



THE WEST EUGENE WETLANDS WETLAND WORD

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WREN is spreading the *Wetland Word* to increase our support base for education programs in the West Eugene Wetlands. The *Wetland Word* is printed seasonally and can be delivered to your door or emailed to you each season. If you do not wish to receive another *Wetland Word*, contact WREN.

Please join WREN's growing membership, or become a sponsor! Printable forms and online donations through PayPal are available at www.wewetlands.org

WINTER OFFERS BEST VIEWING OF MANY BIRDS OF PREY IN THE WEST EUGENE WETLANDS

Naturalist Steve Gordon explains why winter is the best time of year to see a large variety of birds of prey in the wetlands and describes his personal experiences.

Birds of prey demand our attention. With their regal bearing, they sit atop the avian food chain. They are dominating carnivores with sharp, hooked beaks and needle-sharp talons that are perfect for snagging, holding, and ripping flesh and other bits of protein from their unlucky food sources. Another trait shared by these keen-sighted birds is their large eyes set under a heavy brow, giving them a fierce countenance.

Our open prairies, riparian strips and thickets on the valley floor, as well as the foothill woodlands, are home to twelve species of raptors: seven wintering hawks, one eagle, three falcons, and the turkey vulture. There are rare records for another three species that have been recorded only once or twice in the wetlands over the past 20 years and are not addressed in this article: northern goshawk, ferruginous hawk, and prairie falcon.

Winter is the best time to see this variety of birds of prey in and around the wetlands. Some of these winter raptors are year round residents. Others have moved here from the north or from higher elevations to spend the relatively mild winter in the southern Willamette Valley. Many species are described briefly below and I mention a few good places in the West Eugene Wetlands to look for them. They are a beautiful, interesting group of birds. Also, as you can see from the dietary notes, they clean up carrion and collectively eat hundreds of small rodents every day.



Northern Harrier; Illustration by Barbara Gleason

Osprey; Illustration by Barbara Gleason



One of my favorite encounters happened when I was walking in winter along the levee of the Amazon Diversion Canal when ground work on Meadowlark Prairie had just been completed. Shallow depressions were filled with rainwater, and ducks filled the ponds, especially green-winged teal. Suddenly, from a pond just beyond an ash copse, a teal exploded from the water in several directions in noisy, panicky fashion. Then, a peregrine falcon swooped over the top of the ash, only ten feet above me. I felt like I could have touched it. That was my closest encounter with a wild peregrine.

Twice when giving wetland tours to Congressman DeFazio's staff, I had interesting birds of prey show up. At Meadowlark Prairie one spring day, we stopped on a dike looking south up Amazon Creek. An adult bald eagle flew overhead and then lit on the creek bank. Another time from the Meadowlark Prairie overlook, a peregrine falcon was perched in the nearest ash tree, and we watched it for fifteen minutes through our binoculars. If you want to impress the Congressman's staff, just conjure a bald eagle or peregrine falcon to highlight a visit to the wetlands.

Descriptions continue on page 2



**Want to learn more
about birds of prey?
Check out these
resources:**

www.eraptors.org
Cascades Raptor Center in
Eugene, non profit nature
center and wildlife hospital

Birds of Oregon: A General
Reference, David B.
Marshall, Matthew G.
Hunter, and Alan L.
Contreras, Oregon State
University Press, Corvallis,
Oregon, 2003.

Sibley Field Guide to Birds
of Western North America,
David Allen Sibley, Alfred
A. Knopf, New York, New
York, 2003.

The Wind Masters, Pete
Dunn, Houghton Mifflin,
New York, New York,
1995.

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Wetlands. Steve
Gordon, Barbara
Gleason and Mark
Andrew contributed to
this issue.
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windy@wewetlands.org

Continued from page 1, Steve Gordon describes a few of the species and common places to see them in the wetlands. For descriptions of all 12 species, visit www.wewetlands.org

White-tailed Kite - This uncommon raptor is white underneath and gray on top with black shoulders, a white tail, and pointed wings like the falcons. (This species was formerly known as the white-tailed kite, then the black-shouldered kite, and then back to the white-tailed kite - go figure). In winter kites roost communally, and a roost near Fern Ridge has hosted up to 20 individuals. Their bright white color makes them conspicuous in the brown landscape. Good places to look for white-tailed kites are along Willow Creek north of 18th Avenue, the open wetlands from Meadowlark Prairie overlook, and the marshes and grasslands at the end of Royal Avenue at Fern Ridge.

Red-tailed Hawk - This is our most common wintering buteo. It has a large body, a reddish-orange tail, and white undersides with a dark belly band. Be aware, however, that red-tailed hawks come in a variety of color forms. They hunt from perches (utility poles are a favorite) as they seek mice, squirrels, and gophers. You can find red-tailed hawks throughout the wetlands. You may flush one from a copse and hear its loud scream before you see it. Scan the poles and treetops for perched birds and watch for soaring birds.

American Kestrel - This, our smallest falcon, is also our most common. Kestrels are about the size of the American robin. Permanent residents and wintering visitors swell the winter populations in our prairies, grasslands, and agricultural areas. Once known as the sparrow-hawk, kestrels are easy to find perched on roadside utility wires and poles or atop small trees in the wetlands. Look for them as you walk, bike or drive along. It is a rare day when you miss a kestrel.

Turkey Vulture - This large bird has been reclassified as being a close relative to the storks. Turkey vultures have claws, but lack talons like the other birds of prey. In warm weather, they are known to urinate on their legs to help reduce body temperature, a trick also used by storks. Also known as a buzzard, turkey vultures are dark birds with silvery flight feathers on the underwing. In winter they nest communally. Turkey vultures begin migrating back into the Willamette Valley from the south in mid-February, so they have always been here to count in winter. Now higher numbers spend the whole winter with us. Once rare on the Lane County Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count, turkey vultures have become more common. In 2005 a night roost on Crow Road harbored thirteen turkey vultures. Look for them in the Willow Creek basin and from the overlook at Meadowlark Prairie.

BLM ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ADDRESSES CURRENT WETLANDS CONDITIONS AND SELECTS 10 YEAR PLAN

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently published an environmental assessment (EA) and 10 year maintenance and restoration schedule for BLM land in the West Eugene Wetlands (approximately 1340 acres). This public document provides an assessment of current conditions on BLM land and details four alternatives for carrying out restoration and maintenance actions in the future. The schedule presents a comprehensive and long term strategy to meet wetlands goals and values expressed in the 2000 West Eugene Wetlands Plan. BLM Field Manager Steve Calish said this means looking at the big picture instead of setting priorities day to day.

A team comprised of staff from the BLM, City of Eugene and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spent several months of "team time" to develop the EA. The EA and Preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available for a 30-day public review in October, 2005, but BLM received no comment. The team did find some challenges in compiling all the data gathered from various partners, and they were surprised to find how much data already existed, Calish said. Another big challenge was determining how much detail to go into, and how to structure the four alternatives.

The alternatives include: Alternative A, the "No Action" alternative, would carry out no management activities other than those required by city or county ordinance; Alternative B would provide for minimal maintenance of existing mitigation bank sites where restoration work has been completed; Alternative C would provide for maintenance and restoration activities on habitats of selected Special Status Species; and Alternative D, the selected action, would maintain, enhance, and expand high and medium quality habitat of eight predominant habitat types in the planning area.

The cost of fully implementing the selected alternative was estimated at \$1 million per year. BLM will probably not get this much money. To stay within each year's budget, BLM will select from the menu of action items listed in the alternative.

The schedule will be adjusted over its lifespan. "The chances that we got everything right, especially looking ahead 10 years, aren't very good," Calish said, "so one of the concepts embedded in there is a feedback loop: carry out a treatment, monitor to determine its success, and then adjust the treatment to make it more effective."

If you want to see or acquire a copy of the EA, call Rick Colvin, Eugene District BLM office, at 683-6600.



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Contact
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liz@wewetlands.org
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Photo: WREN

Creating and supporting an education program and center that celebrates and encourages stewardship of the West Eugene Wetlands using resources and support from our community...

WREN PARTNERS WITH LOCAL SCULPTOR MARK ANDREW TO SELL UNIQUE BRONZE TILES

WREN is pleased to announce the continuation of a relationship with local sculptor, Mark Andrew. Mark has been involved with the West Eugene Wetlands project since he developed and produced the large bronze discs that are embedded in the Fern Ridge bike path, stretching from the Meadowlark Prairie Overlook to Terry Street. Individual species highlighted in these bronze medallions, which display indigenous flora and fauna of the West Eugene Wetlands will soon be available as smaller formats through the WREN online store.

Mark has more than 30 years experience carving and sculpting wood, stone, and cast bronze. It is the latter that will launch the partnership, as WREN begins to sell three of his beautiful bronze tiles: a heron, a dragonfly and a meadowlark. Mark sells his pieces on his own Web site, www.markandrewstudio.com and from his studio just south of Eugene. The studio is open to visitors the first weekend of each month as part of the Oregon Crafted Guidebook tour. He also offers custom installations for homes and gardens. Well traveled, Mark draws his experience from all over the world, studying in Europe, and the east and west U.S. coasts.

In the 1970's he studied architecture, followed by sculpturing, at UO. "Here, I discovered the artistic direction to fulfill my dreams: good physical work which rewards skill and patience with enduring beauty," he states in his online bio.

Years spent in Carmel, California, increased his commissioned work on homes, including doors, furniture and fireplaces. His return to Eugene in 1995 has introduced new creations including human carvings in stone, wood landscape carvings and a variety of bronzes.

In addition to his pieces and custom work, he is gaining attention for his public sculptures. Most recently, in September 2005, the city of Lake Oswego, Oregon, honored Mark for a 50 foot sculpture, "Spirit of the Marsh," for the Headlee Walkway at Fountain Plaza. This project features 44 tons of rock and 29 cast bronze cattails. Closer to home, ten of his 24 inch wetlands bronze medallions, highlighting wetland flora and fauna, are embedded along the Fern Ridge Trail in the West Eugene Wetlands. WREN will purchase his bronzes through Reinmuth Bronze Studio in Eugene and sell them in the near future at wetland events and online: www.wewetlands.org.



Self-photo provided
by Mark Andrew

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT ON OLENA HORNERBERGER

Olena traveled thousands of miles and crossed an ocean to become a member of the Eugene community. She left behind her home city, Vinnitsia, in Central Ukraine, a 600 year-old city, approximately the same size as Eugene.

Olena began volunteering with WREN in August, 2005. Under the guidance of WREN staff, she leads and assists with environmental education programs in the wetlands.

Olena is a student at LCC. She recently changed her studies from agronomy to nursing. In addition to her new found interest in working with children, she enjoys hiking, studying science and health and spending time in the garden.

WREN would like to thank **Elmira Automotive**

for becoming a 2006 WREN Sponsor!
All WREN programs are free through the generosity of private donations and government grants. Sponsorship supports education programs such as "Winter Crafts", "Seeing Wetlands through the Camera Eye" and "Eggs & Nests." For more information, visit www.wewetlands.org.

Sponsor levels

Fenders Blue Butterfly	\$3500
Western Pond Turtle	\$1000
Great Blue Heron	\$500
Pacific Tree Frog	\$350
Red Fox	\$200



WEST EUGENE WETLANDS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

Education Program

The West Eugene Wetlands Environmental Education Program was initiated in 1999 as the result of collaboration among various West Eugene Wetlands partners and organizations interested in environmental education. This group perceived a need for a locally focused effort to build environmental literacy in the community.

Over the last year many steps have been taken toward construction of an education center as well as further establishment of the environmental education program. Together, the environmental education program and West Eugene Wetlands partners accomplished the following:

- WREN offered 37 informal education programs in 2005. Program examples include wetland month special events, bird walks, and dragonfly walks. Programs specifically for children included a night hike, mushroom walk, and wetland geology tour, as well as a summer-long collaboration with the City of Eugene Adventure Seekers Summer Camp.
- 103 school groups visited and/or received classroom presentations with the formal education programs. The total number of contacts was 2,932 students and teachers/chaperones.
- WREN was nominated for a "Take Pride in America" award from the Department of Interior for their educational contributions in the West Eugene Wetlands.
- WREN hired Liz Myers as Education/Volunteer Coordinator to take on volunteer recruitment and formal program coordination.
- WREN hired Elvira Muniz as an Environmental Education Intern in the fall to lead field trips and outreach programs.
- Work continued at the University of Oregon's Center for Advanced Technology and Education program to refine and submit grant proposals, as well as post the Educator's and Volunteer's Guide online. These documents can be viewed at <http://catweb.uoregon.edu/wren/>
- WREN board and education volunteers contributed more than 2500 hours to help further the education program.
- WREN hosted a week-long teacher training in July that included instruction on journal-making, field work and curriculum development.
- WREN received grants from OWEB, BLM, the Collins Foundation and REI to help support the education program.
- WREN coordinated with the BLM in recruiting and participating in Public Lands Day, Sept. 24th. Fifteen volunteers attended and participated in removing blackberries and other noxious weeds from along trails, as well as helping do yurt repairs.



WREN Volunteer Coordinator Liz Myers leading an informal geology program in the wetlands, March 2005. Photo: WREN



Wild Wetland Walk during Wetlands Month 2005. Photo: WREN

American Wetlands Month

West Eugene Wetland Partners have joined with Americans everywhere to raise public awareness about the uniqueness, beauty and importance of the nation's wetlands during May, American Wetlands Month. The theme for the month-long celebration was "It Pays to Save Wetlands." Approximately 270 people participated in 10 Wetlands Month 2005 activities! In addition, 262 students either visited the wetlands or participated in classroom presentations. Through the generous support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Bureau of Land Management, Environmental Protection Agency, and local businesses and individuals, all events were free to the public.



The West Eugene Wetlands Education Center Field Science Laboratory



West Eugene Wetlands Education Center

WREN, the City of Eugene, the BLM and School District 4J anticipate building the Field Science Laboratory in 2007. This initial component of the West Eugene Wetlands Education Center will allow WREN to expand its capacity to meet the community needs. It will replace the current three season yurt classroom with a permanent building that will facilitate richer programming year round. Programs in the Field Science Laboratory will allow for more in depth exploration of the natural work using technology. The lab is designed to facilitate exploration and excite the curiosity of community members of all ages.

WREN INCOME AND COSTS 2005/2006

Source of Income by Category and Amount	Last Year	Current Year Estimate *
Corporations	\$4,000	\$49,292
Foundations	\$10,000	\$8,514
State Government	\$25,895	\$34,207
Local Government	\$1,308	0
Federal Government	\$50,830	\$80,145
Individual Contributions	\$14,209	\$44,840
In-Kind Contributions	\$44,223	\$26,500
Gift Shop Sales	\$5,430	\$10,500
Total Annual Income	\$155,895	\$253,998
Operating Expenses	Last Year	Current Year Estimate
Salaries and Benefits	\$46,738	\$100,050
Contractual Services	\$43,788	\$78,548
Fundraising	\$2,190	25,000
Training and Travel	\$1,705	\$5,800
Operating (office space, classroom), supplies and other	\$57,641	\$44,600
Carry over	\$3,833	
Total Annual Expenses	\$155,895	\$253,998



The field science laboratory will replace the 30 foot diameter, three season yurt. Photo: WREN

WREN can only continue to succeed with your support. As a community, we have been fortunate to have programs subsidized by state and federal grants. However, this year, WREN will need more private support. Your personal donation, membership dues, or business sponsorship will be critical to our future success to bring quality field science programs to our community.

* Nearly 70 percent of the 2006 budget is secured. WREN is seeking private funds to support 2006 education programs.



EVENTS

Feb 18th 1-2:30 p.m. "Winter Crafts"

Join the WREN volunteers and staff in celebrating the winter beauty of the West Eugene Wetlands. We will have four stations set up for families to create a winter wetland craft. It will be a free, informal drop-in program from 1-2:30 p.m. Meet at the West Eugene Wetlands Yurt, at the corner of W 11th and Danebo.

Feb 23rd 6-7:30 p.m. WREN Volunteer Orientation

Are you interested in teaching students about wetlands? Meet at the BLM West Eugene Office, 751 S Danebo. For more information contact Volunteer Coordinator Liz Myers 683-6483.

March 18th 1-3 p.m. "Seeing the Wetlands through the Camera's Eye"

Limit: 10 participants

Ages 8-12, no experience necessary

The West Eugene Wetlands are a fantastic place to learn nature photography. Photography is not just about pointing and pressing a button; it's a decision making process. Participants will receive an introduction of basic concepts in photography such as lighting and composition. Each student will need to bring a camera, 2 rolls of film (unless you use digital), good walking shoes, and a snack. Meet at the Yurt.

Saturday, April 15th 9-10:30 a.m. "Eggs & Nests"

Families are invited to come discover the beauty and wonder of wetland bird nests & eggs. We will discuss various types of nests & eggs. Participants will then have the opportunity to paint an egg to take home. Meet at the Yurt.

All WREN programs are free through the generosity of private donations and grants from BLM and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. To register for programs or for more information, contact Environmental Education Specialist Holly McRae at 683-6494 or wew@wewetlands.org

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