade ago, Portland Audubon helped lay the groundwork for allocation of SDCs for parks projects in East Portland, which helped begin a much needed shift to funding parks improvements in previously neglected and more diverse communities. This effort, led by Portland Audubon staff Bob Sallinger, Mike Houck, and Jim Labbe, is testament to Portland Audubon's forward-thinking and intersectional policy agenda, which continues to bear fruit today. The new funds will leverage Metro's previously allocated local share funds from the Parks and Nature Bond Measure that voters passed in 2019 (another Portland Audubon priority).

Greening Wilkes

The Greening Wilkes collaborative includes partners Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Verde, Portland Parks, and Friends of Trees and has engaged the community surrounding Wilkes Creek in outer East Portland to restore, revitalize, and steward greenspaces throughout their neighborhood. As part of the project, each organization offers its own unique green infrastructure program to community members at no cost: planting trees in the public right-of-way, installing rain gardens and building wildlife habitat in residential yards, and restoring degraded habitat along Wilkes Creek. In addition to greenspace restoration,

the joint project sponsors free events and incorporates workforce development opportunities for a host of community partners. The collaborative recently received its second year of funding from the Port of Portland's Airport Futures fund, which funds projects that mitigate negative impacts from the Portland Airports operations.



GREENING WILKES PROJECT MAP

The Nature of Being

by Faraaz Abdool, Class Instructor and Ecotour Guide

We are all creatures of nature and instinctually turn to the natural world for inspiration and peace. Whether we are aware of it or not, we all love nature. Having a connection to nature is essential for us to find our way through the most trying of times. Birds in particular help us by their constant presence in our lives.

No matter where we are, birds form part of the landscape. As I sit here in a suburb in Trinidad, a Copper-rumped Hummingbird zooms past on its feeding circuit, and a pair of Great Kiskadees have a territorial dispute, their shrill cries piercing the thick afternoon air. Buoyed by the avian interruption, I can't help but smile.

This is the joy that birding brings. Books, academic papers, and poems have been written, conversations have been had, songs have been sung, all extolling the benefits of being in nature. From mental health to overall wellbeing, it seems birds can't avoid lifting our spirits. Reaping the best benefits from this involves a specific approach, however.

There is a subtle difference between "listening for birds" and "listening to birds"—but this initially minute diversion can potentially have far-reaching consequences on the psyche. One implies a pursuit while the other conjures images of whistles and trills—the intricate melodies of birdsong—gently falling on receptive ears. The former involves active observation; the latter, passive. Surely, both methodologies have their place. However, the passive observation of birds—and nature in general—holds the key to the cultivation of a deeper connection with ourselves.

Why must there be a deeper connection? At this pivotal moment in time, there cannot be too many environmental stewards. Those who speak for nature can theoretically include every one of us, and this is what passively observing nature induces. Specifically, this practice of being in nature encourages the observer to see beauty and commonality in all things. Cascading from this are forms of love and kindness, which in turn help to craft the most ardent of activists among us.

On a personal note, this is the very process that motivated me to move house and set up our little family in an eco-lodge in Tobago. Cuffie River Nature Retreat was our home for a year, during which we worked on content creation to promote nature-based tourism in the recently declared North-East Tobago Biosphere Reserve. While there, I crossed paths with Erin Law and a wonderful group of birders from Portland Audubon on their much-anticipated birding trip to T&T. There was an

immediate synergy among us facilitated in no small way by our shared ethos of responsible interaction with the natural world as well as the group's genuine interest in the project I was working on.

I am happy to host Portland Audubon on another ecotour to Trinidad & Tobago, April 1-15, 2024. April is the prime window to visit T&T, as there will be a mixture of migrants from both the northern and southern hemispheres present, as well as resident birds well into their courtship rituals. Many birds will be in their breeding plumage. April also marks the transition between tropicbird and tern breeding season, so expect the most diverse mix of breeding seabirds on the offshore islands. As an exceptionally incredible bonus, this also coincides with the nesting season of Leatherback Turtles!

Why must there be a deeper connection? At this pivotal moment in time, there cannot be too many environmental stewards.



Faraaz Abdool

Portland Audubon gratefully acknowledges these special gifts:

William Bruce Baer, MD

Betty & Jacob Reiss

Brad Beach

Kathleen Melinis

Janet Brock

Susan Brock

James Davis

Charlotte & David Corkran
Mark Greenfield & Jane Hartline
Lynn & Don Herring
Constance Levesque & Jeffrey
Smith
Barbara Loomis
Jacqueline Wilson

Doug Edwards

David & Gwenda Richards Oshiro

Elizabeth Fitzgibbon

Diane Snow

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BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Through their business practices and financial contributions, the following businesses are helping advance our mission and protect Oregon's birds, natural resources, and livability. If you would like to become a member of the Portland Audubon Business Alliance, please contact Charles Milne, Director of Development at **971-222-6117**. **We encourage you to support the businesses that support us!**



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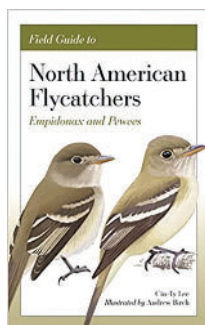
We have everything you need to make the most of your springtime adventures—from wildflower field guides to pocket-sized binoculars to birding guides for nearly every state and region. Our knowledgeable staff and volunteers will help you find the right products and offer advice on where to go exploring and what you might see there. Dust off the winter cobwebs and enjoy the spring sunshine!

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Questions? Email: store@audubonportland.org

or call us at 503-292-9453 ext. 3

Shop the Nature Store online at
www.naturestorepdx.squarespace.com



New Book

Field Guide to North American Flycatchers: Empidonax and Pewees

by Cin-Ty Lee, illustrated by Andrew Birch



We are eagerly anticipating the arrival of this book in early April! Flycatchers are so fun to watch but can be very difficult to identify in the field. This new field guide promises to make experts of us all by providing a comprehensive guide with detailed illustrations that teach us what to look for and how to tell similar species apart!

Member Price: \$17.96

PNW Pick

Uzura T-Shirts

The Nature Store loves to carry products made by local artists and vendors! We are always sourcing new products made in the PNW, and love to support our local community.

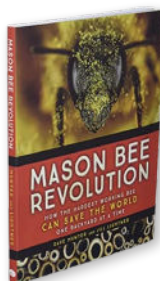
A Wild Arts Festival favorite, Uzura shirts are now available in the Nature Store! We are excited to offer a handful of designs from this Seattle company, which uses eco-friendly materials and beautiful nature-inspired imagery.

Uzura Organic Cotton Ladies' T-Shirt
with Birds on Mushroom
Member Price: \$30.60



Mason Bees

Mason bee season is upon us! Learn all about our friendly early spring pollinators and what you'll need to successfully raise them. Whether you're already a bee lover, or just bee-curious, **Mason Bee Revolution** will tell you everything you need to know about "the hardest working bee" and how integral they are to our food supply. We also carry supplies from Crown Bees, a Washington-based company that supplies all of the housing, nesting material, and community information you need to create a space for mason bees in your own backyard.



Mason Bee Revolution by Dave Hunter and Jill Lightner

Member Price: \$16.16

Mason Bee Tower

Member Price: \$43.20



TOGETHER FOR NATURE

5151 NW Cornell Road
Portland, OR 97210

Portland Audubon inspires all people to love and protect birds, wildlife,
and the natural environment upon which life depends.



Take the Pledge to Go Lights Out

Peak spring migration is April 15-May 15, and now is a great time to Take the Pledge to Go Lights Out and join the growing movement to reduce the impact of light pollution on the billions of birds that migrate annually through Oregon skies.

We encourage everyone to turn off nonessential lights from 11 p.m. to dawn during peak migration periods, and then eliminate any unnecessary overnight lighting year round. Starting in April, watch for Lights Out Red Alerts generated by researchers at CSU AeroEco Lab and shared on our social media channels.

aeroecolab.com/uslights

Bird window strike, photo by DataHamster/flickr.

GET IN TOUCH

Administration Offices

503-292-6855
Open M-F, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Subject to change; call before you visit.

Nature Store & Interpretive Center

503-292-9453 ext. 3
Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Wildlife Care Center

503-292-0304
New temporary wildlife drop-off at Oregon Humane Society. See page 6 for details.

Wildlife Sanctuary

Dawn to dusk every day



Birdy Brain Buster!

Which birds can recognize human faces?

- A. Pigeon
- B. Crow
- C. Mockingbird
- D. All of the above

On the Cover: Handle-Barred Owls Birdathon 2022 team, photo by Tara Lemezis.

On the Inside Cover: Wildlife Care Center, photo by Tammi Miller; Bushtit, photo by Richard Turk; Christmas Bird Count, photo by Kilee Mendiola; Tufted Coquette, photo by Faraaz Abdool.



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