

# Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES Summer 2009

## No more butterfly bushes please

Ever since Washington's Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) program began in 1985, we've advocated the use of the butterfly bush to provide nectar for butterflies.

But a better understanding of how invasive the most common species of this exotic plant can be, especially on the west side of the state, led to the listing of *Buddleia* or *Buddleja davidii* as a Class B Noxious Weed by the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board in 2005.

WDFW is playing catch-up to that listing by removing butterfly bush from program packet materials. But thousands of copies of BWS plant lists have been distributed over the last 24 years, so help us spread the

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Blanket flower,  
*Gaillardia* spp.

Photo by Jim Cummins, WDFW

## Save water, go native

Did you know that summertime landscape watering uses nearly 40 percent of water supplies in Washington's cities and towns?

According to the Washington Department of Ecology, outdoor irrigation can reach as much as 3,000 gallons a day per home during the peak of summer. This year's higher-than-normal temperatures and lower-than-normal rainfall in some parts of Washington could make this summer a record water use one.

But with population growth and climate change, water can no longer be considered unlimited in Washington. Meeting demands for all its uses – including fish and wildlife – requires water conservation practices, with or without drought.

One of the best long-term ways Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary managers can conserve water is to “go native” -- replace thirsty, exotic landscape plants and bluegrass lawn with appropriate native or drought-tolerant plants that will thrive on rainfall alone. The native wildlife species you want to attract to your yard evolved here with native plants. Their beautiful blooms, seeds and fruit are just as attractive as any non-native species, so going native is a win-win for everyone.

“Xeriscaping” (from the Greek “xeros” meaning “dry”) is sustainable landscaping that not only saves water, but requires far less maintenance and chemicals than lawns of non-native grass and garden beds of non-native plants.

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Crossing Paths is a quarterly newsletter for Washington residents enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program and others interested in urban/suburban wildlife.



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# Save water, go native, cont. from page 1

Try replacing a few plants or small spaces of lawn at a time to try out a xeriscape. Even a native, drought-tolerant species will require regular watering after planting to establish a solid root system, so the water savings will come later.

More nurseries are carrying native and drought-tolerant stock, but you may have to shop around to find some species. The following lists of plant species are hardy throughout the state, but there are many other natives and drought tolerant plants that do well in more specific areas.

**Deciduous shrubs:** Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Oceanspray (*Holodiscus spp.*), Mock-orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*), Potentilla (*Potentilla fruticosa*), Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), Golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), Red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), Wild rose (*Rosa spp.*), Sitka mountain-ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*), Cascade mountain-ash (*Sorbus scopulina*), Shiny-leaved spirea (*Spiraea betulifolia var. lucida*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*).

**Evergreen shrubs:** Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*), Tall Oregon-grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*).

**Low shrubs and ground covers:** Kinnikinnik (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Dwarf Oregon-grape (*Mahonia aquifolium "Compacta"*), Creeping Oregon-grape (*Mahonia repens*).

**Flowering perennials:** Yarrow (*Achillea spp.*), Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*), Pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*), Aster (*Aster spp.*), Balsamorhiza (*Balsamorhiza spp.*), Campanula (*Campanula spp.*), Paintbrush (*Castilleja spp.*), California poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*), Blanket



**Lupine**  
(*Lupinus spp.*)

Photo by Jim Cummins, WDFW

flower (*Gaillardia spp.*), Scarlet gilia (*Gilia aggregata*), Wild sweet pea (*Lathrus spp.*), Lupine (*Lupinus spp.*), Penstemon (*Penstemon spp.*), Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*).

When you plant anything – native or not – remember to locate it in your yard where it is best suited to minimize water use. Don't plant a shade-loving species in a full-sun location, or you will be constantly watering it and it will likely never look at home.

Meanwhile, there are many ways you can save water while maintaining your current landscape.

- Water at night or very early in the morning, when temperatures are cooler and evaporation is low.
- Check your sprinkler system often to repair broken sprinkler heads and leaking valves.
- Adjust sprinklers so they water only the lawn and plants, not the sidewalk, driveway or street.
- Install a rain sensor on an automatic irrigation system to turn off when raining.

- Use drip irrigation (hoses or plastic pipelines with pin holes to release water only at plants) to wet the soil slowly, use less water, and maximize the amount of water that goes to the plant.
- Water plants deeply but less frequently to encourage deep root growth and drought tolerance; a little water stress helps plants acclimate to receiving less water.
- Use bark or leaf mulch to help keep the soil cool and moist, and to reduce weeds which compete for water.
- Avoid using grass clippings, rocks or black plastic as mulch materials. Grass clippings can mat down and dry, preventing water penetration; rock mulches absorb and radiate heat, drying out plants; plastic blocks water penetration and proper exchange of air to plants.
- Remove weeds, which are usually deep rooted and will exhaust deep profile water needed by other plants and grass.
- Use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways and sidewalks.

## Keep the lawn and save water, too

Lawn care experts say occasional, deep watering is best for the grass plant.

And yet many people persist with watering their lawn every day, sometimes even twice a day, often for only 10 minutes at a time. With that pattern of watering, the grass plant will not establish the deep root systems that are necessary for it to withstand extended periods of hot weather.

As a result, it takes more and more water to keep the grass green as summer progresses. To get the

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## Save water, go native, cont. from page 2

most from your lawn watering, water for longer periods of time but less often. For example, water twice a week for one hour. Be sure to water in the morning or evening to avoid evaporation and burning from the sun.

Grass needs only one inch of water a week. To determine how long it takes to get one inch of water, place pans around your lawn and turn on the sprinklers. Time how long it takes the pan to fill with one inch of water. Divide that time in half and water for that long twice a week.

## Save water and close the deer candy store

Deer love bluegrass, clover, berries, fruit trees, roses, tulips and a host of other plants that in turn love water. When the nearby woods or open fields are dry as toast, your heavily irrigated landscape is like an oasis in the desert to them.

You can close that deer candy store you've been running in the red by replacing those water-loving plants with drought-tolerant species.

There's no guarantee that deer won't try other plants – in fact, young, new plants of any kind are especially vulnerable to taste-testing and nibbling by deer. But in the long run, you're less likely to draw deer to your landscape with established, drought-tolerant plants that you don't need to water.

Drought-tolerant plants (some native, some not) that can be more or less deer "resistant" include Barberry, Blanket flower, California poppy, Chokecherry, Coreopsis, Cosmos, Cotoneaster, Crocus, Daffodil, Daisy, Iris, Juniper, Lilac, Oregon-grape, Potentilla, Serviceberry, Snowberry, Spirea, and Wild rose.

## Did you know....

....those hummingbirds in your yard are helping control summertime bugs?

Those dainty little nectar-drinkers are major insectivores. Tiny as they are, those high-energy bodies can't exist on carbohydrates alone. They need protein to build muscle and replace feathers.

Research has shown that hummingbirds consume aphids, gnats, mosquitoes, spiders, and other small insects or insect larvae. Their long tongues have brushy tips to trap insects they find on flowering plants or on the wing.

They've been known to pluck insects, or spiders themselves, right out of spider webs, taking some of that web silk with them to their nests. They've also been observed hovering over streams or other water sources in the midst of insect clouds, snatching high-protein meals left and right.

Most hummingbirds drink nectar from flowers for the instant energy that carbohydrates and sugars provide. These birds expend more energy for their weight than any other animal in the world, mostly in helicopter-like flying and keeping their tiny, heat-radiating bodies warm.

Hummers meet their high energy demand by eating more than half their weight in food and drinking up to eight times their body weight in water every day. They convert some carbs into fats that burn efficiently longer, but they also need nitrogen to make protein.

Scientists think hummers evolved as insectivores to develop a more complete diet. Bugs are tremendous sources of fat, protein, nitrogen, and amino acids -- the very things hummingbirds need to make baby hummingbirds, build



strong bodies, and zip to far-off tropical areas to spend the winter.

Think of it as surviving in the short term on a high carb diet, but needing more complete and balanced nutrition for the long term goals of reproduction, growth and migration.

So if you have lots of nectar-producing flowers in your garden, provide water, and avoid using insecticides, you're likely to draw hummers looking for a healthy lifestyle.

Your clean hummingbird feeders with properly-prepared sugar water (four parts boiled water to one part sugar, without additives like food coloring) supplements the natural flower nectar supply.

If your sugar solution attracts ants, bees or wasps, don't count on the hummers being insectivore-enough to take care of the intruders, though. Rather than using insect repellents that could hurt the birds, try applying petroleum jelly around the openings of the feeders and on the wire from which it hangs. Or spray the feeder with a fine mist of water to both chase away the insects for a while and provide a hummer shower.

The main benefit of feeders, of course, is drawing those little jewels close for your observing pleasure. Next time you're watching, see if you can catch a glimpse of them also providing you with a little bug control.

# Wildlife Area is virtually in town

One of Washington's newest wildlife areas is just a couple blocks from the post office of a small town in eastern Lincoln County, just west of Spokane off Highway 2.

Reardan, population 598, is also home to more than 200 bird and other wildlife species during spring and fall migrations, thanks to the 277-acre Reardan's Audubon Lake Wildlife Area on the south edge of town.

The mostly wetlands property was acquired by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in 2005 with the help of the Inland Northwest Land Trust (INLT), Spokane Audubon Society, Reardan Public Development Authority, and a state grant from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. Birdwatchers from Spokane and other places had been making field trips to the privately-owned site for years because it has long been a critical water stop in the migration of thousands of birds.

It's an Audubon Washington Important Bird Area (IBA) nominee and key component of the future Northeast Washington Birding Trail, maps of which are scheduled for completion next year.

With more state grant funds, public access development began last year and is expected to be completed later this year, hopefully in time for a "grand opening" during the fall bird migration.

There are now two disabled-accessible gravel parking lots, one on the north side of the property and one on the south, with pit toilets installed at each. Two short (less than half-mile) disabled-accessible walking trails are also in place, one from each parking lot to wildlife viewing blinds that are still under construction by

Reardan Lions Club members. The two viewing blinds are located to provide the best opportunity for seeing birds and other wildlife on the lake with minimal disturbance. Thanks to a donation from INLT members and donors, the viewing blinds will be equipped with heavy-duty, fixed-focus, mounted scopes.

With help from the Lincoln County Conservation District, a tree/shrub "living fence" has been planted along the trails that in time will provide natural screening to minimize disturbance to wildlife. Wildlife interpretive signs are expected to be installed later this year at the parking lots and possibly along the trails.

Grassland restoration work is also ongoing to ultimately return about 50 acres of the area's uplands to original Palouse Prairie -- one of

the most endangered ecosystems in the world. First native grass seeds will be planted this fall, then native forb seeds next year. By 2011, north side fields will be converted to native grasses, with a mix of forbs and legumes. South fields will have native grasses and forbs in the drier upland areas and "waterfowl-friendly" crops in the wetland areas.

The end result of all these efforts, says WDFW wildlife biologist Howard Ferguson of Spokane, is more cover and food and better nesting opportunities for native wildlife species, more access to wildlife viewing by more people to raise awareness and appreciation, and more dollars in the local community through growing "eco-tourism".



Reardan Lions Club members build a bird viewing blind.

## No more butterfly bushes please, cont from page 1

word: No more butterfly bushes please – at least not *B. davidii* (other species, like *B. globosa* and *B. marrubifolia*, are not invasive.)

Butterfly bush, sometimes called summer lilac or orange eye, is a native of China that provides lots of nectar throughout the summer and fall to many feeding adult butterflies. It requires almost no water, insecticides, or fertilizer to keep it healthy and productive. Its beauty and benefits to butterflies, plus its tough, virtually indestructible nature, have made it a gardener's favorite.

But the some of the same qualities that make it popular also make it a serious problem. In its native range, butterfly bush is adapted to colonizing new areas, such as river banks disturbed by floods, and rapidly forming mature, seeding stands that can resist invasion by other fast-growing plants. Its ability to grow in low-nutrient, low-moisture soil makes it perfectly suited for colonizing sandy river banks.

Its resistance to garden insects also makes it poor habitat for the caterpillars and other critters needed to sustain the wildlife food chain. This is especially true on our rivers and streams where insects feeding on native shrubs and trees fall into the water to feed salmon and other fish.

Butterfly bushes crowd out the willows that are such good habitat for many of our native butterflies. Unlike butterfly bush, willows provide food for both the larvae and the mature butterflies.

Once established, butterfly bush is difficult to remove. It will re-sprout from the rootstock after its stems are cut, and the cut stems can also grow into new plants. If you don't find new seedlings near



your established plant, it doesn't mean it's not spreading. Butterfly bush seeds are small and dispersed by wind for many miles from the parent plant. They seem to germinate best in well-drained, open areas, not necessarily in rich garden soil where they compete with lots of other plants. The seeds, which can be produced during the first year of a plant's life, can remain viable for up to five years.

Escaped, invasive populations of butterfly bush are especially pervasive in western Washington, including Clallam, Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King, Thurston, Lewis, Cowlitz, and Clark counties. (*B. davidii* does not spread as much in the arid east side of Washington, compared to the mesic, or moderately moist, westside.)

You can stop your butterfly bush from spreading out of your garden by picking the flowering spikes before they produce fruits and cutting off the flower stalks in the fall. The seeds usually disperse over the winter and in the spring, so cut

the flowers in the fall, don't wait until your spring garden clean up.

If you're up for complete removal of your butterfly bush, you can dig up the entire plant and dispose of it. Or you can cut and dispose of branches, then apply an appropriate herbicide to the stump to avoid basal roots sprouting. In its place, plant another flowering shrub –something from the BWS list that's both wildlife and whole ecosystem friendly -- to avoid a rogue butterfly weed seed from taking off again.

In Oregon, it is now against the law to sell butterfly bush. The Washington State Department of Agriculture has not put butterfly bush on the prohibited plants list that regulates what nurseries can sell. As a Class B noxious weed, Washington requires control of the plant and encourages removal where possible.

For more information see the Washington Noxious Weed Control Board website at <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/index.htm> .

# Don't help feral cats hurt wildlife

Wild birds and free-ranging cats are not a good mix.

As a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary manager, you likely control your own cat and talk to cat-owning neighbors about doing the same.

But feral cats – those untamed strays that now total up to an estimated 10 million throughout the United States – can, and have, seriously damaged wild bird and other wildlife populations.

While domestic cats are solitary animals, colonies of feral cats often form around food sources like bird feeding stations, garbage dumps, or places where people deliberately leave food for them. In fact, many colonies of feral cats are supported by well-meaning but misinformed advocates of what's become known as "TNR" management: Trap, Neuter, Release.

The theory behind TNR programs is eventual reduction of feral cat colonies. But sadly, such claims are not substantiated.

Cat colonies often serve as dumping grounds for other



**Cat colonies often serve as dumping grounds for other unwanted cats.**

unwanted cats. The food provided usually attracts more cats. Contrary to TNR proponent beliefs, colony cats do not keep other cats from joining the colony. As time goes on, some colony cats become too wary to be caught, so rarely are all spayed or neutered. With females capable of producing up to three litters of four to six kittens each every year, it doesn't take long to grow a feral cat colony.

Well-fed cats, either feral or domestic, become "super-predators" of birds and other wildlife. The need to eat and the instinct to hunt can and do function separately. Any cat owner can attest to this fact with stories of "gift birds" laid at their feet by feline companions.

Almost one-fifth of all injured wildlife brought to Washington's wildlife rehabilitators across the state was harmed by cats.

In addition to their threats to wildlife, feral cat colonies pose human health risks.

Even TNR-managed colonies can spread disease such as ringworm, toxoplasmosis, cat scratch fever, and rabies, since every cat is not captured regularly for health care.

Free-roaming cats usually have short, miserable lives, due to collisions with motor vehicles, attacks by other domestic and wild animals, accidental poisoning or trapping, and parasites and diseases. The Humane Society of the United States reports that the expected life span of an indoor cat is at least triple that of cats that spend their lives outdoors.

TNR management of feral cats is clearly not in the best interests of anyone, and it often overwhelms the ability of well-meaning people who genuinely want to help animals. It also undermines efforts of responsible pet owners who keep their cats indoors.

For more information contact the American Bird Conservancy's "Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats" at 1834 Jefferson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20036 ([www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)).



# FAQs: Coyotes in town

Some of the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about urban/suburban wildlife fielded by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists are about coyotes.

WDFW wildlife biologist Russell Link of Mill Creek, author of “Living With Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest,” answers the top five.

## **Q: How can coyotes live in cities and towns?**

A: Coyotes adapt very easily to making a living almost anywhere there’s a steady food source, hiding cover and potential den areas. As bright and wary canines, they are quick learners and can survive close to humans, often without even being noticed. Although they prey on mice, rats, gophers, squirrels and other small animals, coyotes in cities and towns also make meals of available garbage, garden crops, and even small pets like cats. The main reason coyotes can live in cities and towns is because humans let them, by both intentionally and unintentionally providing food sources and allowing “territorial trespass.” The best ways to minimize coyote residency in urban/suburban areas is to remove food sources and assertively let them know they are not wanted through various kinds of harassment.



*Photo by Brad Manchias*

feed under bird feeders; coyotes will eat the bird seed as well as the birds and rodents drawn to it. Keep dogs and cats indoors, especially from dusk to dawn. Never leave small children unattended where coyotes are frequently seen or heard. Modify the landscape around children’s play areas to prevent hiding cover for coyotes.

## **Q: Are coyotes dangerous?**

A: Coyotes occasionally kill cats and even small domestic dogs for food, or to protect territory. They are very protective of their young and will attack dogs that get too close to their den and pups. There were no documented coyote encounters directly with humans in Washington state until April 2006, when Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officers euthanized two coyotes in Bellevue (King

County) after two young children were bitten while their parents were nearby. Coyotes had also scratched and snapped at two women and charged a man in the same area. These coyotes’ unusually aggressive behavior resulted from being fed by people. Humans increase the likelihood of conflicts with coyotes by deliberately or inadvertently feeding the animals, whether by handouts or by providing access to food sources. Like any dog, coyotes can quickly associate food with humans and will let them know they are hungry by becoming increasingly aggressive. A coyote that is born and raised in an urban setting and associates humans with food can be potentially dangerous.

## **Q: How do you prevent a coyote attack?**

A: Never feed coyotes or give them access to garbage, pet food or other food sources. Don’t feed feral cats (domestic cats gone wild); coyotes will prey on these cats as well as any feed you leave out for them. Prevent the buildup of

## **Q: Are coyotes native to Washington?**

A: Coyotes are considered native to eastern Washington. They dispersed into western Washington using human-created travel corridors, occupying clear-cut forested areas and other open habitats. Coyotes are now abundant on both sides of the states, including our urban ecosystems where they have an important role in controlling small animal populations.

## **Q: How many coyotes are in Washington, and in our cities?**

A: No one really knows how many coyotes are around, but based on available habitat and their breeding success, coyotes are probably at least twice as abundant as black bears, which are estimated at 25,000 statewide. No one knows how many coyotes live in our cities and towns.

For more on living with coyotes, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/coyotes.htm>.

# Do geese prefer cities and towns?

With declines in Canada goose nest counts in parts of rural eastern Washington, and continuing problems with abundant geese in urban parks and golf courses, it almost seems like the big birds prefer our cities and towns.

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Canada goose marking effort that started last year may help answer that and other questions about the species.

This summer WDFW biologists and volunteers captured, banded, and collared 800 more Canada geese in several rural and urban locations, including Wenatchee, Chelan, Tri-Cities, Yakima and Spokane.

WDFW Waterfowl Specialist Mikal Moore says waterfowl hunters can report the leg bands when geese are harvested, and the highly visible collars can be reported by any observer. The information will help biologists compare migration, reproduction, and hunter-harvest of urban and rural-dwelling birds. Recapturing the marked geese at the same locations over five years will provide wildlife managers with information on annual survival, a critical measure of population stability.



“This study will allow us to compare harvest rates between local and migratory geese,” Moore said, “and harvest rates on various other Canada goose subspecies. Until we initiated this study last year, we hadn’t examined many locally breeding Canada geese in eastern Washington for at least 15 years, and we had never looked at the urban goose population as a whole. This will help us learn if urban birds are year-round residents or migratory.”

Urban goose numbers can rise dramatically when the birds do not migrate, or are not exposed to predators, hunting, and other factors that normally limit populations. Urban areas often

provide new attractive habitat for geese, she explained, and direct feeding activities contribute to goose population growth.

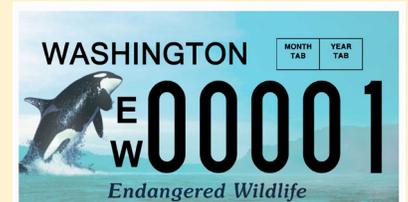
Last year’s first goose marking effort – which involved 422 geese in several similar locations – brought about 41 band returns and numerous collar reports. Some of the band returns came from as far away as northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, although most were local.

Reports of band or collar codes, along with locations and dates, should be made to U.S. Geological Services Bird banding Laboratory at 1-800-327-BAND or online at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/homepage/call800.htm>.

## Picture one of these on YOUR car, truck, trailer or motorcycle!

Proceeds from the sale of the plates go to improving management for these and other wildlife species as well as improving conservation and recreation programs related to wildlife in Washington.

[www.wdfw.wa.gov](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov)



# Spread the word to help make 10,000 by 2010

As of July 2009, the tally of properties currently certified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as Backyard Wildlife Sanctuaries across the state is 8,507.

Of those, 7,317 or about 86 percent, are in western Washington, where of course more of the state's cities and towns lie in the Puget Sound area from Bellingham to Vancouver.

The other 1,190 or about 14 percent, are in eastern Washington,

mostly in the state's second largest metropolitan area -- Spokane -- with some in the Tri-Cities, Yakima and Wenatchee areas.

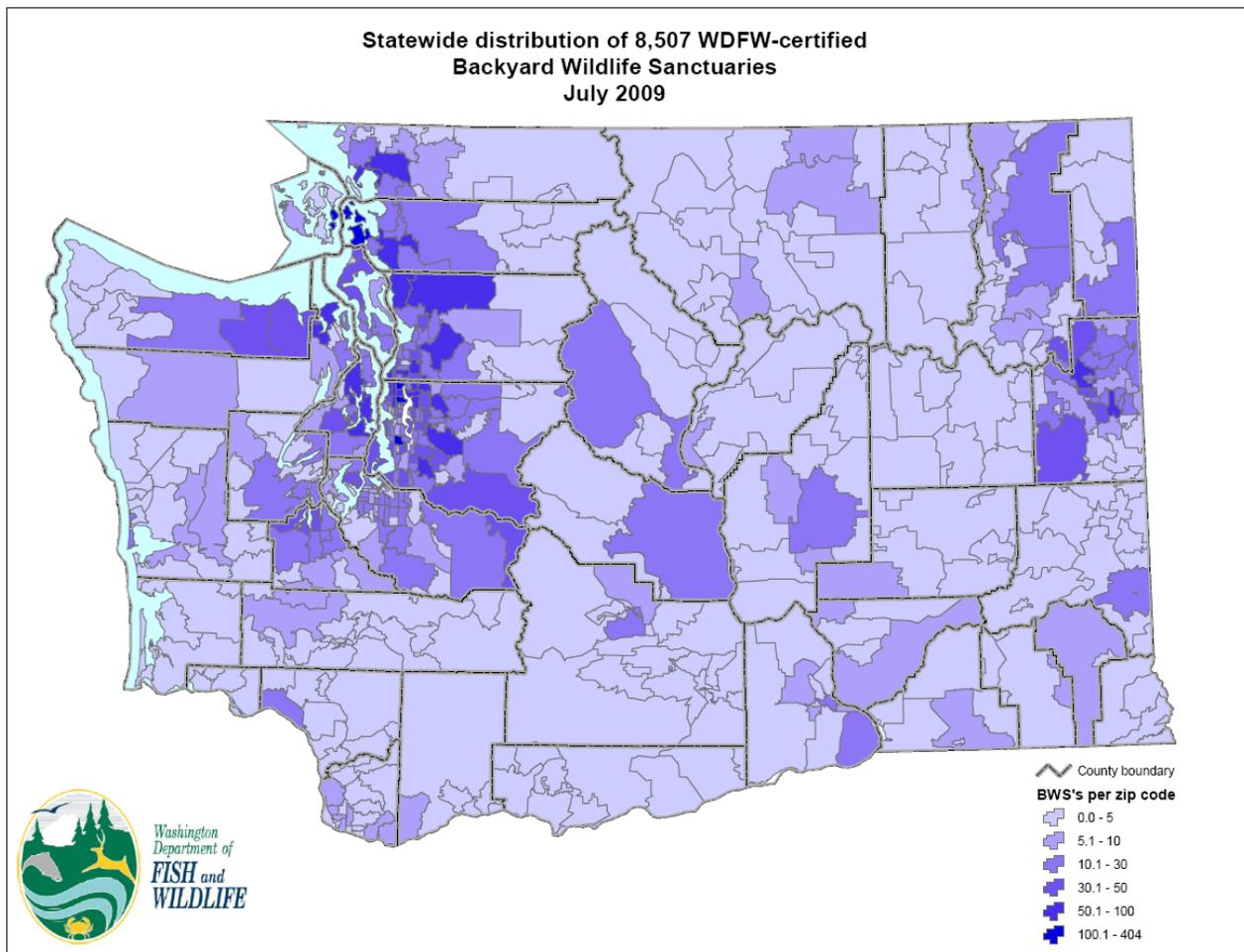
Since Washington's Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program began in 1985, a total of 11,101 properties have been enrolled, 9,819 on the westside and 1,282 on the eastside (with ownership changes reducing today's total.)

To meet our "10,000 by 2010" campaign goal, another 1,493

properties need to be enrolled in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program.

If you're currently a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary manager, help spread the word to your neighbors, family, and friends about helping and enjoying wildlife on their own property.

If you're not in the program, apply on-line today at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/application.pdf> and put yourself on our map!



This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is the policy of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to adhere to the following: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the WDFW ADA Coordinator at 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 or write to:

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Office of External Programs  
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