

# In puffin country, Cannon Beach may honor red-winged blackbird

## Official bird could help mark Earth Day

By Brenna Visser  
Cannon Beach Gazette

As a part of the 12 Days of Earth Day celebration, Cannon Beach will be asked to consider designating an official city bird.

But don't get too excited, tufted puffins. A different bird could be brought into the spotlight: the red-winged blackbird.

The medium-sized, black-and-red songbird loves marshes, brushy swamps and chirping on city power lines. They relish pecking out the seeds of invasive plants and fiercely protecting habitat — whether the trespasser be a fellow bird or an elk. But most importantly, the species is an abundant and longtime inhabitant of the beach town.

"Red-winged blackbirds have been in that habitat forever. It seemed to fit the character of Cannon Beach," said Neal Maine, a wildlife photographer who serves on the 12 Days of Earth Day committee. "They are a part of the downtown, which is kind of rare to have a bird colony right in the central part of the community."

The committee, which organizes a variety of environmental activities throughout April in honor of Earth Day, decided they wanted to propose the idea to the city as a formal way to honor the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a landmark federal law that protects dozens of species of birds. Adopting the bird



**LEFT** The red-winged blackbird is being proposed as Cannon Beach's official bird. | NEAL MAINE  
**UPPER RIGHT** A tufted puffin nests on Haystack Rock. | HAYSTACK ROCK AWARENESS PROGRAM  
**LOWER RIGHT** A red-winged blackbird protects its territory from an elk in Clatsop County wetlands. | NEAL MAINE

officially would take a vote from the City Council. Dozens of cities have adopted similar designations around the country.

While negotiating which bird should be proposed for the title, the tufted puffin was considered. Cannon Beach is the home of the largest tufted puffin colony on the Oregon Coast, with several festivals and fundraisers held in their honor. Between that and

the wide array of puffin paraphernalia available downtown, the black, white and orange bird has become the town's unofficial icon.

But there are many reasons the red-winged blackbird has an edge. Puffins are seasonal, nesting at Haystack Rock for only a few months of the year, and are not very accessible unless "you are strategic about seeing them," Maine said.

Red-winged blackbirds are what people in the community see everyday, and serve as a better representative of the area's ecology, Maine said. Designating these birds would also be historically significant, as many of them live on the Little Pompey Wetland — a marsh named after the son of Sacagawea from the Lewis and Clark Expedition by Cannon Beach Elementary

School fifth-graders more than 20 years ago.

"It's the idea that every bird counts, even common ones like red-winged blackbirds," Maine said. "We have a tendency to go for the rare and unusual. This is more about celebrating the 'common.'"

Haystack Rock Awareness Program Director Melissa Keyser also serves on the committee and said while her program is naturally partial to tufted puffins, she embraces the red-winged blackbird as an official bird.

"It's the perfect bird to highlight because it is often overshadowed by the puffin," Keyser said. "While the puffins are incredibly special and important, we also want to give credit to another species. When you are really immersed in the environment here the bird that you see is the red-winged blackbird. We could have gone with the puffin, but the blackbird was a little more indicative to this place."

Puffin or otherwise, the larger message is to bring to light the importance of protecting bird habitat. Posters of the bird with the caption, "They are all canaries," are being circulated around town to raise awareness. The phrase plays off the old adage "a canary in a coal mine," referencing a time when canaries were used as early detectors for carbon monoxide in mining tunnels.

"They are our measuring stick to the quality of our environment," Maine said. "When the birds start dying, that's when you know you've got a problem."

## Help clean up trails near elementary school

United Way of Clatsop County invites community members to the 2018 Day of Caring event on April 21. The Day of Caring is a countywide opportunity for community members to give something back to their community by volunteering time and talent. For this year's projects, United Way of Clatsop County has partnered with local schools and parks.

In Seaside, Seaside Heights



Elementary needs help with bridge and trail maintenance to keep the outdoor learning opportunities safe and accessible. The Seaside community gardens need help prepping for

the upcoming planting season.

In Astoria, Tapiola Park and Evergreen Fields need a hand sprucing up the ball fields for the softball and baseball season.

New bark chips for the playground, tree wells for over 100 trees and painting of the dugouts and picnic shelters.

In Warrenton, trail maintenance on the waterfront trail between the Lewis and

Clark Bridge and the Young's Bay Bridge. Camp Kiwanilong needs help prepping the grounds for upcoming summer youth programs.

All volunteers are invited to attend a thank-you barbecue at Camp Kiwanilong at 3:30 p.m. for community building, entertainment and s'mores around the campfire; visit [www.clatsopunitedway.org](http://www.clatsopunitedway.org) or call United Way at 503-325-1961.

## Surfrider seeks volunteers for Earth Day Action Day

The Daily Astorian

Bring some work clothes, some friends and a surfboard to participate in the Oswald West Beach Cleanup event from 10 a.m. to noon on Sunday.

The Surfrider Foundation, along with the Friends of Cape Falcon Marine Reserve and Oregon State Parks, is

looking for volunteers to help clean the beach and participate in minor restoration projects as a part of their Earth Day Action Day activities.

Volunteers will be treated to a bonfire and barbecue on the beach, as well as time to surf. For more information, contact the Friends of Cape Falcon Marine Reserve at [capefalconmr@gmail.com](mailto:capefalconmr@gmail.com).

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

#### THURSDAY, April 26

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### WEDNESDAY, May 2

Cannon Beach Budget Committee, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### TUESDAY, May 8

Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., city council meeting and work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### WEDNESDAY, May 9

Cannon Beach Budget Committee, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### THURSDAY, May 10

Cannon Beach Academy, 5:30 p.m., 3718 S. Hemlock St.

#### MONDAY, May 14

Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., 188 Sunset, Cannon Beach.

#### TUESDAY, May 15

Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### Seaside School District Board of Directors, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin, Seaside.

#### WEDNESDAY, May 16

Cannon Beach Budget Committee, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### THURSDAY, May 17

Cannon Beach Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### Cannon Beach Design Review Board Meeting, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### MONDAY, May 21

Ecola Creek Watershed Council Meeting, 4:30 p.m. City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### WEDNESDAY, May 23

Cannon Beach Budget Committee, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### THURSDAY, May 24

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### TUESDAY, June 5

Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

#### MONDAY, June 11

Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., 188 Sunset, Cannon Beach.

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May 12 • Wines For Mother's Day!

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