

## This weekend is for the birds

By CINDY YINGST  
The Columbia Press

Forget Twitter and go outside to hear some real tweets this weekend.

It's time for the annual Great Backyard Bird Count, a citizen science opportunity that has grown in popularity and scope worldwide since it began 21 years ago.

The count is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology along with partner Bird Studies Canada.

The idea is to get people from across the country – and now the world – to sit still in the outdoors and watch birds for at least 15 minutes while noting the numbers and varieties.

In Clatsop County, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park is bird-count central this weekend.

“The thing I love about the Great Backyard Bird Count, specifically, is the timing of it,” said Sally Freeman, tour and volunteer coordinator at Fort Clatsop. “It literally

See ‘Birding’ on Page 5



**Above:** The California condor may not look like the belle of the ball, but its return to Oregon is vital for the species.

Photo courtesy National Park Service

**Top left:** A great blue heron stands guard over Skipanon Marina.

Cindy Yingst/The Columbia Press

**Left:** A park ranger helps a child build a birdhouse at a birding event in Portland.

Photo courtesy Oregon Parks

## When the California condor was king

The Columbia Press

California condors once had a powerful presence in Oregon.

The Lewis and Clark expedition saw plenty of them during the winter they spent at the mouth of the Columbia River and William Clark wrote an in-depth description of one in his journal on Feb. 16, 1806. (He described it as a “handsome bird, at a little distance.”)

Close up, it is no beauty for sure.

But, like the bald eagle, this huge majestic bird is on the road to recovery from its spot on the endangered species list.

Travis Koons, animal curator at the Oregon Zoo, will talk about propagation methods for condors raised in captivity during a lecture at 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb 18, at Fort Clatsop.

A new condor release site is planned in Redwood National Park, just south of the Oregon border. The proximity to Oregon allows for the condor's return to its historic home range in the coastal Northwest, according to Koons.

Koons has 17 years of experience working with condors and other raptors. He

See ‘Condor’ on Page 5

## District takes step toward new campus in hills

By CINDY YINGST  
The Columbia Press

Plans to build a new school compound somewhere in the hills between Costco and Old Youngs Bay Bridge will take 18 years and more than \$36 million to complete.

The Warrenton-Hammond School Board voted unanimously Wednesday night to authorize the district to begin communicating the needs and the plan with the public.

The decision on whether to pursue a bond election will depend on the public's reaction and will be made at the board's April meeting.

“We want to establish at least some baseline of where that support might be,” Superintendent Mark Jeffery told them.

A bond large enough to cover the long-range facilities plan would require taxing property owners an estimated \$2.49 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The owner of a \$150,000 house would pay about \$375 per year in that scenario.

It's true Warrenton's voters recently approved a levy for the library, but the levy was for five years at 33 cents per \$1,000, or about \$49.50 per year.

“It's a steep uphill,” Jeffery said. “We've got some work to do to establish a solid plan.”

The district is running out of room at both campuses and both sit near wetlands and tsunami inundation zones. Later this year, regulations go into effect preventing districts from building in those areas.

Once land is purchased, facilities would be built in phases.

The district will begin by hiring a communications person and a company to conduct phone surveys.

### Great Backyard Bird Count

**What:** Count birds in your own back yard or elsewhere for at least 15 minutes

**When:** Feb. 16-19

**Get involved:** Learn more, sign up and post numbers and photos at [gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org)