



KITITTAS AUDUBON SOCIETY

APRIL 2008

# THE HOOTER

Hooter

EDITOR CRICKET WEBB

Join Kittitas Audubon and Audubon Washington in  
**Bringing Birding Trails to Kittitas County\***

Public Workshop during the  
First Friday Artwalk  
4 April 2008  
5-7 pm

Cascade Land Conservancy  
409 North Pine Street  
Ellensburg

See the original artwork and meet the artist Ed Newbold for the Great Washington State Birding Trail maps.

Comment on the Birding Trail Sites for the Great Washington State Birding Trail map for the Kittitas County area.

View maps of the proposed local birding map being compiled by Kittitas Audubon.

Our Thanks to the Cascade Land Conservancy Ellensburg office for hosting this workshop.

*\*Kittitas County is one of the top 50 birding sites in the United States according to Cornell University.*

## NEXT MEETING

### Ice Age Trail

**DATE** THURSDAY 4/17/2008 **TIME** 7:00 PM  
**PLACE** ELLENSBURG HIGH SCHOOL ROOM - 232

Our Speaker this month will be Tom Foster, formerly the Manager of the Twin City Foods plant in Ellensburg. He became interested in local geology when he found boulders in his carrot fields in the Columbia Basin and wondered how they got there. His interest in the cataclysmic ice age floods (Missoula Floods) resulted in his membership in the Ice Age Flood Trails Institute. An accomplished photographer, Tom will show the Institute's plan for a driving trail to highlight the events that shaped much of eastern Washington..

All Audubon meetings and field trips are open to the public, so feel free to come and meet with us. Stay after the meeting for juice, treats and conversation.

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To contact the editor or to submit articles.  
Email [kashooter@kittitasaudubon.org](mailto:kashooter@kittitasaudubon.org).  
Please use Cricket at the beginning of the subject line

## KAS Field Trips

**April 5<sup>th</sup>** First Saturday BirdWalk at Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park – 8:00AM Bridge parking lot. About a two and a half hour walk on uneven ground. Great for local birds. Bring a friend, optics, and we will find birds.

**April 12<sup>th</sup>** West Ellensburg Park work party. See facing page. .

**April 26<sup>th</sup>** Crab Creek and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. Join this mainly road trip to see birds of the shrub-steppe, shore birds (American Avocets & Black-necked Stilts), plus waterfowl. As many as 76 species have been seen on past trips. For details call Marianne Gordon at 509-964-2320.

**May 3<sup>rd</sup>** First Saturday BirdWalk Irene Rinehart Park – 8:00

## Field Trip report

**First Saturday BirdWalk on March 1<sup>st</sup>.** It must be spring! Snow is almost gone and the wind is blowing. Upper Carey Lake is free of ice and the lower lake has ten feet of open water around the edges where a pair of Canada Geese are claiming their homeland. The Violet-green Swallows are cruising for insects over the Yakima River; groups of American Robins are searching the golf course for bugs; and the Red-winged Blackbirds are ‘twanging’ out their territory. In all there were 21 species. Eleven participants, with a sunny clear sky, enjoyed a great morning outing. ( believe the Violet-green Swallows are the first of the migrants to announce our spring.) Jeb



### YOU ARE INVITED!

#### WENAS CAMPOUT, May 23-26, 2008

[www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org)

**For over three decades Audubon families have been camping over Memorial Day weekend at the Wenas Creek Campground** officially named the Hazel Wolf Wenas Creek Bird Sanctuary. The location, SW of Ellensburg, is now in an “Important Bird Area” which Auduboners has been assured of protective status in a major land swap with the timber company ownership.

The free, “primitive” campground along the north fork of Wenas Creek has exceptional opportunities for birding, botanizing and enjoying spring in the eastern foothills of the Cascades.

- \* The campground is about 2,500' elevation, can be cold at night, hot during day.
- \* Bring water for drinking (the creek is beautiful and bountiful but not potable).
- \* We set up tents or use “pick-up” type campers.
- \* We all share in the rent of portable toilets for four days.
- \* Bicycles and Frisbees are fun, telescopes and cameras standard gear.
- \* Please leave pets at home.
- \* There are organized field trips throughout the Wenas drainage and WA DF&W management areas and some on private property at owners’ requests.
- \* In camp we have natural history workshops with some of the state's top birders, WNPS botanists, entomologists etc.
- \* There will be an old-fashioned campfire in our new “approved” firepit device each evening. We do singing, story telling and recapping the sightings of the day.

Please visit the beautiful Wenas Website, by Webmaster Michael Hobbs, to see Hazel Wolf’s familiar smiling face and get lots of downloadable information about our campout.

[www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org). There's a bird checklist, wildflower checklist, outline of field trips and program, directions to the campground, and lots of photos.

If you don't do websites, contact me and I'll send you printed information.

Bring friends, family, and join us at Wenas Memorial Day Weekend for as many days as you want to stay - May 23-26, 2008!  
See you there, Helen Engle, [hengle@iinet.com](mailto:hengle@iinet.com), 253-564-3112.

## West Ellensburg Park Natural Area! Work party on April 12<sup>th</sup>!!

About two years ago, you may remember that KAS spoke of restoring an area (a former ranch) in West Ellensburg Park back to wildlife habitat. (It is west of all the new soccer fields.) Kittitas Audubon put off delving into this project until we knew for sure what the surrounding zoning was to be. The light industrial designation by the City, along with recent plans to re-route and enhance Reecer Creek in the area next to our area, are both stimuli to proceed with our plans. We have done some preliminary planning, plus have met with some experts for direction on some of our ideas. There is much to do, from small projects to large. Are you willing to help? If so, please attend the information/work party on Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, north end of the parking lot at the west end of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 9:00 AM. We will be done by noon. **Hope to see you there!! Gloria Baldi**

### Step 5: Sustainable Gardening

#### Gardening in an Environmentally Friendly Way

How you maintain your garden or landscape can have an important effect on the health of the soil, air, water and habitat for native wildlife - as well as the human community nearby. Here are some sustainable gardening techniques that you can use to help conserve resources.

#### Mulching

Mulch helps keep water in the soil and available to the plant, rather than evaporating into the air. This can help you reduce your watering time. Also, as mulch breaks down, it provides nutrients to the soil. This can help reduce the need for fertilizer. Be sure to use mulches that are from sustainable forestry practices, and that are free from pests.

#### Reducing Lawn Areas

Grass lawns often require chemicals and frequent maintenance. Gas-powered lawnmowers produce high amounts of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming and air pollution. Since lawns are often made of only a few types of plants that most animals do not consume, they do not provide a lot of value for wildlife. Replacing grass lawn with native wildflowers, bushes, and trees provide the food, shelter, and cover that help to maintain healthy, natural ecosystems.

#### Xeriscaping

Xeriscaping is an approach to landscaping that minimizes outdoor water use while maintaining soil integrity through the use of native, drought-tolerant plants. This is a common practice in drier areas, such as the West and Southwest, where water supplies and water quality are at stake.

#### Rain Barrels

Rain barrels are used to collect rainwater for use during drier months. Rain barrel water is a great way to save money, reduce the amount of chemicals used in processing drinking water, and provide a pure source of water for outdoor plants. Depending on the size of your house and the amount of rainfall in your area, you can collect a substantial amount of rainwater with a simple system.

#### Removing Invasives & Restoring Native Plant Communities

Native plants are better for the environment than exotic plants, generally requiring less fertilizer and other additives, less water, and less effort in pest control. They are especially important to native wildlife, such as pollinators that may have coevolved with a particular species. Pollinators often rely on a certain type of flower as a source of food, while the flower depends on the pollinator to transport its pollen to other flowers for reproduction. When non-native plants are used, they oftentimes upset the delicate balance of a local ecosystem and sometimes even out-compete native species to the point of extinction. Wildlife will benefit more when native plant communities remain intact, or are restored to their natural habitats.

**Once you've completed this step, you're ready to certify your yard.**

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*by Bill Thompson*

**5. The Mixed Seed at the Grocery Store Is Bad.** I believed this with all my heart until recently when I saw some decent mixed birdseed for sale at a fancy grocery store. Granted, the stuff at my local chain grocery store is still absolute junk, unfit for rock doves. But some seed producers seem to be getting the message that quality seed is worth selling. The trick to telling the junk seed from the better stuff is to read the ingredients. Junk seed has almost none of the following: black-oil sunflower, peanut bits, safflower, millet, or sunflower hearts. It will have lots of milo, wheat, barley, cracked corn, and upon visual inspection, perhaps some empty hulls, sticks, and other inedibles. The best mixes feature a hearty helping of sunflower seed in some form.

**4. Blackbirds/Squirrels Won't Eat Safflower Seed.** Safflower was once considered by many feeder operators to be the anti-blackbird and anti-squirrel food. Cardinals seemed to love it, but blackbirds and squirrels did not. That's not really true anymore, but nobody knows why. Many folks who feed safflower report that any bird or mammal that eats sunflower will also eat safflower. Safflower seed is still a nice alternative food to offer—it works in any feeder suitable for sunflower seed and it can be bought in bulk at feed stores. A blackbird and squirrel deterrent it is not, but then again, what is?

**3. Red Dye in Hummer Food Is Bad.** We'd like to think we know what is best for the birds we feed, but in a lot of cases, we don't. It certainly seems logical that adding food coloring to hummingbird nectar solution might not be good for the birds drinking it, but the fact is, we don't have any scientific proof to that effect. So it's one of those innocent-until-proven-guilty things. And until some scientist does the testing, there will continue to be millions of packages of red-dyed hummingbird nectar being sold and used. As Jerry Seinfeld used to say: "Not that there's anything wrong with that." This is what I'm saying: Hello out there. Any ornithology graduate students reading this? I've got an idea for your dissertation! In the mean time, save your money. While it may or may not be bad, it is not necessary.

**2. Perches on Hummer Feeders Are Bad.** It started out as anecdotal evidence that grew into a wave of mild hysteria. Hummingbird feeders with perches were killing hummingbirds! How? Well, the hypothesis was that hummers would land on a feeder perch in the early morning and drink a deep slurp of very cold nectar, and this jolt of coldness would cause them to go into torpor, a trancelike state in which body functions slow drastically to conserve energy. Some hummers were found hanging upside down from their perches, while others fell to the ground and were at the mercy of predators. Witnesses reasoned that the hummers did not generate enough body heat while sitting and thus succumbed to the cold.

Removing the perches would force the hummers to hover while feeding, thus generating body heat. Now, before you go out and rip the perches off your feeders, consider that there are lots of reasons why a hummer might behave in this way. The bird could be in a natural state of torpor, which is how hummingbirds survive in extremely cold weather. A hummer that has been stung by a bee or wasp will behave strangely, as will one that is sick or perhaps injured from the fighting that occurs near a busy feeder. In my experience a feeder with perches allows many hummers to feed at once peacefully. Hummingbirds forced to hover at feeders seem to fight more readily, and are more active in defending a feeder. As with red dye, we don't have scientific evidence to prove that feeders with perches are bad for hummingbirds, so until we do, use your own good judgment. As for me, I'm pro perch.

**1. This Feeder Is 100% Squirrel Proof!** I am sorry, but there's just no way! Here I am setting myself up for angry letters from feeder manufacturers, but it is simply impossible to believe this statement. Oh, yes, you can make a feeder squirrel proof by placing it in the middle of a treeless lawn with a pole-baffle that would do the Pentagon proud. But nail that same feeder to your deck railing and watch the squirrels remove the confident smile from your face, along with all the seed in your feeder. Squirrels have the luxury of being way more resourceful than any bird feeder designer. Why? Because a squirrel is working to feed itself and its offspring, and it will throw itself into the task with all its might every single day. The squirrel thinks of nothing else but the seed inside that feeder, and how to get at it. The feeder designer, meanwhile, is thinking about lunch and vacation and next Tuesday's staff meeting and bowling league. That's why the squirrels win every time.

**HOOTER**

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\_\_\_\_\_ Kittitas Audubon Membership includes a subscription to the monthly Hooter, and the opportunity to support local activities for \$20.00 per year.

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Make check payable to Kittitas Audubon Society

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Kittitas Audubon Membership  
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**NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP**

\_\_\_\_\_ National Audubon Membership includes membership in Kittitas Audubon and subscription to both the monthly Hooter and Audubon Magazine (published 6 time a year). Membership is \$20.00 for new members. Renewals are \$35.00 per year.

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**DONATIONS** are appreciated and give you the opportunity to further support and fund KAS Chapter activities. If you have a National Audubon membership, donations are especially important since KAS no longer receives a portion of your National Membership dues to defray cost for the Hooter.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 American Goldfinch \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Great Blue Heron  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00 Red-tailed Hawk \_\_\_\_\_ Other - Donations in any amount are appreciated

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## KITTITAS COUNTY BUSINESSES SUPPORTING KAS



**Inland Internet**, Roslyn, Donates internet service for our Website:

<http://www.kittitasaudubon.org>

### **Old Mill Country Store**, Ellensburg

Provides a discount on bird seed to KAS members and prints our county bird lists.



Old Mill Country Store gives a 5% discount on all bird seed to KAS members, but you have to mention you are a member. You may notice this is a slight reduction of the former discount. In order to stay competitive, Old Mill has had to reduce the discount to account for the increase in seed price. Still great service, and we are thankful they voluntarily print our Kittitas Audubon County Bird List.

**The mission of Kittitas Audubon Society is to develop an appreciation of nature through education and conservation, with a focus on birds. The goal for KAS is a vibrant active organization recognized in Kittitas county.**

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