

**Special Issue**

**May 2009**



*The gate to the new Gibbons Creek Wildlife Trail on Steigerwald Lake NWR*

## **Gibbons Creek Wildlife Trail will Open June 14<sup>th</sup>**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards will host the opening of the Gibbons Creek Wildlife Trail on Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge on Sunday, June 14, 2009. The trail will open with speakers and a ribbon-cutting ceremony beginning at 1:00 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to arrive prior to 12:45 p.m.

Guided tours will begin at 2 p.m. Information stations along the 2.25-mile trail will acquaint the public with trail construction and on-going activities on the Refuge such as habitat restoration; invasive species control; establishment of a purple martin colony, a bat colony, and brush pile habitats for smaller critters; and fish migration. There will also be a children's station.

The trailhead of the Gibbons Creek Wildlife Trail has an attractive entry gate, parking for 20 vehicles, restrooms, and an informational kiosk. Since the

1,049-acre Steigerwald Lake Refuge is home to more than 200 bird species, soon the trail will also have interpretive artwork to illustrate its signature neotropical songbirds.

Steigerwald Lake NWR is located on S.R. 14 outside Washougal, WA, at the western entrance to the Columbia Gorge Scenic Area. The long-anticipated Gibbons Creek Wildlife Trail connects a trailhead just east of mile post 18 on the south side of S.R. 14 with an existing trail along the southern boundary of the Refuge on the Columbia River dike.

Parking for the general public on June 14 will be at Pendleton Woolen Mills off S.R. 14 and 15<sup>th</sup> Street in Washougal. Look for signs on S.R. 14 directing you to the parking lot. A shuttle bus will run between the parking lot and the trailhead beginning at 11:30 a.m. The last shuttle will return from the trailhead at 5:00 p.m.

For more information, call Refuge Manager Jim Clapp, 360-835-8767.

## **Purple Martins Return to Steigerwald**

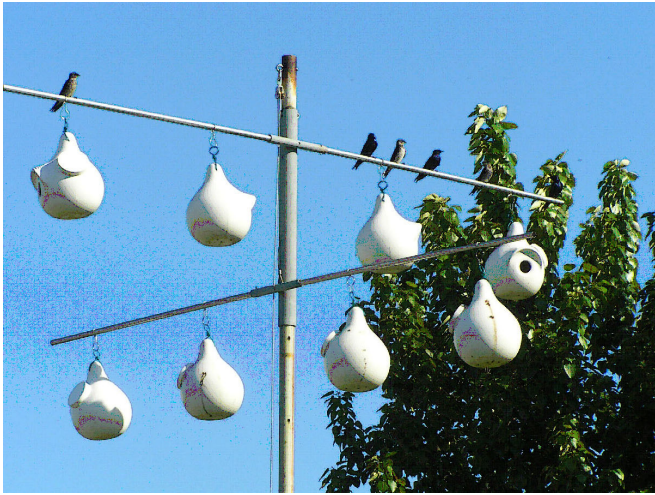
It's that time of year again when the Purple Martins return to Steigerwald Lake NWR to breed and rear their young. So in late April, Stewards Wilson Cady and Randy Fortish along with volunteer Steve Canter were on the Columbia River dike putting up the Purple Martin nesting gourds for the season.

While cranking the first set of gourds up the pole, the crew saw martins checking the nests

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out immediately. Each pole supports 8 gourds for Martins to use as nest cavities, while others nest in tree cavities along Gibbons Creek.

The men are cautiously optimistic that the Martins will have a successful nesting year. Last year's cold, wet spring delayed hatching of the insects on which the Martins feed. Thus a number of Martins starved to death.



*Purple Martins perch above their gourd nests*

The Purple Martin is the largest North American swallow. People have long built nest boxes or put up gourds for them to gain their help in controlling insect populations. The Purple Martin not only gets all of its food in flight but also gets all its water that way. It skims the surface of a pond and scoops up the water with its lower bill. *(With thanks to Roger Windemuth and the e-NEWS from Friends of Ridgefield NWR)*

There are both gourds and nest boxes for Purple Martins at Steigerwald NWR. Several of them are located at the fish ladder and others are located further west at the edge of the Columbia River Dike Trail.

## **Railroad Crossings Closed**

Members and volunteers coming to Steigerwald Lake NWR or the office of the

Columbia Gorge Refuges need to know that access to them has changed.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, which owns the rail line on the north side of Steigerwald Lake NWR, has removed the railroad crossings off Old Evergreen Highway east of Washougal that provided access to the Refuge headquarters and to Straub Road on the Refuge.

Closing of the two unguarded railroad crossings was arranged when funds were provided for the new road to the office from SR 14. The road was constructed last summer.

With the closure of the access across the railroad tracks, the only access to Straub Road from the north side of the Refuge will be from the double gates east of the new trailhead entry and then east along the north edge of the hayfield. Otherwise, crew leaders and volunteers will need to take the long way around through the Port of Camas-Washougal, along the Columbia River dike, and up Straub Road from the ramp at the fish ladder.

Anyone using the access off SR 14 is asked to stay as close to the northern fence line as possible. This will minimize damage to the hay in the field, which will be harvested by a Refuge cooperator.

## **Refuge Stewards Chosen for Chamber of Commerce Honor**

The Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce selected the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards – although a non-profit entity – to feature as the “Business of the Week” for the week of May 11, 2009.

The honor means broader exposure for the Stewards and our mission. Photos were taken to include in the *Chamber News* monthly newsletter, the digital Chamber Chats, and with press releases sent to local media outlets.

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*L-R, Stewards president Gay Leslie, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Brent Erickson, and Refuge Manager Jim Clapp pose for a photo on a rainy day.*

## Become a Member of the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards

We invite you to join us in our efforts to support the Columbia River Gorge Refuges. By joining the Refuge Stewards, you support the fish, wildlife and plants that rely on the Gorge Refuges and assure that they can be enjoyed by future generations.

If you have any questions, please visit our website at [www.refugestewards.org](http://www.refugestewards.org), or contact us via email at [volunteer@refugestewards.org](mailto:volunteer@refugestewards.org).

### Member Benefits

Members will receive periodic news about the Refuges, Stewards' activities, and opportunities to visit the Refuges or volunteer for projects. Providing your email address helps us save money in distributing

this information. Members also are invited to go on special members-only tours, attend board meetings, participate in committees, and vote at the annual meeting.

### Choose Your Membership Level

\$15 Individual

\$25 Family

Donation (please indicate amount \$\_\_\_\_\_)

All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards** and mail to:

**Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards**  
**PO Box 827**  
**Washougal, Washington 98671**

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