



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



WILDLIFE DIVISION
Oregon Conservation Strategy

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On the Ground: The Oregon Conservation Strategy at Work

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March 2009

On the light side of the vernal equinox, there are many bright spots in the field of fish and wildlife conservation—this month's projects illustrate how many roads we travel, intent on the same destination.

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SOCIAL NETWORKING HELPS RELOCATE BIRDS TO SAVE ENDANGERED SALMON

Scientists are relying on social networking to attract migrating Caspian terns to new homes in south central Oregon this summer—no computer or login required. Instead, decoys and recorded tern colony calls will be used to lure the fish-eating waterbirds to desirable nest sites on man-made islands at ODFW's Summer Lake Wildlife Area.

The project is part of a multi-year, multi-partner effort to relocate most of the large Caspian tern colony in the Columbia River estuary that has consumed millions of young salmon and steelhead, some of them threatened or endangered. In 2008, Caspian terns nesting in the estuary consumed about 6.7 million salmonid smolts. Although this is down from the more than 12 million consumed annually by the birds in the late 1990s before relocation projects began, the numbers are still too large for resource managers intent on recovering threatened and endangered salmon to ignore.

"The key to limiting the conflict between protected migratory birds like Caspian terns and threatened and endangered populations of fish like Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead is to create or restore nesting habitat for the birds in locations where fish stocks of special concern do not comprise much of the diet," said Dan Roby, an OSU professor of fisheries and wildlife who has been involved in the project since the beginning.

In 2008, man-made nest sites were built at Crump Lake in southern Oregon and Fern Ridge Reservoir near Eugene. Crump Island showed nesting success the first year when more than 430 pairs of Caspian terns made their way to the site



Caspian Tern
- Photo by Greg Gillson-

and attempted to nest. The Fern Ridge island is expected to take longer to develop as it is not a traditional nesting area for the birds, although as many as nine Caspian terns have been seen on the island at one time.

This year, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will complete three islands at Summer Lake Wildlife Area. Two are in managed wetlands, the third is in Dutchy Lake, a permanent waterbody. A pilot project at Summer Lake in 2003 that used decoys and recordings was successful in attracting Caspian terns to nest.



*Two of the islands on Summer Lake Wildlife Area are complete, the third will be finished this summer.
- Oregon Fish and Wildlife -*

"I expect we'll have a good number of terns this summer. They have nested here historically when conditions were suitable and have a migratory tradition for passing through the area to other parts of the Pacific Flyway," said Marty St. Louis, Summer Lake Wildlife Area manager, who is responsible for the 18,000-acre area which is managed to provide breeding and migration habitat for resident and migratory birds.

Partners include the Corps, OSU, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Geological Survey's Oregon Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Bureau of Land Management, Department of State Lands and ODFW.

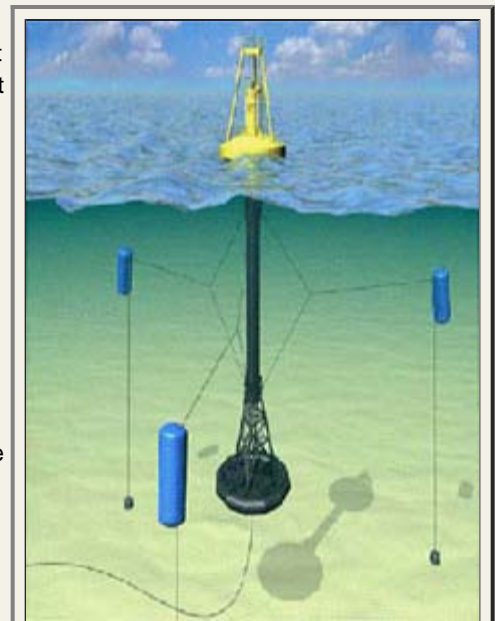
Summer Lake is part of a Conservation Opportunity Area in the Northern Basin and Range ecoregion as defined in the Conservation Strategy. To see photos of the Caspian tern and hear its call, [see WhatBird.com](#). For information on [Caspian Tern Management](#), visit the US Fish and Wildlife Service Web site.

MAKING WAVES

From the scenic overlook on Highway 101, the Pacific Ocean looks wild and untamable on this winter day, wet snow whipped by the wind. As far north, south and west as you can see, is a vast sea of grey swells and white caps. On the surface, it is a monolithic and empty landscape.

But, once in the windowless conference room a few miles down the road where biologists, scientists, community leaders, commercial fishermen and engineers have gathered to discuss harnessing the immense power of the ocean to create electricity, it's an image quickly dispelled.

Maps of whale migration routes, undersea reefs, marine habitats, submerged cables, fishing boats and seabird colonies flash across the screen, displaying the rich, full life of the vertical ocean. Throughout the day-long workshop, environmentalists, educators and regulators make their presentations. Coastal communities express concern about the potential effects on sport and commercial fishing and, in the end, everyone knows a little more, but the controversy is unabated. Is wave energy good for Oregon, or not?



Example of a wave energy buoy. Ocean Power Technologies illustration.

The answer it seems is yes, maybe. The ability to turn wave power into electricity is too promising not to pursue, but concerns about fish, marine mammals, birds, hard structures tethered to the ocean floor, electromagnetic cables and acoustic disturbances all cloud the picture.

"There are definitely a lot of things to think about in relation to wave energy and fish and wildlife," said Patty Snow, ODFW Land and Water Use coordinator. "We need to know more about its effects on wildlife and ocean habitats, so we know where to put structures and how to mitigate for any negative effects."

Oregon State University is fast tracking its study of wave energy, funded in part by a U.S. Department of Energy grant. "Much is unknown about the effects of wave energy devices on fish and wildlife and the nearshore ocean habitats," said Robert Paasch, OSU engineering professor and Director of the Northwest National Marine Renewable Energy Center. "We are working to fill in the knowledge gaps, so we can make the right decisions about adopting marine renewable energy technologies."

The February workshop was sponsored by the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society in conjunction with its annual meeting. A number of presentations are available on the ODFW Web site. The marine component of the Conservation Strategy, the Nearshore Strategy, supports scientific and socioeconomic research to determine the effects of renewable energy on the ocean and its life forms.

For more information:

[The Wildlife Society Oregon Chapter](#)

[Ocean Wave Energy Study at OSU](#)

[Off-Shore Wave Energy Development and the Environment. Workshop presentations](#)

[The Oregon Nearshore Strategy](#)

BIRDERS STEP UP FOR OREGON'S WILDLIFE

By Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director, Audubon Society of Portland

Oregon bird lovers are stepping up to protect our state's nongame wildlife—the 88% of wildlife that is not hunted or fished. Audubon, the Backyard Bird Shop and a coalition of conservation organizations have introduced legislation that would place a 10% tax on birdseed. The resultant revenue would help increase wildlife viewing opportunities and protect native birds and their habitats. If the bill passes, bird enthusiasts will be helping to support avian conservation with every bag of birdseed that they buy.



*Bird lovers step up to help conserve nongame wildlife.
-Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife -*

The birdseed tax would catalyze a significant leap forward on funding the Oregon Conservation Strategy and allow birders to participate in wildlife conservation. Revenue would focus on:

creating new wildlife-watching opportunities on urban and rural landscapes; protecting native birds and other wildlife and habitats prioritized in the Oregon Conservation Strategy; and leveraging funds and promoting ecotourism and nature-based economic development through partnerships with nonprofit groups, businesses and communities.

Currently, ODFW wildlife management of game animals in Oregon is funded largely by hunters and anglers through license fees and federally-mandated programs—nongame fish, birds and other wildlife receive only about 2% of the ODFW budget.

Oregonians currently spend more than \$40 million each year on birdseed. The birdseed tax would be a significant first step toward ensuring that the State has adequate resources to preserve native birds and their habitat. At a time when nearly 25% of the avian species in Oregon are experiencing long-term declines, creating a stable nongame wildlife program is essential.

For more information contact Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director, Audubon Society of Portland at bsallinger@audubonportland.org

INVASIVE SPECIES BILL TARGETS FERAL SWINE

In an effort to eliminate destructive feral swine from Oregon, a bill in the State

Legislature would make it illegal to sell or purchase hunts for feral swine and to knowingly allow feral swine to roam on private property.

It's a bill, if not ahead of its time, at least on time. Unlike California and many other states that have been overrun with wild pigs, Oregon still has a fighting chance of stopping the invasion. Although, according to Rick Boatner, ODFW Invasive Species coordinator, time is running out. The estimated 1,500 to 2,000 feral pigs in the state are going to grow rapidly—feral swine can double their population every four to six months.



Feral swine can destroy stream banks, agricultural fields and rangeland overnight.
- Oregon Fish and Wildlife -

"The passage of this bill is critically important to the health of Oregon's watersheds," said Lisa DeBruyckere, Oregon Invasive Species Council Coordinator. "Feral swine can destroy riparian corridors. We can see what's happening in other states and still have time to stop it in Oregon if we act now."

"It's hard to underestimate the damage feral pigs can do to range and agricultural lands," said Boatner. "They can tear up crops and rangelands overnight. They just destroy the whole field or hillside—it looks like someone came in and rototilled it."

In addition to the negative environmental and economic impacts on landowners, feral swine are also implicated in disease transmission to wildlife, livestock and humans; they also prey on the young of livestock and wildlife.

House Bill 2221 is sponsored by Governor Kulongoski for ODFW. To read the bill, visit the [Oregon State Legislature](#) Web site and enter the bill number.

For a copy of the Feral Swine Management Plan that was produced for the Oregon Invasive Species Council by Portland State University, [visit PSU's Web site](#).

FAMILY FORESTS KEEP OREGON GREEN

Oregon's family forests help maintain air and water quality and provide invaluable benefits to fish and wildlife. But, today, many family forest landowners are at a crossroad. Faced with infrequent income, less time available for land management, more battles to fight with invasive weeds and disease and offers from developers to buy their property, many are trying to decide which way to turn.

"Most of the landowners I talk to want to leave a legacy of healthy forestlands, but they are under a lot of pressure to convert their land to development," said Gina LaRocco, Conservation Program Associate, Defenders of Wildlife, "It's important to help them plan for a future where they can keep their forests as forests while improving wildlife habitat."

LaRocco is one of a number of speakers who participate in family forest landowner workshops put on by OSU extension services and the Oregon Department of Forestry. Her subject, emerging markets for ecosystem services, sounds somewhat impenetrable, but LaRocco is pretty down-to-earth about it. "Opportunity is coming in the way of compensation to forest landowners who provide positive ecosystem benefits, and people need to know how they can participate in them," said LaRocco, a proponent of habitat management planning.

While LaRocco is helping landowners prepare for future funding, Steve Vaught, Incentives Coordinator, Private Forests Division, Oregon Department of Forestry, deals with what is available today.

"My job is to connect landowners with resources they can use now," he said. "I encourage them to identify the habitats and species on their property, so we can focus on what needs to be done to restore and protect the important landscapes. In order to be eligible for incentives, you have to have

a plan in place.”

One of the tools Vaught uses working with landowners is the Oregon Conservation Strategy. “It gives landowners a good overview of habitat interconnectivity and helps them link the habitats they manage with our native species,” he said.

For more information, see these Web sites: [Oregon Department of Forestry](#), [Clackamas County](#), [Benton County](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILDLIFE

That climate change will affect Oregon's wildlife is no longer a point of discussion, today the questions are: how much will fish and wildlife be affected, and what can we do to prepare for the coming changes?

A number of groups are seeking answers to these questions with an immediacy that encourages action. In Oregon in 2008, the Global Warming Commission's Fish, Wildlife and Habitat subcommittee released a set of guidelines to help state-level policy and decision makers as they plan for climate change. The document, *Preparing Oregon's Fish, Wildlife, and Habitats for Future Climate Change: A Guide for State Adaptation Efforts* is available online.

At a regional level, the West Coast Governors' Global Warming Initiative is working to address the adverse consequences on the economy, health and environment of the West Coast states. Nationally, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is promoting legislation and funding sources for research and projects, and a number of hunting, angling and other conservation groups are conducting research and lobbying their legislators for conservation funding.

ODFW staff members participate in each of these efforts in addition to leading a working group to better integrate climate change information into the Conservation Strategy. Learn more by visiting these Web sites:

[Oregon Global Warming Commission](#)
[West Coast Governors' Global Warming Initiative](#)
[Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#)
[Seasons' End: Global Warming's Threat to Hunting and Fishing](#)

ONE SMALL THING

Get a free copy of *Backyard Conservation* and find out how you can help protect the environment and add beauty and interest to your yard. Tip sheets and the colorful 28-page booklet are available free, single copies only. Visit the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) online or call 1-888-LANDCARE.

PAST ISSUES OF THE NEWSLETTER

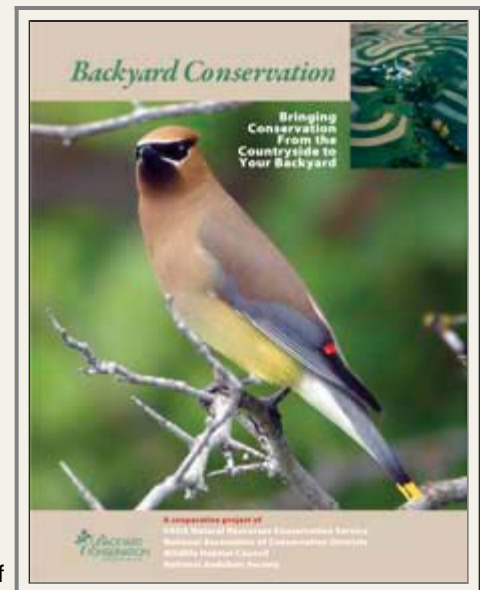
[On the Ground newsletter archives](#)

ABOUT THE OREGON CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The [Oregon Conservation Strategy](#) provides a blueprint and action plan for the long-term conservation of Oregon's native fish and wildlife and their habitats through a non-regulatory, statewide approach to conservation. It was developed by ODFW with the help of a diverse coalition of Oregonians including scientists, conservation groups, landowners, extension services, anglers, hunters, and representatives from agriculture, forestry and rangelands.

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