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Learn your birds



Susan Stauffer, left, and Madeline Kalbach in downtown Long Beach, Wash.

Alyssa Evans/Chinook Observer

Peninsula residents publish local birdwatching guide

By ALYSSA EVANS
 For the *Chinook Observer*

LONG BEACH PENINSULA — Take a look outside and you'll likely see at least one of the more than 300 bird species that make the Long Beach Peninsula home.

Residents Madeline Kalbach and Susan Stauffer are on a mission to make viewing and identifying these birds easier for residents and visitors alike.

Through their recent booklet titled "Common Birds of the Long Beach Peninsula," Kalbach and Stauffer provide a guide to 141 bird species commonly seen on the Peninsula.

The booklet is an update to Kalbach and Kristine Lashley's original "Common Birds of the Long Beach Peninsula: Marsh, Beach, Bay and Backyard" pamphlet. The new edition is an expansion; it features more birds in their habitats and removes less commonly seen birds.

"I've seen bird pamphlets with nowhere near the number of birds in it," Stauffer said. "That's the amazing thing when you look at this peninsula, 26 miles long and a couple miles wide, that there are so many."

Kalbach and Stauffer are also interested in research, as well as wildlife and habitat preservation.

"We both participate in everything we possibly can to educate people about wildlife on this peninsula and appreciate the refuge," Kalbach said.

Looking at wildlife

Kalbach has made a life for herself through teaching. At 18, she was already working as a teacher and would often take her students on field trips to view nature. Kalbach eventually pursued a career in sociology.

Her interest in birding reached new heights after she was awarded a scholarship from a local naturalist club in Ontario, Canada. Through the trip, she became hooked on birding and entomology.

"I joined the naturalist club to give back to them and went from there," said Kalbach, now director and program coordinator for the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. A professor emerita of the University of Calgary's sociology department, Kalbach researches population studies of people and birds.

Stauffer, a lifelong "outdoor person," was never focused on birding but looked at wildlife generally.

"When I got out of college and moved to the Clark County area I noticed this bird that flew overhead," Stauffer said. "It was my first identification. I call it a B-52."

Stauffer eventually learned the B-52 was a great blue heron. Her interest in birding picked up after joining the Friends and meeting Kalbach. Stauffer, director and trails/infrastructure coordinator for the Friends, contributes to the Friends' monthly newsletter and KMUN 91.9 Nature Notes.

When Stauffer isn't spending her time on an outdoors-related activity, she is busy working as an attorney at law in Vancouver, Washington. She earned a juris doctorate from the Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College, and a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley.

Both Kalbach and Stauffer have mentored women in their respective fields. Stauffer has done volunteer lawyer work to support abused women.

Outside interests

Stauffer and Kalbach try to maintain well-rounded lifestyles. Stauffer has often found that when she talks with other attorneys about what they'll do after they retire, they don't have an answer because their work is their life.

"I've always seen some of what I did as part of me," Stauffer said. "My life is not just focused on my career. I'd say a big percentage of the profession that I'm in has that, because when I talk to some of the attorneys my age and a little bit older like, 'When are you going to retire? What are you going to do?' it's like 'I'm just gonna keep working because I have nothing else, because I don't know what else I would do.'"

Kalbach and Stauffer are also members of the Shoalwater Birders, a local birdwatching group that takes monthly field trips.

"When you retire or as you work through life, you really have to have other interests other than your work," Kalbach said. "Coming here allows me to follow my interests to a greater extent. In Calgary I have to get in a car and I go for a couple of hours somewhere. Here, we can just walk out the door and here it is."

Birdwatching anywhere

All you need to birdwatch is a spot to sit outside. When Kalbach was in her early 20s, her aunt loaned her opera glasses so she could enjoy birdwatching.

"You don't have to buy \$2,000 binoculars. When I started out I used opera glasses," Kalbach said. "It took me a year to save up enough money to buy a pair of binoculars."

Birdwatching can happen anywhere, from a backyard to the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

"People should not hesitate to ask questions about what they're seeing, keep their eyes open, put up a birdbath," Kalbach said. "Feed the hummers, especially in the winter. And of course remember to respect the bears, so if you put up a feeder, you bring it in in the evening, or if the bears are around during the day, you don't leave it out."

Kalbach and Stauffer also recommend joining local groups such as the Shoalwater Birders and the Friends. Supporting the refuge is an additional way to get involved with local birding.

"You can't live in this community and not be interested in wildlife because that's what it has to offer," Kalbach said. "This community has more to offer in the way of wildlife than any other community I've ever lived in or visited."



A newly revised full-color pamphlet designed to be carried in the field identifies some of the Long Beach Peninsula and Willapa Bay's amazing birdlife.

A robin enjoys a bath. Madeline Kalbach



Short-eared owls are year-round residents of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. Madeline Kalbach



Western meadowlarks aren't often observed in Pacific County, but historically have had at least a minimal presence here most years. Madeline Kalbach



Red crossbills will come to feeders filled with small black sunflower seeds, but spend most of their time looking for seeds in conifer trees.