

Program Meeting
Dr. Corrie Hines
Injured and Orphaned Wildlife

April 5th - 1:30 pm,
Hoquiam Library
Downstairs Meeting Room

March
April
2020



The Sandpiper

23rd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count 2020 Statistics



Checklists Submitted: 249,547

Total Species Observed: 6,944

Total Individual Birds Counted: 41,489,245

This year's 23rd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count was held on Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14 and continued until Monday, February 17th. This was an especially important count as birds are facing an emergency with 3 billion birds in decline according to the Journal of Science. Audubon scientists project a similar grim future for birds in their report *Survival By Degrees* <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees>

The President's Perch



By Janet Strong

From the President's Perch I can see the lovely Bottle Beach State Park with the newly installed (second time around) sign urging visitors to "Please Respect Our Feathered Friends." What's that in the distance? Unleashed dogs running loose on the narrow beach, potentially flushing shorebirds away from their feeding spots? Unconcerned owners ambling along behind their mutts?

Scenes like this have greeted one of the COASST volunteers on several occasions as she surveyed the park's beach for dead birds – an important citizen-science project that's lasted for decades. Even though she has spoken to the dog owners about the harm dogs can do to the birds, they have defended their activity. To a tiny shorebird, a dog, however calm, looks like Godzilla. A mutt running toward them must be terrifying, causing disruption in feeding and a big overuse of their small stores of energy.

The local State Park Staff has been notified on each occasion and is deciding what to do. Already signs are up stating that NO DOGS are allowed in the park during migratory months and must be leashed at all other times. Obviously additional measures must be taken. Grays Harbor Audubon Society has a role to play, yet to be determined. All members and our friends should be concerned. This is the only State Park strictly for the birds and the people who love, appreciate and respect them. It comprises a tiny portion of the long stretches of ocean and harbor beaches available to the public and their pets for recreation. Let's work together and with State Parks to devise a good solution. Ideas and suggestions are welcome.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Please join the Grays Harbor Stream Team, Chehalis River Basin Land Trust and GHAS folks in removing ivy from our beloved Burrows Road forest. Date: Saturday, March 14; Time: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dress for the weather, bring loppers and hand saws if you have them. Drive Hwy #109 toward Ocean Shores. After crossing the Hump-tulips River, turn left immediately onto Burrows Road. If coming from Ocean shores, turn right off Hwy #109 at the eastern end of Burrows Road. Hot drinks and treats will be there for you!

And, of course, GHAS co-hosts the annual Shorebird and Nature Festival on the last week-

end of April this year. Folks from all over the state and beyond "flock" to Grays Harbor to witness the amazing migration spectacle brought to us by those international shorebirds. We try to bring education and prosperity to the local communities and to attendees an inspiration to return home and work for better bird protection. And we so enjoy ourselves in the process. We hope you will enjoy the New Year and prosper in all you strive to accomplish.

Program Meeting

On Sunday, April 5, Grays Harbor Audubon will host Dr. Corrie Hines from Grays Harbor Veterinary Clinic. She will tell us all about the relatively new Twin Harbors Wildlife Center (THWC), located on the same site as the clinic. We will learn how it evolved to fill a desperate need to help injured and orphaned wildlife in our area, what success they have had and how they see themselves growing into a valuable local resource for animals.

Dr. Corrie Hines has been involved in wildlife rehabilitation since 1997, when she moved to the Pacific Northwest and learned that such a thing was possible. She recently graduated from Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine and works in Grays Harbor county as a small animal/exotics veterinarian and wildlife rehabilitator. In her free time, she enjoys quilting, crocheting, and spending time with her husband and two pit bulls.

Our April program is open to members, friends and the public. It will be held at the Hoquiam Library Meeting Room, accessed from the back of the Library building, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Delicious refreshments will be served! Please join us. AND check out THWC's Facebook site for delightful photos of our local wildlife!

<https://www.facebook.com/Twin-Harbors-Wildlife-Center-276452699960410/>



Photo by John Heinz

Birding the basin *by Mary Oneil*

Field (failed) trips report

Response to the Field Trips planned for January and February was a little disappointing. However, we did get one almost great trip. A total of 5 people including myself showed up for the February 8th trip to Westport/Grayland/Tokeland. I had included Westport only as a meeting point for people from south of the Harbor. As it turned out, we ended up having the bulk of our bird sightings at the Westport Marina. In my EBird report I included terms like “biting cold” and “blistering winds”. The surf was the most turbulent I have ever seen - pounding over the outer viewing platform. At the Marina, we saw Harlequin Ducks, Surf Scoter, Buffleheads, Red Breasted Merganser, and both Western and Horned Grebes. It was a little blustery and cold on the Marina walkways, so we didn’t venture very far before heading back to the safety of our vehicles.

The sightings on down the coastline were less spectacular, but toward the later afternoon when the sun tried peeking through the clouds, the raptors seemed to think hunting might be a good idea. We caught good looks at a Red-Tailed Hawk, a Cooper’s Hawk and Bald Eagles. There was one other mystery raptor that sailed by in a hurry not wanting to be caught himself. Very striking light underwings, but too fast to catch anything for making a positive ID. Once at the Tokeland Marina, we were not disappointed by the Marbled Godwits who showed up at their usual resting place - the old half sunken wooden walkway which was left just for them. On the way out, we couldn’t help ourselves - one fast peek at the timeless Tokeland Hotel. What a flurry of activ-

ity at the Hotel. We were wet and tired and only allowed ourselves a quick peek. The place was teeming with people bustling all about. Caught reminiscing of other times, we glanced across the estate one more time when we spied a rather large flock of Greater White Fronted Geese serenely tucked away in a side yard away from the bustle of the front door.

Both the Raymond and Copalis Beach trips were no-shows. The McClane Creek trip was an almost-no-show. However, the 19th of February was a beautiful pre-spring day, and I was ready to go birding. I picked up a friend along the way and proceeded to travel the proposed route. The Nature Trail at McClane Creek was very restful and the birds thought so too. Only one little spot on the trail showed a little flurry of activity where we spied a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a Pacific Wren and a Song Sparrow. However the pond was quite busy. The most beautiful ducks in the country were moshing about searching for food while showing off for one another: Wood Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads, and a Ring-Necked Duck circled around among the more plain Mallards.

While viewing the pond which, though the sun was shining, was frozen around the edges, we enjoyed a very plus-type treat. There were several Song Sparrows chipping and singing from the reeds around the ponds edge. One Song Sparrow decided he needed to wet his whistle. He jumped down to the edge of the pond in plain view of where we were standing. But as he pecked at the water, he could drink nothing, because it was frozen solid. So he jumped a little farther - still nothing. We got to watch quite a little ice-skating performance before that poor bird finally got a bit of wet water to drink. We did go on to Tumwater Falls and ended up at the World’s largest American Chestnut Tree. Hopefully, next time you will be there with us.

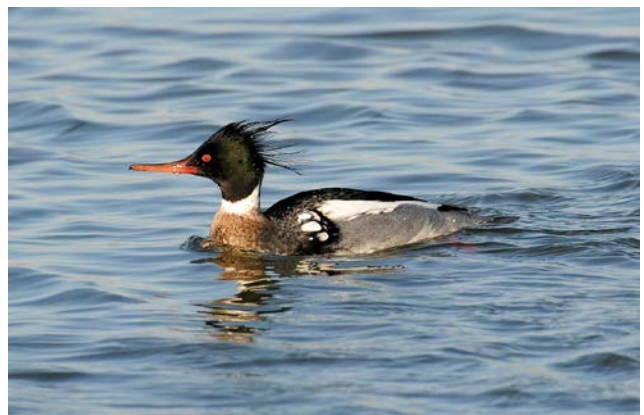


photo by Peter Massas

Let's Go Birding with Mary Oneil

Billy Frank, Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge Wednesday, March 18: Last day of Winter

Let's join the scheduled Wednesday Morning Bird Walk at the Billy Frank Jr Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. At the Refuge, they are ready to be walking at 8:00 am. That means we need to meet at the Tractor Supply Parking lot (Hwy side) at 6:30 am. We need to leave Tractor Supply by 6:40 am. For those from East County, we will stop at the McCleary bus stop at or about 7:05 am. We need to leave there by 7:10 - no later than 7:15. Google says it takes 34 minutes from McCleary to the Refuge. Bring lunch, drinks, and munchies.

Ocean Shores Oyhut Wildlife Refuge - OS STP - Pt. Brown Jetty - Saturday, March 28

Meet at Bowerman Basin Wildlife Refuge (Parking area for Sandpiper Trail) at 9:00 am. Leave Bowerman Basin by 9:15 am. Meet residents from Ocean Shores at the Convention Center, 120 W. Chance A La Mer NE in the corner nearest to the McDonalds at 9:50 am. The Wildlife Refuge offers some walking. Tide is out much of the day, but we can walk the rainforest at the Weatherwax Park on our way to the Refuge. Bring lunch, drinks and munchies.

Lake Sylvia and Vance Creek Park Thursday, April 16th

Meet at Tractor Supply Parking lot (Hwy side) 9:00 am. We can wait a little, but plan to be away from Tractor Supply by 9:10 am. Friends from East County meet at Lake Sylvia parking lot around 9:25 am. Be sure to have current Discover Pass.. We will do some walking at both places hoping to have some waterfowl on the lakes and warblers in the woods.

Shorebird and Nature Festival.

By now you should have received your guide to the Shorebird and Nature Festival. Be sure to sign up for the field trips of your choice. ---and remember, if you ever get the urge to go birding, give me a call and we will work something out. Please note, my phone number has changed. Call me at 360-810-7995. Look forward to hearing from you. Stay on the trail - but off the beaten path.



Siberian Accentor - photo by Judy Rowe Taylor

Unexpected visitor

Earlier this year, a bird which is normally never seen in the lower 48 states found its way to a road's end in Woodland, Washington. Since then, hundreds of birders have flocked (yes, like birds, flocked) to Woodland to see the star of the show - the Siberian Accentor.

When Judy Taylor called and said she had a day free to go bird watching, I suggested that we always have Ocean Shores and Westport, but only once in a life time do we have the opportunity to see a Siberian Accentor. She agreed. So we headed down the highway to Woodland to catch a rare bird. Dianna Moore had heard about the Accentor on Twitter so she provided us with very detailed directions for finding the bird. Once we left the freeway at Dike Access Road, we had no problem locating Stenerson Rd. which has come to be known as Accentor Avenue. As we approached the end of the road, I recognized the apple tree from the pictures I had seen posted on EBird. - and there it was - Sitting in the apple tree just like the pictures had shown it. For all the hundreds of birders who have visited this spot from across the country, we showed up on a day when there was only one other birder present. We practically had the bird to ourselves.

As we approached the tree, Judy stopped to get a better look and to grab her camera. But within seconds, the bird hopped down to the ditch across the road and hid in the tall grasses. "Oops, sorry," we said to the other birder. But she was gracious and said not to worry, just get parked and the bird would be back. She was so right. Our pictures were not the best, but check it out on EBird. It's a beautiful bird and very much worth the effort it took to find it.

Remember, If any of you are interested in a day of birding but can't make the posted field trip, be sure to call me. I'm not always available, but much of the time I am and would be more than happy to spend a day with you hunting whatever might be around.. Please note, I have a new phone number: 360-810-7995. -- Happy Birding

Membership Dues Due

Your local Grays Harbor Audubon Society depends on the kindness of you, and a couple of strangers. January marks the date when memberships are due for renewal. If you have not already renewed, simply turn to page 8 of this Sandpiper and fill out your renewal at a level that is comfortable for you.

We depend on your support to bring you the programs you enjoy at the bi-monthly get-togethers. Subscribing at a higher-level allows us to enhance the care and consideration we give to our over 3,000 acres of essential wetlands and habitat for birds and other wildlife species. Grays Harbor Audubon protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, but only with your support. Make sure you renew or upgrade today. If you are unsure, contact Linda Orgel at ldotorg@olearycreek.com to review your current status.

Thank you in advance for caring about the birds, and your generous support of our Chapter.



Godwit Days

25th Annual, Arcata, California

April 15 -21, 2020

visit <http://godwitdays.org> for
more information



GHAS Mission

The mission of the Grays Harbor Audubon Society is to seek a sustainable balance between human activity and the needs of the environment, and to promote enjoyment of birds and the natural world



Predatory Songbirds - the case of the murderous tit

Jena McCullough

When you think of a songbird, like a finch or a sparrow, what kind of food does it eat? For many people, the first thing that comes to mind is bird seed — it fills feeders and the shelves of our local bird-watching stores. But songbirds are more diverse than finches at your neighborhood feeder and they eat more than just idyllic bird seed.

“Songbirds” specifically refers to oscine passerines, which at its core is a perching bird with complex vocal organs. They’re found all over the world and have dynamic diets. Brown Creepers and nuthatches probe tree trunks for insects, Australian honeyeaters use their brush-tipped tongues to eat flower nectar, and Cedar Waxwings will gorge themselves on fermenting berries (sometimes to the point that they are intoxicated).

Shrikes, one of the few groups of predatory songbirds, will impale their prey items (i.e., insects, snakes, small rodents, birds) on thorns or barbed wire for a tasty meal later. Songbirds are the most species-rich group of birds on Earth and take advantage of diverse resources, and we ornithologists are learning more and more about their diets each day.

A few months ago, I saw a photo of a European songbird, the great tit (*Parus major*), proudly standing over a dead vole, surrounded by snow on twitter. I was astonished to learn that it had killed this vole — I had thought that Great Tits typically eat seeds and small invertebrates. The observer described how the bird had only eaten the vole’s brain and left the rest for other scavengers. Apparently, this type of behavior is not so surprising, or even unusual, for this species.

Though great tits do have a ‘typical’ songbird diet for most of the year, harsh winters bring out their vicious side of when food resources are

scarce. Tits are documented carrion scavengers and there are historical anecdotes of these birds eating the tissues of recently hanged people in Europe.

These seemingly innocuous birds have been documented systematically searching out and preying upon hibernating bats in Hungarian caves; there are videos of these tits attacking defenseless bats by ruthlessly pecking their skulls specifically to eat their brains. Great tits will prey on other similarly-sized songbirds too — there’s a shocking video of a tit assaulting a European Chaffinch and pecking it to death under a bird feeder. The murderous tendencies of this species and its preference for brains was noted by 20th century ornithologists, and more recently, a wildlife photographer documented a grisly scene of almost a dozen songbirds killed by a couple of great tits in Finland. This predatory behavior is out of necessity though: in experiments related to the hibernating bats, tit predation decreased substantially when sunflower seeds and bacon was provided near the cave entrance.

After a large winter snowstorm in Wyoming in 2015, western meadowlarks both scavenged and preyed upon horned larks, longspurs, and dark-eyed juncos, sometimes only eating the brains and eyes of their victims. The desert-adapted Gila woodpecker has been observed to prey upon dove nests — with one individual described to have performed “predatory lobotomies” by cracking the nestling’s skulls open and slurping up their brains while they were still alive.

As an ornithologist, these observations and studies captivate me. Birds have been studied for thousands of years: inferences of their breeding biology are evident on Egyptian frescoes and were mentioned in one of the oldest books in the world, the ancient Chinese text “Book of Changes”. However, we are still learning basic facts about what they eat.

It’s easy to boil down these out-of-character predatory behaviors as birds “reverting to their dinosaur ancestry”, but I think that’s an oversimplification. For me, it’s marvelous to observe how birds cope with scarcity in different ways and how dynamic birds can be in the fight for their existence.

Jena McCullough is a PhD student studying avian evolution in the Biology Department University of New Mexico.

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**Grays Harbor Audubon Society
P.O. Box 470
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Program Meeting

Twin Harbors Wildlife Center

***Dr. Corrie Hines talks about injured
and orphaned wildlife***

***April 5th
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