

Fall 2020

# SIUSLAW

## WATERSHED COUNCIL NEWS

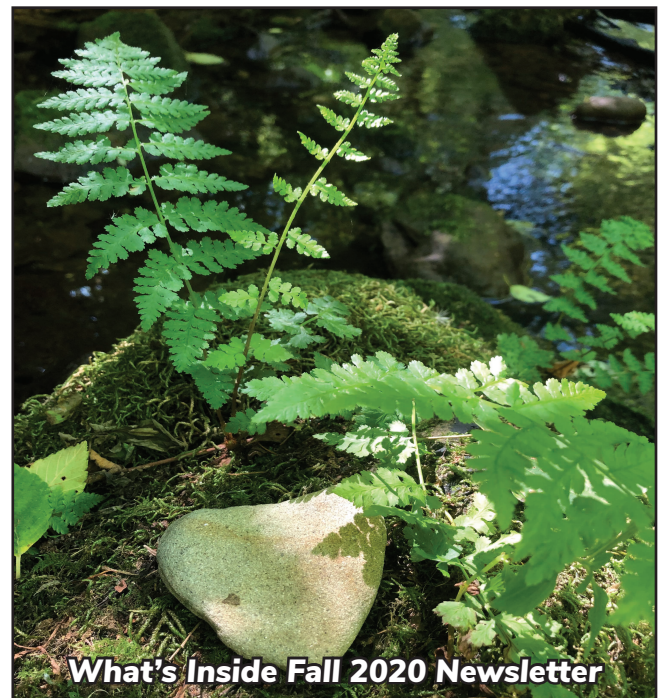
*What's Happening in Your Watershed?*

November is nearly over, and as always here at the Siuslaw Watershed Council, it is a time to take stock of the busy season preceding it, and make plans for the future. And what a season it was! A lot of work got done here in the Siuslaw Watershed over the summer, despite extremely challenging work (and life) conditions.

Before I talk about what got done, I want to take a moment to say thank you to those who did the work. Accomplishing restoration projects is always a team effort, and is rarely simple. This year's work was exceptional in so many ways, none of which made completion of projects easier, and it simply would not have been possible were it not for the way each person involved persevered, and did what they could to complete their own work and to make it easier for someone else to get theirs done, too. Thank you to the SWC office-based (now remote) staff, the Restoration Technicians, the Board, project partner organizations, and the SWC members that have stayed engaged and active in their watershed stewardship efforts, despite all the challenges that 2020 has had to offer.

It is due to their efforts that:

- An undersized culvert was replaced with a fish-passage friendly structure on Pontius Creek, ensuring upstream access for spawning fish, and unimpeded access for juveniles as they rear.
- Large wood was added to Fish Creek, enhancing the complexity of habitat, and improving winter rearing conditions.
- A variety of native plants were planted, and protected by fencing, in alder-dominated riparian areas on Condon Creek, increasing the diversity of the riparian community, and ultimately contributing leaf litter and large wood to the stream system.
- The earth-moving portion and placement of large wood in the final phase of restoration work on the decade-long Fivemile-Bell valley-wide restoration project was completed, and planting of native vegetation is underway.
- Miles of stream in the Indian Creek basin were re-surveyed to document habitat response to the placement of large wood in 2019.



### What's Inside Fall 2020 Newsletter

2 - Meet New Staff  
3 - 2021 Native Plant  
Distribution  
4&5 - Crew Update

6&7 - Birds of Waite  
Ranch  
8 - Photography  
Contest Winner



### **Siuslaw Watershed Council Staff**

#### **Executive Director; Watershed Restoration Projects Manager**

Mizu Burruss  
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#### **Programs Manager**

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#### **Financial Manager**

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#### **Habitat Restoration Technician Lead**

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#### **Habitat Restoration Technician**

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#### **Habitat Restoration Technician**

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#### **Newsletter Editor**

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newsletter@siuslaw.org

#### **2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Chair: Les Fetter  
Vice-Chair: Jim Grano  
Secretary: Wendy Farley-Campbell  
Treasurer: Rodger Bennett  
Representatives:  
Kevin Carroll  
Margaret Corvi  
Tiffany Roddy  
Dennis King

Interested in joining our Leadership/  
Board? email: coordinator@siuslaw.org

- Large wood was added, using a helicopter, to streams in the Indian Creek and North Fork Siuslaw watersheds.

- Many additional tasks were accomplished, including planning for future projects, maintaining past projects, and supporting partner organizations' projects.

The SWC was privileged to be able to accomplish this work over the course of 2020. The Siuslaw Watershed is something that unites us, physically and emotionally. All of its residents share the water that runs through it, the air that flows around it, and the dynamic interactions that produce annual miracles like the migration of salmon up the river, the changing color of the foliage, and the blooming of the wild cherries, crab apples, dogwood, and ocean spray. We hope and believe that the work that we are doing contributes to the enjoyment of all of these delights by future generations of people, fish, and all the other watershed residents.

If you are already involved in the SWC's work, then we look forward to our next chance to interact with you. If you are looking to get involved, keep an eye on our web and social-media presences for upcoming opportunities to engage—but don't stop there! Consider attending our Annual Membership meeting in January, where we will confirm the members of our Leadership Body, and fill open Board of Directors positions. If you are interested in serving on our Leadership Body or Board, please contact us. It is very rewarding work!

*Contributed by Mizu Burruss, Executive Director*

### **Meet Our New Financial Member Christina Ward**



Christina Ward joined our team in September of 2020 as our Financial Manager, replacing Karen Skulley who recently retired.

Christina has over 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector, with a focus on fundraising, community outreach, and financial management. She was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma and relocated to the Oregon coast in August of this year, along with her rescue dog, Rascal. Her personal goals include spending

more time in nature and away from the hustle & bustle of city life. She is thrilled to be able to serve the Siuslaw Watershed Council's mission, as it aligns so well with her personal goals and focus.

Christina loves volunteer service and recently joined the Rotary Club of Florence to get even more involved in our community. In her spare time, she enjoys oil painting, playing with her rescue dog, nature walks, and sitting on the beach.



## Looking Forward | 2021 Native Plant Distribution (NPD)

During the fall and winter months, heavy rains, strong wind, and rising streams can damage the riparian seedlings you planted last spring. If you have planted NPD plants before, now is a good time to make sure the bamboo stakes, tree tubes, and flagging are all intact and secure for the upcoming winter. While you're out there take a look at which species are growing well at your site and you'll have an idea of what to plant next February and March. Assistance with this maintenance is available for free from SWC on a limited basis. Call our office or email [nativeplants@siuslaw.org](mailto:nativeplants@siuslaw.org) to request help from the SWC Habitat Restoration Technicians.

Plant requests will be accepted starting in late November. Here is a look ahead at our 2021 plant list:



- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • <b>Western red cedar</b> | • <b>Blue elderberry</b>        |
| • <b>Big leaf maple</b>    | • <b>Coast black gooseberry</b> |
| • <b>Black cottonwood</b>  | • <b>Mock orange</b>            |
| • <b>Oregon ash</b>        | • <b>Wapato</b>                 |
| • <b>Cascara</b>           | • <b>Pink fawn lily</b>         |
| • <b>Grand fir</b>         | • <b>Trillium</b>               |
| • <b>Bitter cherry</b>     | • <b>Seaside daisy</b>          |
| • <b>Serviceberry</b>      | • <b>Coastal strawberry</b>     |
| • <b>Salmonberry</b>       | • <b>Common yarrow</b>          |
| • <b>Tall Oregon grape</b> |                                 |

Left photos: 2020 NPD plants before and after release. Technical assistance and maintenance is available from SWC by contacting [nativeplants@siuslaw.org](mailto:nativeplants@siuslaw.org) Photos by Ryan Pitcher, Habitat Restoration Technician



before planting: 2015



after planting: 2020

Right photos: NPD plantings along Hawley Creek in Lorane maintained by the landowner and SWC Technicians. Before planting in 2015 and after in 2020.

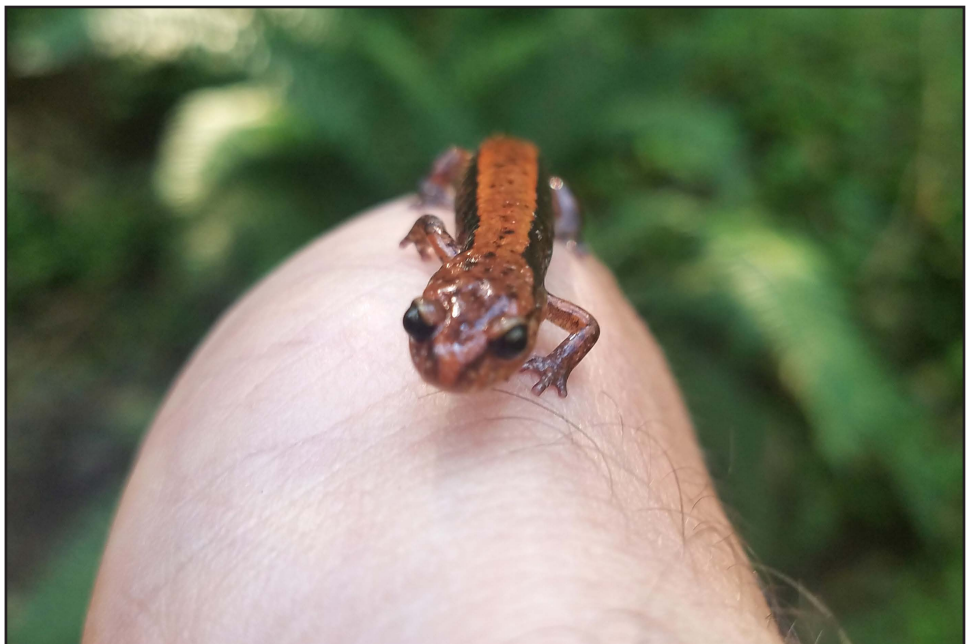


## Habitat Restoration Technicians Update

The Summer has been busy for the Watershed restoration crew. Facing the challenge of new pandemic protocols our crew has continued to be productive. We have kept in contact with our community members and expect further involvement as people become comfortable with new safety protocols. We have focused our efforts this Summer on the Five Mile Bell and Upper Indian Creek restorations. For those unfamiliar with the project, Five Mile Bell is a restoration project we are a part of at the East end of Tahkenitch Lake. We are assisting the USFS in restoring natural stream processes such as increased floodplain connectivity, which existed before Fivemile Valley was settled. Upper Indian Creek is another USFS partnership with the goal of restoring Coho salmon populations by placing large woody debris (LWD) in several areas within upper Indian Creek basin. The project is designed to help create more suitable habitat for young, rearing salmon.



At Five Mile Bell we continue to maintain the native plants in the restored flood plains. Maintenance includes brushing around plants to give them reprieve from noxious species and protection from animal browse by caging around plants and building large exclosures to protect plants. We have also been assisting the USFS in their fish salvage efforts as a part of the relocation process for the fish as they fill in the down cut channel to restore floodplain connectivity. After the channel is filled, and the area is regraded, we begin spreading native seed mixes to promote establishment of native plant species. We will be wrapping up our seeding for the season by November and will start the transition to planting in November.



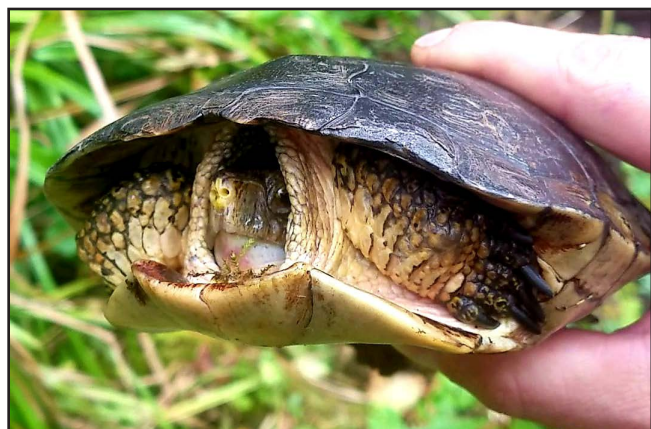


At Upper Indian Creek, we recently finished our post-implementation Aquatic Habitat Inventory (AQI) surveys, measuring physical stream characteristics and woody debris following the helicopter LWD placement projects implemented in 2019 and 2020. Last year, before LWD placement, we surveyed the stream in its “pre-implementation” status. After the AQI survey, the logs were placed by helicopters and now have had a season to affect the stream channel. We hope to return again in a few years to measure geomorphic response in the reaches we placed wood after several winter flows—hopefully a few big ones.



This year was a rather interesting year! Along our survey in upper Rogers creek we came across a Western Pond Turtle which is a forest sensitive species. I have hiked in areas like this all my life and have been a part of several surveys out in these areas, and I have never found a turtle. I, like many of you, have seen them in or around ponds in nearby areas but never in this type of setting.

As we approach the winter months the crew will transition to putting plants in the ground. This means planting at Fivemile Bell and lots of it. We will also be preparing for our annual Native Plant Distribution event, which will provide an opportunity for community involvement, we hope to have you participate. As we do every year the Watershed Council offers crew services to come prepare, plant, and even help maintain plants from the Native Plant Distribution. We hope everyone had a fun summer and look forward to working with the community in the months to come.





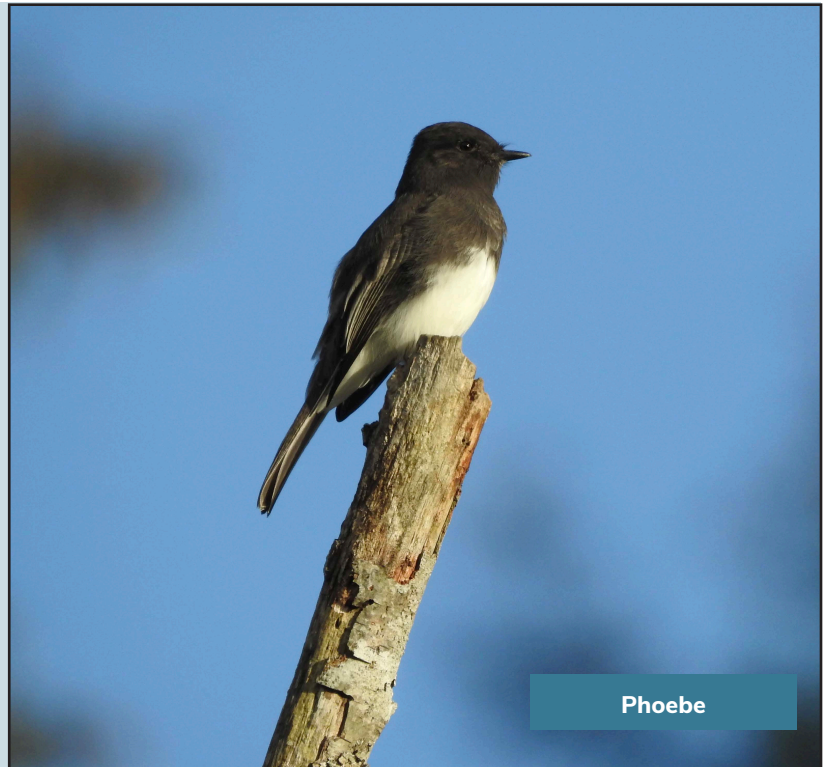
## The Birds of Waite Ranch: 2010-2020

McKenzie River Trust acquired the 216-acre Waite Ranch in 2010. Since that year, bird surveys have been conducted on the property on a regular basis. These include visits at all times of year using Cornell University's eBird data collection protocol and, each year in mid-December, the Florence Christmas Bird Count, which assigns a team to Waite, typically for the entire morning. These counts have found 159 bird species on the Waite property, a remarkably high number for an area without any significant woodland component. What does Waite Ranch have that brings it this great variety?

First, there is water. Wetlands are always among the most productive for birdlife. Waite currently has year-round Prosser Slough adjacent to Hwy. 126, used mainly by herons, egrets and waterfowl. It also has a network of sloughs, sumps and small ponded areas that attract Wilson's Snipe, rails and, especially when muddy, shorebirds. Adjacent to these channels are large areas of rushes, grasses, canary grass, sedges and water-loving forbs and small shrubs (e.g. spirea). These moist grasslands support significant breeding populations of Savannah Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat. Marsh Wren is a regular breeder too, and the shrubbier areas have Red-winged Blackbirds.

Breeding habitat gets all of the attention, but Waite is especially important as a wintering area for waterfowl, marsh and grassland birds. Swamp Sparrow is more regular at Waite than at any other location in Lane County or the central coast. Savannah Sparrow winters in small numbers, one of the only places on the c. coast where it is regular in winter. More Lincoln's Sparrows use Waite in winter than use any other site of similar size on the c. coast. In winter, seed-eating birds tend to be more upslope where the dense growth of grasses and small shrubs provide more food and cover than the marshy sumps.

Waite Ranch has had some unusual birds appear from time to time, mostly in winter. Two Sedge Wrens wintered in 2018-19, bringing close to 200 observers guided by Florence biologist Daniel Farrar. Only three had ever been found in Oregon before. Palm Warbler has been found along the dike road in winter. Emperor Goose, Ross's Goose and Trumpeter Swan have been found in winter. Red Phalarope and Pectoral Sandpiper have occurred, and Western Meadowlark, harder to come by in western Oregon than it was as recently as the 1970s, winters, mainly at the drier eastern end of the property.



Phoebe



Sage Wrens



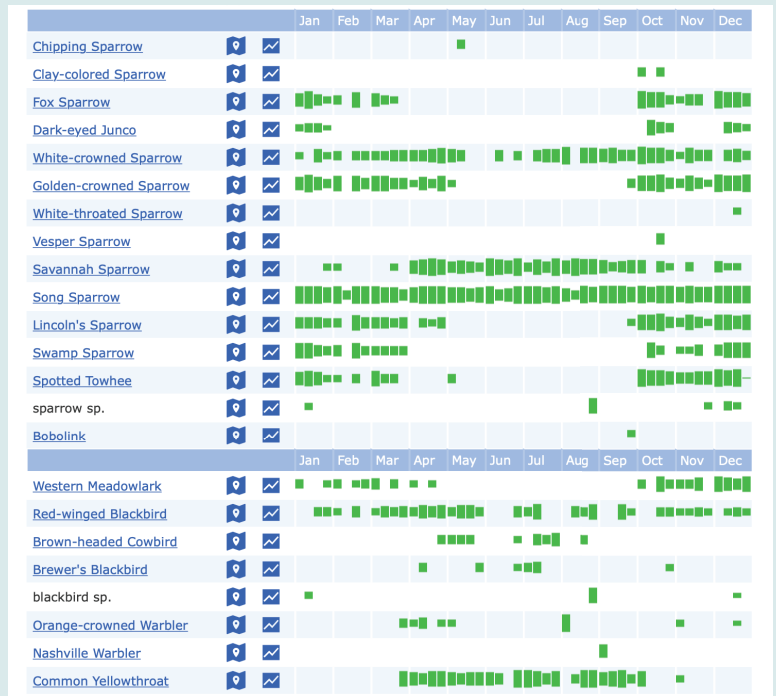


Waite Ranch is closed to general public access, which allows for wildlife to use it without disturbance by people, dogs or ATVs. Access (during non-COVID times) can be arranged for tour groups, special events and research. Although birds constitute a large proportion of visible vertebrate use of the area, coyotes are often seen and a family group was found on the 2017 CBC. Black bears come through now and then, too, and are fond of the apples found at the old homesite.

McKenzie River Trust, in cooperation with SWC and the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw, intends to improve the site by allowing part of it to become a natural salt marsh again, providing more habitat for fish. This will not have a significant effect on wintering sparrows and wrens, but may increase the breeding habitat for Marsh Wren and rails, as upper parts of the marsh will not dry out in summer. Depending on how tidal action affects the area and what trees, if any, are planted, habitat for shorebirds, herons and certain waterfowl may change. If Prosser Slough becomes entirely tidal, use by diving ducks and Wood Ducks may be reduced.

Contributed by Alan Contreras

A native of Tillamook County, Alan was co-editor of *Birds of Oregon* (2003) and editor of *Birds of Lane County* (2006), both from Oregon State University Press. He has been an active bird observer at Waite Ranch since 2014.



Coyotes

## Fall Photo Contest Theme : WATER

**1st Place Winner is Dolly Brock, "A Gal and Her Pup in the Siuslaw Mist"**

### Upcoming Photo Contests

(details on [www.siuslaw.org/events](http://www.siuslaw.org/events))

• Jan. 31st deadline for Winter -

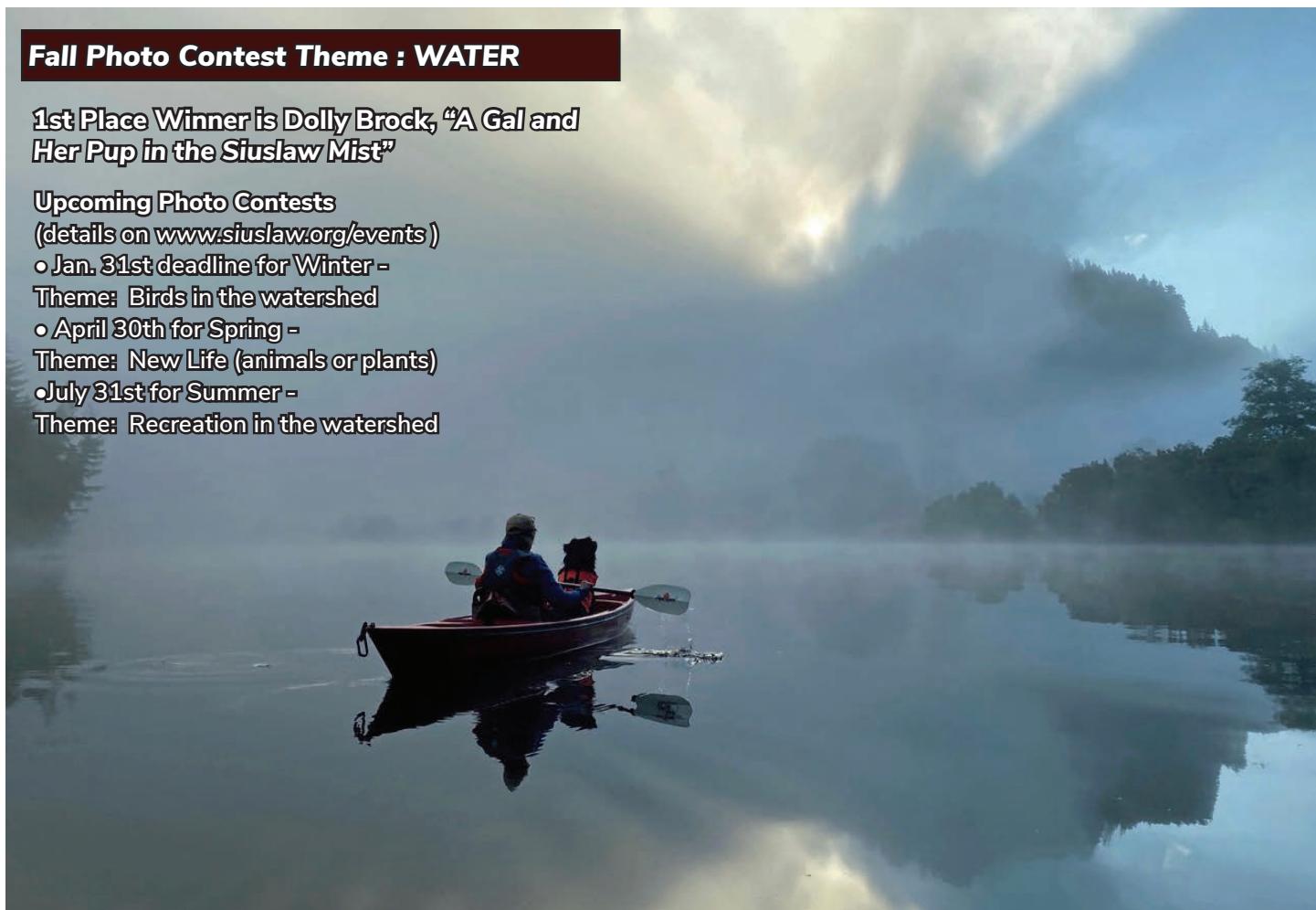
Theme: Birds in the watershed

• April 30th for Spring -

Theme: New Life (animals or plants)

• July 31st for Summer -

Theme: Recreation in the watershed



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