

Behind the Scenes

June 2021



Dear Friend,

I hope your Memorial Day was spent in the good company of loved ones, in honor and remembrance of the sacrifices made by our military, veterans, first responders and their families. Although you may have already known that the first national Memorial Day commemoration was held at Arlington National Cemetery on May 30, 1868, did you know many communities observed their own versions of Memorial Day (then referred to as Decoration Day) even earlier? One of the earliest documented Memorial Day commemorations was held on May 1, 1865 by a group of formerly enslaved black community members in Charleston, South Carolina. As I continue my journey as part of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) planning team, I hope to continue shining a light on the history of underrepresented groups that have faded from, or have been suppressed in, both local and national memory.

From the very earliest Memorial Day ceremonies to the most recent, flowers are an important element in commemorating and showing our love and respect for those who have passed away. The stunning beauty of a flower in full bloom is only seen for a short time before it is gone, symbolizing the fleeting nature of life. A flower also has the power to direct our attention and inspire our admiration. It is not surprising that there are quite a few stunning flower images submitted to our photo contest! Speaking of our photo contest, if you haven't had a chance to view and vote for your favorite photograph entries, please take a moment to visit the photo contest gallery right away at www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/lwc-photo-contest-vote.html. I promise you won't be disappointed!

May your June be spectacular, and happy reading! - Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator



Love Your Watershed News & Updates:

LWC 20th Anniversary Photo Contest - Vote for your favorites!



Throughout the past two months, we've accepted 110 photographs from both professional and amateur photographers showcasing the beauty of the Luckiamute and Ash Creek watersheds. Now it is time for the next phase of our photo contest — the public voting period! From now until June 30, you will be able to vote for your three favorite photographs in each of our six categories (Landscapes, Wildlife, Plants, People, Water and Youth Entries) on our Photo Contest voting page at <https://www.LuckiamuteLWC.org/lwc-photo-contest-vote.html>.

On July 1, the three photos in each category with the most votes will advance to the semi-finals. At that point, the LWC Education and Outreach Committee will select the winning photograph for each category and award the photographer a \$30 gift certificate to the LWC online store. One of the six category winners will then be chosen as the photo contest grand prize winner, and the winning photographer will be awarded a \$100 Visa gift card!

Please help us choose the winners by participating in the vote and then share the link above with your friends, family, neighbors and social media groups — everyone is welcome to participate!

2021 Love Your Watershed Fundraising Campaign



June 9 - June 30!

Our annual *Love Your Watershed* fundraising campaign starts next week! Throughout the following four weeks, you will see campaign progress reports and previews of the *Love Your Watershed* events and activities you can expect in the coming months. Your support will help us — and Pedee the steelhead trout — reach our fundraising campaign goal!

Your Land. Your Rivers. Your Community. Your Watershed.

Watershed Notes

LWC Bird Walks offer a window to watershed biodiversity



Bird-walkers search for warblers in the canopy along Luckiamute State Natural Area's North trail.

It takes a special kind of motivation to get up at dawn on a Saturday morning when the mercury is just barely hovering over freezing. Yes, a piping hot cup of coffee certainly does help... but the real excitement comes from knowing that one of the most easily observed yet often overlooked displays of local biodiversity awaits!

The birdlife that exists in our backyards, parks, fields and forested areas is way more diverse than you might think. The tricky part is that you can't always see these little birds.. you really have to rely on your ears rather than your eyes to fully appreciate their rich variety. This is what makes a Luckiamute Watershed Council bird walk such an incredibly fun and educational experience. These four-hour excursions into the different habitats of our watershed are now some of our most popular annual events, attracting both seasoned and amateur birder-watchers. Each bird walk is unique, and offers the participant a deeper understanding of how closely tied wildlife diversity is to plant diversity.

For our May 8 Spring Bird Walk, a group of 17 met at LWC Boardmember Dave Ehler's J₂E Tree Farm on a chilly morning to walk the forest trails with Salem Audubon Society (SAS) members, Tim Johnson and Jim Kopitske. Not only was this our first bird walk of the year, it also happened to be the first in-person event that we were able to host since the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to switch our focus to virtual events. While our Sips 'n' Science pub talks were relatively easy to transform into an online format, trying to re-create the experience of a bird walk using Zoom or YouTube is simply impossible.

"Listen! There's the warbling vireo," Tim says, as we hear a sweet burble of up-and-down notes. "Oh and that trill that sounds like a car starting? That's the Wilson's warbler!" As Tim points towards the canopy alongside the trail, a rich series of notes and whistles fill the air, and Tim quickly pivots to point out the melodic song of the rose-breasted grosbeak. Because so many forest birds blend in with the foliage or stay out of sight high up in the canopy, it is often difficult to get a visual of these tiny singers. But every once in awhile, participants are able to zoom in on a splash of golden yellow or bright red and find the colorful source of a sweet song.

Once we get going again, we don't make it very far along the trail before we stop again, straining to make out the distinct patterns of different bird songs and calls. In total, our J₂E bird walk yielded a 'catch' of 43 different bird species, each with their own unique contribution to the spectacular chorus of birdsong that provided the sound track to a beautiful day (you can view the full list of our May 8 bird sightings at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S87529392>).



Top left to bottom right: Wilson's warbler prefers forest edges; rose-breasted grosbeaks are also found along forest edges; warbling vireos typically stay high up in the forest canopy; and the spiraling song of the Swainson's thrush is heard in closed canopy forests.

Our May 23 Bird Walk at Luckiamute State Natural Area's North Unit was also led by Tim Johnson, this time accompanied by fellow SAS bird expert, Harry Fuller. Though we saw and heard exactly the same number of bird species that day, the list was comprised of very different species that reflected the differences in elevation, food sources, plant life and habitats between LSNA and J₂E Tree Farm (view the May 23 bird checklist at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S88840489>). One highlight of this bird walk was hearing the hauntingly beautiful flute-like song of the Swainson's thrush, a species that thrives in dense closed-canopy forest habitat.

To be a bird walk leader is to be a teacher, a tour guide and a foreign language specialist all rolled into one. The Luckiamute Watershed Council has been incredibly honored to have had the chance to have several skilled local birders volunteer to help lead our spring and fall bird walks over the past five years. A BIG thank you goes to the local bird experts who have volunteered to lead our walks over the years — including Joel Geier, Tim Johnson, Jim Kopitske, Harry Fuller, Kassi Roosth, David Craig and Mike Unger, as well as Beatrice Serrano, Eduardo Gonzalez and Ramon Martinez for translation assistance during our bilingual bird walks. We are also grateful to the Willamette Habitat Restoration Fund, whose *Love Your Watershed* grant funding allowed us to offer our 2021 Spring Bird Walk series for free!

Our Spring Bird Walk series has now come to an end since the birds have now settled into their territories and are focusing on raising their young, but we will be looking forward to offering a fall series of bird walks once our migratory birds start moving in late September/early October. Keep an eye on your inbox for an early-bird invitation to these and other events coming up this summer and fall — these early sign-up notices are one of the benefits that you get by being a Friend of the LWC, and allow you to register for our most popular events before they fill up!