

**Black Hills
Audubon Society**
Olympia, Washington

**Volume 39,
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July/August 2008



**Message from the
president**

Black Hills Audubon has benefited from the dedication of many hard-working individuals. I would like to thank Linda Carter for her tireless service as President for the past two years. When we needed someone to speak for Audubon and habitat preservation at public meetings or to raise funds for Black hills Audubon, Linda was there; when we needed someone to be Editor of *The Echo*, Linda was there to take over the job; even when we needed rented chairs for a meeting, Linda was there with her truck. She was always willing to go the extra mile.

Thanks go to Mike O'Malley for handling the job of Treasurer for the past five years, maintaining the financial records, and keeping the Board well informed with frequent reports. Thanks, also, to Susan Markey for preparing accurate and reliable minutes for more years than I know and for providing an institutional memory for all the rest of us on the Board. Ever dedicated, she is moving over to serve as Treasurer.

And thanks to Sue Danver, who has made her years as Conservation Chair memorable by her untiring efforts to curb encroachment of wildlife habitat and protect water and air quality. She was the lead on the

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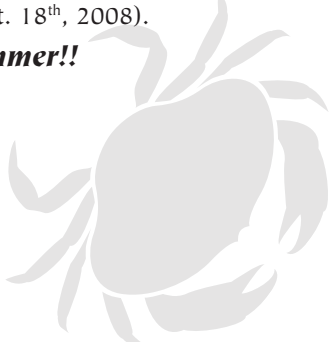
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Remember,

Monthly Membership Meetings/Programs take the summer off. They will resume on the 3rd Thursday of September (Sept. 18th, 2008).

Enjoy your summer!!



Birdathon Update

The 2008 Birdathon [See *The Echo*, last issue, May-June 2008, page 4] is wrapping up. Outstanding pledges should be into BHAS by June 30. While we don't have a final report, initial indications are that the Birdathon was a big success. A complete report with earnings, participants, and sponsors will be in the next issue of the *Echo*. Thanks to all who participated! Several Birdathon reports are in this issue. If you have any questions about the Birdathon, call or e-mail Sheila McCartan at: 357-9170 or blackhillsbirdathon@comcast.net 🐦



—Sheila McCartan
Birdathon Coordinator

Conservation Notes

BHAS'S Seven-Year Involvement with the Quality Rock Products Case

[Editor's Note: Would Black Hills Audubon Society have decided to fight a proposed asphalt plant near the Black River Wildlife Refuge if it had known it would last 7 years and cost more than \$70,000 in legal fees? The question is easy to ask, in retrospect, but not easy to answer...even knowing now that we would eventually succeed.

What follows is a brief history of the QRP case. What may not be obvious is the huge amount of human energy expended for each action and submission of documents. As much as this was a win for BHAS and the environment, it was also a testament to steadfast perseverance, attention to detail, and passion to protect the natural environment. Sue Danver lived every day of this QRP case. Cheers to Sue!]

2001

July: BHAS submits written and oral testimony opposing an air quality permit for an asphalt plant proposed by Quality Rock Products (QRP) in the vicinity of the Black River. OAPCA (the Olympic Air Pollution Control Authority) granted the permit because QRP's project met Federal Standards for a plant that size, location, and material.

October: BHAS submits comments requesting that an EIS be done for the Quality Rock Products Special Use Permit (SUP) request to expand a 26 acre gravel pit to 151 acres and build an asphalt plant and concrete plant immediately adjacent to the Black River National Wildlife Refuge. On October 4, the Thurston County SEPA official states that a mitigated determination of non-significance (MDNS) is adequate.

November 19: Session I of Land Use Hearing before Thurston County Hearings Examiner William Driscoll. Heath Packard and the BHAS Conservation Committee present oral and written testimony to the Hearings Examiner.

December 9: Spawning Coho Salmon found in Ashley Creek that crosses QRP's property upstream of QRP. QRP had said in its SEPA that this was a non-fish bearing stream and called it a "ditch" on its map.

December 10: Session II of Land Use Hearing. Sue Danver provides the BHAS defense against QRP's statements made in the hearing. The Hearing Examiner extends the written comment period a week because of the discovery of the Coho Salmon.

December 13: BHAS, with a special gift of \$1100, hires Mace Barron, a toxicology and environmental consultant with expertise in wildlife toxicology, to

prepare a review of the SEPA and land use Special Use Permit (SUP) for QRP.

December 17: BHAS requests in writing that the County SEPA official withdraw the MDNS and replace it with an EIS since the SEPA application had incorrect information about the fish. In addition, it became apparent that QRP had said that there was "no recreation" nearby on the same SEPA application even though the Black River National Wildlife Refuge (BRNWR) is immediately adjacent. The state endangered Oregon Spotted Frog was also not identified in the SEPA. BHAS provides Mace Barron's (consulting toxicologist) analysis as support.

2002

January 9: The County SEPA official recommends to the Hearings Examiner that a survey for the State Endangered Oregon Spotted Frog be conducted in the stream and wetlands on the QRP property.

January 17: The Hearing Examiner orders another hearing to deal with the new information about the wetlands, the hydro-geology of the site, the presence of coho salmon, and the possible presence of the Oregon Spotted Frog.

Late January: BHAS retains Dave Bricklin, Seattle environmental attorney, to assist on the case.

Early Feb: BHAS hires Nadine Romero, hydro-geologist, to assist in the hydro-geology of the site.

Feb 5 & Feb 11: Session 3 and Session 4 of the continued Land Use Hearing with Nadine Romero and several other witnesses in support of BHAS's position.

April 5: Hearings Examiner William Driscoll grants QRP a Special Use Permit with minimal mitigation. He does not adopt County SEPA official's recommendation to do a survey for frogs on QRP's property.

April 19: BHAS appeals the Hearing Examiner's decision to the Thurston Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

July: The BOCC's provides the written decision in which they remand QRP's Special Use Permit (2-1) to study traffic on 88th Ave. SW, whether QRP's land has mineral designation, the impact of the project on the BRNWR wetlands and water quality, and the status of the 1985 and 1986 permits.

November 13: Session I of the remand hearing. Marion Smith, past DOT road design employee, joins Dave Bricklin and Nadine Romero in support of the BHAS position.

2003

January 10: BHAS writes to the County that QRP only has an exempt well with which to conduct all

their activities—which is supposed to be limited to 5,000 gallons per day. A Mason County EIS on the McEwen mine provides information on how much gravel washing can occur with 5,000 gallons.

Jan/Feb: BHAS again asks the County to withdraw the SEPA—Dave Brickin and BHAS both submit requests independently.

February 10: Session II of the remand hearing.

May 30: Hearing Examiner William Driscoll again approves QRP's SUP.

June: BHAS appeals the second granting of the SUP.

August 4 & 11: The County Commissioners (3-0) agree with BHAS's appeal.

Late August: QRP appeals the County Commissioners decision to Mason County.

December 23: Mason County Superior Court Judge dismisses the QRP appeal on a procedural error. BHAS has Dave Bricklin assist with the County's oral argument.

2004

Late January: 1) QRP requests Judge James Sawyer to reconsider his dismissal of the QRP appeal of the County.

March 22: Judge James Sawyer, Mason County Superior Court, dismisses QRP's reconsideration argument. QRP's appeal of the county decision is denied.

2005

January 13: The State Appeals Court in Tacoma hears QRP's appeal of the Mason County Superior Court decision. County Prosecutor Elizabeth Petrich conducts the majority of the defense on the procedural matter. Dave Bricklin, BHAS's attorney, assists. A decision is expected in two to six months.

March 8: The State Appeals Court reverses the Superior Court decision on procedure. The case is remanded back to Mason County Superior Court on its merits.

October 3: Judge Sawyer hears the case in Mason County Superior Court and agrees with QRP's appeal. Sawyer states that there was a preponderance of evidence: the County Hearing Examiner, Mr. Driscoll, decided twice that the project was acceptable, and the County hydrogeologist, several times over two years, said he thought the project was okay. The Final Order does close 88th

Avenue SW, a narrow residential road, to gravel truck traffic until improvements can be made (effective in late December 2005). Due to right of way problems, the road may not ever be improved.

November 22: Thurston County and BHAS both appeal the Superior Court decision to the State Court of Appeals. The case will take place in 6-12 months.

2006

January 23: Mason County Superior Court Judge Jim Sawyer rules that QRP can no longer use 88th Avenue SW for gravel truck traffic.

May 22: BHAS and Thurston County each write an appeal brief of Mason County Superior Court decision to the State Court of Appeals.

August 14: BHAS and Thurston County each write a reply to QRP's response to the BHAS's and Thurston County's appeal to State Court of Appeals.

2007

February 7: The State Court of Appeals unanimously agrees with BHAS' and Thurston County's appeal and deny QRP its permit in an unpublished decision.

February 23: QRP requests that the State Court of Appeals decision be published. (If a decision is published it is more likely that the State Supreme Court will consider an appeal to their court.)

May 30: The State Court of Appeals orders a part published decision.

June 30: QRP petitions the State Supreme Court to hear an appeal of the State Court of Appeals decision.

July 30: BHAS and Thurston County each enter an answer (brief) requesting that the State Supreme Court refuse to hear the QRP case.

September: The Supreme Court receives three *amicus curiae* memoranda in support of QRP's Petition For Review. The briefs were submitted by: (1) Washington Aggregates and Concrete Association and the Association of Washington Business (AWB Brief); (2) Pacific Legal Foundation, Washington Dairy Federation, Building Association of Washington and Washington State Farm Bureau (PLF Brief); and (3) Inland Associated General Contractors and the Associated General Contractors of Washington (AGC Brief).

October 9: BHAS and Thurston County answer (in another brief) the *amicus curiae* memoranda request that the State Supreme Court deny QRP's Petition.

2008

April 2: A panel of four State Supreme Justices unanimously denies QRP's Petition For Review to be heard by the State Supreme Court. BHAS, Thurston County, and the Environment **WIN!!!** 🦋

Birdathon Sweep Across Washington

Adapted from an account by Jean McGregor

A small group of seven intrepid birders—four of us from the Olympia area—spent the entire Memorial Day weekend crossing the state of Washington and searching for as many species as possible, in a birdathon on behalf of Audubon Washington, our state office of National Audubon. We netted 176 species (one of which is extremely rare hereabouts) and a tremendously good time.

The members of the group were our leader Michael Carmody (Spokane); Ann and Helen Berry (Olympia); Nina Carter (Olympia, the executive director of Audubon Washington); Jean McGregor (Olympia); Carrie Aikin (Seattle); and Charlie Kahle (Seattle).

Why were we this obsessive about counting birds for four days? Because... Audubon Washington is the voice for birdlife and other non-game wildlife at the state level. They can only do all this good work if they have the support of people like us.

We set off on Saturday at 5:45 a.m. from Spokane, with the first bird of the day a **black-billed Magpie**. At a small quiet pond it was a thrill to get a close-up sighting of a **Harrier** and to hear the nasal *br-e-e-e* of the **Western Wood Pewee**. The edges of the farm ponds and small lakes were thick with **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**, and we all agreed they win the prize for “most unmelodious bird song.” Also numerous were **Black Terns** feeding on marsh bugs. The wetlands yielded diverse waterfowl and we had the opportunity to catch an **Osprey** having just nabbed a mouse or vole. We pulled over to watch the osprey perch and begin devouring its morning meal. A little further west, at a series of farm ponds in wheat country, we were pleased to find a couple of **Wilson’s Phalarope** twirling and feeding. The delightful, lyrical calls of the **Western Meadowlark** were everywhere. Later, we got a small taste of the eastern Washington scablands, spotting **Sage**

Thrasher, Brewer’s Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark and Calliope Hummingbird feeding on flowers between the sage.

Since Wenas Creek was our destination for Saturday evening, we moved quickly across central Washington (spotting a **Swainson’s Hawk** and many **Red-Tailed Hawks**). At Ellensburg, we turned south over the Umtanum Ridge to Wenas Creek. En route, we were delighted to see **Western** and **Mountain Bluebirds** (such a pleasure to see all the Yakima Audubon Society bluebird nesting boxes along this road) and **Lazuli Bunting**.

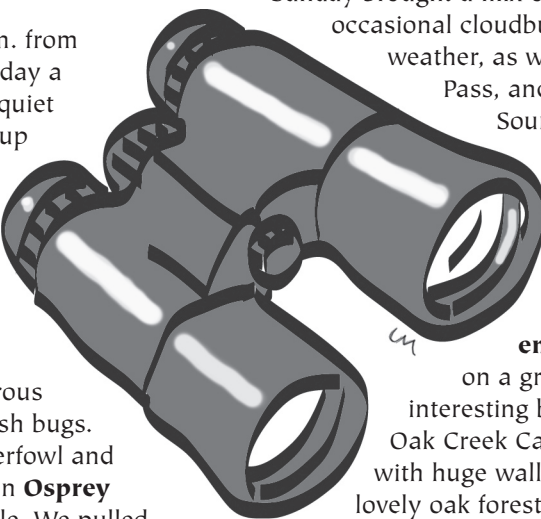
We pulled into the Wenas Campground in time for a wonderful dinner prepared by Helen Engle and her daughter Melanie. Helen’s son-in-law, Rob Sandelin immediately scooped us up to go check out the **White-headed Woodpecker** before the evening campfire

program, a popular evening ritual of the Wenas Audubon Campouts that have been occurring at this site every Memorial Day weekend since 1963. We then headed back into Yakima for some sleep.

Sunday brought a mix of sun, clouds, drizzle, and occasional cloudbursts—not the best birding weather, as we headed west over White’s Pass, and then back down into Puget Sound country toward Ocean Shores. Driving over the Pass we were stunned by the amount of snow still covering the ground and largely frozen lakes, but did pick up a **Barrow’s Goldeneye** and an **American Pipit** on a gravel pile. Some of the most interesting birding of the day was along Oak Creek Canyon—a substantial canyon with huge walls of columnar basalt, and lovely oak forests on the canyon floor. We were treated to great views of **Rock Wrens** singing on rocks high up, and occasional calls of **Canyon Wrens**. We got our one **Golden Eagle** sighting here and a wonderful view of a stunning male **Western Tanager** and **Lewis’s Woodpecker**.

Monday morning was gray and occasionally drizzly

Continued on next page



Nisqually NWR Birdathon Report

On May 7, twenty of us enjoyed a productive walk around the outer dike at Nisqually under cool and breezy conditions with the tide dropping fast. We saw a total of 70 species. There were several highlights including **Wilson's Phalarope**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, and **Merlin**. The **Wilson's Phalarope** and **Solitary Sandpiper** were both in the first pond on the left as you start out to McAllister Creek. The Solitary was working the shoreline and the Phalarope was just beyond the weed line spinning up food. The Spotted Sandpiper was out on McAllister Creek working the edges of the creek. The Merlin was the last bird we saw today as we stopped for one last look for the

Wilson's Phalarope near the parking lot when the Merlin blew in and sent a small flock of peeps up off the edge of the pond. The Merlin left hungry but put on a show. Other good sightings included two **Rufous Hummingbird** nests, one with the female on the nest and the other with two young in it. We also saw a pair of **Brown Creepers** hauling nesting material to a tree on the outside of the boardwalk.

We had all five **swallow** species today but no woodpeckers. We also had lots of waterfowl species and spring migration is definitely on. We had our first **Evening Grosbeaks** and **Western Tanagers** of the year today. 🐦

—Submitted by Phil Kelly

Sweep Across Washington

From previous page

at Ocean Shores. Our first beach explorations were pretty disappointing, but we did see a **Peregrine** perched on a post right on the beach. Standing on the jetty, we watched **loons** in the water and in flight (**Red-throated**, **Pacific**, and **Common**) and spotted **Brandt's**, **Double-crested**, and **Pelagic Cormorants**, **Black**, **Surf**, and **White-winged Scoters**, **Pigeon Guillemot**, and **Cassin's** and **Rhinoceros Auklet**.

Then, checking out the tidal ponds behind the sewage treatment plant at the west end of the Oyehut Game Range, we had our biggest find of the trip: a single female **Hudsonian Godwit**, a rarity in Washington and considered "accidental" in the spring. Michael Carmody's expertise was essential here, as he recognized its dark tail, pale eyebrow and diagnostic white rump-patch—visible when it raised its wings. He explained to us that this Godwit, who usually migrates up the Mississippi Flyway to nest in Hudson Bay and the Arctic Circle, probably took a wrong turn in Central America and ended up on the Washington Coast. In the tidal wet lands we also found **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Long-billed Dowitcher**, **Semipalmated Plovers**, **Western Sandpipers**, **Dunlin** and a **Greater Yellowlegs** flying overhead and a **Common Yellowthroat** calling from the bushes.

This trip list would not have reached 176 species without the expert route-finding and



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Watershed Park Birdathon Trip Report

Ten Black Hills Audubon members spent a lovely, cool, sunny morning on May 31 at one of Olympia's jewels, Watershed Park. Because the focus of this walk was "Birding by Ear," we moved slowly and stopped frequently to practice with listening and identifying bird songs, and thus our list is not lengthy. With the trees leafed out now, many forest birds are hard to spot...but their songs are abundant at this time of year. We enjoyed the sounds and the searching!

Here is our list of the 20 species seen:

1. Rock Dove
2. Mourning Dove
3. Rufous Hummingbird
4. Northern Flicker
5. Pileated Woodpecker
6. Pacific Slope Flycatcher
7. Steller's Jay
8. American Crow
9. Black-capped Chickadee
10. Chestnut-backed Chickadee
11. Winter Wren
12. Golden-crowned Kinglet
13. Swainson's Thrush
14. American Robin
15. Cedar Waxwing
16. Wilson's Warbler
17. Western Tanager
18. Black-headed Grosbeak
19. Spotted Towhee
20. Song Sparrow

—Submitted by Jean MacGregor

BHAS Field Trips for July and August

July 26th, Saturday, 6:30 am to late afternoon.

Naches Pass area.

Leader: Kristin Stewart

This area, mostly in southeastern King County, but bordering on Pierce, Kittitas and Yakima counties as well, offers a westside chance to find eastside montane bird species. Red-naped Sapsuckers, Cassin's Finches, Rock Wrens, Mountain Bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaires, Pine Grosbeaks are possible, as are other high country breeders such as Fox, Chipping, and Lincoln's Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, or Hermit Thrushes. Expect some hiking, and driving on narrow FS roads. Meet at the Martin Way Park and Ride ready for a 6:30 departure. Call the BHAS phone at 360-352-7299 to register. Limit of 3 cars.

August 2nd, Saturday, 6:00am to late afternoon.

Mt Rainier National Park.

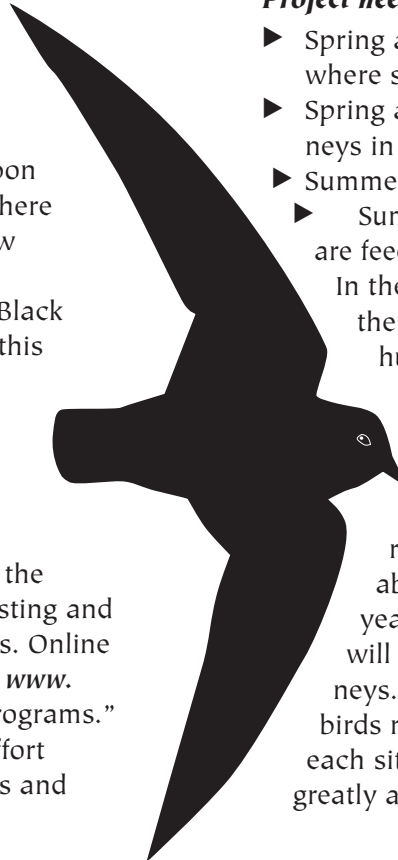
Leader: Kristin Stewart

Join us for our annual trek to the mountain to enjoy the wildflowers, and look for a few higher altitude bird species. There are not many species there, but we have been successful in locating White-tailed Ptarmigan in recent years, as well as a few Gray-crowned Rosy Finches. We also enjoy the Hoary Marmots, and now and then we see a Pika. This trip involves hiking from about 5400 ft to approximately 7200 ft, so be sure to bring enough food and water, wear sunscreen, and good boots. Parking is very limited at Paradise due to construction, so there will be a 3 car limit. Call BHAS at 360-352-7299 to register.

Save our Swifts

In the Spring and Fall groups of Vaux Swifts (*Chaetura vauxi*) use chimneys and snags as communal roosts along their migratory route. Pilchuck Audubon is heading a project to assess where these roosting spots are and how many birds may be using them. I have agreed to coordinate the Black Hills Audubon effort to support this project.

If you know of locations where swifts have been seen please share this with me (866-8156) or use online reporting forms to document current activity. Note the address where the birds are roosting and the approximate number of birds. Online reporting forms can be found at www.pilchuckaudubon.org click on "Programs." There you can read about the effort to assess Vaux Swift populations and gather other information.



Project needs:

- ▶ Spring and Fall reporting on locations where swifts roost
- ▶ Spring and Fall counts of swifts using chimneys in Olympia and Thurston County
- ▶ Summer reports on Swift nesting locations
- ▶ Summer reports on lakes where swifts are feeding

In the Capitol neighborhood of Olympia there are at least two houses where hundreds of swifts roosted this spring.

There may be other locations. You can help find those locations.

Screening of chimneys is a growing problem. Houses where the birds roosted one year are often unavailable the next. It is possible that in years to come artificial roosting boxes will be used to replace screened chimneys. First we need to assess where the birds roost and how many birds are using each site. Your help is needed and will be greatly appreciated. 🐦

—Whittier Johnson

Black Hills Audubon Society (BHAS) Membership form

Type of Membership—check appropriate box

Yearly benefits:

Member of Black Hills Audubon Society Chapter (BHAS) only

Singles or household

- \$20, regular member
- \$35, regular member for 2 years **NEW!**
- \$50, regular member for 3 years, **NEW!**
- \$15, senior or full-time student
- \$25, senior or full-time student for 2 years **NEW!**
- \$35, senior or full-time student for 3 years **NEW!**

Please make check payable to Black Hills Audubon Society.

All dues go to support local Black Hills Audubon chapter efforts.

Receive the chapter newsletter, *The Echo*, which describes local chapter conservation action, events, and field trips.

Member of Black Hills Audubon Society Chapter and National Audubon (both)

- \$20, first-time member price
- \$15, Senior or full-time student

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society.
Renewals: please renew your National Audubon Membership by filling out the forms sent to you by National and sending directly to National Audubon. Thanks!

Most of the dues go to support national efforts.

Receive the award-winning national magazine, *Audubon*, and the chapter newsletter, *The Echo*.

Subscription only—receive the chapter newsletter, *The Echo* (does not include membership)

- \$10 chapter newsletter only

Please make check payable to Black Hills Audubon Society.

Receive the chapter newsletter, *The Echo*

- I would like to help Black Hills Audubon's programs of education and conservation.

Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____

Renewals: please renew your National Audubon Membership by filling out the forms sent to you by National and sending directly to National Audubon. Thanks!

Name: _____

Address: _____ City/State/zip _____

Phone/Email _____

My check for \$_____ is enclosed.

Please fill out this form and mail it with your check to the appropriate address:

Black Hills Audubon Society is a 501(C)3 organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Membership
Black Hills Audubon Society
PO Box 2524
Olympia WA 98507

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Thank you for supporting the Black Hills Audubon Society!



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Black Hills Audubon Society is a non-profit organization. A member chapter of the National Audubon Society, it represents Audubon members in Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties.

Our goals are to maintain, restore and protect our ecosystems for future generations, and to promote environmental education and nature-based recreation.

General membership meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday evening of each month, September through June, at the Capitol Museum Coach House, 211 West 21st Street, in Olympia.

Board meetings are at 5:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. The site varies from month to month, so please call us at the office if you would like to sit in.

Phone and e-mail messages are welcome, but please remember that we are a volunteer-based organization, and it may take us a few days to get back to you.

The Echo is published bi-monthly. Editor: Deb Jaqua. Layout and design by Lee Miller. Graphics by Nature Icons/Ultimate Symbol unless initialed.

Material for *The Echo* should be sent to PO Box 2524, Olympia, WA 98507, or e-mailed to Deb Jaqua at webdeb1@gmail.com.

Deadline for the September/October issue is **August 10, 2008.**

Volunteers are needed for the following jobs:

Please contact the Black Hills Audubon Society at info@blackhills-audubon.org or 360-352-7299 if you are able/interested in helping out with these jobs or with other activities.

Education Committee

We are looking for more volunteers who wish to help with a variety of education-related projects including:

- ▶ Developing presentation slideshows on birds and birding for children and adults—skills in graphics, science, or education
- ▶ Coordinating and arranging birding classes
- ▶ Working with area teachers to bring this curriculum to the schools
- ▶ Staffing information tables at various local events

Volunteers are wanted to promote bird and birding education, whether you have days or just a few hours to participate.

Please contact Debbie Nickerson at 360-754-5397

for questions and for more information.

Serve as the back-up person responsible for collecting messages off the Audubon phone line.

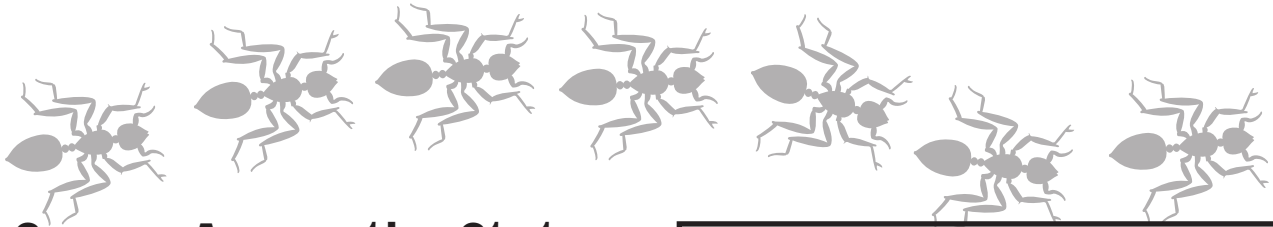
This can be done from your home phone.

Conservation Committee

Members are wanted to follow certain conservation, environmental, or public policy issues such as cluster housing, land-use policy, habitat protection, critical area ordinance changes, zoning, comprehensive plans, development proposals, Puget Sound protection and restoration, etc.

Please contact Donna Nickerson at D.J.Nick@comcast.net.

We couldn't do what we do without our Volunteers! 🐦



Sweep Across the State

From page 5

bird-finding of Michael Carmody. Many of you know of his bird touring company, Legacy Tours (<http://www.legacy-tours.com/>) and his marvelous skills as an ornithologist, educator, and community-builder. We are grateful for his donating these days to the Audubon cause. And, we could not have carried this off without you, our donors. Thanks to you, we have raised close to \$10,000 for Audubon Washington.

Why were we this obsessive about counting birds for four days? Because Audubon Washington leads our science, policy, and education work in Washington State, coordinates Important Bird Area (IBA) work, coordinates the statewide Washington Birding Trails, opened a trail-blazing nature center in Seward Park, and does so much more! Audubon Washington is **the** voice for birdlife and other non-game wildlife at the state level. They can only do all this good work if they have the support of people like us. 🐦

President's message

From page 1

successful, multi-year effort to halt expansion of a gravel mine and construction of an asphalt plant by Quality Rock Products near the Black River National Wildlife Refuge—an effort that was finally settled when the State Supreme Court let stand an Appeals Court ruling in April 2008. [See more details on this effort in this issue of the Echo].

As we begin a new fiscal year, those of us who are continuing on the BHAS Board look forward to finding new opportunities in the areas of education and habitat preservation. We particularly hope to involve more of our membership in the work of Black Hills Audubon. With your help, we look forward to a good year. 🐦

—Sam Merrill,
BHAS President

The Bimonthly Bird The swallows of Summer— Family *Hirundinidae*

In the Pacific Northwest we are blessed with an abundance of species of swallows. From cliff to bank, tree to barn, these splendid birds encompass a range of colors and habitats. Belonging to various genera in the family *Hirundinidae*, swallows are migratory, wintering in the southernmost States and in Central and South America. All five of the species described below can be seen around the South Puget Sound area. (Tip—Look up under the roof at the entrance to the Library building at The Evergreen State College to see the characteristic nests of one local species of swallow).

The swallow we are most likely to see in and around town is *Tachycineta thalassina*, the Violet-green Swallow. Frequently seen perched on utility wires, this cavity-nester has dark wings and a green back. The white of its belly and throat extends to its face and above its eyes. The female's plumage is duller overall. When perched, the wings of the Violet-green Swallow extend well beyond its short tail.

The Tree Swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor*, is very similar to the Violet-green. Also a cavity nester, but less likely to be found in town, the slightly larger Tree Swallow has a dark blue back. The white on its face does not reach the eye,

and the wings, when the bird is perched, just reach the tip of the tail. The male's and female's plumage are similar.

The Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*, is the epitome of summer. This usually rural, fork-tailed swallow nests in small colonies, frequently under the eaves of farm buildings. The cup-shaped mud nests adhere to the building. The Barn Swallow has a dark blue back over a lighter belly—pale in the female, rich buffy orange in the male. In both sexes the throat and forehead are rust-colored. Barn, Tree, and Violet-green swallows can all be seen from the viewing platform near the Twin Barns at the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge.

Stelgidopteryx serripennis, the Northern Rough-winged Swallow, is brown over a whitish belly, with a short tail. The male and female plumage are similar. Not colonial, Northern Rough-winged Swallows nest in pairs in holes in cliffs or riverbanks.

The Cliff Swallow, *Petrochelidon prrhonota*, is another short-tailed swallow. It is more colorful than the Northern Rough-winged Swallow, having a pale rump, rusty cheeks extending into a dark throat patch, and a white forehead. Its wings, back, and the top of its head are dark. Cliff swallows are colonial. Each pair builds an enclosed, gourd-shaped mud nest, usually under the overhang of a cliff or building. 🐦

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