

Behind the Scenes

March 2023



Dear Friend,

This month's Behind the Scenes Bulletin celebrates the season of rebirth and renewal of the landscape, which doesn't wait for the Spring Equinox day designated on our calendars. Though March has started off cold and snowy this year, warmer temperatures are definitely on the horizon! I hope the short intro to phenology in this issue of BTS encourages you to set aside time each day to step outside and experience the many sights and sounds that mark the beginning of a new growing season.

Also, I want to call out the wonderful time that was had at this year's LWC Social, which happened this past Sunday (March 5) at the Independence Women's Club. Thank you to all of our Friends and Business Circle members who were able to make it, and a BIG congratulations to Karen Lippsmeyer for her winning entry in the Like Chocolate For Water contest! Her amazing chocolate mousse recipe, and the recipes of all of our talented contest entrants, will be featured in an extra-delicious issue of our Spring newsletter, which will be coming to your inboxes next month. Happy reading!

--Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator (contact me at Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org or 503-837-0237)



Upcoming LWC and Partner Events:

Winter Wildlife Field Days - Independence

Saturday, March 18 @ 10am - 1pm @ Riverview Park, Independence



On March 18, bring the whole family to Riverview Park in Independence for a bilingual, family-friendly activity that explores the wonderful world of wildlife living in our waterways! This event is a part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Winter Wildlife Field Days, and this year's theme is "Water: The Life in Wildlife." Drop on by to our field station between 10am and 1pm for some hands-on learning activities that will focus on the unique adaptations of our local wildlife to aquatic habitats. Find out more at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/winter-wildlife.html>

This field station is a collaboration between the LWC, Polk Soil and Water Conservation District, the City of Independence, and Oregon State University.

Participate in a Beaver-Focused Discussion Group!



The Mid-Willamette Beaver Partnership (MWBP) is inviting those who manage property in the Luckiamute, Ash Creek, Marys River, North Santiam, South Santiam or Calapooia watersheds to participate in a discussion group about interactions you have with beavers on or near your property. **We are looking specifically for those who derive income from the land - including those who grow crops, raise livestock or manage timber.** The discussion will be conducted online via Zoom, and all participants will receive a \$50 gift card as compensation for participation in the 90-minute discussion.

The purpose of the discussion group is to gather a variety of perspectives about the presence of beaver in the area, and to gain a greater understanding about the relationship between humans and beaver in the Mid-Willamette Valley. To learn more and to find out how to participate, please visit <http://www.mwbeaverpartnership.org/>

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

Watershed Notes

Keep your eyes (and ears) open for these tell-tale signs of spring!

It may still feel like winter out there, but there are plenty of hints that spring is right around the corner! You might hear the songbirds beginning to practice their singing, like an orchestra warming up before a grand performance. Or perhaps you are noticing that the buds on some trees and shrubs are bursting open to reveal flowers or vibrant green leaves. Paying attention to *phenology*—the study of nature's seasonal changes—happens to be one of the best ways to build a closer relationship with your corner of the watershed. Once you start looking for the many ways that plants and animals herald the arrival of spring, you will start seeing and hearing them everywhere!

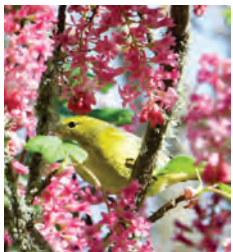
Plants Emerging from Dormancy



Look for snow queen (*Veronica regina-nivalis*) flowers in wooded areas, especially conifer forests. This is one of the earliest blooming native flowers in our area, and its tiny bluish-purple flowers bring a cheery splash of color to the late winter landscape!



Indian plum/oseberrry (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) is another plant known for flowering early in the year, well before the calendar start of spring. This small-statured shrub starts its bud break (opening of the buds) before most of our other native woody plants, providing an important source of nectar for hummingbirds and insects at a time when not many other flowers are blooming.



Once you see the red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) blooming, prepare to see many of the insects, birds and other wildlife that depend on this beautiful and life-sustaining native shrub. Anna's hummingbirds are year-round Willamette Valley residents, and welcome the return of this prolific nectar source. Rufous hummingbirds, who spend their winters in Mexico, are often seen for the first time in late winter just as the red currant flowers begin to open. Salem Audubon member, Tim Johnson, snapped this photo of another newly arriving migratory bird species—the orange-crowned warbler—amidst blooming red flowering currant branches in his yard.

Late Winter Bird-Watching



With their nocturnal habits and excellent camouflage, great horned owls are more often heard than seen. At this time of year, breeding pairs have already located suitable nesting sites and are awaiting the arrival of their adorably fluffy chicks (owlets). When twilight approaches and in the wee hours of the morning, listen for the distinctive hooting calls that both males and female owls use to announce their territory. When you have a breeding pair nearby, you'll often hear rhythmic duets of *hoo-h'HOO-hoo-hoo*, with the female's voice higher in pitch than the male's.



This is the time of year when tree swallows return to the Willamette Valley, to the delight of all who enjoy watching their stunning mid-air acrobatics in pursuit of their insect prey! You can find these sociable birds in open fields and wetlands, often in large groups of several types of swallows. Luckily, the tree swallow's iridescent blue back and snowy white front make it fairly easy to recognize in a crowd!

Additional Signs of Spring's Arrival



In March, winter steelhead are coming over the Willamette Falls, making their way to the Willamette tributaries, including the Luckiamute River. Soon we will also start seeing native cutthroat trout too, which get more active in late March and April.



As the weather begins to warm, you'll also see more insect activity. Early flowering shrubs and trees provide a critical source of nectar and pollen for both native bees and honeybees - one of which is pictured on the left visiting the same red-flowering currant bush from the photo above. Although most dragonflies and damselflies start being active closer to May, there are a few species that can be seen flitting about this time of year, including the migratory Variegated Meadowhawk (dragonfly) and the Pacific Forktail (damselfly).

A huge thanks goes to Tim Johnson, Mike Unger, Joel Geier, Josée Rousseau and Joan Hagar, for providing invaluable information about bird, plant, fish and insect phenology, and to Tim Johnson for the beautiful photographs!