

Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

Fall 2008

Pass on your passion for wildlife

By Dr. Jeff Koenings, WDFW Director

As children return to classrooms this fall, it's a good time to remember to share our enthusiasm for wildlife with the youngsters in our lives.

Invite your children, grandchildren or young neighbors to help plant native trees and shrubs or set up bird feeders. Share your knowledge of the wildlife that visit your yard. Help them take photos, draw pictures or train binoculars on wild visitors.

In these simple ways you can be a part of a national movement to encourage kids to get outside and explore their natural environment first hand, rather than simply

Continued on page 5

Crossing Paths is a quarterly newsletter for Washington residents enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program and others interested in urban/suburban wildlife.



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Photo by Mark Markel

Cats and bats are more than just scary

It was almost like a scene out of Halloween movie.

Backyard wildlife enthusiasts in western Washington reported finding six dead bats scattered on their porch and lawn.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologist Chris Anderson, based in the North Puget Sound region office in Mill Creek, explored the possibilities with the concerned reporting party.

The neighborhood was full of birds, bats, raccoons, squirrels, and cats, Anderson learned. When he first suggested there might be a situation that allowed a house cat – a potentially very effective predator – to take advantage of the local bats, there wasn't initially much belief.

But when the property owners set up a night watch to learn what was happening, the results were as educational as scary....

They keyed in on a locally-familiar, free-ranging, homeless cat hiding by their flowering yucca plant.

Yuccas flower both day and night and are great nectar sources for butterflies and moths. They hadn't realized until that night how attractive yucca nectar is to night-flying moths, and they watched many coming in to feed.

And then nature's food chain displayed itself.

The feeding moths attracted hungry bats, swooping in to grab

Continued on page 3

Shoreline residents team up for wildlife

W Shoreline's Community Wildlife Habitat Project



Residents of Shoreline, a community of about 53,000 located 15 miles north of Seattle, are working toward becoming a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat under the auspices of the National Wildlife Federation.

Project coordinator Boni Biery says the effort, which began on Earth Day 2007 and is sponsored by the Sustainable Shoreline Education Association, has a goal of certifying

500 backyard/balcony habitats, 10 businesses, and five schools.

The backyards are registered either with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program or the Federation's Backyard Habitat program. (Two years ago WDFW was the first state to offer joint certification with the Federation.)

The project started with 109 properties enrolled in one program or the other, Biery reported, and to date there are 154, including two schools and two businesses.

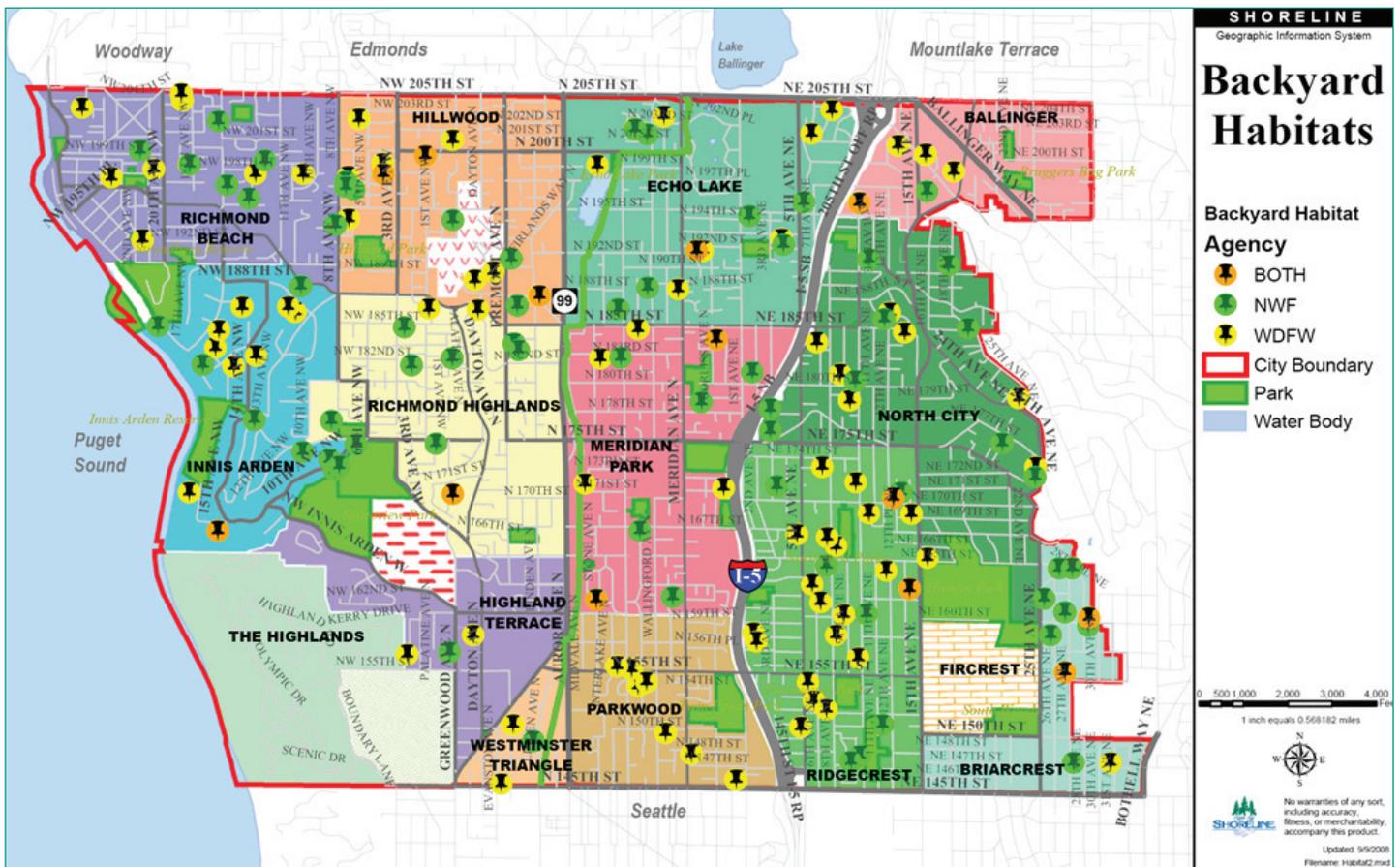
"Our 'Habitat Team' brainstormed a number of possible activities to get residents engaged," said Biery. "For example, each newly certified property owner is given a birdhouse kit designed specifically for our native birds."

Biery also noted that in the 18

months since the project began, 2,450 volunteer hours have been contributed to improve wildlife habitat in the City of Shoreline.

Last fall volunteers worked with the Shoreline Parks Department on four consecutive weekends to clear away invasive undergrowth in an area 35 feet wide and 130 feet long at Ronald Bog. Masses of blackberry vines were cut and dug out, along with other unwelcome plants like English ivy, holly, and Japanese knotweed. After the removal, they planted 135 plants of 17 different native species, including twinberry, salmonberry, elderberry, snowberry, western red cedar, Sitka spruce, and ninebark. Additional plantings were made in the spring, and all are doing well, enhancing food sources for both resident and migrating birds that use the bog.

Continued on page 7



Cats and bats are more than just scary, cont. from page 1

a meal of moth. The feeding bats, in turn, were killed by the quietly waiting cat.

With two more dead bats left by the cat on their lawn, two things became clear: the cat wasn't necessarily hunting out of hunger, and for the sake of the neighborhood's wildlife, it needed to be removed from the area.

The situation was relayed to neighbors, some who may have been feeding the homeless but tame cat, and then it was taken to a shelter for care and adoption by a cat lover who will keep it indoors.

"These folks gave both the bats and the stray cat itself a break," Anderson said. "It was really the best option. And the situation helped them realize that free-ranging domestic cats are deadly to wildlife."

Americans' most popular pet is also one of the most harmful to backyard wildlife.

Our 84 million or so pet cats, plus perhaps at least that many homeless feral cats, kill billions of birds, small mammals and other wildlife each year.

Anderson is a cat owner who believes we can both in our lives.

"Research shows that spending time with pets and spending time watching wildlife both lower stress levels," Anderson said. "So why not have both?"

Anderson walks his cat outdoors on a leash with a harness, but otherwise keeps it indoors. "He didn't like the leash when we first adopted him," he said, "but he adjusted to it and my two dogs. Now my cat enjoys the outdoors safely, both for him and for wildlife."

The lives of free-roaming pet cats are often cut short by vehicle collisions, disease, poisoning,

parasites, territorial fighting, and predation. According to the Humane Society, indoor cats and those confined or controlled when outdoors can average at least three times the lifespan of free-ranging cats.

Wildlife definitely benefits from keeping cats indoors and under control when outdoors.

Extensive studies of the feeding habits of free-roaming domestic cats have been conducted over the last 55 years throughout the world. These studies show the number and types of animals killed by cats varies greatly, depending on the individual cats, the time of year, and availability of prey. Roughly 60 to 70 percent of the wildlife cats kill are small mammals; 20 to 30 percent are birds; and up to 10 percent are amphibians, reptiles, and insects.

Some free-roaming domestic cats kill more than 100 animals each year. One well-fed cat that roamed a wildlife experiment station was recorded to have killed more than 1,600 animals (mostly small mammals) over 18 months. Rural cats take more prey than suburban or urban cats. Birds that nest or feed on the ground, such as California quail, are the most susceptible to cat predation, as are nestlings and fledglings of many other bird species.

Well-fed cats kill birds and other wildlife because the hunting instinct is independent of the urge to eat. In one study, six cats were presented with a live small rat while eating their preferred food. All six cats stopped eating the food, killed the rat, and then resumed eating the food.

Other studies have shown that bells on collars are not effective in preventing cats from killing birds or other wildlife. Birds do not

necessarily associate the sound of a bell with danger, and cats with bells can learn to silently stalk their prey. Even if the bell on the collar rings, it may ring too late, and bells offer no protection for helpless nestlings and fledglings.

Wildlife rehabilitation centers report that most small animals injured by cats die. Cats carry many types of bacteria and viruses in their mouths, some of which can be transmitted to their victims. Even if treatment is administered immediately, only about 20 percent of these patients survive the ordeal. A victim that looks perfectly healthy may die from internal hemorrhaging or injury to vital organs.

Anderson noted that the idea of trapping, spaying/neutering, releasing, and leaving food out for feral cats is misguided.

Cats are solitary animals, but groups of feral cats often form around an artificial feeding source, such as garbage dumps or food put out for them. These populations can grow very quickly, even if most are spayed or neutered -- it only takes two intact cats to start multiplying!

These feral cat colonies can have significant impacts on wildlife populations and feeding doesn't prevent them from following predatory instincts. Feral cat colonies can also cause significant health risks to other cats and humans.

"Cats are good pets but lousy outdoor companions," Anderson said. "It's a cat's nature to stalk prey, even when they're well fed. We cat owners need to take responsibility for them and keep our wildlife safe."

For more information see American Bird Conservancy's "Cats Indoors" campaign at <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/>.

Enter “Little Green Places” Contest

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is looking for photos, drawings or videos of “Little Green Places” that are good for birds because they provide shelter, food, or water.

“Little Green Places” can be an ivy covered wall, flowers next to the stoop, a window box, a container garden on a rooftop or balcony, school garden, or even potted plants by a building entryway.

Prizes will be awarded to some of the best and most unusual “Little Green Places.” Send photos, drawings, or link to a video to urbanbirds@cornell.edu . by October 31.

More information about the “Little Green Places” contest can be found at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/temporary> .



Photo by Christine Southwick

It's more popular than football!

American wildlife watching participants number over four times more than attendance at all professional football games.

That's one of several observations drawn from “Wildlife Watching in the U.S.: The Economic Impacts on National and State Economies in 2006,” a recently released analysis and addendum to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

This report presents estimates of the national and state economic impacts of wildlife watching, addressing (1) national participation in wildlife watching; (2) expenditures associated with participation in wildlife watching; (3) estimates of the total economic activity generated by these expenditures; (4) total employment and employment income associated with these expenditures; and (5) estimates of associated state and federal tax revenue.

The complete report, is available

at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov>, but here are a few other results:

- Roughly one out of three Americans 16 years of age and older, or 71 million, participated in wildlife watching in 2006.
- Wildlife viewing is growing, with eight percent more people participating in 2006 than in 2001.
- Expenditures on wildlife watching (\$45.7 billion in 2006) are equivalent to the amount of revenue from all spectator sports (football, baseball, and other sports), all amusement parks and arcades, casinos (except casino hotels), bowling centers, and skiing facilities.
- Total state and local taxes generated by wildlife viewing expenditures totaled more than \$8.8 million; federal taxes generated were over \$9 million.
- Washington was the eighth highest state for wildlife viewing expenditures (\$2,522,788 by 2,331,000 participants)

WANTED: BACKYARD WILDLIFE PHOTOS

If you captured a shot of waxwings eating your chokeberries, squirrels stashing acorns, of any other wildlife use in your backyard sanctuary, consider sharing it with the world via the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) website Image Gallery at http://wdfw.wa.gov/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=8782 .

Photos displayed in the WDFW Image Gallery may be used for non-profit or educational purposes provided that you, the copyright holder, are properly credited. Commercial use of these images without your approval is prohibited.

Send your photos to webmaster@dfw.wa.gov.

Pass on your passion for wildlife, cont. from page 1

watching the world through television and the Internet.

The latest development in this national effort was last month's passage of the No Child Left Inside Act by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The act, if approved by the Senate and signed by the President, would amend the National Environmental Education Act to authorize grants to non-profit organizations, states, local educational agencies or higher-education institutions for activities that support environmental education. Those activities would include teacher training to develop and use curriculum that:

- Enhances understanding of the natural environment
- Fosters greater appreciation of interdisciplinary environmental issues
- Increases achievement in related areas, such as mathematics and science

- Builds understanding of the benefits of being exposed to nature
- Improves understanding of the interaction between human and natural systems
- Broadens environmental awareness

You need not be a professional educator to engage further these goals by passing along your interest in wildlife. In your own yard, you can show kids how:

- A backyard wildlife sanctuary mitigates some impacts of habitat loss to development
- Native and drought-tolerant plants save water needed by fish and wildlife
- Wildlife needs can be assessed in how animals consume plants or seed in feeders

Or keep it simple—just invite youngsters to smell the flowers, rake the leaves or watch birds or

other wildlife from the kitchen window.

Any exposure to the natural world helps children appreciate their environment, but studies show it can also boost their overall cognitive skills. One such study, "Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning," was conducted under the auspices of the State Education and Environment Roundtable, a cooperative of 12 state agencies including our state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. For more information, visit the No Child Left Inside website at http://www.cbf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=act_sub_actioncenter_federal_nclb.

When the kids get off that school bus this fall, continue their education with a moment or two in your backyard wildlife sanctuary.

Keep it clean

The number one duty in maintaining a backyard bird feeding station is keeping it clean, not only for the birds' sake but also for human and domestic pet health.

Disease is a natural part of a bird's world. But feeding stations concentrate birds and can spread diseases at an unnatural rate.

Although some bird diseases can afflict dogs or cats, most are not transmissible to humans. One notable exception is avian influenza, although it has not yet been found in North America.

To reduce risks, take these precautions:

- Do not handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Wear rubber gloves while filling or cleaning bird feeders.
- Disinfect bird feeders periodically with a 10 percent solution of chlorine bleach and dry thoroughly.
- Clean up seed waste and bird droppings beneath feeders.
- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol wipes immediately after filling or cleaning bird feeders.



Photo by Georgene Mellom

Year of the Frog: Endangered frogs return to native habitat

With 2008 as the “Year of the Frog,” state endangered Oregon spotted frogs were reintroduced to some of their native, historical habitat on the Fort Lewis Military Reservation in Pierce County this fall.

Biologists from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the U.S. Army released about 500 seven-month-old, captive-reared frogs into Dailman Lake in an effort to re-establish populations in Washington.

The frogs were collected as fertilized eggs last spring from breeding areas in Klickitat and Thurston counties, the only known areas with existing populations within the species’ historic range in Washington. They were then transported to Northwest Trek Wildlife Park and Oregon Zoo for rearing and monitoring.

The captive-rearing strategy, called “head starting,” is based on the premise that juvenile frogs are thought to be less vulnerable and

better able to survive when released back into the wild, especially in large numbers.

The Oregon spotted frog historically ranged from southwestern British Columbia to northeastern California. The frog is now believed to have disappeared from California and Oregon’s Willamette Valley and has suffered significant declines elsewhere in its historic range. Loss of habitat, predation by non-native species such as the American bullfrog, and disease have decimated its numbers, which prompted listing it as a Washington state endangered species in 1997.

Through a partnership with the Fort Lewis Fish and Wildlife Program, the Dailman Lake area was chosen for reintroduction because it contains diverse wetlands connected to a stream system capable of supporting and sustaining a frog population.

The project coincides with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’

designation of 2008 as the Year of the Frog to address global amphibian extinction. Around the world frogs are known as sentinel animals, signaling serious environmental and climate changes that can affect all species. Some reintroduction activities are being funded through grants from the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and the Association of Zoo & Aquarium’s amphibian fund.

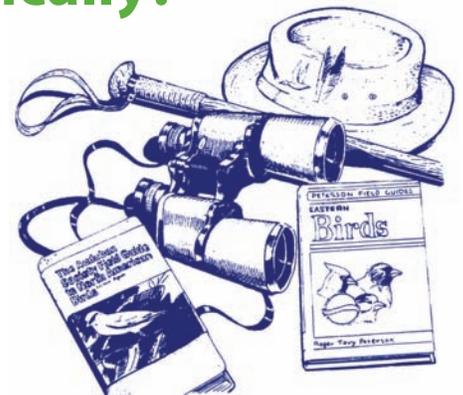
Washington’s reintroduction program was first developed in 2007 through a collaborative effort by WDFW, Fort Lewis, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Oregon Zoo, Washington State Department of Transportation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Woodland Park Zoo, Port Blakely Tree Farms, Washington Department of Natural Resources, NW Zoo & Aquarium Alliance, U.S Geological Survey, Mountain View Conservation & Breeding Centre and The Nature Conservancy.

Test: Are you watching wildlife ethically?

Close-up views of wildlife make lifelong memories, and sometimes they just happen. But when you attempt to make the encounter close-up, are you respecting animals’ needs for space and wildness?

Take this quick test to measure your wildlife viewing ethics:

1. Do you keep your dogs and other pets at home or secured in a motor vehicle when wildlife is spotted?
2. Do you use your motor vehicle as a viewing blind to avoid disrupting roadside wildlife?
3. Do you use binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses for cameras to avoid getting physically close to an animal to enjoy it?
4. Do you stay away from a wild animal that is obviously out of its element in an urban or suburban setting so that it can find its way out?
5. Do you give young, naïve animals – from birds to whales – an especially wide berth to avoid upsetting parent animals?
6. Do you leave lone wild babies as you find them, knowing that in most cases a parent animal is nearby?
7. Do you leave seashore rocks unturned to avoid exposing beach creatures?
8. Do you secure permission to enter private land in pursuit of watching wildlife?



Shoreline residents team up for wildlife, cont. from page 2

The Shoreline Habitat Team also worked with the Parks Department to find the biggest and oldest native trees in the parks to help protect them and educate residents about native species. The team received 29 nominations for 15 species, plus two significant groups or stands of trees, for this “Champion Tree Contest.” Once the trees have been professionally measured, Biery explained, the trees will be “signed” to let park visitors know about them and the winning nominators will be presented with awards. Next year Biery hopes to extend the contest to trees on private property.

The group also started a Wintering Bird Population Study with a goal of banding birds in three locations and having residents report sightings of them through the winter. Local, certified bird-

banders put color-coded bands on black-capped and chestnut-back chickadees at the first banding site this spring. This winter they will begin banding at a second site and also include fox sparrows and juncos.

“This month we’re clearing a 160-foot stretch of stream bank along the north fork of Lyon Creek and planting a diversity of native sedges, grasses and berries,” Biery said. “This will introduce an increased variety of food and shelter sources for wildlife. It will also stabilize the bank and increase the amount of shade over the stream to cool the water,” Barry said.

For more information on the Shoreline Community Wildlife Habitat Project, contact Boni Biery at birdsbeesfishtrees@gmail.com.



Photo by Kelly McAllister

**Picture one of these
on YOUR car, truck,
trailer or motorcycle!**

www.wdfw.wa.gov



This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is the policy of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to adhere to the following: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the WDFW ADA Coordinator at 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 or write to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of External Programs
4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 130

