

# BIRDS FLOCK TO FERNHILL

## BEAUTIFUL CLEAN WATER RESTORES WETLAND HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE

Fernhill is a popular birding destination in the Portland Metro and is owned by Clean Water Services. In 2012, CWS began an ambitious habitat restoration project by transforming 90 acres of obsolete sewage ponds into a native wetland habitat designed to treat wastewater naturally. The site was reconfigured, and workers planted more than 750,000 native wetland plants and three billion seeds. More than 180 logs and snags created habitat and perches for birds and other wildlife.

In 2015, CWS partnered with the Audubon Society of Portland to understand how birds are responding to the Fernhill habitat restoration, conducting multi-year formal bird surveys and engaging local birders in community science to monitor bird activity. Here are some key preliminary findings:



Marsh Wren

Overall, the number of different species has increased significantly. High species richness is especially pronounced in the spring and summer, a promising sign that birds are flocking to the site during migration and also that breeding conditions for many species may have improved.



Common Yellowthroat

More wetland-dependent songbirds such as the Red-winged Blackbird and Common Yellowthroat are evident.



Gadwall

Mallard, Gadwall, and other dabbling ducks have shown a positive response.

Species that depend on large water bodies (i.e. wintering Western Grebes) are less common because there is less open water.



Western Grebe

### VIRGINIA RAIL SURVEY RESULTS



Marsh birds like Virginia Rail and Sora have increased dramatically – quadrupling in less than two years.

Birds and wildlife continue to adjust as the vegetation matures, so Portland Audubon and volunteers will keep monitoring the site to track changes in the bird community.

This collaborative project is deepening understanding of the multiple benefits of using green infrastructure strategies to manage stormwater and wastewater, and will foster and inform similar restoration projects at facilities across the nation. CWS will also use the monitoring data to maximize benefits for birds and wildlife at Fernhill.

For more information about Fernhill or Portland Audubon's efforts please visit [fernhillnts.org](http://fernhillnts.org) or [audubonportland.org](http://audubonportland.org)

Photos by Haley Crews, Candace Larson and Scott Carpenter

If you would like to be a community scientist at Fernhill, please contact Joe Liebezeit at Portland Audubon: [jliebezeit@audubonportland.org](mailto:jliebezeit@audubonportland.org).

