

**Transcript of Videotape of Bureau of Environmental Service's  
Conversation with David B. Marshall  
Marshall Home, Lake Oswego, Oregon  
November 10, 2008**

**Present:** Dave Marshall (DM), Claire Puchy (CP), Dave Helzer (DH), Jennifer Devlin (JD), Georgia Marshall (GM)

**First Hour**

CP: Welcome. This is November 10, 2008. Dave Marshall and his wife, Georgia, Jennifer Devlin, Dave Helzer and I, Claire Puchy, representing the City of Portland, Watershed Services Group, are in Dave and Georgia's home in Lake Oswego, and we're here to have an informal conversation with David B. Marshall who is one of the – if not THE – most preeminent experts on birds in the State of Oregon. Why we're doing this interview today is because the City of Portland, as it's trying to restore its watersheds back to health as much as possible, is very, very interested in learning about, not only birds, but bird trends over time and what changes have occurred in our watersheds in Dave's lifetime and even going back to the 1800s when there were people doing surveys and making records of birds and our biological communities. Dave, you reminded me some ago that when you pick up a bird checklist nowadays, it doesn't necessarily represent what is expected to be here or what was here in the past. There have been many, many changes over time. So that's just kind of the setting and the context for this interview today. So, with that, maybe we can just get started, and if you don't mind, Dave, maybe you can just tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got interested in birding and what you've been doing in your career related to birds and natural history.

DM: I don't know how I got interested in birds; it just started right out as part of my life. That's when I was a little boy and my parents, and some of my grandparents, were interested. For example, my great-grandmother, Samantha Jane Seaman, was one of the early members of Audubon. These are her binoculars – her field glasses, I should say. They came from her father who came across the plains in 1852 in the covered wagon; these came with them.

CP: Oh my gosh. So that's what people used in those days to watch birds.

DM: Yes. And what I want to bring out is that their books and their optics were so inferior to today. And you look at this 1926 Christmas Bird Count record for the Portland area and they only found some 50 species. You know there were well over 100. The books just weren't good. This is Willard Eliot's book "Birds of the Pacific Coast," which has the original publication of the [Bruce] Horsfall pictures that are on display at the Audubon Society of Portland. This was all I had for a book when I was a boy. There are no water birds in it. They're missing, and then there are strange things like a roadrunner in there. What it's doing in here, I don't know.

DH.: Do you remember some of the earliest bird sightings that you had in your childhood? Are there sightings that stand out for you?

DM: No. I just remember the birds of the yard; the juncos and towhees and robins and so forth and chickadees.

CP: Where did you grow up, Dave? What part of Portland?

DM: SE 55<sup>th</sup> and Mt. Tabor.

CP: Mt. Tabor's probably changed quite a bit.

DM: Oh, that's changed. That has really changed because there were a lot of vacant lots. White-crowned sparrows, because of the vacant lots; ring-necked pheasants. I have a list of birds that were common then that you won't find today.

DH: Dave, do you remember when ring-necked pheasants were introduced or was that before you really started watching birds?

DM: Before. I think it was around the turn of the century.

CP: I wonder if we can back up a little bit and have you say a few words about – at a landscape level – some of the changes that have occurred in the Portland area. Maybe thinking about it in terms of the changes, like in the Slough, now that the airport's there. Give us the big picture setting about what's occurred.

DM: There was a lot of vacant ground. I heard meadowlarks singing when I was on my way walking to school on SE Belmont because of vacant lots. The landscape was all these vacant areas, which were in fields and orchards. Then from 82<sup>nd</sup> east, it was almost all farmland.

CP: Had these meadows and fields and farms been there since the 1800s? Had those areas been originally logged? Was the natural landscape throughout that part of Portland forested?

DM: I think part of it was oak. You don't see the stumps. You used to see oaks, just like in this neighborhood. Big old oaks that are hundreds of years old.

CP: In fact, on the drive up here, Dave Helzer and I were noticing some big old oaks down the street from you.

DM: But there were orchards, and there was an orchard here too. But a big change – the agricultural areas were not intensively farmed like they are today. You had hedgerows, brushy areas for pheasants and meadowlarks. A big change is in farming practices, so intense today and it wasn't then. Different crop lands – more diversified.

CP: Different rotations and probably not the same use of pesticides.

DM: There wasn't any use of pesticides, to speak of. I'm glad you brought that up. Even the lawns in the city had lots of angle worms with robins. Now you don't see robins. Everybody's using fertilizers, which we didn't have then.

JD: Dave, can you tell us a little bit about the waterfront, like the Willamette, Oaks Bottom or some industry that was at the waterfront?

DM: The main thing about the waterfront and along the Columbia River from the airport on down, and that's what we called the Slough Bottoms. That's where my father wanted to put a Pittock Bird Sanctuary. I think about how right he was.

CP: Both your parents were very active with Audubon, right?

DM: Yes. He was President at one time.

JD: I actually want to go back and ask one more question. You said that your parents and your grandparents were interested in birds and in birding, and I'm wondering, was it as unusual then to have people who were birders, or were people more commonly interested? What's your feeling about that?

DM: Very little interest.

JD: So they were eccentric from the start?

DM: Oh yes. They sure were.

CP: Thank goodness they were there, keeping their eyes out.

DM: The Oregon Audubon Society had what, about 100 members in the 20s and 30s, and dues were \$.50 a year. Then they went to a dollar a year.

CP: There might have been some debate about that!

DM: I've got a list of people here who came to mind who were prominent, and William L. Finley was certainly the top guy, and they would never have put a book out like that [Dave holds up a book].

CP: Why is that?

DM: He knew better. *Birds of America* came out in 1936. I've got one downstairs. He was one of the writers. He was such a good speaker and writer. And then Stanley Jewett and Ira Gabrielson were the only real scientists, and all the birding then was done by collecting. They collected specimens. That's how they recorded the presence and absence of species, was with a shotgun. And it's a good thing, because it was difficult to take good photographs. Jewett used to say that he didn't take as many compared to what a Cooper's hawk takes in a year.

CP: William L. Finley and Herman Bohlman took some marvelous pictures.

DM: Yes.

DH: Could you tell us a little bit more about the Slough Bottoms? I'm curious about the areas west of the airport.

DM: The main area that I thought was the greatest birding area was the mouth of the Willamette River upstream about 5 miles and by Bybee Lake area. It belonged to Willamette University, and we used to get permission to go down there as kids. We'd take our bicycles. There was a road, a primitive road, about the last five miles along the Columbia River, and it was such a beautiful area. It was the last place I suspect there were cuckoos.

CP: You had one of the last sightings in 1943?

DM: Well Bill Telfer did. But that was the most wonderful birding area and most pristine. It's all industrial today.

JD: Dave, when was the last time you went birding in that area? 5 years or 10 years?

DM: Went down to Bybee Lake maybe 5 years ago. Nothing like it was.

JD: Really? Because we still, or course, think of it as the jewel.

DM: Oh no.

JD: So, 5 years ago what did you notice?

DM: Most of it gone, and there was a 200 nest heron rookery down there and we counted the nests several times.

CP: Do you remember the location of that?

DM: Approximately. It was kind of north of Bybee Lake between there and the river.

DH: Do you remember egrets being part of that area?

DM: No. They are new additions. I've got a list of new additions; preliminary, here; and ones that are missing.

CP: You want to read that to us?

DM: I'll just hand it out.

CP: While you're doing that can you must say a few words about purple martins in the Slough.

DM: Well, there were lots of pilings in those days and woodpeckers would make cavities in pilings. That's where the purple martins nested.

DH: Dave, there's another bird I'm wondering about in the Bottoms, and that's the short-eared owl.

DM: We have them. I didn't mention that on my list. Where they had a nice field in the Bottoms there were short-eared owls. I want to mention here, while I have it, J.C. Townsend's report from about 1836. And how he came about it. When I was a little boy in Audubon, a lady gave me a manuscript – a typescript. She said, "You keep this, it'll be valuable some day". About 10 years ago, I ran across it in my files. We published it. It's a lot of fun to read, because he says so many funny things like, "These poor swifts out here, they don't have chimneys and have to resort to hollow trees." You can see where he got confused now and then. Anyway, that's been published in the *Northwestern Naturalist*, and we had to interpret it.

CP: Was it in pretty stilted language?

DM: Well, some of the bird names have changed. Oh yes, and stilted language. He talked about Bewick swan, but he had to have been talking about trumpeters. Another strange one, he insisted there were magpies in the area and sharp-tailed grouse. It's possible. He was mainly around Sauvie Island and Vancouver. Another publication people generally aren't aware of is *Birds of the Portland Area*, by Gabrielson and Jewett.

CP: Is that the 1929 publication?

DM: 1929. Correct.

CP: Cooper Ornithological Society?

DM: Yes.

CP: We just became aware of that this past year. It's very interesting. I found it interesting, in part, because so many attempts had been made to introduce species to the area.

DM: Oh yeah! From Europe.

JD: Just for fun?

DM: Only Europeans wanted to have their birds from home, like skylarks, and these "valuable starlings" didn't make it.

CP: I read in there that starlings had been introduced. It must not have taken, because the word among most birders is that they kind of arrived in the '40s – migration from back east.

DM: That's right. Anyway, I think this is a pretty valuable publication. A copy of the original publication was given to me by my Uncle Norman G. Seaman. It was his and he gave it to me when I was a little boy. He was the man who built the pond at the sanctuary and the gazebo. He was a good birder.

JD: About what year was that pond built at Audubon?

DM: I would guess about '36.

JD: And was that idea just to diversify that area?

DM: Yes. We built it with a wheelbarrow and a shovel.

CP: That sanctuary has changed quite a bit.

DM: Oh yeah. What's really changed there is the vegetation. There was a lot of mountain ash planted for the berries. Now you don't see any. Elliot had the idea he was going to have all the native trees of Oregon planted there. He never made it.

CP: What about those very large trees, the big Sequoia and the dawn redwoods in front of the Wildlife Care Center?

DM: I don't know who planted them. But they sure know about the redwood. I was standing right there when Thornton Munger planted it. He told me, "Some day this tree's going to get too big for this spot and you'll want to make sure that it is removed". Thornton Munger was the #1 forester in the State; started the Forest Experiment Station. Anyway, he believed in planting trees all right, but when they got too big in residential areas, "take 'em out".

JD: Do you remember about what year that was for that tree?

DM: No.

JD: We're talking about the tree by the Wildlife Care Center, right? Well it did get a little big.

DM: He told me it was gonna get real big. No, I don't know the year. It would have been in the mid-1930s. He was a great man. He's right as far as I'm concerned.

CP: Dave, can I just jump around a little bit?

DM: Sure, go ahead.

CP: We were talking about some of these geographic areas. What about the area around Powell Butte, Kelly Butte, some of those areas out in the eastern parts or Portland?

DM: Powell Butte was used as a dairy pasture. It held back some of the shrubs so the top was more grassland. I haven't seen it lately. I'm disappointed in it now. The cows kept the vegetation back. Kelly Butte – I don't think that's changed. Then the west side of Powell Butte, the forested part, had ruffed grouse, I remember. I did a lot of birding at Powell Butte.

DH: Do you remember if there were larks there? Horned larks?

DM: The horned larks were more in the fields between Portland (82<sup>nd</sup>) and Gresham. A City guy tried to run me off of Powell Butte on day – a Water [Bureau] guy. I went home and told my dad, and my dad said, “Don’t you pay any attention to him. That’s City property and you have every right to be on Powell Butte”.

JD: What were some of the other grassland birds up by Powell Butte? Kestrels?

DM: Pipits. Lots of pipits.

DH: Do you think the pipits were nesting there?

DM: No. Just wintering.

CP: How about lazuli buntings?

DM: A few.

DH: How about vesper sparrows on Powell Butte?

DM: They might have been there, but they were more in the fields, the flatter fields west of Gresham.

JD: What about marsh hawks or harriers? Did they have them up there?

DM: I don’t remember. I probably have some lists.

CP: What about the Johnson Creek area? That area is pretty industrialized now too. But I’m just wondering, did you spend much time in that area when you were growing up?

DM: No, I didn’t.

CP: How about in southwest, like in this area – the Tryon Creek area. Did you do any birding there as a kid?

DM: I had an aunt who lived south of here – between here and West Linn. I put up bluebird boxes and got bluebirds.

CP: Was she at a pretty high elevation?

DM: No.

CP: You were successful at even lower elevations?

DM: Yep.

DH: Dave, going back to Powell Butte, with the bluebirds, were bluebirds part of the bird life at Powell Butte that you remember?

DM: I don't remember. I don't think so. I know there were Western bluebirds on my family property on Portland Heights; about the time I came into the world was when they left – 1926.

CP: What do you think accounted for that?

DM: Started the trees. Started building up with more houses and trees.

CP: What about Forest Park? That had several burns in it over the years, and now that's probably one of our, what we consider, anchor habitats, in the Portland area because of the size and more or less the functioning ecosystem up there compared to a lot of other spots.

DM: As far as I know it hasn't changed. The Pittock Sanctuary is a part of it. I never used Forest Park much. Powell Butte was closer to home.

CP: Dave, when you and I went to the Oregon Historical Society several times this past year to look at 1939-1949 bird surveys, you and I started making little lists of some of the species that seemed to be much more common then or seemed to have either decreased, or may even some increased since then. Could you talk about some of the species that you think have really seen some changes.

DM: [He passes out a list.] This is incomplete yet.

CP: Wow, this is a great list.

DM: Trouble is, it's mostly out of my head.

CP: Oh, I wouldn't say that's "trouble". That's valuable information! That's what Dave and Jennifer and I have noticed as we've been trying to gather information. Some information has been written down, it's been scattered in a lot of different places, but nothing's pulled together all in one place, so this is a wonderful outline.

JD: I'm still curious about the quail, Dave. Not very long ago, there were quail just on the outskirts of Portland or wherever there was enough cover, but now I don't see them.

DM: That's right. They were in our back yard on 55<sup>th</sup> Avenue when I was a boy – even mountain quail. There were two mountain quail that would show up there.

DM: Wow!

JD: Were there any quail on Council Crest?

DM: My dad used to hunt them up there as a boy. His grandfather (my great grandfather) gave him five shotgun shells and expected him to bring back five quail.



CP: So what's been happening to the warblers and vireos?

DM: Well, I keep wondering about pesticides, and what's going on in their breeding, and during the wintering area. We've got such a sterile environment now. When I was a boy, there were all kinds of butterflies and insects.

CP: This list of native declining species includes insectivorous birds for the most part.

DH: Dave, can you tell us a little bit about yellow warblers? I'm especially curious about areas you might recall them breeding in the City or in the Slough Bottoms.

DM: They were in the residential areas too.

DH: Breeding even?

DM: I don't know.

DH: Were they quite common?

DM: Yes. And warbling vireos.

DH: Warbling vireos as well?

DM: Yes.

CP: These were commonly seen in peoples' backyards, not just outside of the City.

DM: Yes. Right.

CP: It's interesting to look at the species that have been increasing. For some of these, like the bald eagle, there have been efforts to pass laws, such as the banning of DDT or shooting. And public attitudes have changed—things like that.

DM: I can remember as recently as the early 1950's, at Stillwater Refuge, I saw some U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents shoot bald eagles for no reason except "sport". Public attitudes have changed since then.

JD: A good place to see bald eagles now is Smith and Bybee Lakes. And so I'm wondering, compared to how many there were in your childhood.

DM: I didn't see them.

JD: I was wondering if you got to see that decline and the recovery, but it sounds like they were already in decline.

DM: Yes, people would shoot them.

CP: At the top of the third page – house finch – as I understand it, you were the first to spot or record house finches in Portland. Where was that and when?

DM: Yes. Two places. One of the places was off of 82<sup>nd</sup> and Division where there was a German elderly peoples' home – kind of a retirement home – and then there was a place on Holgate, around 48<sup>th</sup> – a big vacant lot with trees. I knew the bird from eastern Oregon. I recognized it right away.

CP: Did you see it or hear it first?

DM: Heard it first.

CP: You've got such an amazing capability for identifying birds' sounds.

JD: About when was that?

DM: About 1939, 1940.

DH: How do you think that, over time, affected the purple finch? Were purple finches common backyard birds?

DM: Yes. Not as common as house finches. They were backyard birds that came to bird feeders.

DH: They've really declined in the Portland area.

DM: Oh yes.

CP: Do you think there might have been a bit of competition once the house finches showed up? You'd mentioned that to me some time ago that was a possibility.

DM: You wonder... It sure looks like it.

DH: On the native declining species. I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about the horned lark and what areas in the City you recall where horned larks were most common, and what your impression of how common they were in the City.

DM: Columbia River Bottoms – so-called Slough Bottoms, and then out between 82<sup>nd</sup> and Gresham. I didn't get out to the Tualatin Valley. I'm sure they were there too.

DH: What kinds of habitats in the Slough Bottoms do you remember them being in? Were they on the river beach or the dried-out wetlands or the farm fields?

DM: Dried-out wetlands, farm fields.

DH: I have one more question about the lark, Dave. Do you recall if they were here in the breeding season in the summer time in those areas you describe, or do you feel, like with pipits, they were more of a wintering species?

DM: I don't remember.

CP: Switching to another native declining species on the list, the common nighthawk. That's a species we're concerned about and would like to be able to do something in the City to .....

DM: Where's the insects for them?

CP: That may be the limiting factor, huh?

JD: Can you describe what the insect population...I mean I think some people now-a-days would say there's lots of insects. Are we talking clouds of insects or what?

DM: Well, if you took your car somewhere...say you drove your car out to Gresham and back – the grill would be full of insects.

JD: Not anymore.

DM: No.

JD: I wonder if that's from wetlands being drained everywhere and forests cut down, and just a habitat thing, or if that may be pesticides as well.

DM: Pesticides.

CP: Someone mentioned another possibility, because the nighthawks used to be more common downtown Portland along Broadway. I think it was Tom McAllister who mentioned all the neon that used to line the streets of Broadway, that that attracted insects which attracted nighthawks.

DM: I remember driving up to Mt. Hood after dark, the nighthawks zooming in front of the headlights.

JD: Maybe that's what got 'em.

DM: No, but they'd see insects lighted by the headlights, and they'd be zooming and crossing in front of the car.

CP: Some time ago you had mentioned to me that back then you thought that the insects had come in because there had been some forest fires up on Mt. Hood, and that the old snags and decaying wood were riddled with insects.

DM: Yes, fire. That's why there were so many nighthawks. That fire was about 1910.

DH: Dave. I've heard that nighthawks commonly nested on roofs of buildings. Do you recall that?

DM: I don't remember even seeing them myself. I've heard that, but didn't get on the roofs.

CP: Where would they have been nesting had there not been buildings with flat top roofs? I mean where would nighthawks nest naturally?

DM: Probably on bare ground.

CP: Are there any species on this list of yours that you'd like to talk about yourself? We've been asking you about ones of particular interest to us.

DM: I didn't get into the waterfowl. Yellow-breasted chat was never too numerous.

DH: Yellow-breasted chat is one we're curious about.

JD: Were they always uncommon and secretive and mysterious?

DM: Yes. Right. Yes.

CP: Was their stronghold the Slough Bottoms?

DM: Tualatin Valley.

CP: A lot of brushy riparian habitat?

DM: Yes. My father was from a pioneer family...they insisted on calling it the Tualatin Plains. It wasn't Tualatin Valley; Tualatin *Plains*.

CP: It suggests a certain landscape.

DM: Yes.

JD: When you were birding out in the Slough Bottoms, was there already a lot of cattle grazing going on, and were you able to observe the decline of the willow layer during that time, or was there still a pretty good cottonwood and ash?

DM: There was good tree cover.

JD: How about that shrub layer that cuckoo nesting spots kind of thing, that middle layer?

DM: I don't recall it.

JD: Something in my head is that that layer kind of got damaged by grazing and other land uses.

DM: Probably did. Yep.

JD: Sometimes you can see those things happening, and sometimes they just happen so fast as soon as you put cows on, and every bit of it is gone.

DM: Yep.

DH: Do you remember about the flood frequency of the Slough Bottoms? Did you ever go down there during high water in the winter time?

DM: No. But I know – like the Vanport Flood – I remember it from the standpoint of people who needed aid, because my mother always stepped up to help.

CP: Can you talk about the Christmas Bird Counts? You have the records from 1926, but there's quite a remarkable history of bird trends over time. One of things we're trying to figure out is into the future, how we're going to monitor bird trends. We're not going to be able to monitor everything, so we'd like to consider Christmas Bird Counts and then maybe figure out some other focal species to monitor over time.

DM: The thing that gets me about looking that this is I knew the people who participated and they really weren't that good of birders.

JD: That's interesting. Do you think they tended to under-record? They missed stuff?

DM: Under-record. They missed stuff, and they didn't have the transportation access. Like Willard Eliot, one of the top birders, but he couldn't hear a damn thing.

JD: So forget about the little birds up in the trees. You have to send him to do the ducks.

DM: He wasn't that good on ducks either.

CP: So I guess the bottom line is we just take those records with this understanding the context and not rely on them as....

DM: I wouldn't rely on them at all.

CP: OK. Well that's good to know. What about the Breeding Bird Survey? We don't have routes here in Portland. There are a couple in the area, but they're not here in the City. Would you recommend that we think about setting a few?

DM: Would like to set some more up.

CP: Would that be a lot more reliable in terms of trend information?

DM: Yes. If you get the right people on them. If you look at the people on these Christmas Bird Counts, they just weren't all that good.

JD: Was there an attempt to cover certain habitats, or was it just sort of by convenience and who came?

DM: Well, it was convenience. Like my Aunt Harlie – Harlie Seaman – (another child of Samantha Jane's; my Uncle Norm was also a child of Harlie's) used to take Eliot around. And they had these districts, but Eliot insisted on going way out of his district – going to see certain things. He wouldn't stay in his district. And she got kind of disgusted with him.

CP: Were the 1939-1949 Portland bird surveys more accurate, though?

DM: As time went on, they got more accurate.

CP: Better birders?

DM: Better equipment, better maps, better roads...

CP: If you were to give us advice about what bird species we should really keep our eyes on over time as an indication of whether our biological communities are getting better or worse, would you make some recommendations to us?

DM: I have to think about it.

CP: Not that we have all the money in the world, but certain birds to monitor that would really speak to the health of our biological communities, or different habitat types.

DM: Let me think about that.

CP: OK, we can come back to that. If not today, maybe another day.

DM: Yes.

JD: I'm interested in your increasing and expanding list. Things like the pileated woodpecker. Can you talk about that a little bit?

DM: When I was a boy, it was considered a real rare bird. Now I've got them in our backyard. In a place like this.

CP: Yeah, this is not necessarily an old growth forest up here.

DM: No.

JD: So what sort of trends, I mean what are you thinking? Was Portland just so completely deforested when you were a boy and it had been for a while, and now it's making a comeback?

DM: Well, I don't know. Areas like Tryon Park, I don't think has changed that much.

DH: What do you suppose could account for the change in the pileateds? Why would they have not been here and then come to be so well known and fairly common?

DM: I don't know. I wish I knew.

JD: A mystery. A good mystery.

CP: More carpenter ants?

DM: My first pileated woodpecker was at Quinalt Lake up in Washington. They just weren't around.

DH: Not even on Mt. Hood you wouldn't encounter them?

DM: Might have.

DH: How about another woodpecker? How about the Lewis's woodpecker?

DM: Lewis's woodpeckers were in the Slough Bottoms.

JD: Wow!

DH: Do you remember, were they associated with the oaks?

DM: Cottonwoods.

DH: The Cottonwoods? That's great!

DM: I was trying to think.

CP: I was looking down this list too. The California condor, of course, has been gone for quite some time. There are some who would like to see it again in Oregon. Maybe not Portland, but... What's your thought about the condors – kind of their range east of Portland into the Gorge? Do you think they ever bred there?

DM: They might have. I don't think there's any point in considering it today. They're so prone to accidents.

CP: Condors are a big deal for the Oregon Zoo. Because we've been taping for close to an hour, should we take a break?

DM: I could use one.

CP: We've been jumping all around the outline.

GM: Cup of tea, anybody?

CP: That sounds lovely.

DM: Yes.

DM: I put some names of prominent Auduboners there, but I might have missed some.

CP: Should we switch gears and talk a little bit more about that?

DM: Yes, like Norbert Leupold.

JD: They sound like some characters.

DM: Well they were.

### **Second Hour**

CP: Going back to what we were just talking about, was it pileated woodpeckers being kind of on the tame side? What were we talking about just before that? The name changes? The lutescent warbler was orange-crowned?

DM: Wilson's...oh, the lutescent is now the orange-crowned warbler.

CP: What was the Wilson was called?

DM: The golden pileolated.

DM: The main reason for this is they used common names for sub-species. The main reason.

JD: Then did they lump them and then they got kind of a simpler name?

DM: They lumped them a lot, which was a good thing.

JD: What about Townsend's warblers? I don't see them on your list anywhere. I get them a lot in the winter on suet.

DM: I don't see a change.

CP: I wonder why those seem to be doing better than a lot of the other warblers have been on such a decline. Is there something different about them?

DM: I don't know.



JD: It seems, Dave, that the forest species, except for some of them, like the flycatchers...that a lot of the forest species like the pileated or the band-tailed pigeon, and like the Townsend warblers, are doing OK—now that our forests are sort of coming back around here. Are there forest species that you can think of that were common? Was the spotted owl common here?

DM: No.

JD: The reason I ask it this way is that I often tell people – now I don't know if I'm just making this up or not – is that (and I always say this because I want to give people hope), that Portland was once forested and then it was pretty much cleared for farms and houses, and now it's kind of getting more forested. People like to live around trees. So when people think it's all so bad, it's like well actually no, we're kind of doing better in some ways than we were 100 years ago, for example, or 50, and so I'm just wondering...

DM: Well, they cleared so much for farms.

JD: What would be the average farm size we're talking about? 640 acres? Smaller?

DM: Not that big. 160. Think about the size of the donation land claims were.

CP: So Dave, you were telling us that on your list of people who either published things about birds in this area, like Townsend, Jewett, Gabrielson, there were some other people you'd like to mention. Norbert Leupold...

DM: Well, Eliot too.

CP: This is Willard Eliot?

DM: Yes. Eliot was really “Mr. Audubon” to the public. And he lived out there at the sanctuary where the care center is today.

CP: In that funky little old building. It was there up until the mid '80s when I was Executive Director [of the Audubon Society of Portland]. I remember that building.

JD: Did he have an official role as a caretaker for the site?

DM: He was president for a long time, over and over.

GM: He was such a character.

DM: Yes. He'd call into my dad that he was sick. My dad would go up and see him and then my dad would come home and say, “Eliot's laid down to die again”. His wife was really good at bird rehabbing.

CP: Is that what started the little house to be a bird rehab center?

DM: I don't know, but she rehabbed birds all the time.

JD: On that very site. Oh my gosh...that's awesome!

DM: She was good at it. More of an art than anything, I think.

CP: Would people just bring her things once they heard she was good at it?

DM: Yes. Just like they do today.

CP: What was her name?

DM: You know, I can't remember it [her name was Henrietta].

CP: Was he also a Unitarian minister, at the downtown Unitarian church, or was that a different Eliot?

DM: Different Eliot. I'm trying to think of her name.....

CP: Georgia, your family was active in Audubon too.

GM: Oh yes. My uncle was active for many years. My Uncle Norb Leupold. Now my son-in-law volunteers up there. He's up there quite a bit.

CP: We ought to put a microphone on *your* collar. And have you say some words about your family.

GM: He was recorder for the Audubon Society for years and years and years.

DM: I met her uncle birding.

GM: You were 13, weren't you?

DM: About 13, yeah.

GM: About 5 years apart.

DM: I ran onto this guy birding, which was kind of unusual in those days.

CP: And you became friends at that point?

DM: Yes. And he told Georgia that she should meet me.

GM: We were at Washington High School together. Which is no longer there. It was at 14<sup>th</sup> and Stark. Dave was 6 months ahead of me. And anyway, Uncle Norb would keep asking me, "Have you met David Marshall yet? Washington High School". No I hadn't.

JD: "He's a nice young man."

GM: I was on the *Washingtonian* staff. That was the school paper. I was typing away at my typewriter. This was in November of '43. And I heard this voice behind me, saying. "I'm David Marshall. I have this paper I want printed". It was for one of the clubs you belonged to. And I thought, "Oh, David Marshall...that's who Uncle Norb said I should meet." And I said, "Oh, you're David Marshall. I'm supposed to meet you"...or something like that.

DM: You said, "I'd like to meet you."

CP: Little did you know...

GM: Yeah, I'll say.

CP: Georgia, were you interested in birds, too?

GM: Oh I've always been interested, but not like a scientific birder. Oh yes, we'd have the typical backyard birds. Mother always put out bird crumbs. We didn't have seed. And we had a little feeder. Mother was always interested in birds. And I remember once Mother had a pileated woodpecker come into the yard. And my dad would say, "Oh no, no...that's not what it was. We have *deer*".

CP: Now you got to meet Finley as a boy?

DM: Quite a bit.

CP: Up at Audubon?

DM: And at the family home on Council Crest. He used to come to family Christmas programs with his wife, Irene.

CP: What was he like? Can you talk about his personality?

DM: Gee, I ought to be able to. I knew him well enough.

CP: Gabrielson, Jewett, you got to know them.

DM: Oh yes.

CP: ...and travel with them as a youngster, didn't you?

DM: Yes, with Jewett. I knew Gabrielson when I got to Washington, D.C.

CP: Are these people partly why you got into the profession of being a wildlife biologist?

DM: Jewett certainly was. There was a man who I saw doing nothing but birding. Looked to me like it was a profession – getting paid for – I decided that’s what I want to do.

GM: I think David was born wanting to be a birder.

CP: And he had the skills too, in addition to the interest. Good powers of observation, good ears.

DM: I’m trying to think how to describe Finley.

GM: Was he a jovial man or serious?

DM: Well, I’d say both.

GM: He could be fun, but he also had a serious side?

DM: Yes.

CP: Did he give a lot of presentations to the Audubon Society?

DM: Oh yes, all over the country. Then he got dementia, and his wife used to have to stay behind the stage to prompt him.

CP: He was such an influence on national policy and establishment of refuges.

DM: Yes. An influence on Teddy Roosevelt.

JD: Dave, talk a little bit about the culture of conservation and how it moved from people shooting the birds to some of the first conservation movements to Malheur [National Wildlife Refuge]. What did it take to change people?

DM: Well the very first conservationists were mostly hunters. People don’t recognize that. Irritates me. They were hunters and they saw the need for conservation, like Finley. And some people who were hunters became basically birders. And then you had the collectors. People who collected birds.

CP: Did they collect as a hobby?

DM: To start with.

JD: When I worked at Audubon, I inherited a lot of the egg collections from people. As people passed on, their heirs donated them. They were really incredible. I wonder if you could say a few words about some of the egg collections that you might have seen.

DM: Where did you send them?

JD: They’re actually at the Audubon Society.

DM: Oh they are? Because they're pretty valuable.

JD: Yeah, they're all in Plexiglas cases. They really could use a really good home, I think...kind of like your library, they're protected, but they're kind of squirreled away.

DM: They show eggs "before DDT".

JD: Yeah, most of them have like 1903, or 19.... They're written on the eggs about when they were collected. They're really incredible jewels. They're really beautiful. But did you know many collectors? Did you do that?

DM: I didn't do that. I knew one. Jewett tried to get me interested in collecting birds, but it never appealed to me.

CP: He did a lot of collecting himself?

DM: He had a tremendous collection of birds in his basement.

JD: Where are his collections?

DM: In one of the museums in Washington.

DH: Were there collections locally? Institutions that you visited a lot that you remember?

DM: No.

DH: Not so much? You're more of a field biologist rather than a museum biologist.

DM: Yes.

DH: Yeah, I can relate.

CP: What about that collection in Tillamook?

DM: Walker's. Alex Walker. He was a great collector.

CP: Who was he?

DM: He was an amateur collector, an ornithologist.

JD: Did he live in the Tillamook area?

DM: Yes. He was from a cheese family. One of his sons became a biology professor at Western College in Monmouth. He used to come over to Malheur. He was one of the big collectors.

CP: Harry Nehls is on the list here. Harry has been associated with Audubon for many years and has written several bird books.

DM: Right.

CP: Can you tell us something about Harry and your relationship with Harry?

DM: Well, my relationship started when he just got into birding. There was an Auduboner named Jake Williams and his wife who kind of took him into tow, and I helped him some, and he took off. He was very shy. He got over it.

CP: Thanks to birding, huh?

DM: Mm-hmm.

DH: Well, he in turn mentored a lot of young birders, like Dan Vandenbrook, David Bailey.

CP: Dave, you did a lot of your early childhood birding on a bicycle. Wow. That's challenging.

DM: That's how I got around.

JD: Did you have a spandex outfit with a yellow.... I was wondering how long it would take you to ride from 55<sup>th</sup> over by Mt. Tabor out to the Slough Bottoms.

DM: 45 minutes.

JD: Really? That's all? Seems like there's so much in the way now it'd almost be longer because you're stopping at all the lights.

DM: Not as many lights. It worked fine. Took me about an hour to ride to Pittock.

JD: Wow. That's a steep hill too.

CP: Did you go up Burnside?

DM: No, I went up Lovejoy and Cornell.

CP: Still, there's a hill there too.

JD: You were in pretty good shape to get from Mt. Tabor over there. When you said you rode your bike to school and saw meadowlarks, were you talking about grade school or middle school or high school?

DM: Grade school.

JD: What school was that?

DM: Glencoe.

JD: Oh, you went to Glencoe. We have some pretty cool stormwater projects there these days.

DM: I walked to school usually. I was a little afraid of my bike being stolen.

DH: You grew up in the Mt. Tabor neighborhood, and there's a Portland park there. I'm sure you spent a lot of time birding there. What was it like birding there?

DM: Probably about like today.

DH: Is the habitat pretty similar?

DM: Yes, except there's a lot of Scotch broom.

JD: Was it kind of locally known as the hot spot for migrants in the spring, early on?

DM: No. Not that many people paid attention.

JD: Not enough to make a "hot spot".

DM: Right.

DH: What were some of the characteristic birds that you remember from birding on Mt. Tabor?

DM: Western tanager for one. I remember hearing "pit-a-dick, pit-a-dick" first part of April. I'd turn it in to bird record and Leo Simon really got after me. "It's too early, couldn't have been".

JD: They didn't know how good your ear was yet, huh?

DM: I knew it better by sound than if I'd seen it.

JD: What warblers would you have heard up there?

DM: Black-throated grays, particularly, and Townsend's, Wilson's, orange-crowned.

DH: What about quail up there?

DM: They were there - big flocks.

DH: California quail?

DM: Yep.

DH: You ever come across mountain quail up there?

DM: No, but I did in our yard when I was a small boy.

CP: You mentioned knowing Leo Simon. Can you tell us a little bit about him? Who he was.

DM: Leo Simon was a professional photographer. He did portraits, school portraits, and he knew the Latin name of every plant in Oregon, I think. He'd always go to Audubon lectures and correct people.

JD: There's always one.

DM: Whether it was birds or plants or what there was.

CP: Was he generally right?

DM: Yeah.

CP: Self taught?

DM: Yep. Pretty active in botanical circles.

JD: So Dave, back to my question about hunters and conservation, was there a point where quail were getting too rare to hunt and people stopped hunting them? Do you think the demise of quail was hunting? Or habitat?

DM: Habitat, because the demise was in the city too.

JD: People were not necessarily hunting them in the city.

DM: No, no.

JD: Do you think that domestic pets - dogs and cats - played any part in the demise of some of the ground birds?

DM: Could have. I'm trying to think of some of the other early Auduboners.

CP: Well, think of some of your family members...

DM: My uncle, my dad's brother, and his wife started *The Warbler*. Edna and Charles (C.L.) Marshall. C.L. Marshall was Charles Lou, but he just went by C.L., and his wife Edna started *The Warbler* in their front room.

DH: What year was that? Do you remember?

DM: Mid-30s. It started as a mimeographed sheet, printed on both sides.



CP: I wonder if some of those are in the Oregon Historical Society records.

JD: That would be amazing to try and find the first couple. To see what people were talking about, what was interesting, some of the conservation issues. Dave, so there was a time in your life when you were really birding Portland a lot and then you got busy with your career.

DM: Well, I went into the military.

JD: Ok, so you went into the military, and then when you came back you were not necessarily based in Portland? Or how did that work?

DM: Oregon State. I was either working for Forest Service, Park Service, Fish & Wildlife Service summers, and then during the school year I was at Oregon State.

JD: So there was a time that you were in Portland quite a bit as a youngster, and then you were gone for some portion of your career. Do you remember coming back and forth and kind of noticing “wow, that’s really different”?

DM: A little bit. I don’t remember a whole lot.

CP: Dave and Jennifer, Dave Marshall has written his memoirs and will be published fairly soon. That will fill in a lot of gaps in our questioning here.

JD: I have a bird question for you and then I’m going to slip out. Things like the olive-sided flycatcher, Dave. What do you think about some of the flycatchers? I mean, they’re insect eaters like some on the declining list.

DM: Yes.

JD: Were they pretty uncommon and now they’re really uncommon or did you hear “quick three beers” more frequently?

DM: I used to hear “quick three beers” a lot around Council Crest when I lived up there.

DH: Is your impression that olive-sideds have declined as one of the insect eaters?

DM: Oh yeah, and the willow [flycatcher] used to be in our neighborhood in Portland.

JD: Did you get them up on Powell Butte?

DM: Yes.

JD: There are still some that sing up there all the time, but they’re kind of a holdout.

DM: They were in a vacant lot a block away from my boyhood home.

DH: What about the Slough Bottoms? Do you remember willow flycatchers being fairly common in that area?

DM: I don't. Probably were. They're such a common bird.

DH: They're fairly common now. No, I wouldn't say fairly common, but right along the main part of the Slough there are some birds still.

DM: Are there? Good.

DH: They're holding on.

DM: They're not in urban areas.

DH: Not really.

CP: There's one bird that's on your list of increasing even in urban areas - the barred owl. I know that you live now, pretty close to Tryon Creek State Park, which has had nesting barred owls in the last several years. I'm just wondering what your prognosis is for barred owls in the metropolitan area.

DM: Probably going to be here.

CP: Do you think that that might have an impact on other species? Not spotted owls, but screech, pygmy, saw-whets; are the barred owls a threat to our other owls?

DM: I doubt it. I'm not too concerned about it.

CP: That's good.

DH: How about another raptor, Dave, your impression of the peregrine falcon. What's been going on with them?

DM: Well thanks to artificial propagation and Tom Cade, we brought them back.

DH: Do you remember them early on when you were young?

DM: Yes, but not as many as there are today.

DH: Where do you remember seeing them around town?

DM: Troutdale, cliffs above Troutdale.

DH: Closer to the Gorge?

DM: Yes.

DH: So they really hadn't started nesting on structures.

DM: No.

CP: Wasn't there an eyrie you were telling me about out at Lewis and Clark State Park near the Sandy River? Was that an old eyrie out there?

DM: There is an old one out there in Troutdale. As far as I know it's not used.

DH: Do you remember an eyrie by Elk Rock in the Willamette, down in the south of Portland a little bit?

DM: No. These eyries were kept so secret. The falconers kept them a secret.

CP: Jennifer, before you leave, I want to point out something that's an amazing thing. That painting [of a Steller's jay] over there is by Bruce Horsfall.

JD: The dogwood and the Steller's jay.

CP: That's the original Horsfall painting that's in Harry Nehls' book. How did you come to acquire that painting, Dave?

DM: My great-grandmother. I don't know if Horsfall gave it to her or if she bought it from him. Samantha Jane Waldron (later Seaman). And then it got marked by Aunt Edna and Uncle Lou when the house on Council Crest was sold; and my Aunt Edna right away wrote on the back: *Property of David Marshall.*

JD: Dave, I'm going to slip out. You people have a good time here. Thank you so much. It was great seeing you again.

DM: Great seeing you.

CP: How are you doing? Are we wearing you out?

DM: No, I'm OK.

CP: Maybe the question is whether you are wearing *us* out. As long as you're holding up.

DM: I put quite a bit on paper.

DH: Well I could ask you about birds all day long, Dave. One bird that does come to mind that we haven't touched upon is the vesper sparrow. What's your impression of them over time?

DM: In the fields, pastures.

DH: Fairly commonly?

DM: Yes. Singing in the evening.

DH: And they're definitely mostly gone, if not totally gone.

DM: Yeah, like one of places used to be was Happy Valley.

DH: That was a pretty reliable place for them, huh?

DM: Yes.

DH: What do you suppose accounts for them? I mean we have less farm land and less hedgerows.

DM: Yeah, it's just monotype now.

DH: Have you in the places in the city where the meadowlarks are holding on?

DM: No.

DH: The vespers are gone.

DM: Like out at the airport?

DH: Yeah. We saw meadowlarks at the airport, but we don't have any vesper sparrows there. I wonder why that would be.

DM: I don't know.

CP: Dave, you know we were talking about oaks earlier. Do you think acorn woodpeckers have ever been here? Is part of their range up here?

DM: I don't think they were here that much.

CP: Mostly over by where they are now, Pacific Grove...Salem...

DM: Yes. Further south, like Salem.

CP: Your impression is that they never really were common at all or even present at all in Portland.

DM: That's right.

CP: So we shouldn't get our hopes up to see them here.

DM: Well they've been moving kind of north.

CP: Have they?

DH: Another oak species that I'm curious about is the white-breasted nuthatch. They've become very uncommon here. How do you recall them from your youth? Did you encounter them frequently?

DM: I ran across them in the Slough Bottoms.

DH: Within the Slough Bottoms, were there particular trees or habitats, such as oaks, cottonwoods, or....

DM: Cottonwoods, particularly.

DH: There are still a few in the Columbia Slough. There are some nice oaks out in the east end of the watershed, and there are still a few there.

DM: They used to be at my aunt's place south of town here, near West Linn (on Cherry Lane). She had a great big oak. I used to see nuthatches there all the time. Between here and West Linn.

CP: How about chipping sparrows?

DM: They weren't real common.

CP: Is that a species we should be concerned about?

DM: Might be.

CP: Back to a question we asked earlier about what we might want to think about monitoring over time. To think about what trends are telling us about habitats and the health of our watersheds. What we're trying to do is select a suite of species, not just birds, but maybe some amphibians, maybe some mammals, but birds seem to be, first of all, somewhat easier to monitor, but also very representative of habitat conditions. That's something Dave Helzer and I and Jennifer have been working on. Dave [Helzer], can you recite off the top of your head some of our latest groups of species we're thinking about? We'd like to run those by you [Dave Marshall] and see what you think.

DH: Yeah. We've been talking about a lot of them so when we're looking at the bottomlands habitat, the cottonwood we've been asking about, we're thinking about the willow flycatcher and the yellow warbler.

DM: They're good ones.

DH: When we talk about the oaks, we're thinking about the white-breasted nuthatch and with the grasslands, which is a special area of interest for me, the streaked horned lark, and the meadowlark. Those are definitely two we're thinking about. Another interesting one that we haven't talked about is the kestrel. There's some concern now about the kestrel population...

DM: Oh, yeah?

DH: ...on a national scale. What's your impression of kestrels?

DM: I thought they were doing all right.

DH: Were they part of your early memories of birding in the city?

DM: Oh yeah.

DH: You'd think that all the farmland would have been welcoming to them.

DM: Yep. They do respond to boxes.

DH: That's a good thing.

DH: We're looking at wetlands, and some of the wetland species we're thinking about are the yellowthroat, and then the sora and Virginia rail.

DM: The yellowthroat is a good one but it's hard to monitor the sora and Virginia rail.

DH: Yeah, they are hard to monitor. Which one do you think is more common in the Portland area?

DM: I don't know. They seem about the same.

DH: About the same? Well that's good to know. The other one that I wanted to ask about was the American bittern.

DM: I don't think you're going to get a big enough sample.

CP: That is one of the challenges. If we're just looking for a needle in a haystack, it may be difficult to detect trends.

DM: It would be. I don't think that's a good one to use.

CP: Dave, what about the late-successional conifer forest? What species might we think about there?

DM: Creeper.

CP: Brown creeper. Yeah.

DH: That's a good one. And olive-sided flycatcher and winter wren.

DM: Yep.

DH: Brown creeper's a good one.

CP: You know Chuck Henney, I think.

DM: Very well.

CP: I talked with him a few months ago at [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist] Charlie Bruce's retirement party, actually. He was there, and I had a similar conversation with him about what we might want to monitor, and he said the osprey might be a good one for the Willamette River area, the open water. Mainly because it's fairly easy to monitor, and the USGS has been monitoring it over time, and it's one that maybe citizens could help, or Audubon members could help us with. They're fairly visible and they know where all the nests are. Would that be something you think would be worthwhile to monitor?

DM: Seems to be. I think it'd be fine. You've got so much information anyway.

CP: Yeah, and build on it. We're also thinking about maybe some mammals if possible. Maybe even trying to figure out where beavers are because of their being a keystone species for connection with salmon. But I don't know; that's just one that's been thrown out there for us to think about. Maybe red-legged frog, certain habitats, maybe some bats, if we could figure out how to really detect them accurately. But we always keep coming back to birds.

DM: Yeah. They're easier to deal with. You got people who know them.

DH: What about crows, Dave? What's your impression about how crow numbers have changed?

DM: They've really come up; more and more of a city bird. When I was a boy, we used to think of them as a country bird – a farm bird.

DH: How about the magpie? Kind of a country bird?

DM: Yes, east of the Cascades.

CP: Do you think we'd ever see ravens in the city?

DM: I've wondered that myself.

CP: I think you're the one who put the idea in my head. Why do you think we might see them in Portland?

DM: Why not?

CP: But what do you think?

DM: I don't know why they can't adapt.

CP: Why do you think we haven't had them here before?

DM: I don't know. Seems like they should be around garbage dumps.

CP: Kind of like crows?

DM: Yeah. Well, I'm getting kind of tired.

CP: OK, we can wrap this up. Thank you so much. We appreciate your time and information. It's so informative.

DM: I don't know how this compares to what you got from Tom [McAllister].

CP: It was a different format with Tom. He gave more of a formal presentation in the auditorium about salmon, and then he joined a whole team of people at one of our staff meetings to talk about wildlife. He talked a little bit about birds, but mostly talked about things like wolves on Council Crest and some of the early settlers, and things like that.

DM: History.

CP: Yeah. And so between the two of you I think this has been great because we're starting to get a better picture of Portland in the past. What's been happening over time, but we didn't talk to Tom about what to monitor, so this is really good for you to react to some of our preliminary thinking.

DM: You got some good ones to monitor.

CP: Now we have to figure out how to do it – how to pay for it, but as you said, there are some people who are very knowledgeable. What we'd love to be able to do is partner with Audubon or birders, and in some cases, for certain species, we may want to hire some professionals, but there are other ways we might be able to do this.

DM: I wish we had an equivalent here to the East Cascades Bird Conservancy. They're really getting into a lot of monitoring.

CP: But they only monitor in their own area. Maybe we could set up some Breeding Bird Survey routes.

DM: Yes.



CP: Whom might we talk to about formally establishing those?

DM: Oregon Field Ornithologists. They meet all the time.

CP: That would be good. Anyway, I'll stop asking questions.

DM: It's OK.

CP: Well thank you.

DM: You're very welcome.