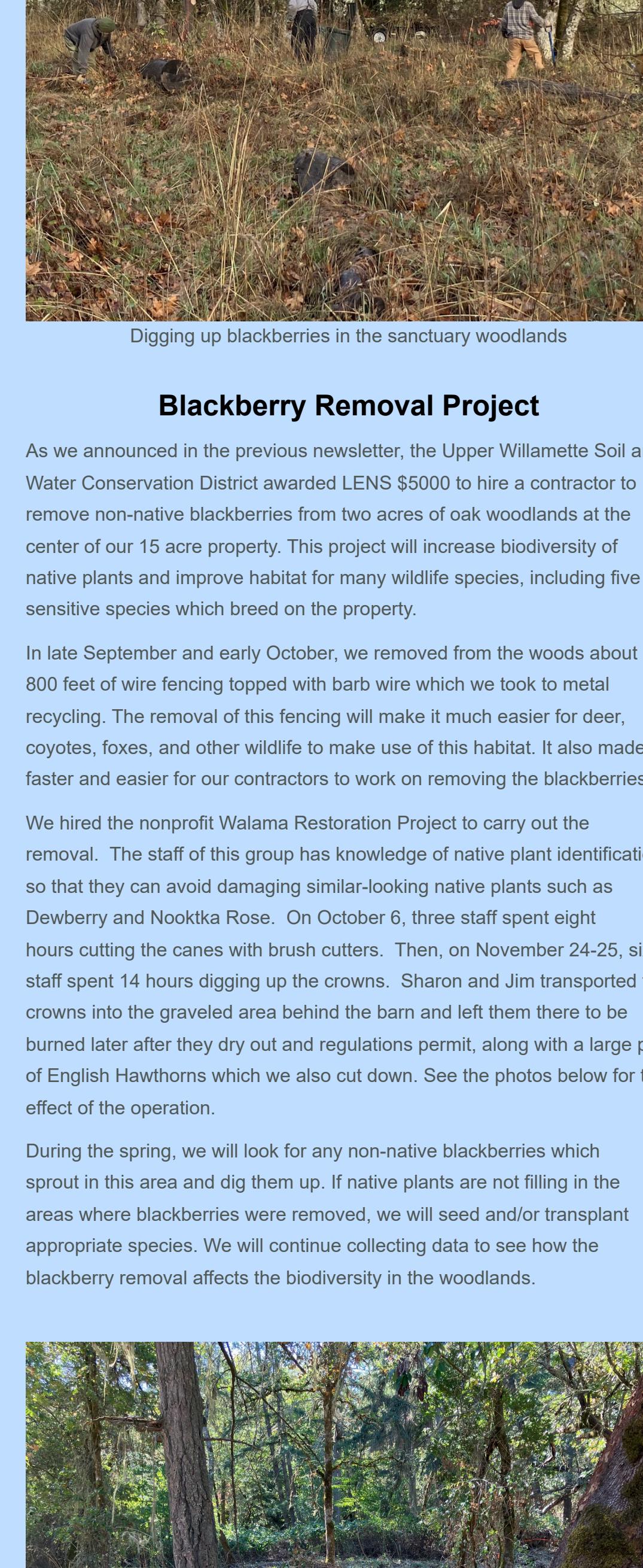


News from the Living Earth Nature Sanctuary Fall 2025



Digging up blackberries in the sanctuary woodlands

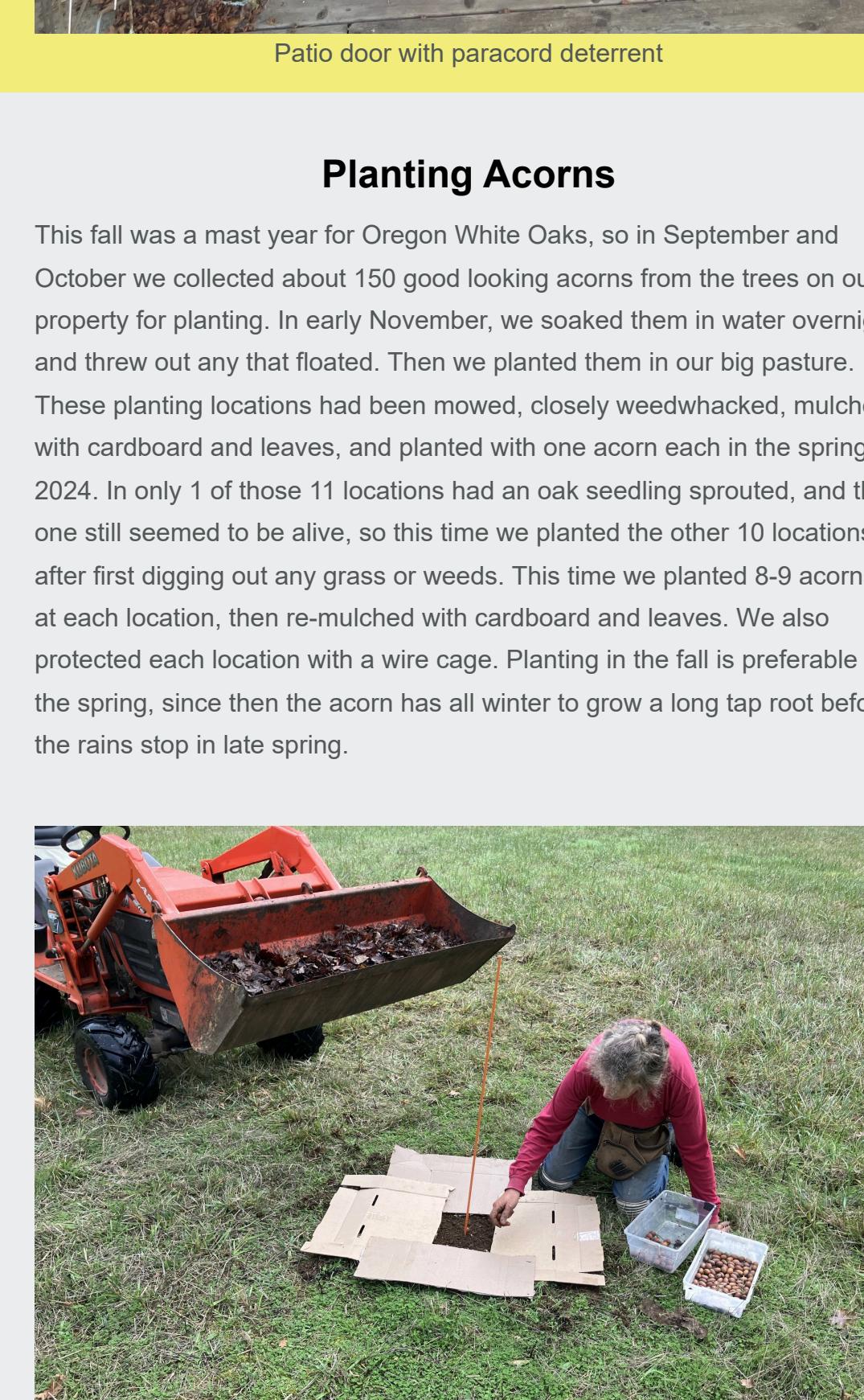
Blackberry Removal Project

As we announced in the previous newsletter, the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District awarded LENS \$5000 to hire a contractor to remove non-native blackberries from two acres of oak woodlands at the center of our 15 acre property. This project will increase biodiversity of native plants and improve habitat for many wildlife species, including five sensitive species which breed on the property.

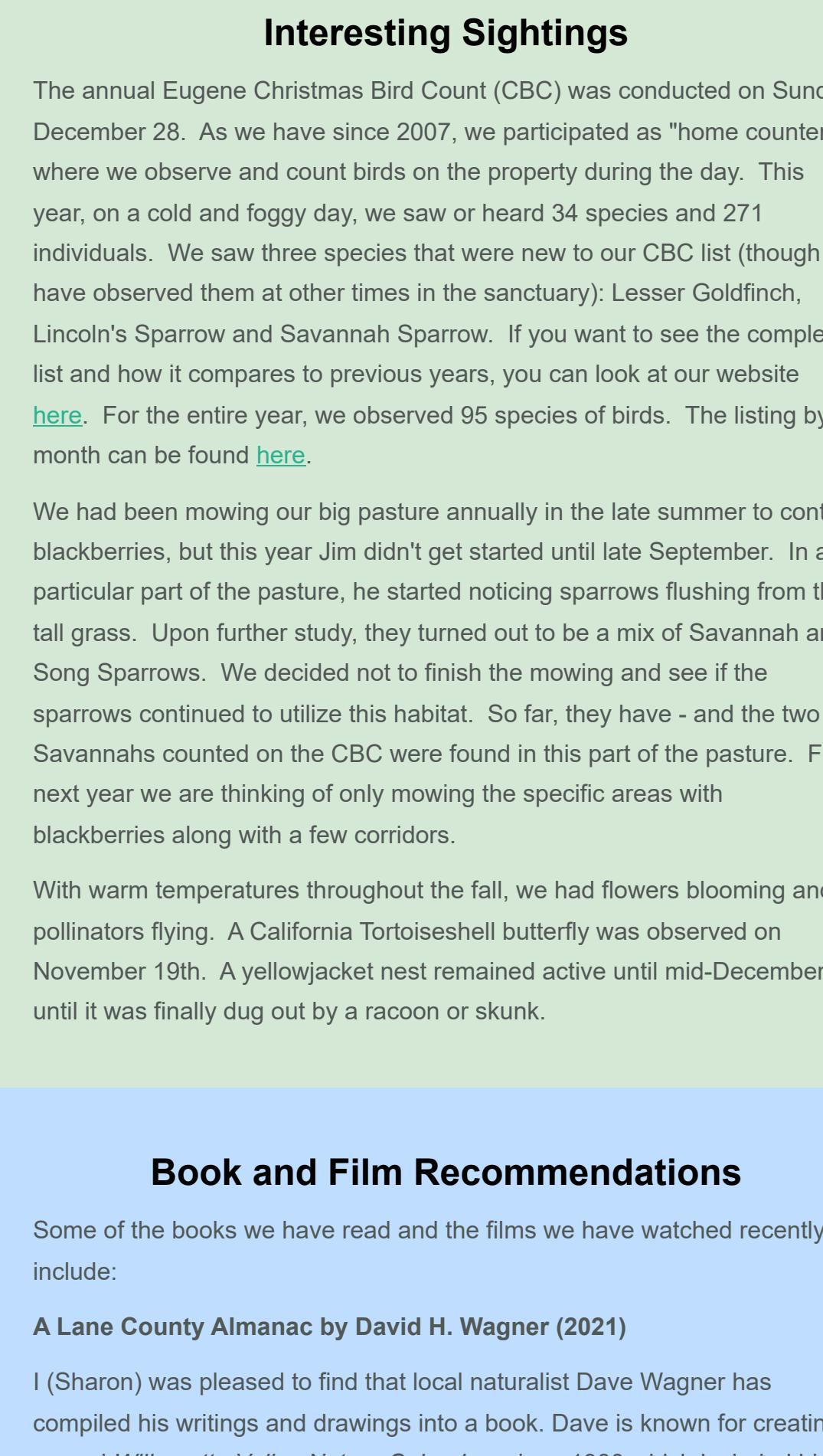
In late September and early October, we removed from the woods about 800 feet of wire fencing topped with barb wire which we took to metal recycling. The removal of this fencing will make it much easier for deer, coyotes, foxes, and other wildlife to make use of this habitat. It also made it faster and easier for our contractors to work on removing the blackberries.

We hired the nonprofit Walama Restoration Project to carry out the removal. The staff of this group has knowledge of native plant identification so that they can avoid damaging similar-looking native plants such as Dewberry and Nookika Rose. On October 6, three staff spent eight hours cutting the canes with brush cutters. Then, on November 24-25, six staff spent 14 hours digging up the crowns. Sharon and Jim transported the crowns into the graveled area behind the barn and left them there to be burned later after they dry out and regulations permit, along with a large pile of English Hawthorns which we also cut down. See the photos below for the effect of the operation.

During the spring, we will look for any non-native blackberries which sprout in this area and dig them up. If native plants are not filling in the areas where blackberries were removed, we will seed and/or transplant appropriate species. We will continue collecting data to see how the blackberry removal affects the biodiversity in the woodlands.



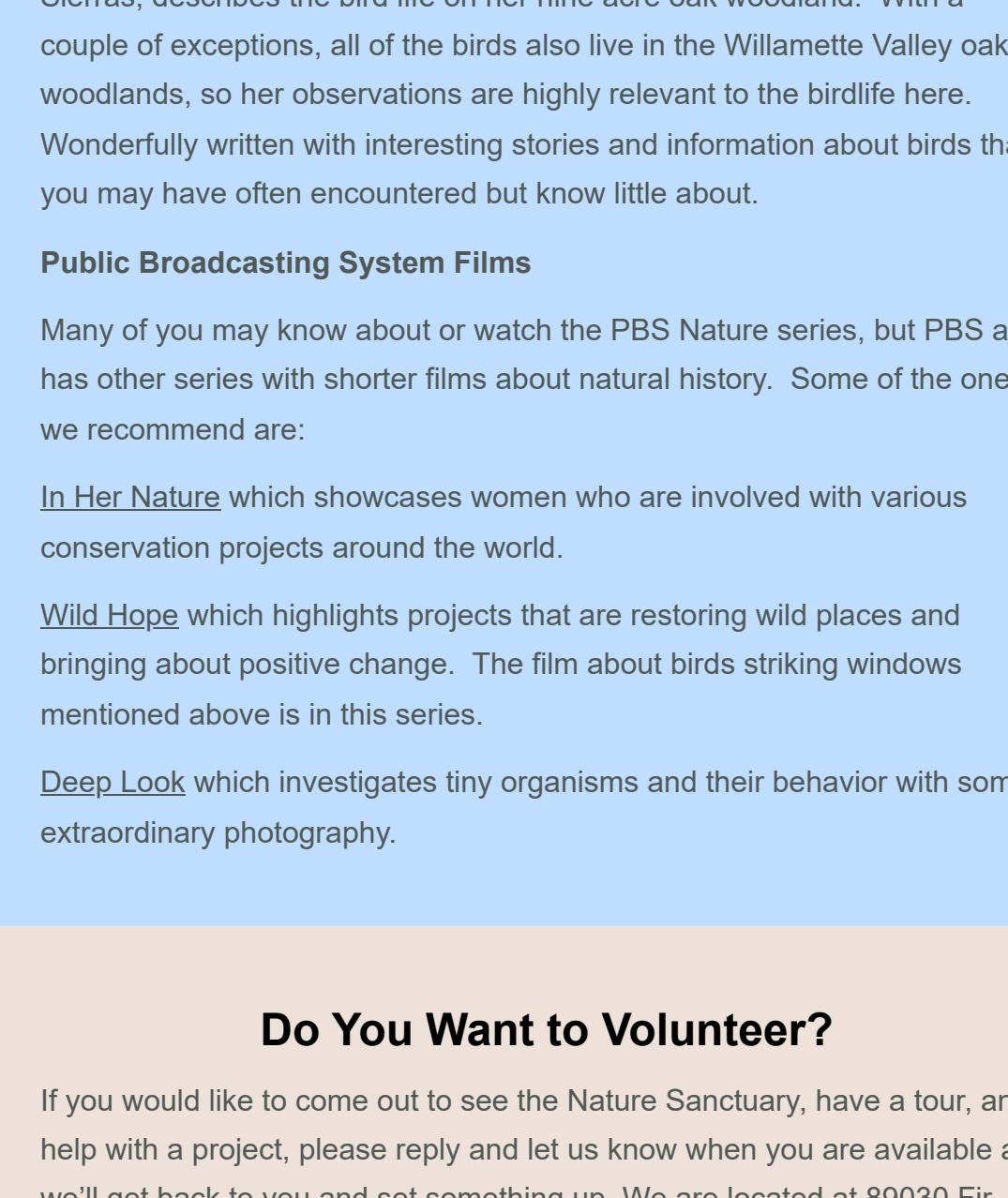
After brushcutting the blackberries



Patio door with paracord deterrent

Planting Acorns

This fall was a mast year for Oregon White Oaks, so in September and October we collected about 150 good looking acorns from the trees on our property for planting. In early November, we soaked them in water overnight and threw out any that floated. Then we planted them in our big pasture. These planting locations had been mowed, closely weedwhacked, mulched with cardboard and leaves, and planted with one acorn each in the spring of 2024. In only 1 of those 11 locations had an oak seedling sprouted, and that one still seemed to be alive, so this time we planted the other 10 locations after first digging out any grass or weeds. This time we planted 8-9 acorns at each location, then re-mulched with cardboard and leaves. We also protected each location with a wire cage. Planting in the fall is preferable to the spring, since the acorn has all winter to grow a long tap root before the rains stop in late spring.



Planting Oregon White Oak acorns in the pasture

Interesting Sightings

The annual Eugene Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was conducted on Sunday December 28. As we have since 2007, we participated as "home counters" where we observe and count birds on the property during the day. This year, on a cold and foggy day, we saw 34 species and 7 individuals. We saw three species that were new to our CBC list (though we have observed them at other times in the sanctuary): Lesser Goldfinch, Lincoln's Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow. If you want to see the complete list and how it compares to previous years, you can look at our website [here](#). For the entire year, we observed 95 species of birds. The listing by month can be found [here](#).

We had been mowing our big pasture annually in the late summer to control blackberries, but this year Jim didn't get started until late September. In a tall grassy part of the pasture, he started noticing a mix of Savanna and Song Sparrows. We decided not to finish the mowing and see if the sparrows continued to utilize this habitat. So far, they have - and the two Savannas we counted on the CBC were found in this part of the pasture. For next year we are thinking of only mowing the specific areas with blackberries along with a few corridors.

With warm temperatures throughout the fall, we had flowers blooming and pollinators flying. A California Tortoiseshell butterfly was observed on November 19th. A yellow jacket nest remained active until mid-December, until it was finally dug out by a racoon or skunk.

Do You Want to Volunteer?

If you would like to help with a project, please reply and let us know when you are available and we'll get back to you and set something up. We are located at 89030 Fir Butte Rd, which is between Greenhill Rd and the Fern Ridge Reservoir, about 15 minutes west of downtown. While you are here, you might want to enjoy one of the many nice places to walk in our neighborhood (along the Amazon Canal or in the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area.) Also, depending on the time of year, we might have extra fruits or vegetables to share with you if you can help harvest.

Thank you for your interest!

To make a tax-deductible donation to our nonprofit organization via PayPal, click the button below:

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