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JBLM Golf JBLM's Eagles Pride is for the birds

BY CATHY HAMILTON-WISSMER

Directorate of Public Works

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Alive with birds and other wildlife, Eagles Pride and Whispering Firs golf courses are a stunningly beautiful reminder of the beauty in the Pacific Northwest.

Joint Base Lewis-McChord has two out of seven Audubon-certified courses in the Department of Defense, out of 155 courses. Dave Wienecke, golf superintendent and soil agronomist, is justifiably proud of maintaining the golf courses in the manner required to sustain the Audubon certification.

There are six different categories required to “enhance the valuable natural areas and wildlife habitats that golf courses provide, improve efficient and minimize potentially harmful impacts of golf course operation, the program serves an important environmental role worldwide,” as stated on the Audubon International website. A key component to all the good environmental stewardship work being done at Eagles Pride is the outreach and education element.

Audubon-led bird walks occur on the third Thursday every month at Eagle's Pride. They meet at 8 a.m. in the golf course driving range parking lot and end by noon. A bird tally is kept monthly that is shared among participants.

Each season brings a variety of different birds.

“One hundred and seven species out of 148, have been identified in 51 walks,” said Russ Smith, a birder.

The 107 species is an amazing count given the limitations of habitat. All are welcome to join in, you do not need to be a birder to enjoy this walk.

In additional outreach events, the annual meeting of the Washington State Golf Course Superintendents was held at Eagle's Pride in June and coincided with the fifth Annual Green Classic golf tournament and Sustainability Summit. It covered the groundbreaking study, “The Use of Compost as Turf Care on Joint Base Lewis McChord Golf Courses.”

“Quite probably the only research of its kind anywhere in the world,” Wienecke said.

The study was stimulated when it was noted that one of the most hazardous chemicals on JBLM was a fungicide used on the golf courses.

Challenged to reduce hazardous chemicals, the JBLM Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Sustainable Procurement theorized that compost on JBLM could be used to maintain fairways, tee boxes and ranges.

Partnered with Washington State University, Nathan Stacey took this project on as his doctorate and under the direction of Wienecke, and now, five years later, the results are in.

“Compost amendments needed to improve play, reduce costs and help improve our environmental stewardship,” Wienecke said. “And it does.”

Eagles Pride Golf Course play is open to the public. For more information, call 253-967-6522.

No registration is necessary for the bird walk. Simply meet in the parking lot by the driving range at 8 a.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

If you go
What: Nature and bird walks
When: Third Thursday of every month at 8 a.m.
Where: Eagles Pride Golf Course, Exit 119, Interstate 5, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Lewis Main.

For more information, visit the Sustainable JBLM Facebook page facebook.com/SustainableJBLM.

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