

Behind the Scenes

August 2020



Dear Friend,

Many of you may be out in your yards and gardens, reaping the sweet rewards of all the hard work you put into soil preparation, weeding, and trouble-shooting pest issues. Or perhaps you are busy preparing your family for a different kind of start to the school year - one that is centered at home rather than in the classroom. No matter what kinds of activities the end of August finds you doing, I hope that you are well and enjoying the last few weeks of summer!

The LWC is also busy with project activities that we'll be continuing to update you about - including Luckiamute State Natural Area Floodplain Reconnection and the J2E River to Ridge Diversity projects. But in the midst of the whirlwind of late summer/early fall project activity, I'd like to take a moment to thank you, our Friends of the LWC, for your ongoing support of our restoration and outreach programs. We are especially grateful to those of you who chose to contribute an additional amount this year to help bring our Love Your Watershed fundraiser to a successful finale a full week before our August 31 deadline! Thanks to your support, we have a terrific line-up of education and outreach events on the calendar for the next few months, including our first ever virtual Sips 'n' Science pub talk this October (see below for more information)! Also, if you live in or near Independence, make sure to stop by our Weed Out Invasive Ivy! table at Riverview Market this Saturday, August 29, between 9am and 2pm. We will have resources available for the identification and control of English ivy and many other priority invasive weeds.

Take care, stay safe, and happy reading!

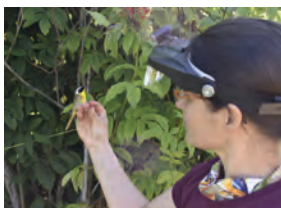
--Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator (Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org or leave a voicemail at 503-837-0237)

Love Your Watershed News: YOU DID IT!!!

We've reached our goal!
THANK YOU, everyone!!!



A BIG THANK YOU goes out to all of our Love Your Watershed campaign supporters, including Benton Soil & Water Conservation District, Starker Forests, Spiritopia, Willamette Habitat Restoration Fund, and many of our Friends of the LWC! We are excited to be able to continue connecting our communities to their watershed, even in the midst of a pandemic. Your support is what makes it possible to keep inspiring and empowering our communities to take action for watershed health!



Sips 'n' Science: How Birds Use Floodplain Forests at Luckiamute State Natural Area

Date: Wednesday, October 13, 2020

Time: 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Place: via Zoom (registration information will be sent to your inbox soon!)

Details will be posted at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/sips-and-science-lsna-birds.html>

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

Watershed Notes

Caring for a New Generation of Freshwater Mussels

by Emilie Blevins, Senior Conservation Biologist @ Xerces Society

You may be surprised to hear that Oregon is home to a unique group of aquatic invertebrates – the humble freshwater mussels. These animals, which are mollusks that inhabit the bottom of creeks and rivers yet look like living rocks, filter water nearly continuously over the course of their 10 to 100+ year lives. They improve habitat for fish and water quality for our communities, which benefit from their ability to clean water as they filter. However, many people may not be aware of them or the role they play in our rivers and streams.



Photo Credit: Emilie Blevins



Photo Credit: Emilie Blevins

The Western pearlshell mussels pictured here were found in Vincent Creek and relocated to a safe new home away from the project work zone. Since these mussels can live more than 100 years, we hope they will continue to thrive at J2E Tree Farm for many years to come!

The Luckiamute Watershed Council (LWC) and Xerces Society have partnered for the last several years to survey for and map mussel beds in the watershed to support mussel conservation and habitat restoration efforts. These surveys have revealed some surprising results, namely that while freshwater mussels can be abundant in some tributaries in the basin, and indeed the state, they are conspicuously absent from others. These surveys have also proved valuable where mussel beds and stream enhancement projects overlap. Because freshwater mussels depend on permanent water and relatively stable habitat, they can inadvertently be impacted by restoration projects that (in the short term) disrupt habitat. Yet, mussels also benefit from projects that improve fish habitat and support fish populations. As a result, it is important for projects to include surveys for freshwater mussels beforehand.

This is where projects like the J2E River to Ridge Diversity Project shines. J2E Tree Farm, LLC is a small woodlands operation located along 1.5 miles of Vincent Creek, a tributary to the Luckiamute River. In addition to the LWC, project partners include the J2E landowners, Benton Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF) and Xerces Society. Surveys this summer revealed that while western pearlshell mussels are absent from some portions of the Luckiamute River, they are surprisingly abundant in Vincent Creek. In June 2020, Benton SWCD was awarded a grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for a restoration project to improve late-season water retention, enhance instream habitat, and increase off channel habitat. In preparation for the in-stream portion of the project, J2E owner and LWC board member Dave Ehlers, Xerces Society biologist Emilie Blevins, and ODFW fish biologist Karen Hans spent a day mapping mussel distribution in the creek and identifying areas where mussels should be relocated from before construction began. Just a couple of weeks later, Dave and LWC Project Manager Jean-Paul Zagarola returned to the creek and rescued 171 western pearlshell, by hand, from areas of work. This included 115 found in just one spot! They found new homes for the mussels safely outside of the project footprint, and checking on them just the next morning, Dave reported seeing them burrowed down into their new homes, happy as clams.

Projects like these are wonderful examples of how partnerships between landowners, agencies, watershed councils, and biologists are critical to successful conservation of Oregon's unique species. Because of these combined efforts, mussel beds like those in Vincent Creek will remain for future generations to discover, and will keep filtering water for cleaner streams for many decades to come!

Did you know that the Western Pearlshell Mussel (*Margaritifera falcata*) is dependent on salmon and trout for reproduction? Learn more at <https://www.xerces.org/endangered-species/freshwater-mussels/about>

For information on freshwater mussel conservation, check out the Xerces website: www.xerces.org.

Here is a deeper look at the fascinating life of another freshwater mussel species, the California floater: <https://www.kqed.org/science/1961648/california-floater-mussels-take-fish-for-an-epic-joyride>.