

Behind the Scenes

September 2021



Dear Friend,

Every once in a while thick cloud cover darkens our daytime skies. Night-time temperatures are now dipping down to the 40's and sometimes even lower. A tinge of color can be seen on the willows, maples and dogwood, promising a vibrant show in the months to come. The morning commute is a bit slower due to groups of children running, walking and biking their way to school. The signs of autumn are all around us—perhaps causing a tinge of sadness as the daylength shortens and our garden palette starts to fade. Yet there is so much about the arrival of fall to celebrate, with the harvest season in full swing and eager anticipation of that first glorious fall rain shower.

Reflecting back on the past few months, the record heat, devastating wildfires, prolonged drought, and the far-reaching impacts of the Delta variant of COVID-19 have been and continues to be particularly hard on our watershed community members—both human and non-human. Our watershed could definitely use some extra love as we enter into this cooler and (hopefully) wetter time of year. For those of you who have some land that you can turn your attention towards, the autumnal equinox heralds the start of the best season to plan and plant a garden or landscape that provides high quality habitat for our native birds, pollinators and other local wildlife. If you need some tips and techniques to get started, visit our Native Plant Resources page on our website at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/native-plant-resources.html>. Another way to show love for your watershed is to make your home and land more fire resilient. The Oregon State University Extension Office has a great resource for protecting your property from wildfire at <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9247/html>.

Happy reading! —Suzanne Teller, LWC Outreach Coordinator [contact me at Outreach@LuckiamuteLWC.org or (503) 837-0237]



Love Your Watershed News & Updates

Luckiamute State Natural Area (LSNA) Bird Banding Research Experience - *1 spot left!*



As of now, 9 Friends of the LWC have signed up to participate in a unique opportunity to experience the bird banding research being conducted by Joan Hagar and Josée Rousseau at LSNA's North Unit. This behind-the-scenes tour is scheduled for **September 25, from 7:30 - 11:30am**, and should give attendees a truly "behind-the-scenes" look at the diverse birdlife utilizing our floodplain forest habitat! Sign up today at https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/birdbandingtour_friends.html (or call me at 971-312-7192) to register for the last spot for this event! *We will have a wait-list for this event, so please feel free to sign up*

even after the bird-banding tour is full.

Fall Bird Walk at Soap Creek



Date: October 3

Time: 8am - 12pm

Place: Soap Creek Schoolhouse (37465 NW Soap Creek Rd, Corvallis, OR 97330)

Cost: FREE!

Join Salem Audubon member Mike Unger and local landowners for a stroll through oak savanna, meadows, wetlands and riparian forest located in beautiful Soap Creek valley. Along the way we will be learning from Mike how to look and listen for the resident and migratory birds we discover along the way. We'll also hear about the history and restoration efforts happening in this area. You are invited to bring a lawn chair and a bag lunch to enjoy a socially-distanced picnic by the historic Soap Creek schoolhouse afterwards. Details and RSVP at <https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/fall-bird-walk-Oct3.html>

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

Watershed Notes

A Grateful Goodbye...

It is with mixed emotions that we bid farewell to Wendy Hudson, who is moving across the country to Massachusetts, after 3.5 years of service on the LWC Board. Although having been born and raised in Washington, D.C. makes Wendy an east coast native, her three decades of advocacy and conservation work within Oregon have certainly given her a deep and abiding connection to the Pacific Northwest. It is impossible to overstate the many significant contributions Wendy has made to our watershed council—and to the watershed itself.

Wendy took on the role of LWC Board President in February 2020, right before the onset of COVID-19. Despite the challenges of leading a community-based organization and navigating fundraising during a pandemic, her commitment, expertise, insight and energy helped propel the LWC forward towards greater efficiency and efficacy. Thanks to Wendy, we have strengthened our Love Your Watershed fundraising campaign, launched a new Planned Giving program, and streamlined several processes for better staff and board communication and coordination.

While we will all miss Wendy's presence, we are thrilled for her move to another beautiful part of our country and an exciting new chapter in her life.



Seeding at the Upper Luckiamute

Last month, LWC staff accompanied Project Manager Jean-Paul Zagarola (Bonneville Environmental Foundation) to a remote stretch of the Upper Luckiamute River located on private timberlands owned and managed by Hancock Natural Resource Group. Our mission was to collect and spread native seed within the excavator tracks to help remediate some of the impacts from the heavy equipment used during the recently completed large wood placement project. In addition to being surprised by a herd of elk, we were greeted by a welcome committee of hundreds of melitta crescent (*Phyciodes melitta*) butterflies as we walked along the access road towards the project site. It felt exhilarating to be able to stroll through this remote part of the watershed together—a rare opportunity for all of us to convene in-person during this age of COVID-19 distancing. As we veered off the road and into the restoration sites along the river, it became a peaceful exercise of seed-gathering from sedges, rushes, wildflowers, and even a lone native gooseberry! After we gathered cupfuls of seed, it was sprinkled and raked across the nearby excavator tracks. The seeds will lie dormant over the next few months, until the warmth of the springtime sun and the gift of nutrients deposited by waxing and waning floodwaters spurs them to awaken and take root in the soil. We wish these nascent plants well, and look forward to seeing them sprout and fill in these areas next year!



Stream Temperature Monitoring Program Update



With the help of a small team of volunteers, Assistant Project Manager Aubrey Cloud just wrapped up the mid-season checks of our temperature loggers to make sure they are still in place and in good working order. Besides the important task of... um... monitoring the monitoring ability of our monitoring equipment, the mid-season checks offer an excellent opportunity to observe the condition of our streams during the time of year we typically see the lowest water levels. This year in particular, stream monitoring has taken on an especially significant role as a way to assess how a changing climate is affecting our rivers.

Before the one good rainfall that we got in June, the Luckiamute River was breaking low flow records for each day through much of April and May. Since that rain in June, the river has been hovering around 25% of median flow rates according to data recorded over 87 years by USGS at the Suver Gage. Several Luckiamute tributaries are dwindling to trickles and small puddles before they reach their confluence with our watershed's namesake river. Although this is certainly alarming to see, in streams that have accumulated large amounts of gravel—behind log jams for example—water can run subsurface and may re-emerge further downstream or converge with the mainstem Luckiamute unseen. Water in these sediment-rich channels quickly re-appear as the rains return. Good quality habitat conditions—including a healthy riparian zone and the presence of large wood and gravels—facilitate the sub-surface flow of water, which stays cooler by avoiding solar exposure. Aquatic wild-life adapts by moving further upstream or staying in pools that remain along the creek bed.

While the impacts of this year's extra hot, extra dry spring and summer revealed the vulnerability of our waterways to climate change, it also points to the benefits of continued efforts to protect and enhance watershed health. **Thank you, Friends, for your commitment to healthy watersheds and for continuing to support the work of the Luckiamute Watershed Council!**