



THE CHAT

MID-WILLAMETTE BIRD ALLIANCE

COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL EXPANSION

SUZANNE ORTIZ

The Benton County staff report related to the Board of Commissioners' reconsideration of a decision approving a conditional use permit was recently released to the public. The 100-page report recommended denial of the application by Republic Services to expand the Coffin Butte Landfill.

The staff recommendation on page 95 of the report reads as follows:

“Based on the findings in the Staff Report and information in the record, Staff concludes that odor analysis and evidence provided by the Applicant does not sufficiently demonstrate that the proposal will not ‘seriously interfere’ with uses on adjacent properties, the character of the area, or the purpose of the Forest Conservation zone. Therefore, Staff recommends that on reconsideration, the Board of Commissioners deny the application.”

The staff report is a recommendation to the three-member Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners must now reach a decision regarding the reconsideration.

On Tuesday, March 3, at 11 a.m., the Benton County Board of Commissioners will meet to continue the reconsideration hearing. The hearing will take place in the Kalapuya Building, 4500 SW Research Way, Corvallis.

On Tuesday, March 17, at 9 a.m., the Benton County Board of Commissioners will adopt its findings, followed by transmittal of its decision on reconsideration to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. If the board schedules an earlier date than March 17 for the adoption, it will be announced at the March 3 meeting. The adoption meeting will take place in the Kalapuya Building, 4500 SW Research Way, Corvallis.

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GREAT BLUE HERON
PHOTO BY VERONIKA ANDREWS

THE GREAT BLUE HERON: WITNESS AT THE WATER'S EDGE

REFLECTION BY SEPALA WELIWITIGODA

*Across the bay, a kayak split the mist.
A heron, cloaked in cobalt reverie,
stood still as time upon a granite stone.
One leg tucked tight, the other poised in thought,
its eye fixed on the glassy, dimpled tide.*

*He waited—not for fish, but for the breath
of something deeper, surfacing at last—
a truth too slow to rise, too sharp to flee.
The river held its secrets just below,
while fog returned to swaddle what we know.*

The Great Blue Heron often appears motionless in shallow water—focused, poised between patience and movement. To encounter a heron in this state is to feel the pace of solitude: space to breathe, to meditate, and to ponder thoughts and ideas carried quietly within. For a moment, the world slows, as if attention itself has been invited—or granted.

The life of the Great Blue Heron is inseparable from water. It depends on healthy wetlands—quiet shorelines, floodplains, estuaries, and shallow rivers where fish and amphibians remain abundant and waters retain ecological balance. Because of this reliance, the heron has long been regarded as an indicator of environmental health. Where herons thrive, wetlands are often functioning well. Where they disappear, the loss usually signals deeper disruption long before it becomes obvious elsewhere.

Yet the heron's significance extends beyond biology.

Across many ancient cultures, herons were regarded with reverence long before modern science provided explanations for natural systems. In Indigenous traditions across North America, herons were associated with wisdom, patience, and self-reliance; their presence often signaled abundance and the assurance of sustenance. In ancient Egypt, herons were linked to the soul and the passage between worlds. In Chinese and Japanese art, folklore, and literature, they appeared as emblems of balance, longevity, purity, and the ability to move between elements—water, earth, and air.



GREAT BLUE HERON
PHOTO BY THOMAS MATHEW



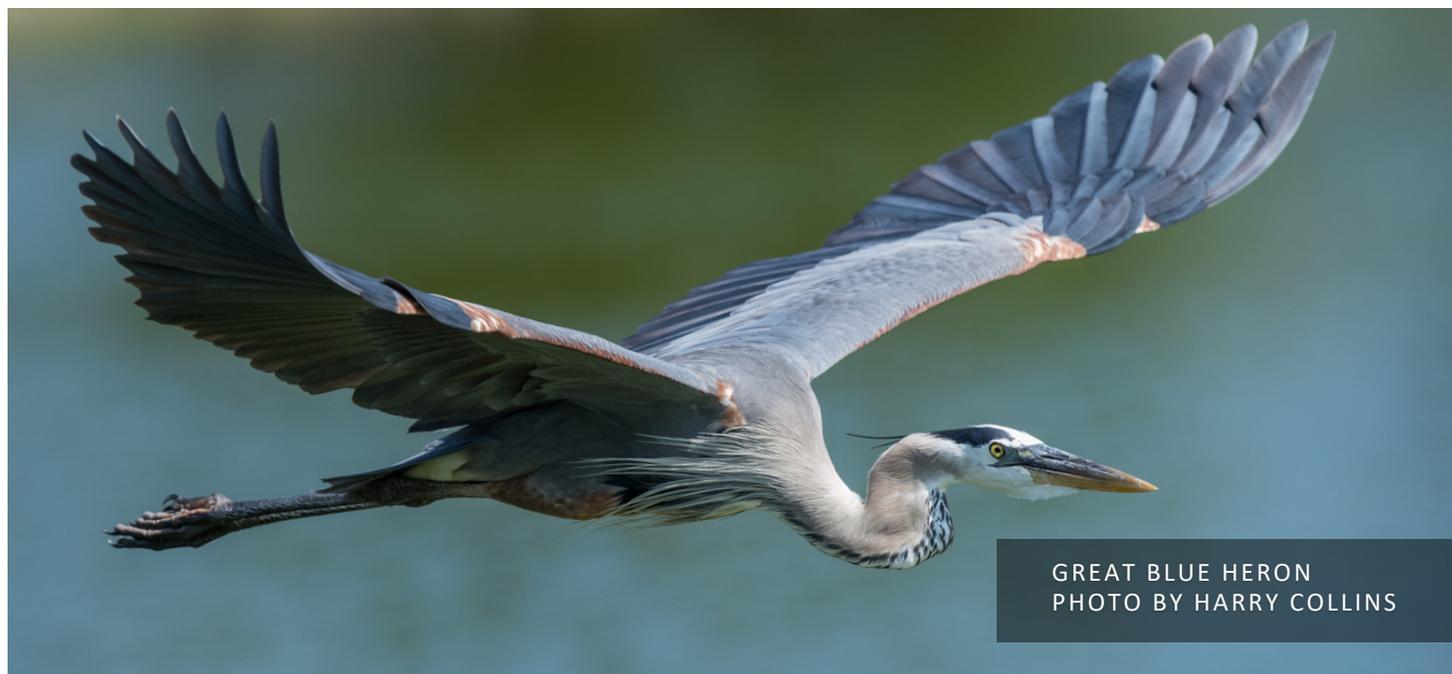
These traditions were not grounded in data, but in sustained observation and lived experience with the natural world. Reverence fostered social cohesion and psychological steadiness at a time when nature’s uncertainty could not be explained scientifically. The heron’s quiet self-reliance served as an example to individuals and families facing sickness, scarcity, and despair—particularly in the production and gathering of food.

Today, science has given us extraordinary insight into how ecosystems function and why species like the Great Blue Heron depend on ecologically sound wetlands. What science cannot compel, however, is care. No legislation or dataset can require people to notice a bird standing at the water’s edge, or to feel responsibility for the habitat that sustains it. Laws can protect wetlands, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on human behavior—on attention, restraint, understanding interdependence, and a willingness to coexist thoughtfully with other forms of life.

As wetlands deteriorate through development, pollution, and climate-driven change, herons often respond quietly. Their absence can speak as clearly as their presence. In this way, the Great Blue Heron becomes both witness and messenger, revealing change not through alarm, but through silence.

Perhaps what is needed now is not a return to ancient belief, but a rational reverence—a way of seeing informed by science and experience, guided by respect. Modern knowledge can explain why wetlands matter; reverence gives us reason to care. Together, they offer a framework for stewardship that serves birds, forests, waters, and people alike.

To watch a Great Blue Heron fish is to observe patience as survival. Nothing holds its attention except the present moment. Nothing is rushed. In that quiet discipline lies a lesson. When we learn to notice the heron clearly, we may also begin to notice the health of our wetlands—and our own responsibilities—more honestly. Care, like balance, begins with attention.



GOOD THINGS CAN HAPPEN WHEN CONSERVATIONISTS PERSIST

JIM FAIRCHILD

Much credit is due to Jarod Jabousek and all the Partners staff and collaborators for establishing a major addition to the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges Complex in southwest Linn County. If you missed Jarod’s presentation on the new **Diamond Hill Wetlands**, you missed learning about all the effort and time involved in securing this outstanding parcel in perpetuity. A video recording will hopefully be available soon on the MWBirdAlliance website.

Just south of this refuge addition, current U.S. trade conditions have grass seed farmers losing money on non-irrigated, high-value soils, even as electricity demand skyrockets. For almost 1,600 acres east of I-5, the Hanwa Q Cells [Muddy Creek Energy Park project](#) offers several farmers the option to lease their land long-term for installation of an industrial-scale photovoltaic array, with potential for grazing under the panels. The project lay dormant for a few years, but now it must meet a May 2026 application extension deadline. Agency discussions continue regarding the adequacy of surveys and proposed protection measures for listed and at-risk species known to occur there. More news to come!

Last month, I wrote about the **Corvallis Municipal Watershed** on Marys Peak. Under the leadership of its Public Works Department, Corvallis stepped back from a 3½-year revision of its stewardship plan after nonprofits, the public and Task Force members noted in January that the plan focused on timber management rather than aquatic conditions—the watershed’s primary purpose. Corvallis also acknowledged that it has not presented the draft plan to the community. The draft contained numerous errors and inconsistencies, demonstrating a need for consultation with experts and peer review, including in forestry practices. The next Task Force meeting is on March 25 at 5 p.m. in the Madison Avenue Meeting Room. The revision may not be released beforehand, and a community presentation has yet to be scheduled. This may still be the best source water supply in western Oregon, aside from Portland’s Bull Run watershed, where logging has been prohibited for good reasons.



SHORT-EARED OWL
PHOTO BY TIM LENZ



ACORN WOODPECKER
MATT DAVIS



Federal officials are proposing to increase logging on 2.5 million acres of western Oregon forests as part of a Trump administration priority to expand domestic timber production. Older forests on revested Oregon & California lands occur across large swaths of southwest Benton County and along the lower west slopes of the Cascade Mountains in Linn County. Marys Peak and Alsea Falls areas, as well as the giant trees of the Valley of the Giants and Crabtree Valley, are included.

Older forests support recreational opportunities, valuable fish and wildlife habitat for common and at-risk species, critical carbon sequestration, and increasingly important clean water sources. A surge in logging will not only degrade wildlife habitat and harm water quality, but also make wetter westside forests seasonally drier and more prone to high-severity wildfires.

The Bureau of Land Management is seeking public comment on its Notice of Intent through March 23. Email comments to blm_or_revision_scoping@blm.gov.



FINCHES AND CARDINALS

SUE POWELL

The eighth issue of Backyard Birds completes the finches and introduces two of their cousins in the cardinalid family. Both finches and cardinalids are generally small- to medium-sized perching birds. Their sturdy bills are ideal for their diet of seeds, insects and berries.

Pine siskins are about the same size as American goldfinches and have a shorter tail and sharper bill than most finches. They are mostly brown with distinctive streaking on the head, back and breast. The edges of their wings and tails are yellow, providing bright accents on a rather plain bird. Their behavior is anything but drab, as siskins are rarely seen alone. Instead, they gather in energetic, vocal groups in forest canopies, where they search out tree seeds. They are also very comfortable at backyard feeders, where they prefer Nyjer thistle.

Evening grosbeaks are on the large end of the finch size scale — about the size of an American robin. Males are black and yellow, with a white patch on each wing and bright yellow eyebrows. Their huge beak can easily crack the hardest seeds. Other birds with smaller beaks often loiter near them, sweeping up small fragments left behind. Evening grosbeaks often gather in large flocks in winter but visit the Willamette Valley irregularly. If you happen to catch a flock visiting your feeders, enjoy the action.

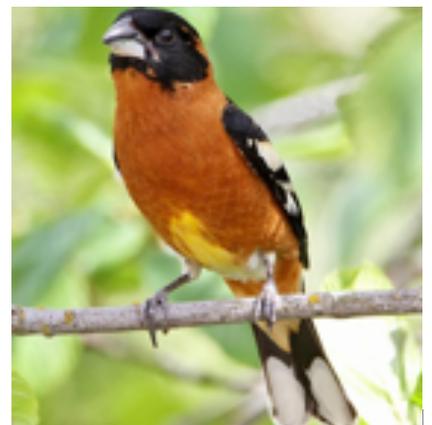
Despite their name, large body, massive beak and colorful plumage, **black-headed grosbeaks** are not closely related to evening grosbeaks. In fact, they are not finches but cardinalids. They are about the size of a robin but slimmer. Male black-headed grosbeaks have an orange breast, black head and wings with white markings. They also have a bright yellow spot under their wings, visible only in flight. On the wintering grounds of monarch butterflies, these birds are one of the butterflies' few predators, as they can tolerate the toxins the butterflies accumulate.



MALE PINE SISKIN
PHOTO BY DAVID BELL



MALE EVENING GROSBEAK
BY BELLEMARE CELINE



MALE BLACK-HEADED
GROSBEAK
PHOTO BY MARLENE CASHEN



The only other cardinalid to visit our backyard is the **western tanager**, and it is a rare guest. They are beautiful, with a reddish-orange head, bright yellow body and black wings, back and tail. Since they are not usually attracted to feeders, they likely visit the bird bath, which is equipped with a dripper that refreshes the water daily in summer. Most red tanagers get the pigment carotenoid from plants, seeds and occasionally invertebrates. An enzyme changes the yellow pigment to red. Western tanagers are unique, as they likely get the red pigment rhodoxanthin directly by eating insects that have fed on conifer buds containing the pigment.

Lesser Goldfinch note: Apologies for not including the correct image in the last issue of the Chat. Thanks to Cornell Labs "All About Birds" and Macauley Library.



MALE WESTERN TANAGER
PHOTO BY SIMON BOIVIN

SUSTAINABILITY FAIR & TOWN HALL

SUZANNE ORTIZ

The 2026 Sustainability Fair and Town Hall will take place on Thursday, March 12. More than 60 hands-on exhibits will be on display at the fair, which runs from 5 to 7 p.m. The Sustainability Town Hall will take place from 7 to 9 p.m. Both events are free and open to the public.

The 2026 Community Scrapbook will be shown at the Town Hall, and the keynote speaker for the evening is Andrew Millison, founder of the Oregon State University Permaculture Design Program. The title of Andrew's presentation is "Global Resilience Efforts: Lessons for Corvallis."

Town Hall attendance requires advance registration.

[Click here to register for the Town Hall.](#)

The Mid-Willamette Bird Alliance is an engaged partner of the Sustainability Coalition, and our volunteers will be at the fair. MWBA is a sponsor of the Town Hall.

Both the fair and Town Hall will be at the CH2M Hill Alumni Center on the OSU campus, 725 SW 26th St., Corvallis.



LESSER GOLDFINCH
PHOTO BY BRYAN HIX

SUSTAINABILITY STUDENTS HELP OUT AT HESTHAVN

RAY DRAPEK

In the last month, on three separate dates, students from the Oregon State University class “Sustainability for the Common Good” came to volunteer at Hesthavn. They mostly dug blackberries and cleared weeds from the main trail. On one of the dates, they worked on the deer fencing around some of the native plantings in the upper meadow. The fencing was installed more than 10 years ago to keep deer out of the native plantings. In the meantime, vegetation on the upper side near the road had engulfed the fencing. One tree had woven its way in and out of the fence, and some of the fencing material had even grown into the wood.

The deer fencing is looking much better now, and we are probably as close to having the blackberries cleared from the portion of the property east of the creek as we have been in many years. Thank you, sustainability students!



OSU STUDENTS FREEING
THE DEER FENCING
PHOTO BY RAY DRAPEK

EDUCATION NEWS

DODIE WILSON

As expected, the winter months are usually a little slow for MWBA Education. We ended the month of January with an exhibitor's table at the Willamette Valley Bird Symposium at the CH2M Hill Center at OSU on Jan. 31. We had information about our organization, brochures on local birding opportunities, and volunteers to answer questions from the interested public. The symposium always has several interesting presentations on birds, and this one did not disappoint.

The following Saturday, on Feb. 7, we were again an exhibitor at the Master Gardeners' "Insights Into Gardening" event at La Sells Stewart Center. This is a popular event with more than 300 participants. We brought information on our organization and how to garden for birds. We also had a few handouts on native plants for birds that many people picked up. We brought a raffle prize of a porch swing-shaped tray feeder, a small bag of bird seed and one of our logo canvas bags—it was popular. Not surprisingly, gardeners and bird lovers have a lot in common.

March promises to be a little busier. Look for us at STEAM Night at Katherine Jones Harrison Elementary on March 5, Wild4Nature at Avery Park on March 7, and the Sustainability Fair on March 12. Hope to see many of you at these events! Thank you to our wonderful volunteers who helped staff these recent events: Mai Kiigemagi, Phyllis Bailey, Tricia Bowlby and Ann Brodie.

MULTI-DAY FIELD TRIPS

MARK BALDWIN

The dates for our 2026 Malheur Field Trip have been changed. New dates are May 28-31, about 10 days later than previously announced. Our chances of slightly warmer weather and seeing migratory songbirds, including warblers, bobolinks, vireos and others, are increased.

Rogue Valley (March 27-29) — Leader: Ray Draypek (16 people)

Malheur (May 28-31) — Leader: Mark Baldwin (16-22 people)

Summer Lake (June 19-21) — Leader: Bev Clark (16 people)

Steens/Eastern Oregon (Aug. 13-16) — Leader: Bruce Kelpsas (16 people)

South Coast/Bandon (Sept. 9-11) — Leader: Tom Penpraze (16 people)

For questions or to sign up for trips, email fieldtripsmultiday@mwbirdalliance.org.



OUR TABLE AT "INSIGHTS INTO GARDENING"
PHOTO BY DODIE WILSON

SECOND SATURDAY FIELD TRIP

March 14: Second Saturday Field Trip, meet at Willamette Park shelter 8 a.m. *To register for Saturday Field Trips, please contact SecondSaturday@mwbirdalliance.org.*

MWBA MONTHLY SPEAKER

“COASTAL CONSERVATION – LAND-SEA CONNECTIONS,” PAUL ENGELMEYER, MARCH 19 AT 7:15 P.M.

Beginning in 2000, the public, the fishing industry and other interested individuals began discussions of the feasibility of creating marine protected areas in Oregon. Ultimately, five marine reserves were established — at Cape Falcon, Cascade Head, Otter Rock, Cape Perpetua and Redfish Rocks.

Each site is unique, with different habitats, shapes, and sizes, amount of prior fishing and characteristics of nearby communities. The goals are long-term research of these living laboratories to support biodiversity conservation, scientific research, ecosystem management, reserve management, sustainable ocean resources and coastal communities, and public education.

Paul’s presentation will cover several coastal Oregon issues, including protecting forage fish, which are the prey base for seabirds; the unique habitat of the ESA-listed marbled murrelet; and the current status of Oregon’s five marine reserves. Paul has managed the Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary, near Yachats, for the Oregon Bird Alliance (formerly Portland Audubon) and served on Oregon’s Ocean Policy Advisory Council, which developed the system of marine protected areas.

Members and nonmembers are welcome to attend the meeting in person at the C3 Chandler Ballroom on NW Tyler Avenue in Corvallis. The social begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by the business meeting at 7 p.m. and a slide show presentation around 7:20 p.m. lasting about an hour.



PAUL ENGELMEYER IN TEN MILE SANCTUARY
PHOTO BY KELSEY KUHNHAUSEN



MARBLED MURRELET
PHOTO BY BRIAN SULLIVAN

COMMUNITY NOTES

SUZANNE ORTIZ

Benton County Historical Museum, Corvallis

- Thursday, March 5, at 10:30 a.m. “100 Years of Water Pollution on the Willamette.” Presentation by Larry Curtis. Free and open to the public (suggested donation is \$5-100). Registration closed, but open seats are available on a first-come, first-seated basis. BCHS Museum, 411 SW Second St., Corvallis.
- Saturday, March 15, from noon to 1:30 p.m. “Native Bee Workshop.” Heather Andrews, research entomologist, OSU. Learn about the different types of native bees in the Willamette Valley and their different habitats. Participants will decorate mason bee houses.

Corvallis-Benton County Public Library

- Saturday, March 7, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Public Seed Library Pop-Up Clinic. Benton County Master Gardeners will help plan your garden, select the right seeds and answer your questions. Free. Co-sponsored by the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition and CBCPL, with educational support from Benton County Master Gardeners and OSU Extension Service — Benton County. Belluschi Wing. CBCPL, 645 NW Monroe Ave., Corvallis.
- Saturday, March 21, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Public Seed Library Pop-Up Clinic. “Cool Season Crops and Flowers Plus Herbs to Start Indoors Now.” Free. Co-sponsored by the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition and CBCPL, with educational support from Benton County Master Gardeners and OSU Extension Service — Benton County. Belluschi Wing. CBCPL, 645 NW Monroe Ave., Corvallis.

Corvallis Community Center

- Friday, March 6, at 5 p.m. Family Fun Night. The night features STEAM activities, art and games. Ages 2-12. Free. C3, Corvallis Community Center, 2601 NW Tyler Ave., Corvallis.

Marys Peak Group of the Sierra Club

- Wednesday, March 18, at 7 p.m. “A Kalapuya Legacy: Oak Savannas and Prairies on OSU Lands.” Part 1 of the 2026 Frenkel Series, “Listening to the Land.” Dennis Albert, Ph.D., OSU researcher. Learn about the history and importance of the local Oregon white oaks and herbaceous species on OSU lands. Free. Co-sponsored with the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library and Corvallis Sustainability Coalition Water Action Team. Virtual meeting. To register for the Zoom meeting, [click here](#).

Oregon State University

- Friday, March 6, at noon. Also on March 10, 12, 25 and 28. Tree Walk (and food drive). Dan Blanchard, curator of living plant collections for the OSU Campus Arboretum. Email amy.baker@oregonstate.edu for details. OSU Department of Horticulture and OSU Extension Service.
- Monday, March 9, at 1 p.m. “Literature Review of American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) Habitat in Oregon.” Melissa Hunt. OSU Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Sciences. Virtual event. [Click here for more info](#).
- Tuesday, March 10, at 1:30 p.m. “Movement Ecology and Habitat Selection of Female Northern Pintail at a Key Spring Migration Stopover Site.” FWCS Defense Seminar. Sarah Swann, MS candidate. OSU Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Sciences. Agricultural and Life Sciences Building, Room 4000, 2750 SW Campus Dr., Corvallis.
- Wednesday, March 11, at 4 p.m. Starker Lecture Series. “What We’ve Learned From Decades of Long-Term Forest Research.” Fred Swanson, OSU emeritus faculty and research geologist (retired), U.S. Forest Service. Webinar. [Click here to register](#).
- Friday, March 13, at 2 p.m. “AI for Nature: From Science to Impact.” Tanya Berger-Wolf, Ph.D., Ohio State University. Discussion on how AI can turn data from new data collection technologies into high-resolution information sources, introduce the field of imageomics and present a vision on how to partner with AI in science and biodiversity conservation. OSU College of Engineering, ENGINEERING+, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. LINC 268, 165 SW Sackett Place, Corvallis. [Click here for more information and the Zoom link](#).
- Through March 20. The Little Gallery: “Wanderlust 2026.” Second annual exhibition of photos taken by OSU students while they studied and interned in diverse locations. Free. Collaboration between OSU Global Opportunities and World Culture & Languages in recognition of UNESCO’s Mother Language Day. The Little Gallery, Kidder Hall, Room 210, 2000 SW Campus Way, Corvallis.

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

FEB. 12, 2026

President

- Annual report due in less than a month
- March board meeting moved to Wednesday, March 11

Program Committee

- Mark and Mai coordinating with Doug on students presenting projects funded by the organization
- March speaker: Paul Edelmeier

Treasurer

- Carolyn working on new credit cards for field trip leaders

Education

- STEAM Night: March 5, Katherine Jones Elementary
- Winter Wildlife Field Day: March 7 at Avery Park (“Wild 4 Nature”)
 - Partners: Chintimini, Starker Forests, USFS, USFWS
- Sustainability Fair: March 12
- Feb. 5: Natural Resource Educator Working Group at C3
- Feb. 7: Insights Into Gardening event; very successful, distributed handouts and brochures
- Discussion of iNaturalist workshop; possibility of Facebook Live for those unable to attend

Conservation

- Interest in having a host at Hesthavn for Bird Nerds
- Owl research: Saw-whet owl caught that was previously banded in Alberta, Canada

Hesthavn

- Three student groups volunteered recently, completing significant work
- Gravel may be needed for driveway to prevent vehicles from getting stuck

Field Trips

- 4-5 signed up for Malheur; additional sign-ups for other trips
- Bandon: Sept. 9-11

Sustainability

- Sustainability Fair and Town Hall: March 12
 - Volunteers needed; Bev and Dodie volunteering
- Suzanne created slide for 2026 Sustainability Town Hall scrapbook thanking Fred for 55 years leading multi-day field trips
- Natural Areas Celebration Week: May 2-10
 - Open house at Hesthavn; seeking volunteers

Membership

- Membership numbers steady; preparing tax information

Kai Frueh Concert Update

- Location narrowed to Good Sam or Grace Lutheran
- Scheduled for June 27, 5:30–8 p.m.



WESTERN BLUEBIRD
PHOTO BY SCOTT MARTIN



VAUX'S SWIFT
PHOTO BY STEVE KOLBE



TRUMPETER SWAN
PHOTO BY CAROLINE LAMBERT

MWBA LEADERSHIP

OFFICERS

Co-President: Dave Mellinger

Co-President: Karan Fairchild

Secretary: Annie Lamas

Treasurer: Carolyn Peterson

BOARD MEMBERS

Phyllis Bailey

Mark Baldwin

Bev Clark

Suzanne Ortiz

Marge Popp

Dodie Wilson

CHAIRPERSONS

Bluebird Trail: Matt Lee

Chat Editor: Jada Krening

Christmas Bird Count: Bev Clark, Matt Lee

Conservation: Jayshaun Talbert

Corvallis Sustainability Coalition: Suzanne Ortiz

Education Team: Meika Vingelen, Dodie Wilson

Field Trip - Local: Duncan Evered, Caryn Stoess

Field Trip - Regional: TBD

Hesthavn: Ray Drapek

Membership: Bill Gellatly

Website: Sue Powell

Facebook: Dodie Wilson

Instagram: Spencer Mair

Refreshments: Becky Garrett

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Let us know! Contact us at volunteerasc@gmail.com.

The Chat is published 10 times a year by the Mid-Willamette Bird Alliance, PO Box 148, Corvallis OR 97339.

Annual ASC memberships:

- \$25 for an individual
- \$35 for a family
- \$15 for student
- \$15 for Chat only subscriptions (email delivery only)
- \$50 for Supporting Level
- \$100 for Patron Level
- \$200 for Benefactor Level

PROGRAM MEETINGS

Join us in person at the C3 Chandler Ballroom in Corvallis: social at 6:30 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m., slide show at 7:20 p.m. Or join via Zoom at 7:15 p.m.

OPEN BOARD MEETINGS

MWBA Board of Director meetings are open to all members. This month's board meeting is Wednesday, March 11. Visit the MWBA website for more information.

CHAT ARTICLES

The Chat welcomes articles from all members of the MWBA. Please submit text and photos to chateditors@gmail.com.

FIND US ONLINE!

Website: mwbirdalliance.org

Facebook: [Corvallis Audubon](https://www.facebook.com/CorvallisAudubon)

Instagram: [@midwillamettebirdalliance](https://www.instagram.com/midwillamettebirdalliance)