

# The Kingfisher

Volume 14, Issue 2

Winter/Spring 2020

## Notes from dawn



**I**'ve got a number of things to share with you as I take a break from preparing for my husband's and my December trip to Cape Town, South Africa next month. It's been an exciting six months since I last jotted down some notes for our newsletter! I hope that you have all been enjoying the monthly updates, eNews! My goal is to share our activities and accomplishments, and hopefully encourage you to get involved by volunteering! We have many things you can do, from helping with a class of kindergartners to planning activities to lobbying for habitat protections.

There are other ways that you can support our programs: choose Audubon Society of Lincoln City as your Amazon Smile donee; follow us on Facebook; send donations via PayPal; or write and mail in a year-end check. It all goes toward our programs, which are: 1) Conservation, 2) Community Science (e.g., surveys, bird houses, etc.), 3) Education, and 4) Outreach. And if you're not a member, you can join us!

Support us by sharing the word about us! Purchase an ASLC hat and wear it proudly. Get an ASLC sticker and put it on your car. Share our Facebook posts with your friends. Buy a brick from the Cultural Center with the name of a local bird to be included in our "Find the Bird" handout (see website for details).

Finally, you can get involved in our 2020 Rocky Habitat project. We're putting together an education and awareness program focusing on our special rocky habitat along the Lincoln and Tillamook coast and we can use volunteers to write education materials, lead field trips, and much more. Email me ([dawnv@birdlover.com](mailto:dawnv@birdlover.com)) and let me know what interests you!

- dawn villaescusa, ASLC President

## Federal Regulatory Changes Threaten Birds



photo by ernie rose

In the past year, two important laws, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), have had major changes implemented and more have been proposed. Whatever your opinion on these current changes, there's no debating these laws have made a huge, positive impact on birds, such as the Bald Eagle, in North America.

### Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The MBTA is a 101-year-old law that was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1918 after the extinction of several species due to the unregulated hunting and poaching of birds, primarily related to the feather trade that supplied the huge demand for feathers to adorn women's hats. As a result of the law, it is a crime to kill or harass a migratory bird; and it is a crime to take parts (nests, eggs, feathers). Prior to last year, one could be fined and charged for "unintentional harm to migratory birds that occurs in the course of otherwise lawful commercial activities." This unintentional harm can come in the form of open waste pits, power line collisions and electrocution, and wind farms. These fines have incentivized industries to work closer with environmental groups to search for solutions. However, in 2018 the Department of the Interior (DOI) released new rulings that no longer enforce incidental take, including large scale events such as oil spills.

### Endangered Species Act of 1973

The ESA has been the pillar of conservation law in the United States for over 40 years. Under the ESA, federal agencies must work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that no action they take may adversely affect a listed species as well as preventing the "taking" of any species. In 2019, a change was proposed that would allow the conducting of economic assessments when deciding if a species should be listed under the ESA. For example, these economic assessments can include estimating lost revenue from a moratorium on logging operations in critical habitat. Another proposed change would treat threatened and endangered species separately, with cases involving threatened species protections reviewed on a case by case basis. Finally, a rule has been proposed that climate change may not be considered when ruling on a species status. The new rules were expected to go into effect on September 30, 2019, however, 17 states as well as environmental groups, including the National Audubon Society, have filed multiple suits against the proposed changes.

Read more about the Migratory Bird Act here: [www.audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act](http://www.audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act)

Read more about the Endangered Species Act here: [www.audubon.org/conservation/endangered-species-act](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/endangered-species-act)

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## ▼ Winter and Spring Events

All ASLC field trips are free and open to the public, no pre-registration or experience is required. Binoculars and guide books are provided. Field trips are held rain or shine, so dress appropriately for coastal weather. Be sure to carry water. Walks are easy to moderately-easy unless indicated. All are family-friendly. For details, check our website ([lincolncityaudubon.org](http://lincolncityaudubon.org)), Facebook (@audubonlincolncity), or call 541-992-9720.



## MAY

## IAN 2020

**Friday, Jan 10, 9-11am - Siletz Bay: Taft Waterfront and Salishan Nature Trail.** Siletz Bay is a winter resting grounds for thousands of waterfowl including Northern Pintail, Teal, Wigeon, and American Coot. Meet at the dock beside Mo's Restaurant in the Taft District of Lincoln City. Sponsored by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation and Explore Lincoln City.

**Saturday, Jan 11, 9-11am - OSU Hatfield Marine Science Center (HMSC) Nature Trail and Yaquina Bay South Jetty.** There will be an abundance of waterfowl, birds of prey, and songbirds like Western Meadowlarks and Savannah Sparrows. We will meet in the HMSC Visitor Center parking lot.



## FEB

**Saturday, Feb 8, 9-11am - Hostetler Park (D River) with Devil's Lake State Park.** Join us for a walk through diverse habitat including river, wetlands, lake, and woods. We will look for wintering sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Meet at the NE 1st Street parking area on the east side of Hwy 101 in Lincoln City. Sponsored by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation and Explore Lincoln City.

**Friday, Feb 14 - Monday, Feb 17 ~ Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).** Everyone is welcome to participate, from beginners to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy and it helps the birds. More details to come.

## MAR

**Friday, Mar 13, 9-11am - Spring Lake Open Space.** This beautiful lake is located in Lincoln City off 14th St. Walk through woods along the lake and up to hilly meadows. We should see resident woodpeckers and Great Blue Heron as well as wintering sparrows and thrushes. Meet in the Port Ave parking lot off NE 14th St. Sponsored by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation and Explore Lincoln City.

**Sat, Mar 14, 9-11am - Tillamook Raptor Survey.** This driving and walking field trip will take us to several popular hangouts for wintering eagles, hawks, and falcons in the Tillamook bay area. Meet at Fred Meyer in the north end of the parking lot in Tillamook.



## APR

**Friday, Apr 10, 9-11am - Cutler City Open Space and Josephine Young Park.** Cutler City Wetlands offers a unique habitat - wooded wetlands. Large trees host species such as Pileated Woodpecker while the marshy brush is home to Common Yellowthroat, Wrentits, and other songbirds. We'll look for recent spring arrivals, then move on to Josephine Young Memorial Park where we will watch for migrating shorebirds. Meet at the pull-out on SW 63rd west off Hwy 101 in Cutler City. Sponsored by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation and Explore Lincoln City.

**Saturday, Apr 11, 9-11am - Nestucca National Wildlife Refuge.** The new 2.2 mile Two Rivers Nature Trail boasts a sweeping viewpoint of the confluence of the Nestucca and Little Nestucca Rivers. The trail is moderately difficult based on elevation changes and uneven terrain. Will look for Varied and Hermit Thrush, a variety of sparrows, Northern Pygmy Owl, raptors, and waterfowl. Heading north on Hwy 101, turn left at the refuge entrance on Christensen Road and meet in the lower parking area.

**Saturday, May 9, 9-11am - The Villages Open Space with Road's End State Recreational Area.** This easy stroll takes us through meadows, woods, and marshes ultimately arriving at the ocean beach. We should see Black-headed Grosbeaks, Anna's Hummingbirds, warblers, sandpipers and more as we walk through mixed woodlands, forest, marsh, and coastline. Easy walk, family-friendly. Meet at the cul-de-sac at the north end of NE Devil's Lake Blvd. Sponsored by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation and Explore Lincoln City.

**TBD - World Migratory Bird Day** festival and birdwalk in Lincoln City. Kids activities, art projects, bird walks, speakers, and more. Details to come.

## JUN

**Friday, June 12, 9-11am - Friends of the Wildwoods Open Space.** Walk through forest and forest edge right in the heart of Lincoln City on the Head to Bay Trail. We should see year round residents such as Pacific Wren and Downy Woodpecker, and enjoy spring arriving warblers and Osprey. Meet by the Open Spaces sign on NE West Devils Lake Rd across from NE 26th. Sponsored by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation and Explore Lincoln City.

**Saturday, Jun 13, 9-11am - Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area (Yaquina Lighthouse).** Yaquina Head is known for its easy viewing of nesting seabird colonies of Common Murres, Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, Western Gulls and Black Oystercatchers. The highlight for some are the Peregrine Falcons which have nested on the cliff face beside the Interpretive Center for several years. We will meet in the Interpretive Center parking lot, which is up the hill past the gate. Vehicle entrance fee will be waived for ASLC birdwalk participants.

**TBD - Annual ASLC Meeting (date and location to be determined).** Potluck dinner followed by a brief business meeting, election of officers, and our "Year in Review" presentation.

*Visit [www.lincolncityaudubon.org](http://www.lincolncityaudubon.org) for more calendar details and for ASLC news updates!*

# Eelgrass is Essential to Ocean Health\*

*Eelgrass is one of the most important plants in the ocean. It cleans the water, nurtures fish, absorbs climate-warming carbon, produces oxygen, and protects the coastline—and that's just for starters. But this versatile seagrass, found in estuaries, bays, and other shallow nearshore areas, is disappearing because of pollution, dredging, development, sea level rise, and other impacts.*

*Eelgrass beds provide natural buffers against coastal storms by absorbing the force from waves and, through their extensive root systems, preventing some shoreline sediments from washing away.*



*Marbled Godwit - RD stock photo*

Eelgrass beds play an integral role in the ocean food chain by providing habitat where microorganisms such as plankton thrive. The swaying grasses also offer shelter and foraging areas for rockfish, salmon, and Dungeness crab. Pacific herring, a vital forage fish, lay their eggs on the long, slender leaves of eelgrass. These are just some of the reasons NOAA Fisheries declared the plant essential fish habitat in 1996.

Migratory waterfowl, including the Pacific Black Brant, eat eelgrass. In other regions, marine mammals rely on this and other seagrasses for nourishment.



*Seastar in eelgrass - NOAA photo*



*Siletz Bay. ASLC file photo by dawn villaescusa*

Eelgrass combats climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and methane (both climate-warming greenhouse gases) and storing them in its root system.

Like a massive filter, eelgrass helps improve water quality by absorbing pollutants. This flowering marine plant also traps and retains sediment, resulting in clearer, cleaner water.



*Bass in eelgrass. NOAA photo/Adam Obaza.*



*Pacific Black Brant - photo by Ernie Rose*

Healthy beds support fish and shellfish that are integral to the commercial and recreational fishing industries—the economic engines of many coastal communities. Eelgrass also supports a wide array of wildlife that draws millions of visitors to the West Coast each year.

*\*Extracted from article "Six Reasons to Protect Eelgrass" by Paul Shively, Project Director, Conserving Marine Life, U.S. West Coast. Used by permission.*

# On the Rocks with Black Oystercatchers

by Linda Fink

What are those noisy black birds with long red bills that poke around tidal rocks, eating limpets and mussels, often calling loudly as they fly between offshore rocks? They are Black Oystercatchers... that do not eat oysters. Black Oystercatchers are shorebirds, but are usually seen on rocks near seabirds like gulls and cormorants. Along Oregon's coast, Black Oystercatchers rely almost 100% on our rocky habitat, where they nest, feed, and raise their young.



*Oystercatchers prepping nest site - dawn villaescusa*

According to studies across their range, continual disturbance from human activities is the greatest threat to breeding Black Oystercatchers. Dogs and humans near their nest sites send them into a frenzy, causing them to leave their nest exposed for predators to eat the eggs. *So please stay off those big rocks that are sometimes accessible from shore at low tide. Disturbance often prevents pairs from nesting or causes them to abandon their nest sites.* And be especially respectful during their breeding and nesting season from May to as late as September.

After breeding season, Oystercatchers congregate at their favorite rocky habitats on the coast. The rocky shoreline at



*Oystercatchers at Otter Rock - Howard Shippey*



*Oystercatcher and chick - Nora Sherwood, artist*

Depoe Bay is one such place where wintering flocks can be seen. Black Oystercatchers don't reach breeding age until they are 4 or 5 years old, and their nesting success is very sporadic, so it is fortunate they can live a long time: over fifteen years.

Black Oystercatchers are only found on the Pacific coast from Alaska into California. They nest on shoreline rocks and sea stacks, just above the high tide line. Their nest is a scrape on their chosen rock, usually with a few pebbles thrown about but no nesting material added. They lay two or three eggs and take turns incubating the eggs for 26-32 days. Parents bring food to chicks nearly non-stop during low tides and continue even after the chicks fledge (fly) at about 38-40 days old. Usually only one or two of the chicks fledge as they are very vulnerable to predation from mammals and birds, like falcons, glaucous-winged gulls and ravens.

Enjoy these unique, vocal, and fascinating birds from a distance and they may come back year after year to the same rocky shoreline nesting area, calling loudly and driving off any bird daring to invade their declared territory.



*Oystercatcher pair - Jack Doyle*

# Environmental Education and Field Trips are Elementary!

It's back to school time and ASLC's education volunteers are planning ASLC's thirteenth year of offering in-classroom environmental education and field trips at Lincoln and Tillamook County elementary schools.

For many years, ASLC volunteers taught National Audubon's "Wild About Birds" program in fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Kids not only learned about bird anatomy and behavior, they learned to identify birds using field guides and binoculars. In the past several years, ASLC's educational offerings have expanded to include an environmental education program for kindergarten through third grade classrooms, "Our Neighbors the Osprey."

Last year, all six kindergarten classes at Oceanlake Elementary learned about osprey in their classroom and then stepped outside to view the Osprey family in the nest across the street up close through birding scopes and binoculars. Third grade classes at Taft Elementary also learned about Osprey and using binoculars in their classrooms and then viewed their neighboring Osprey family in the nest at the athletic field next to their school. A generous grant from Columbia Bank as well as member donations allowed ASLC to purchase junior size binoculars which better fit the smaller faces and hands of the K-3rd grade students.

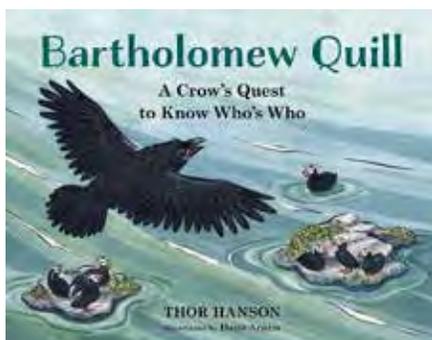
Caren Willoughby, ASLC Education chair, welcomes interest from classroom teachers as well as kids and community groups in ASLC's education programs for kids. Both "Wild About Birds" and "Our Neighbor the Osprey" address Oregon's grade-appropriate learning goals. In the past, teachers have integrated these programs with additional bird-themed art, science, and reading activities. "Wild About Birds" is two 50-minute sessions and includes hands-on practice with field guides and binoculars. "Our Neighbor the

Osprey" is a one hour session including an outdoor activity. These programs can be modified for community education, and this past spring, Cub Scout Pack 47 of Lincoln City learned about birds and using binoculars during a meeting held after school, and with Audubon volunteer assistance practiced their new skills on a field trip to Alder Island Loop at the Siletz Wildlife Refuge.

Taft Elementary students comparing their wing spans to Osprey wing span



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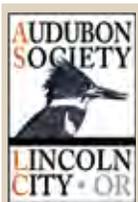
**Bartholomew Quill:**  
A Crow's Quest to Know Who's Who  
Thor Hanson, illustrated by Dana Arnim.  
Sasquatch Books, 2016.  
\$17.99. 9781632170460.

"Bartholomew Crow was a crow long ago, when all of the world was new. When the bears and the bees and the hares and the trees were learning to tell who's who." So begins Thor Hanson's delightful rhyming book about learning how to tell "who's who" in the Pacific Northwest. Bartholomew knows that he's feathered and black, but he's not sure what kind of animal he is, so he takes the reader on a tour of many of the iconic animals they might see in and around Oregon and Washington. Author Thor Hanson an award winning author and biologist. He has also written books for adults, including *Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle*. Bartholomew Quill would be a wonderful gift for children from toddler through first or second grade; the rhyme scheme and bright pictures make it a fun and engaging read aloud and for older children, it can form the basis for further exploration.



**The Triumphant Tale of the House Sparrow** written and illustrated by Jan Thornhill. Greenwood Books, 2018. \$18.95. 9781773060064.

House Sparrows. The ubiquitous little brown birds may be, as the author points out, "the most despised bird in human history." But they are also among the first birds many of us learn to identify at our feeders and out and about in the world. Thornhill's wonderful nonfiction picture book, suitable for 1st-4th grades, introduces the reader to the House Sparrow's origins. There is evidence that these birds evolved alongside humans, eating our grain as we learned how to farm – and they were considered pests from ancient times. However, the author also notes that some farmers have appreciated the reduction in insect pests. Thornhill also tells the story of how and why the House Sparrow was introduced to the United States, and the "Sparrow Wars" between its fans and detractors that followed once it gained a foothold and became a successful invasive species. Finally, Thornhill details the decline of House Sparrow populations in recent years, and the human factors that have contributed. The Triumphant Tale of the House Sparrow is an excellent choice for any curious child or budding naturalist.



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Be sure to visit  
[www.lincolncityaudubon.org](http://www.lincolncityaudubon.org)  
for more news and activities of the  
Audubon Society of Lincoln City



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## Conservation Priorities in Lincoln and Tillamook Counties

*Please help support  
our birding, education, and  
conservation programs!*

**YES! I'd like to support ASLC  
by becoming a member:**

- \$20 Individual
- \$30 Family
- \$50 Wood Duck
- \$100 Osprey
- \$200 Western Meadowlark
- \$300 Red-tailed Hawk
- \$500 Bald Eagle
- In support of your programs,  
I submit a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_

*Please mail your check payable to:*

Audubon Society of Lincoln City  
(ASLC)  
PO Box 38  
Lincoln City OR 97367

*Or Join, Renew, or Donate online at:*  
[lincolncityaudubon.org/membership.html](http://lincolncityaudubon.org/membership.html)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Conservation Committee** has a busy year ahead, and we invite you to help us achieve our objectives. Our "playing field" is Tillamook and Lincoln counties – from the crest of the Coast Range to the Territorial Sea Limit.

We have selected our conservation priorities, and they are to: 1) win stronger protections for our coastal forests and streams; 2) educate the public about climate change and its impact on our communities; 3) encourage alternatives to single-use plastics, particularly in the food industry; 4) promote efforts to increase support for Oregon's Marine Reserves (which will be up for renewal in 2023), and 5) help our newly-formed Rocky Habitat team engage the public in efforts to promote greater awareness of, and appreciation for, our extraordinary rocky habitats – from Cape Meares in the north to Cape Perpetua in the south.

Each member of the Conservation Committee has taken on responsibility for a priority issue. For Joseph Youren, it's coastal forests and streams; for Jeanne Sprague, climate change; and for Nora Sherwood, plastics. Newest committee member Tory McOmie will provide assistance to both Jeanne and Nora. Steve Griffiths chairs the Committee and also serves as liaison to the Rocky Habitat Team, which is chaired by Richard Townsend.

Both the Conservation Committee and the Rocky Habitat Team welcome your participation if you would like to help – whether it's arranging for a program speaker, recruiting participants for Rocky Habitat tours, writing letters to the editor, or testifying before a state or county committee. These are just a few examples. There's much more. No special background or expertise required. Steve's email address is [sgoregon@gmail.com](mailto:sgoregon@gmail.com), and Richard Townsend's is [richtownsend@netscape.net](mailto:richtownsend@netscape.net).

What's coming up in the next few months? Certainly more than we can foresee at the moment, but here are a few items on our "to-do" list: We will support efforts to appeal the recent judicial decision to overturn the aerial spray ban passed by Lincoln County voters in a referendum three years ago. We will help get the word out on an upcoming Public/Private Climate Change Partnership meeting in Lincoln City, and will distribute the Partnership's climate change questionnaire to our members. We will continue our work to identify potential candidates with strong scientific backgrounds for appointment to Oregon's Board of Forestry. And we will support the Rocky Habitat Team as it begins to develop and implement its agenda.

-- Steve Griffiths, Conservation Committee Chair