



Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest – Celebrating the Founders

Written and compiled by Susan Ballinger, May 2021

Wenatchee Naturalist

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This weekend, the 19th annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest is underway! The Wenatchee Naturalist program is the proud sponsor of the newly minted “Founders’ Award,” created to honor volunteerism in support of festival. The award was inspired by the visionary team of people who came together in 2003 to launch the very first Bird Fest. Three audacious women co-chaired the steering committee, each representing one of the founding organizations: North Central Washington Audubon Society, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, and the U.S. Forest Service.

We celebrate the hard-working members of the 2003 Steering Committee: Corky Broaddus, Ross Frank, Karen Haire, Scott Hosfeld, Marcia Kaufman, Maggie McManus, Janet Millard, Cathy Miller, Bill Rietveldt, Sarah Smith, and Susan Thomas. Dozens of people from local businesses, non-profits, agencies, and individuals were part of the collaboration that launched Bird Fest.

Please enjoy this essay by Jane Zanol, written as a tribute to these visionary people. Be sure to read Jane’s biography at the end of this blog!

The Founding of Bird Fest

Written by Jane Zanol, May 2021

The founding of Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest in May 2003 is a story of collaboration among many organizations and people. Bird Fest successfully linked conservation, science, art, and culture. It also incorporated International Migratory Bird Day and emphasized the partnership North and South America share in providing habitat for migrating birds. To emphasize those connections, there were bilingual field trips featuring Neotropical migrants. A Mariachi band concert and a choir concert showcased local cultures. An art exhibit featured over 25 artists at a local gallery. There was a strong youth educational component in the schools. The main attraction was the resident and migrant birds in the Leavenworth, Washington area.

The project had the full support of the United States Forest Service, the commitment of the fledgling Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, and the engagement of the volunteer organization North Central Washington Audubon Society. In addition to those people and groups, many other individuals and organizations made significant contributions to Bird Fest founding in 2003. As the festival evolved over the years, countless people have organized, led trips, performed, and made art at Bird Fest.

Today, the Wenatchee River Institute and NCW Audubon Society recognize and honor the contributors who established Bird Fest. The 2003 steering committee, which had a vision and worked to make Bird Fest a reality, included: Heather Murphy, USFS; Sharon Lunz, CDLT; and Jeannie Garrity, NCWAS.

Next year, WRI will bestow the first Bird Fest Founders' Award, recognizing exceptional volunteer service to the festival. An archive of materials and interviews is being collected and organized for posterity. If you were involved in planning or attended that first Bird Fest, please let us know so we can add your contribution to our archive.

This was the original mission statement:

The Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest provides educational and recreational activities focusing on birds, wildlife, and their environments. This annual event promotes the awareness of environmental and conservation issues surrounding the area's birds, while providing an economic and educational benefit to the community. This event connects with the International Migratory Bird Day, including a multi-cultural aspect linked to Latin American countries. The heart of the festival is to have fun through bird education with-and-for families, locals, and visitors, yet the event also has a scientific quality of gathering important birding data.

Jane's Biography: Jane Zanol retired from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. She moved to Wenatchee in October 2010, where she has volunteered for the Wenatchee Symphony Orchestra on the membership committee, the Chelan Douglas Land Trust where she works on legal files and leads trail walks, Upper Basin Birders as a citizen science surveyor, Audubon Washington Sagebrush Songbird Survey as a surveyor, East Cascade Audubon Society as a raptor surveyor, and NCW Audubon and Wenatchee River Institute on the Bird Fest trip committee and as a trip leader. She enjoys birding, hiking, kayaking, calligraphy, and art.