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## **Update on NorthPoint/Maytown (May 21, 2019)**

*By Sue Danver* – BHAS implemented its new electronic alert system, *SpeakOut!*, with an April 23 alert asking that the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) deny the NorthPoint request (for industrial rezoning of land near Maytown) to be added to the 2018-2019 Comprehensive Plan Docket. On May 7, 2019, the BOCC adopted a position we supported (2-1) to observe a more normal docket application process. Staff will begin the required work for the 2020/2021 docket on November 15, 2019.

The alert system was quite a success. Thanks to Jim Wilson and Deb Nickerson, our first alert went out to around 750 BHAS members. Members could send our chosen message to the BOCC with the push of a button. They could forward the alert and those recipients could also participate. Anyone could go to our website, and select to send an alert. Friends of Rocky Prairie (FORP) sent their folks to our website. We estimate that the BOCC received over 500 messages in six days. The point that people cared was definitely made.

At the May 7 BOCC vote, perhaps 30 opponents and a few proponents, who may work for NorthPoint, filled the meeting room. FORP handed out “no rezone” signs that people held against their chests for the entire meeting. Commissioner Tye Menser supported no new projects until the County completed their work on the Comp Plan, Habitat Conservation Plan Shoreline Master Plan, and joint city/county plans (our most favored position). Although that position got no further support, Commissioner Hutchings joined Tye to deny NorthPoint’s urgent request to have their project reviewed ASAP. Perhaps the “deny-project” audience and many comment letters from BHAS and FORP helped persuade John Hutchings to his position to keep a normal project application process. Commissioner Edwards was firmly in favor of opening the application process (to NorthPoint and others) without delay.

FORP is reorganizing its group with new, energized and talented individuals. These folks have joined some of the original 2006-2008 leaders. Various plans are in the works, with the goal of getting details out about NorthPoint throughout Thurston County.

Having been seriously involved with West Rocky Prairie and the Port of Tacoma (POT) property since around 2004, BHAS can contribute significantly to legal arguments. We were key to the finalization of the 2005 Settlement Agreement (SA) that resulted from our appeal of the County’s environmental Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance for the gravel mine on the current POT property. The SA conditions are integrated into the mine’s Special Use Permit.

In late April 2019, Patrick Williams, our attorney, provided a letter to the County stating that, as stipulated in the SUP, 450 acres of the land (now owned by the POT) including the mining area need to be reclaimed, with lakes, upland forests, and transitional areas between them. The SUP further states that “When mining is completed, the reclaimed area will be habitat, lakes, and open space, and the remaining part of the site will be non-industrial” and “The Agreement [SA] shall terminate only on the completion of the mining and reclamation

...” In addition, we have collected seven years of groundwater level data within West Rocky Prairie, including sites near the POT border. Reports generated from this data — which indicate a high water table rendering the land sensitive to significant flooding if impervious surfaces are developed nearby — are among the many scientific arguments BHAS has already and will continue to use in contesting the appropriateness of the NorthPoint proposed industrial development.

The ideal remedy to this issue would be to have the POT sell the 745 acres to WDFW to make a contiguous 1555 acre wildlife area, a goal WDFW has been pursuing since the 1990s.

## **Birding at its Best**

*By Sharon Moore* – What an extraordinary birding trip we experienced on May 3 in conjunction with the 2019 Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival. On that crisp, windy day we were led to various Ocean Shores locales by seasoned birders Whittier Johnson and Rob Chrisler. During the spring migration those specific seacoast and harbor habitats are some of the best birding spots on the West Coast hosting more species per location than anywhere else in the state of Washington.

From late April to early May hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed on the vast mudflats in the Grays Harbor estuary. There they find abundant tiny shrimp, worms, horseshoe crabs and microscopic organisms. Within one square meter of mud there may be up to 50,000 individual invertebrates. Feeding on those food sources gives the shorebirds sufficient strength and endurance to continue their northern migrations. Some species travel over 15,000 miles from their non-breeding locations in South America to their breeding grounds in northwest Alaska, the Yukon Territory and Wrangel Island in the Arctic.

Our cohort of 35 stalwart birders, carrying 35 binoculars, 10 spotting scopes, many cameras with telephoto lenses and an assortment of bird books spent seven hours locating, observing, exclaiming over and recording sightings of an incredible array of 82 species. The five most abundant – Western Sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers and Semipalmated Plovers – were present in large numbers.

The following list represents our best efforts to record each class of bird we saw that day on the coastal shoreline, North Jetty, ocean expanse and Grays Harbor estuary environs: Pacific Loon, Common Loon, Brant, Surf Bird, Wandering Tattler, Sanderling, Barn Swallow, Western Gull, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Sooty Shearwater, Pelagic Cormorant, Caspian Tern, Common Murre, Western Grebe, Black Turnstone, Harlequin Duck, Lesser Yellowlegs, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, Bald Eagle, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, White-crowned Sparrow, Canada Goose, Glaucous-winged gull, Killdeer, Savannah Sparrow, Red-breasted Merganser, Greater Scaup, Black Scoter, Rufous Hummingbird, Violet-green swallow, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plover, Whimbrel, Red Knot, Cliff Swallow, Western Sandpiper, Western Gull, Black-bellied Plover, Ring-billed Gull, Red-throated Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Ruddy Turnstone, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Pheasant, Eurasian Collared Dove, Least Sandpiper, Great Blue Heron, Short-billed Dowitcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Pigeon Guillemot, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, American-Northwestern Crow, Common Raven, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, American Robin, European Starling, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson’s Warbler.

Consider joining a field trip during the next Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge Shorebird and Nature Festival. You’ll be glad you did.

## **BHAS Receives Bequest**

BHAS greatly appreciates the generous bequest of \$8129 from the estate of E. Reade Brown. Reade was a member of BHAS while he lived in Olympia and moved to Spokane in retirement. He was a beloved Chief of the Wildlife Management Program in the Washington Department of Game (later Fish and Wildlife) for many years. Perhaps his most important professional legacy was the 1985 technical tome, *Management of Wildlife and Fish Habitats in Forests of Western Oregon and Washington*. He also wrote a book about his career as a wildlife biologist entitled *Fifty Years of Fur, Feathers, and Fins* in which he ardently described many wildlife encounters including scrambling up tall stumps to avoid charging angry cow elk protecting their calves, wrestling mountain goats to radio-collar them for research, backpacking through the wilderness of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, and patting a killer whale on the nose.

## Board Meeting Review (5/2/2019)

1. The Board gave heartfelt thanks to Craig Merkel, Deb Nickerson, Steve Curry and Paul Moody for their years of service to BHAS as Board members. These folks will be honored at our annual picnic. Along with our returning officers and board members, two new members will be on the slate for Board of Directors at our May annual meeting: Rachel Hudson and Charlotte Persons.
2. The June 13<sup>th</sup> annual picnic is being organized and will be held at the Rose Garden in Priest Point Park. There will be bird walks at 5 pm followed by a potluck and socializing.
3. Kathleen Snyder and Rachel Hudson will be co-coordinators of the new Volunteer Coordinator position.
4. Dalton Spencer has arranged for the shop teacher at Adna High School to have his classes make nesting bird boxes to be installed on City of Centralia tree farm property. BHAS will pay for materials and will form a work party to install them prior to 2020 spring nesting season. We are hoping to attract chickadees, swallows and wrens.
5. Bob Wadsworth is our new Avian Science Coordinator and will be overseeing our community science projects like Christmas Bird Count and the Purple Martin nest box colony in Boston Harbor.
6. Sam Merrill gave the Board an update on the Maytown development issue currently before the Thurston County Commissioners. A multi-million square foot warehousing complex is being considered for this area which is adjacent to West Rocky Prairie. BHAS signed a settlement agreement in 2005 concerning the gravel mine portion of the property in exchange for the then developer to sell a portion of the property to WDFW. The Conservation Committee used our SpeakOut! system, for the first time, to generate over 300 signatures on a petition to the Commissioners that this rezoning request not be added to this year's docket.

## BHAS Facebook Update

*By Deb Nickerson* – I am thrilled to announce that Mark DeLauier has taken on the position of managing our Facebook page. He has a Ph.D. in Communications, in particular, Environmental Communications. Most recently, he has written for Carbon Washington, the Yes on I-1631 campaign and the Nature Conservancy. He grew up in Oakville and has lived in eastern Washington while in college and taught at the University of Oklahoma. We welcome him to the chapter. Check out our Facebook page for information about our events and discussions about all things birds.

## Puget Sound Seabird Survey (PSSS)

**Go birding and make a difference!**

Are seabirds in the southern Salish Sea increasing or decreasing in numbers? Which species are changing their range? Help us find out. The Puget Sound Seabird Survey (PSSS) is a community and citizen science project

managed by Seattle Audubon that empowers volunteer birdwatchers to gather valuable data on wintering seabird populations across the southern Salish Sea.

You can contribute to this vital seabird science by joining the thirteenth season of this exciting project. We are now recruiting enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers to help us monitor the status of our local wintering seabirds. Training on survey methodology will be provided at a location near you in September and early October. Volunteers should ideally be able to identify Puget Sound's seabird species and be available on the first Saturday of each month, October through April, to conduct a 30-minute survey. But, if determining between Lesser and Greater Scaup is a challenge, we'll team you up with more knowledgeable surveyors. To help us determine each volunteer's seabird identification skills, visit [www.seabirdsurvey.org](http://www.seabirdsurvey.org) to take our quick, fun Seabird ID quiz.

## **Volunteer for Habitat Enhancement**

Jan Caille, a BHAS member, is working with a federal agency to restore stream and pasture habitat on an 80-acre farm near McCleary. Volunteers are needed to develop a bird list and habitat enhancement suggestions. Please contact Jan directly if you are interested in helping with this project, [j.caille@comcast.net](mailto:j.caille@comcast.net).

| SUNDAY  | MONDAY                                   | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY   | THURSDAY  | FRIDAY                              | SATURDAY   |
|---|--|---------|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 26<br>WENAS Memorial Day Weekend Campout                                  | 27<br>WENAS Memorial Day Weekend Campout | 28      | 29<br>Bird Walk at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge<br><br>Shelton Birds & Brew | 30<br>Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival             | 31<br>Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival | 1<br>Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival<br><br>Birding and Breakfast/Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge / Hank Henry<br><br>McLane Creek |
| 2<br>Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival<br><br>OYAS Field Trip – Scatter Creek | 3  | 4       | 5<br>Bird Walk at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge                              | 6   | 7                                   | 8<br>Woodard Bay for Beginning and Intermediate Birders  |
| 9<br>LBA Woods  | 10                                       | 11      | 12<br>Bird Walk at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge                             | 13<br>Black Hills Audubon Society Annual Picnic | 14                                  | 15<br>West Rocky Prairie   |
| 16  | 17<br>Olympia Birds & Brew               | 18      | 19<br>Bird Walk at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge                             | 20<br>Birding Eagle's Pride Golf Course         | 21<br>Lewis County Birding Hotspots | 22   |
| 23  | 24                                       | 25      | 26<br>Bird Walk at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge<br><br>Shelton Birds & Brew | 27  | 28                                  | 29   |
| 30  | 1  | 2       | 3<br>Bird Walk at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge                              | 4   | 5                                   | 6<br>Birding and Breakfast at Edmond Marsh/ Leslie Lynam   |