

A Brief History of My Time with ECAS by Sherrie Pierce, January 18, 2022

My history with East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS) began in the fall of 2010 with my election to its Board of Directors. Recruited by Mary Oppenheimer, a continuing Board member from East Cascades Bird Conservancy (ECBC) to East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS) and a main architect of the legal framework from ECBC to ECAS, I was happy to say yes to this volunteer opportunity. Recently retired from my professional career as a school counselor and then caregiver to my elderly mother, this sounded like a good way to continue my interest in birds and the local Audubon organization. I'd been attending meetings and events of the previous Central Oregon Audubon, and then East Cascades Bird Conservancy (ECBC) for a number of years and, most recently, the ECBC Birders' Nights, Annual Events, and Field Trips where I'd met a number of local birders, a great group of folks to learn from and be around.

During my time on the Board as both President and Secretary, I was fortunate to be part of some exciting projects. I was very interested in the Education aspect of the organization and found there was a very well-organized committee already at work with several undertakings in mind. The two that became most impactful was the installation of bird feeders at a number of schools in the area and the Fledgling Fun Program that ran for 5 years. Volunteers from the organization fulfilled many community and school requests. The other big project was the Annual Event where I found my school experience invaluable in herding adult volunteers into various responsibilities that they took much more seriously than a group of teenagers. Those events produced some of my fondest ECAS memories.

The other project that I became intimately involved with was the resurrection of the Woodpecker Festival. Originally an event called Woodpecker Wonderland, organized by Steve Shunk, a local bird guide and ECBC member and centered in Camp Sherman, many of the local birders were recruited to guide trips looking for the resident woodpeckers. I attended the Festivals held in 2008 and 2009 so was fairly acquainted with the idea when John Gerke, an ECAS Board Member from Sisters proposed bringing back the defunct Festival as an ECAS event centered in the Sisters area, the ongoing habitat for the eleven species of nesting woodpeckers. Held in June of 2011, it was a resounding success albeit a little disorganized, but it moved on to better organization and a determined philosophy to make it all about the birds. None of that other Festival stuff. Of course, local birders had the most fun scouting for birds in anticipation of the folks coming to see them. Sadly, in March of 2012, longtime stalwart volunteer, birder, and festival guide organizer, Dean Hale, was killed in a car accident. In Dean's memory, the Festival was named the Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival and continued on as the most popular and fun event ECAS held until COVID caused its suspension in 2020. Hopefully, it will be able to make a comeback.

Many of the important ECAS Conservation and Science Projects continued on making our locally run, volunteer-fueled organization one I was happy to be part of and will volunteer in as long as possible.