

# Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

Spring 2007

## Go native to help wildlife

By Jeff Koenings, PH.D., WDFW Director

As you spruce up your Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary this spring, “go native” with plantings that benefit wildlife.

Besides providing the best habitat for native birds and other animals, native plants are generally easier to grow because they’re naturally adapted to our soils and climate and don’t require as much watering and care.

Native plantings in maintained landscapes such as backyards also help slow the spread of invasive, exotic plants, plant diseases and insects.

In recognition of these and other attributes of native plants, Gov. Chris Gregoire has proclaimed April 29 through May 5 as “Native Plant Appreciation Week” in Washington.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is proud to join other natural resource agencies and organizations in this celebration of over 3,000 native plant species that inhabit our state’s forests, mountains, deserts, river valleys and our backyards.

Native Plant Appreciation Week is full of activities and events to help citizens learn more about native plants—from how they protect water quality to how we

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Sara's orangetip

Photo by Kelly McAllister

## April showers bring May butterflies

April showers DO bring May flowers, but in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary world, that translates to butterflies.

Most of these winged beauties tend to be more active on sunny summer days, but spring rains are what really support them – in more ways than one.

Blooming flowers that produce nectar are the obvious food for butterflies. But now, in the spring, is when butterfly larvae – the caterpillars that hatch from eggs and eventually become butterflies – need food from even earlier plants.

Many native backyard trees that are budding up and out now with spring rains are good food sources for butterfly larvae. Pine, maple, alder, hawthorn, cherry, oak, and willow trees are among the best.

Ceanothus or buckbrush, rhododendron, serviceberry,

chokecherry, and bitterbrush are native shrubs most used by butterfly larvae. Native perennial best bets include butterfly weed, bleeding heart, lupine, and pearly everlasting.

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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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## April showers bring May butterflies, (cont. from page 1)

Some common Washington butterflies emerge from their larval forms as early as April and definitely by May, including orange sulphur, Sara orangetip, brown elfin, spring azure, silvery blue, mourning cloak, mylitta crescent, satyr comma, and common ringlet.

These spring butterflies need the earliest blooming nectar-producing plants, like ceanothus, crabapple, cherry, willow, mock-orange, chokecherry, elderberry, spirea, butterfly weed, wild buckwheat, and phlox.

As spring advances into summer, some of the more commonly known butterflies emerge, including swallowtails, parnassians, brushfoots, skippers, and “milkweed butterflies” like monarchs. These butterflies use many nectar-producing blooms including honeysuckle, lavender, aster, blanket flower, gilia, monkey-flower, goldenrod, and yarrow.

Butterflies don’t live on nectar alone. They also take water and trace minerals from patches of wet soil or sand, which means those April showers are also important for making mud.



Orange sulphur

Photo by Kelly McAllister

If natural precipitation is in short supply, butterfly mud sites can be created and maintained with frequent light watering of a bare patch in a sunny but wind-protected area.

Some butterfly enthusiasts combine the needs for sugar and water with special mixes to feed and attract their favorite backyard visitors. Here’s one recipe from the Pilchuck Audubon Society:

### Butterfly Mud

3 very mushy bananas  
1 cup sugar  
One-half bottle of beer

Mix together and put in a container. Do not seal tightly or it might explode while fermenting. Leave for a few days in a warm spot.

Put mud on a feeding platform or hollowed out log trough, hung at viewing level, in a sunny, wind-protected location.

This is a mixture that butterflies love, but squirrels don’t.

## Skagit County elk watching spot to be improved

Elk watching in Skagit County will be safer and easier, thanks to a recent WDFW easement acceptance for development of a wildlife viewing site near the town of Concrete.

The property, known as “Hurn Field” or “Elk Field,” was purchased by the Skagit Land Trust as elk habitat. It has long been an excellent location for local residents and visitors to view elk, but its popularity has reached the point that the highway right-of-way is often clogged with parked cars, posing a safety hazard for both elk watchers and passing motorists.

WDFW has partnered with the Skagit Land Trust using Watchable Wildlife project funding to build a parking lot and wildlife viewing area. The land trust will maintain the parking area once it is constructed.



Photo by Don Geyer

# Birds indicate changing climate

Birds have long been indicators of environmental change, sounding the alarm about the impacts of pesticides, polluted water, and the loss of contiguous forest.

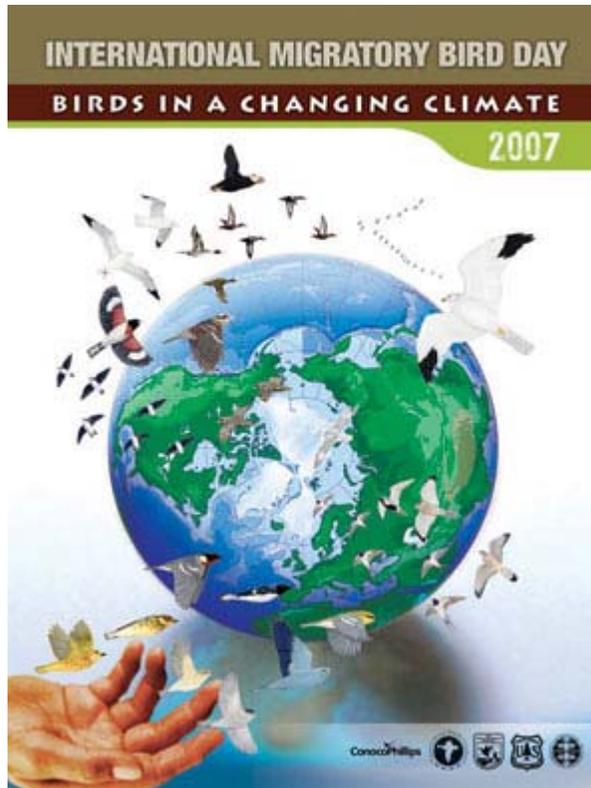
The reactions of birds to weather have also long been noted. For hundreds of years, farmers have used the arrivals of migratory birds to make decisions about planting crops.

So it's no surprise that our feathered friends are indicating changes in our climate now, too.

"Birds in a Changing Climate" is the theme of the 14<sup>th</sup> annual International Migratory Bird Day, always the second Saturday of May, this year May 12.

Led by "Partners in Flight," a cooperative bird conservation effort among public and private agencies and organizations, International Migratory Bird Day is observed through various educational activities across North and South America.

Participants will learn that changes in the movements of some



bird species is just one indicator of the warming of the Earth's atmosphere. As the rate of warming increases, scientists are exploring how climate change will affect birds and how we can reduce our impact.

Among the Washington observances of International Migratory Bird Day on May 12 are:

- The 7<sup>th</sup> annual **Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival**, centered at the Tukwila Community Center, 12424 42nd Ave S., 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. with a wildlife garden tour starting at 3 p.m. For more information, see <http://www.backyardwildlifefair.org>
- **Clallam County Birdathon/Migratory Bird Count**, coordinated by Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society; contact Bob Boekelheide at the Dungeness River Audubon Center in Sequim (360-681-4076) to sign up to count birds.
- **Breakfast Boat and Bird Cruise** with the Seward Park Environmental and Audubon Center aboard the M/V Fremont Ferry, 8–10 a.m.

Join local migratory bird and climate change experts for breakfast and a tour around Lake Washington. Call 206-652-2444 for more information.

To learn about other International Migratory Bird Day activities in your area, see <http://www.birdday.org/>.

## Celebrate Urban Birds May 10-13

Birds cover thousands of miles during migration. Like any long-distance traveler, they need a place to rest and refuel.

What do birds do when all they see below are towns and cities? Despite the dramatic increase in urbanization, how can we provide green spaces with adequate food and shelter to help the birds? What impacts do community gardens, rooftop gardens, parks, green

balconies, or even a single tree in a sea of concrete have on birds?

Help the Cornell Lab of Ornithology find out in a free nationwide event called "Celebrate Urban Birds!" May 10-13, 2007.

People of all ages and backgrounds can spend from one hour to four days learning about city birds, conducting bird counts for science, and engaging in projects to "green" up their community.



Photo by Georgene Mellom

Learn more about joining in or helping organize an event in your community at: <http://www.urbanbirds.org/celebration>.

# These natives are favorites

If you can't attend the Native Plant Appreciation Week presentation on favorite native plants for the wildlife garden by WDFW Wildlife Biologist Russell Link, (April 30, 12-noon in the Seattle Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave.), here's his list:

## Russell's "Lucky 13" Native Plants for Western Washington Wildlife Gardens

### Trees

- Cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*)
- Vine maple (*Acer circinatum*)

### Shrubs

- Evergreen huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*)
- Wax-myrtle (*Myrica californica*)
- Tall Oregon-grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)
- Salal (*Gaultheria shallon.*)
- Red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)

### Bulbs

- Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*)

### Vines

- Orange honeysuckle (*Lonicera ciliosa*)

### Groundcovers

- Low Oregon-grape (*Mahonia nervosa*)



### Perennials

- Goat's beard (*Aruncus sylvestris*)
- Davidson's penstemon (*Penstemon davidsonii*)

### Ferns

- Sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*)

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## Go native to help wildlife, cont. from page 1

can protect them. Among the events is a presentation by WDFW Wildlife Biologist Russell Link, author of the popular *Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest*, on his favorite native plants for the garden. Russell is scheduled to speak April 30, from noon to 1 p.m., in the Seattle Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave.

You can find the complete list of talks, walks, garden tours, work parties, natural area visits, habitat restoration projects and other events, plus sources of native plants across the state, on the Washington Native Plant Society website at [www.wnps.org](http://www.wnps.org).

The Department does its part to protect and promote native plants. On the land that we own or manage

for fish and wildlife habitat – about 850,000 acres of wildlife areas and water access sites across the state – we make native vegetation restoration and control of invasive, non-native weeds a top priority.

Our authority to protect habitat on other lands is limited, so we work collaboratively with landowners through incentives, easements, agreements and technical assistance on best management practices and habitat restoration.

The Department has the authority to regulate activities within fish-bearing waters, including the importation and release of aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal species. Working with other agencies and organizations, we use cooperative education and

enforcement to stem the introduction and spread invasive species.

Just as intact terrestrial habitats lessen the opportunity for non-native invasive species to encroach, so aquatic native plants—such as eelgrass— help keep invasive species from becoming established in our waterways. Activities in fish-bearing waters permitted under the WDFW Hydraulic Project Approval program must be conducted in a way that protects the habitat that supports native aquatic plants.

Look for additional information about “going native” to help wildlife in this edition of “Crossing Paths.”

# Use fire-resistant plants to enjoy wildlife near your home

With the wildfire season ahead, and that spring itch to get some new plants in the ground, now's the time to add or replace backyard plants with fire-resistant species that wildlife will use.

Fire-resistant does not mean fireproof, since any plant can burn. But some plants do not readily ignite or significantly add to the fuel load and a fire's intensity.

Fire-resistant plants have moist and supple leaves, have little dead wood, and tend not to accumulate dry, dead material. Their sap is water-like and does not have resins or strong odors. Many deciduous trees and shrubs are fire-resistant.

An example of a highly-flammable plant that is often used in home landscapes is the juniper. It contains a lot of fine, dry, or dead needles that contain aromatic and volatile oils, and its sap is very resinous.

Native junipers are popular in backyard wildlife sanctuaries because they grow quickly to provide cover and winter berries for birds. If you use junipers or other flammable evergreens in your landscape, simply keep them out of the "defensible space" within 100 feet of your home or other structures.

Within that closer-in "defensible space," consider planting these native fire-resistant species that are also used by wildlife:



## Groundcovers

- Kinnikinnick
- Phlox
- Sedum
- Wild strawberry

## Perennials

- Blanket flower
- Columbine
- Coral bells
- Fireweed
- Honeysuckle
- Lupine
- Penstemon
- Yarrow
- Yucca

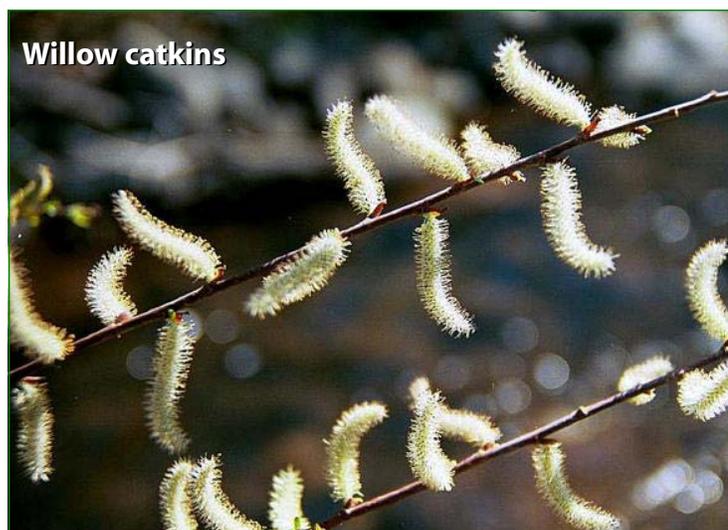
## Shrubs

- Chokecherry
- Dogwood
- Mock orange
- Oceanspray
- Oregon grape
- Rhododendron
- Rocky Mountain maple
- Salal
- Serviceberry
- Snowberry
- Sumac
- Vine maple
- Wild or wood rose
- Willow

## Trees

- Alder
- Aspen
- Crabapple
- Hawthorn

For more information, a new Pacific Northwest Extension publication, "Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes," is available through Washington State University Extension offices.



*Photos by Jim Cummins*

# Bluebirds returned to San Juan County

Eight pairs of western bluebirds are checking out new nest boxes this spring in a part of Washington they haven't been in a long time – San Juan County.

Their return was an assisted event this March. Wildlife biologists and enthusiasts from several organizations, including WDFW district wildlife biologist Ruth Milner of LaConner, captured the birds in Pierce County on the U.S. Army's Fort Lewis where they are abundant, and transported them to the San Juan Islands where they were extirpated years ago.

Bluebirds are secondary cavity nesters (they don't excavate but use existing tree cavities) and they prefer open fields to forage on insects. Milner says her best guess about why bluebirds are no longer on the islands is the loss of this kind of habitat.

"As snags were cut and grasslands converted, there probably just wasn't the habitat left to sustain them," she said.

Islands in general are slow to recover species once they're lost because of the geographic distance from established populations, she noted. "We have a few bluebirds in Skagit and Snohomish counties," she said, "but the nearest large population is Fort Lewis."

With undeveloped prairie habitat and now hundreds of bluebird nest boxes maintained, Fort Lewis is home to at least 100 pairs of western bluebirds or nearly half the South Puget Sound population.

"There is strong interest in oak woodland and prairie restoration on the islands and there are still open areas near forests there," Milner said, "but the missing link is probably nesting cavities."

That's why volunteers coordinated



**Western bluebird**

by the San Juan Preservation Trust and San Juan Audubon Society first posted about 80 nest boxes on the island before the birds were released.

The bluebirds were captured in very fine "mist" nets set up around Fort Lewis nest boxes that pairs were starting to defend as chosen nest sites but not yet nesting in. Audio tapes of bluebird calls were played to coax pairs into the nets. Each bird was gently removed from the net, measured, weighed, banded, and transported in pairs to their new home. They were initially held in temporary aviaries for a few days where they were fed mealworms and allowed to acclimate before release.

Plans call for capturing and releasing six to eight bluebird pairs annually for five years, possibly including other islands if San Juan relocations are successful.

Milner says the effort is underway thanks to project lead and fundraiser Bob Altman, who is the Northern Pacific Rainforest Bird Conservation Region Coordinator for the American Bird Conservancy; bluebird capture expert Gary Slater, research director of the Ecostudies Institute in Mount Vernon; and Fort Lewis wildlife biologists and volunteers.

## June 24: Spokane Wildlife Gardening Tour

**This event had been cancelled**

The second annual Wildlife Gardening tour in Spokane County is scheduled for Saturday, June 24.

The tour, which operates open-house style from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., showcases both public and private landscapes that provide habitat for wildlife in urban and suburban settings, some which use native, low-water-use, and drought-tolerant plants.

It will include the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) recently-planted native and drought-tolerant landscaping at the agency's Spokane Valley regional headquarters. It will also feature "The Green Zone," a public sustainability demonstration site on the grounds of the Spokane County Conservation District, including a small Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary. Several private residences of various sizes and neighborhoods, enrolled in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program in Spokane County, are also part of the tour.

Tour registration will be available in late May through the Washington State University Extension Master Gardener Clinic at N. 222 Havana St. in Spokane.



# Lake Forest Park to be certified as “Community Wildlife Habitat”

Lake Forest Park, on the north end of Lake Washington near Seattle, will be certified by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) as the 21st “Community Wildlife Habitat” in the nation on April 21.

This community of 12,730 includes 165 Backyard Wildlife Sanctuaries under both the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and NWF programs. It also includes two businesses certified for providing in-kind benefits for backyard habitat, and five parks and two elementary schools certified for environmental education programs and habitat development.

Lake Forest Park has a rich network of forested hillsides, wetlands, and streams that provide

vital habitat for salmon and other species of wildlife. Over the years, human settlement and urban development altered the natural landscape, impeding salmon runs, affecting water quality and eliminating many natural wildlife corridors.

In recent years, citizen groups such as the Lake Forest Park Stewardship Foundation, StreamKeepers, and the Urban Tree Task Force worked with many volunteers to restore and preserve these sensitive native habitats. Individual property owners and neighborhoods did their part, linking efforts to create greater green space and ecological interconnections.

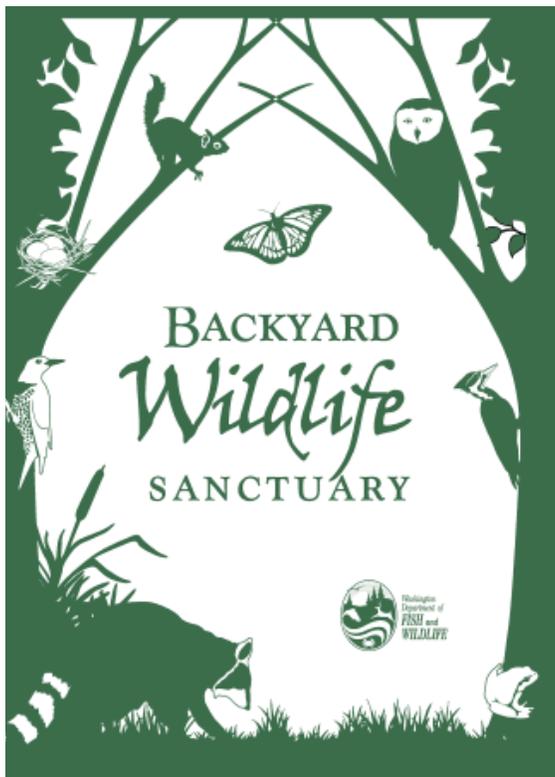
The community celebration of this

distinction will be from 12-noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 21, at Third Place Commons in the Lake Forest Park Towne Centre, 17171 Bothell Way, in conjunction with Lake Forest Park’s Dig-It Green/Earth Friendly Fair. After the certification presentation to Mayor Dave Hutchinson and the “Good Stewards Team” at 12 noon, activities will include a native plant sale, tours of several Backyard Wildlife Sanctuaries, and tours of

Lake Forest Park Elementary School’s six wildlife gardens and new science resource room.

For more information contact Libby Fiene at [lfpwildlife@comcast.net](mailto:lfpwildlife@comcast.net) or 206-365-8867.

## Certify your yard in both national and state programs



Backyard wildlife enthusiasts can certify their property as a “sanctuary” or “habitat” in both state and national programs with one step.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/> links to the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Wildlife Habitat program to provide the benefits of both with the paperwork of one.

WDFW’s program provides an information packet on landscaping for wildlife, supplemental feeding, and other details for \$5; return of a completed backyard inventory of habitat provided, along with another \$5, certifies that property in the state program with a yard sign, personalized certificate, and electronic subscription to “Crossing Paths” newsletter.

NWF certification, based on the same inventory, costs \$15 and includes a personalized certificate and subscription to the award-winning *National Wildlife* magazine.

If you’ve already certified your property as a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary in the state of Washington, you can receive additional recognition for your efforts through the National Wildlife Federation.

# Warden School District helps with “Project Burrow”

The Warden School District in central Washington’s Grant County is participating in a long-term citizen science project to help the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in the conservation and management of the Washington ground squirrel.

It’s called “Project Burrow” because this rare species (*Spermophilus washingtonis*) – a state and federal candidate for protective listing — is a ground-burrowing squirrel.

“Burrowing wildlife are not necessarily seen as welcome neighbors in Warden and elsewhere in Washington farm country,” says WDFW Watchable Wildlife Manager Chuck Gibilisco. “But the 15-acre campus of the Warden elementary, middle and high schools just happens to have a population of about 300 Washington ground squirrels, so we approached them to help us and they were willing to give it a try.”

Gibilisco recently teamed up with WDFW wildlife biologists and researchers to train Warden students and teachers on field identification and behavior of Washington ground squirrels. Equipped with binoculars, spotting scopes, weather instruments, data sheets, and field protocols, they are learning to master the steps of scientific field inquiry.

“And they’re just having fun watching these little animals through binoculars,” Gibilisco said. “It’s ‘way cool.’”

The Washington ground squirrel is found only in southeast Washington and northeast Oregon. In Washington its range is east of the Columbia River from the center of the state southward in shrub-steppe and grassland habitats where it digs burrows for nesting, hiding, and

hibernating. It is gray-brown with white spots and has a short tail with blackish tip. It measures seven to almost 10 inches from tip of nose to tip of tail and weighs from five to nearly 10 ounces.

Along with WDFW monitoring and studies, Cornell University researchers have been studying the Washington ground squirrel for the past three years. But there are still gaps in knowledge about the species movements, interactions, and first above-ground appearance of offspring.

“The students are right there in the middle of a large colony every day,” Gibilisco said. “They can even make observations from their classroom windows. We hope they can really help us fill some of those holes in the research.”

For example, Gibilisco explained, WDFW researchers are hoping to color mark a sampling of the squirrels so the students can readily



Photo by Derek Stinson

tell who’s who to track movements across the local range.

Project Burrow will eventually include monitoring of other species that live beneath the school grounds, or prey on those that do. The campus is also home to several pairs of burrowing owls, a federal species of concern and state candidate for protective listing. Because the little owls are so active and visible, the students are already enthralled with them, Gibilisco said. Also on campus are badgers, prairie falcons and a red-tailed hawk pair that nests on the football field light pole.

## Earth Day activities scheduled across Washington

**Earth Day is April 22 and organizations across Washington are celebrating with activities that range from tree planting with the Clark Public Utilities’ Stream Team in Vancouver to birdwatching in Skagit County.**

**For Earth Day activities in your neck of the woods, see <http://www.earthday.net/programs/find/searchEvent.aspx>.**

# Next Watchable Wildlife conference Sept. 12-13 near Enumclaw

Washington's 5<sup>th</sup> annual Watchable Wildlife conference is slated for Sept. 12-13 at Crystal Mountain Resort, southeast of Enumclaw on the northwest edge of Mount Rainier National Park.

Sponsored by the Washington State Tourism Office, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and many cooperative partners, the conference is an opportunity for wildlife enthusiasts and educators to share ideas about promoting wildlife viewing.

WDFW Watchable Wildlife Coordinator Mike O'Malley says the conference theme is "Pathways to Nature", emphasizing the various ways that people can get out and enjoy wildlife viewing.

"We want to introduce the concepts from Richard Louv's "Last Child in the Woods" book to provide the 'why' of wildlife viewing," O'Malley said. "In previous conferences, we have delivered messages on the what, where, and how of wildlife watching. Louv's message about the long-term benefits of connecting kids with nature is part of the 'why'."

O'Malley said conference planners are looking for a keynote speaker to deliver that kind of message, and welcomes suggestions at [omallmfo@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:omallmfo@dfw.wa.gov) or 360-902-2377.

O'Malley also noted a recent article in Orion magazine (<http://www.orionmagazine.org/pages/om/07-2om/Louv.html>) provides a good summary of "Last Child in the Woods," for those without time to read the whole book.



## Puget Sound Bird Fest is May 18-19

The city of Edmonds is the first stop on the Cascade Loop of the Great Washington State Birding Trail, so the community's hosting of the Puget Sound Bird Fest is only natural.

This year's event, May 18-19, is the third annual. It starts with the culmination of a month-long juried bird art show, "On Wing," with an artists' reception Friday evening, May 18, at the Edmonds Conference Center (201 4th Ave N.), followed by Seattle nature photographer Paul Bannick's presentation, "Wild Wings, A Photographic Celebration of Northwest Birds".

On Saturday, May 19, guided walks and field trips take advantage of birding opportunities in local parks and wildlife reserves, along the Puget Sound shoreline and at the Edmonds Marsh. Indoor activities are at the Frances Anderson Center (700 Main St.), including speakers on topics ranging from bird-watching basics to bird-friendly gardening. Exhibits and a vendor marketplace are at the Edmonds Plaza Room (650 Main St.) Saturday evening's keynote speaker in the Plaza Room is Dr. Jeff Price on "A Bird's-Eye View of Global Warming".

For more information see <http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com/> or call Sally Lider, Environmental Education Coordinator for Edmonds Parks & Recreation at 425-771-0227.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will provide equal opportunities to all potential and existing employees without regard to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or Vietnam Era Veteran's status. The department receives Federal Aid for fish and wildlife restoration. The department is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any department program, activity, or facility, or if you want further information about Title VI or Section 504, write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia WA 98501-1091.

