

THURSTON HILLS OAK RESTORATION

Searching for Birds at Thurston Hills



Perched atop Thurston Hills is our most recent oak restoration project. Working closely with Willamalane, we removed invasive vegetation in the woodland understory and prairie such as invasive blackberry, false brome, Scotch broom, Canada and bull thistle, teasel, and English hawthorn. We also removed Douglas fir trees that were outcompeting the Oregon white oak. This provided space for the oak trees to begin developing full, open canopies and receive the sunlight they need. We then replanted the area with native grasses and wildflowers.

In spring 2018, before removing the Douglas fir trees, Willamalane hired an ornithologist to listen and look for all the different bird species in our project footprint. A volunteer from the local Audubon Society repeated those surveys in Spring 2020 to see which birds showed up after the restoration work. We conduct surveys like these to assess the success of our projects. We hope to see birds move back in who weren't there before, indicating that they approve of our changes!



Over the course of our surveys, we observed 51 bird species within our oak restoration site. Of these birds, we heard 15 oak-associated species before the restoration project and 13 after. We saw an increase in "species of conservation concern" from three before the project to four after it (see page two for more info on this). We are excited by these findings but know that there are also many outside factors that may influence bird use of Thurston Hills. We hope to conduct more surveys in a few years after the oaks have had more time to develop their crowns, offering even more nooks and crannies to our bird friends.

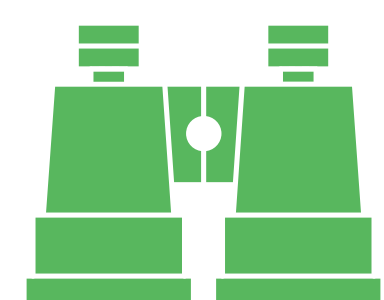
You can help us continue this monitoring! As you are out searching for birds, you can log your findings on iNaturalist or eBird and your reports will help add to our knowledge of the area. These were just some of the species found at Thurston Hills. How many can you find?

Anna's Hummingbird
Black-capped Chickadee
Black-headed Grosbeak
Black-throated Gray Warbler
Brown-headed Cowbird
Bushtit

Cassin's Vireo
Cedar Waxwing
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Lazuli Bunting
MacGillivray's Warbler

Olive-sided Flycatcher
Orange-crowned Warbler
Pileated Woodpecker
Purple Finch
Purple Martin
Red-breasted Nuthatch

Red-tailed Hawk
Rufous Hummingbird
Spotted Towhee
Swainson's Thrush
Violet-green Swallow
Western Tanager
Western Wood-Pewee



Birds of Conservation Concern

Several birds found in our surveys are listed as "birds of conservation concern" by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service. We pay special attention when we see these birds in our project areas. Keep your eyes open and you might see them too!



OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER

This stocky bird sports a two-toned chest that makes it appear as if it is wearing a vest. Look for these birds perched high in trees where they watch for flying insects. They will dart out to hunt and then return to their perch. They are pretty small (between a sparrow and a robin) so keep your eyes peeled! For more information, including their calls, visit: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Olive-sided_Flycatcher/id



RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD

These orange-hued hummingbirds are iridescent around the throat and can appear to burn like coals. Look for mostly orange plumage on the males and a green-orange mix on females. Despite their small size, they are tough and you will often see them chasing other hummingbirds (even chipmunks sometimes!) away from feeders. Check out more information here: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rufous_Hummingbird/id



PURPLE FINCH

Males have a distinctive full-body red coloring, once famously dubbed as a "sparrow dipped in raspberry juice." Females lack the red markings and instead have a brown-streaked body. These birds may be hard to see as they are quite small and stay higher up in the trees. Keep your ear open for its song, which you can find here: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Purple_Finch/id



PURPLE MARTIN

The male bird has an iridescent black/blue coloring that fades to a dark brown on the tail and wings. Females are slightly duller and can have white on their chests. They feed and roost in flocks that can sometimes be mixed with other swallow species. Keep an eye out for them as they swoop and dive, hunting large flying insects like dragonflies. At our project site look to the snag trees as these birds like to nest in natural cavities. Find out more here: allaboutbirds.org/guide/Purple_Martin/id

