

*Program Meeting*  
**NOTE DATE CHANGE 4/11/2021**  
**SeaBed Mining Sucks & Plastic Plugs**  
**- Lee First, Liz Schotman 1:30 pm**  
**April 11th Via Zoom**  
**see page 2 and/or page 9 for access**

March  
April  
2021



# The Sandpiper



*photo US Fish & Wildlife - Bob Payton*

## **World's oldest known wild bird hatches another chick at age 70**

*by Anna Schaverien -The New York Times*

At more than 70 years young, Wisdom, the world's oldest known banded wild bird, is taking on the challenge of motherhood once again.

An egg laid by Wisdom, a Laysan albatross, late last year on a speck of land in the Pacific Ocean hatched at the beginning of last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced. Biologists believe that Wisdom, who was first identified and banded on Midway Atoll in 1956, has hatched between 30 and 36 chicks, possibly more. Even before she became the world's oldest known breeding bird, Wisdom defied expectations.

She has logged hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of miles flying around the northern Pacific Ocean and has earned the distinction of living about twice as long as the average Laysan albatross.

"Albatrosses are extremely long-lived, but the unusual thing about Wisdom is she's so much older than other birds," said Professor Richard Phillips, a seabird ecologist and head of the higher predators and conservation group at the British Antarctic Survey. "You wouldn't expect a bird to be quite as much of an outlier as she is," Phillips added, explaining that the next oldest banded albatross he has come across is 61 years old.

Though albatrosses tend to mate for life, Wis-

dom's longevity means that she has had multiple mates, Beth Flint, a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said in an online post. The father of the chick that hatched Feb. 1 is Akeakamai, Wisdom's mate since at least 2012. The parents will share feeding duties for the chick, providing a diet of fish eggs and squid by regurgitating the food that they forage while at sea into their offspring's mouth. By summer, the chick should be ready to fly for the first time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial, on the far northern end of the Hawaiian Islands, is home to the world's largest colony of albatrosses and millions more seabirds. Albatrosses like Wisdom and Akeakamai return to the 2.5-square-mile island each winter for nesting and mating. These seabirds typically lay at most one egg a year as the effort of incubating it, feeding it and parenting it after it hatches is so great.

Wisdom has surprised researchers in this respect, too, as she has hatched chicks almost every year for the past 15 years. "Ordinarily you expect albatrosses to age in the same way as humans and for their breeding frequency and success to drop off with increasing age, so again Wisdom is unusual in that she still seems to be breeding fairly regularly," Phillips said. How many more years will Wisdom survive to continue hatching chicks? "No one really knows," said Mike Parr, president of American Bird Conservancy. "We are in uncharted territory," he said, adding that the bird's survival so far was a ray of hope.

Biologists at the Midway Atoll wildlife refuge have been studying and tracking thousands of albatrosses like Wisdom for 85 years, and Wisdom has been returning to the island for decades, even outliving ornithologist Chandler Robbins, who first banded her.

Wisdom's return, Flint said, "not only inspires bird lovers everywhere but helps us better understand how we can protect these graceful seabirds and the habitat they need to survive into the future."

## The President's Perch



By Janet Strong

The proposed dam, or FRE (*Flood Retention Expandable*), for the upper Chehalis River has gone through both the SEPA (*State Environmental Policy Act*) DEIS (*Draft Environmental Statement*) and the NEPA (*National Environmental Policy Act*) DEIS process of review by the public.

Many, many organizations and individuals submitted comments in opposition to this massive construction project. Their objections include concerns about the survival of fish, especially spring Chinook salmon and Steelhead, large impacts on birds and other wildlife in the area of the dam and reservoir, and the decline of the quality of the Chehalis River itself. They are also alarmed by the huge cost of the dam (minimally estimated at \$628 Million but with a more realistic cost of \$1 Billion) with benefits to a limited portion of the basin and the fact that it will not prevent future flooding, but merely reduce some of the impacts. Many other basin areas, including the lower basin where we live, will not benefit from having the dam. In fact, there will be losses of salmon species that many care about. Many commenters submitted alternatives to the dam, including habitat restoration throughout the river basin, re-connection of floodplains to absorb floodwaters, movement of threatened buildings to higher ground, and provision of high areas for livestock and farm equipment.



GHAS (GH Audubon) submitted comments as did several of our members. At the March 9th public meeting, via ZOOM, the presenters suggested that any decision on constructing the dam is still a long way off. This suggests to me that the Chehalis Basin Board has been receiving lots more opposition than they had anticipated. For more information, visit the Chehalis River Alliance website (<http://chehalisriveralliance.org>) and the website of Twin Harbors Waterkeepers

(<http://twinharborswaterkeeper.org>). These two organizations have great articles and resources to learn more about this issue and more.

In the meantime, the Shorebird and Nature Festival committee has been merrily planning an interesting and fun self-guided, do-it-yourself, virtual celebration of the reliable spring migration of shorebirds. You can check out the Shorebird Festival website <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/> for videos, maps and best-viewing dates and times. The committee has hired an event promoter who is creating 3 short videos for the occasion and will be advertising the festival in a number of local venues. Check it all out!

I hope everybody is getting outdoors to bird, garden, walk, or just breathe in the spring air and being safe in every way while we make our way through these troubling times. Nature can be a healer for all of us as it moves forward through the seasons in its steady, dependable way. Please take advantage of this reliable presence in our lives. Stay safe.

Join GHAS Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84122539452?pwd=Q3o2aURQMfVOWQ0a2J3Q05kSDh0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 841 2253 9452

Passcode: 618973



### Plant for the birds

A healthy habitat with native trees and plants—the ones that have evolved in that place along with the other living things there—is key to making birds feel at home. Plants provide protection from weather and predators, and offer places to roost at night. Seeds, nuts, fruit, and flower nectar are food sources all year long. And when it comes time to lay eggs, birds use trees and plants to build nests—and hide them, too.

But there's more! Trees host the protein-rich insects that baby birds need to grow. Science has shown that native trees and plants support far more insects than non-native species. Bottom line, a healthy habitat dominated by native trees and other plants means birds and other wildlife can thrive, and the same is true for another organism: human beings.



## Program Meeting

### *Seabed Mining Sucks and Plastic Plugs*

**Seabed Mining (SBM):** The Risks to WA from Seabed Mining, and our successful campaign to ban this practice.

Washington State's waters contain known mineral deposits, and there are known hard mineral resources in Washington State's coastal waters. Given the present reality of rising ocean temperatures and acidification, nearshore marine waters and coastal communities along the Pacific do not need another threat. Surfrider and Twin Harbors Waterkeeper (THW) joined the Pew Charitable Trusts to mount a successful campaign against SBM in WA State Waters. But this issue is still active in other parts of the world. We'll explain what SBM is, and highlight areas of the world where this is a danger. We'll explain steps can be taken to promote a circular economy in our own lifestyles.

**Plastic Plugs:** Lee will discuss what steps THW is taking to work with coastal youth to reduce the use of single use plastic, and she'll discuss the "yellow rope project."

Liz will explain Surfrider's many years of marine plastics activism, and highlight recent and ongoing legislation, both local and national, that makes Surfrider a leader for this important issue.

### **Biographies:**

*Liz Schotman* is the Washington Regional Manager for Surfrider Foundation, supporting Washington's five volunteer chapters in their efforts to address plastic pollution, climate change, and threats to our water quality, and to protect public coastal access. She holds a Master's degree in Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology and a background in fisheries and marine science. *Lee First* is a co-founder of Twin Harbors Waterkeeper, on the SW WA coast. She has worked in the Waterkeeper movement for 15 years; as the North Sound Baykeeper, and with the Spokane Riverkeeper. When not working to prevent a new dam from being built in the Chehalis headwaters, or out in her canoe or kayak, she is looking for solutions to pollution in the Chehalis River, Grays Harbor, and Willapa Bay watersheds.

## GHAS members and the 2021 Virtual Shorebird Festival

*The official start and end of the 2021 Shorebird and Nature Festival are April 24 – April 30*

Our festival this year will be 'on your own'. No lectures, no fieldtrips on a school bus, no poster awards, no vendors, but the birds will be here! They are not constrained by those dates, and will be moving north to their breeding grounds from about the last two weeks in April through the first two weeks in May.

We will be having some signs on the Sandpiper Trail emphasizing masking and social distancing for those birders who choose to visit the Trail. We may have a few volunteers on the trail to point out sightings of the groups of birds on the mudflats. We will have posters on the railings at the loop for Shorebird ID help.

The usual dike signs, east bluff reader board and banner at the Pocklington Park in Hoquiam will quietly say we're still here. There will also be some recorded public service messages posted on social media and on our website, signs and a banner referring visitors to the Shorebird Festival website: [www.shorebirdfestival.com](http://www.shorebirdfestival.com) The website will also have maps to some of our usual viewing sites off SR-105 & SR-109. There will also be links to some good birding information. I'm sure you will be going out to see the shorebirds yourself, so while you're at it give some friendly advice to others, some of whom may be 'birding' for the first time! You know lots about our birds, so share your information, but don't share your optical equipment, and mask up.

In addition, there are several sites that can be visited in Ocean Shores which are visited by more coastal birds such as Sanderlings, Rock Sandpipers, and Surfbirds. They can be viewed from the North Jetty and the open beaches. Locations of the beach accesses are available on the Shorebird Festival website.

The Shorebird Festival committee would love to hear about your viewing of the great migration! Contact Arnie Martin who will send your comments on to the committee.

*Note that Discover passes are required at the State Parks. Also note that disturbing nesting sites for Snowy Plovers and Streaked Horned Larks is prohibited. A Handicapped accessible Sani-can will be at the start of the Sandpiper Trail from April 20th through May 11th.)*



photo by Mark Peck, Ontario

## 10 fun things about Barred Owls

### *National Audubon*

A large owl of the eastern, central, and, increasingly, northwestern United States, the Barred Owl is one of our more common owl species. As with most owls, the Barred is primarily nocturnal, but it is known to call and hunt during the day. Easily identified by its heavily streaked chest, round, tuftless head, and big, black eyes, the Barred Owl can be found in forested areas throughout its range year-round, including in more urban environments.

1.) If you're out in the woods and hear someone calling who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?, you're actually hearing the distinctive call of the Barred Owl. If you hear what sounds like maniacal laughing afterward, that's usually two Barred Owls performing a courtship duet. Usually.

2.) Barred Owls prefer nesting in tree hollows, but they will also use nests abandoned by other animals, from squirrels to Red-tailed Hawks, and nest boxes located in forest habitat.

3.) These hefty owls can become incredibly territorial once they establish a nest—and especially when they begin rearing chicks. Barred Owls are known to chase away intruders by aggressively hooting or attacking and striking with their talons. (There's even a theory that a Barred Owl was the culprit in a famous murder case.)

4.) Barred Owls prefer mature forests that have both an abundance of prey and trees with cavities. Barred Owls hunt from a perch, where they sit and wait, scanning and listening for prey, and then silently swoop down when they pinpoint their meal.

5.) Barred Owls mostly eat small mammals like mice and voles, but sometimes they go fishing for crayfish and crabs. If a Barred Owl eats enough crayfish, the feathers under its wings can

turn pink—just like a flamingo, which gets its hue from the high volume of shrimp in its diet.

6.) Barred Owls are largely sedentary, but in the past century, they have gradually expanded their range. The expansion began west across Canada and then south into the states of the Pacific Northwest, reaching California by the 1980s. This poses a problem for the bird's smaller cousin, the Spotted Owl, which is endangered and also relies on old-growth forests. Barred Owls force Spotted Owls from their territories and can also hybridize with them.

7.) Barred Owls mate for life, and they usually have a single clutch of two or three white eggs each year. During the incubation period, which lasts somewhere between 28 and 33 days, the female sits on the eggs while the male hunts for food.

8.) After they hatch, young Barred Owls can stick around the nest for up to six months, which is unusual for owls. During this time, the young owls rarely stray far from each other and are often seen sitting side by side.

9.) Hatching order often determines chick size: The oldest of a Barred Owl clutch tends to be the largest, with the other chicks being progressively smaller. Adult owls can grow to an impressive 20 inches tall—big enough to terrify an unsuspecting person wandering in the woods.

10.) Chicks leave the nest at four to six weeks old, but they don't go far: Once they leave the nest, these talented climbers clamber about their nest trees (or a nearby tree if they fall to ground), using their bill and talons to grab hold while flapping their wings to keep balance. At 10 to 12 weeks, they begin flying.

Bonus Fact! Historians believe that Harriet Tubman, an avid naturalist, used the Barred Owl's call as a signal for people seeking to use the Underground Railroad. Depending on the call she used, freedom-seekers would know whether it was okay to come out of hiding.



photo by Chokchai Leangsuksun



## Rufous Hummingbird

### *American Bird Conservancy*

At a tad over three inches long, the feisty red-and-orange Rufous Hummingbird is a tiny warrior, readily attacking birds many times its size, as well as large insects or anything else it perceives as a threat to its territory. It dominates feeders and choice flower patches, chasing away other hummingbird species such as the Calliope and Anna's Hummingbird.

The Rufous Hummingbird is a standout in a family of already incredible American birds, and not only because of its moxie. It's also known for its stunning migration, one of the longest of any bird its size.

The Rufous Hummingbird is the most northerly breeding member of the family Trochilidae. It nests from Oregon and Idaho north through much of British Columbia and into southern Alaska.

Traveling up to 3,000 miles to wintering grounds in western Mexican pine/oak and oak habitats, Rufous Hummingbirds can be found with other migrants such as the Western Tanager and Townsend's Warbler.

In recent years, the Rufous Hummingbird has been seen more regularly in winter in the southeast U.S., where it was once a rare stray. Sightings have piled up particularly along the Gulf Coast. This change is likely due to a warming climate, combined with an increase in suburban garden habitats and hummingbird feeders.

Research has revealed that the area of a hummingbird's brain related to learning and spatial memory — the hippocampus — is proportionately the largest of any bird group studied to date, occupying a percentage of "brain volume" up to five times larger than that found in songbirds, for example.

With enhanced spatial memory, the Rufous and other hummingbirds pinpoint prime locations of nectar, their main food source, and keep track of which blooms are at peak, visiting only when the flower provides its richest nectar supply. Remark-

ably, hummingbirds can also remember feeder locations from previous years, both on their home territories and along their migratory pathways.

Like all in its family, from the Esmeraldas Woodstar to the Blue-throated Hillstar, the Rufous Hummingbird needs a lot of fuel to sustain its nonstop daily activity. To keep its "tank" full, it must feed almost continuously throughout the day in short spurts of less than a minute at a time, often visiting more than 1,000 flowers in a day. But in addition to nectar, Rufous and other hummingbirds also need protein, both for themselves and for their fast-growing young. They get this nutritional mainstay from tiny insects and spiders that they capture in the air and on foliage and flowers.

Like other hummingbirds, including the Ruby-throated, male Rufous Hummingbirds court females with elaborate flight displays, including steep, U-shaped dives. During these flights, air rushing through the wings and tail produces a variety of buzzy, chattering noises that enhance the performance.

As with other hummingbird species, the male Rufous defends a breeding territory, which may contain several nesting females. After mating, the female does all the work of nesting and raising the young.

Although the species is still considered common, the Rufous Hummingbird's population is declining due to habitat loss on both breeding and wintering grounds, as well as threats along the long migratory route. These minuscule birds regularly fall prey to outdoor cats and other predators, while others die after window collisions.

*Editor's note: Our local rufous population first showed up at the O'Leary Creek feeders on March 14th, 2021.*





## The Olympic Loop Birding Trail

The Olympic Loop features more than 200 of Washington's 346 annually recorded bird species.

From the quiet Nisqually River delta in south Puget Sound, the Olympic Loop leads west to wild Pacific breakers, follows rivers through moss-draped forests, and touches the tip of the contiguous U.S. at Cape Flattery. The route traces the Strait of Juan de Fuca east over the Olympic Peninsula, and wends south along the inland waters of Hood Canal.

This loop explores Olympic National Park, four national wildlife refuges, state and local parks, as well as the natural and cultural history of six Native American tribes: Jamestown S'Klallam, Makah, Quileute, Quinault, Skokomish, and Squaxin.

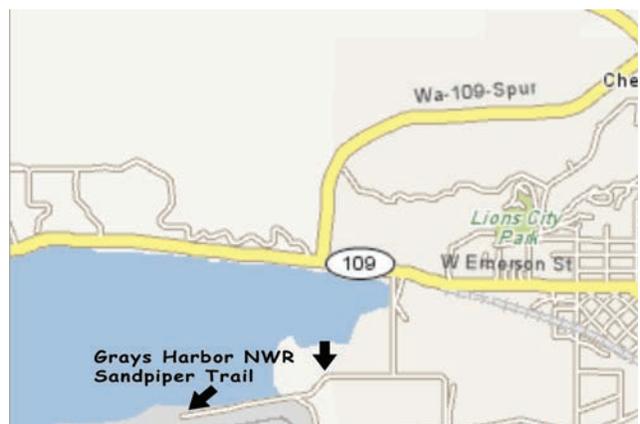
Around the Olympic Loop, spring migration brings clouds of shorebirds to sandy beaches—Dunlin, Sanderlings, and Western Sandpipers—and visitors to rocky coasts—Black Turnstones, Surfbirds, and Wandering Tattlers. In summer, Marbled Murrelets and Bald Eagles nest in old-growth firs, American Dippers bob on glacial streams, and Yellow Warblers sing in wetland willows. Fall's berries feed Cedar Waxwings. Winter features waterfowl extravaganzas on fresh and saltwater.

The map features original art by Ed Newbold on the cover and along the route of the map. Thank you to the many dedicated Birding Trail volunteers, and to the funders: National Forest Foundation; US Forest Service; Washington State Tourism; Parks and Recreation Commission; departments of Fish and Wildlife; Transportation; and Community, Trade and Economic Development; Grays Harbor and Mason Counties; the Cities of Aberdeen, Forks, Ocean Shores, Olympia, and Tumwater; Clallam Bay and Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce; Sequim Marketing Action Committee; North Olympic Peninsula Convention and Visitors Bureau; and individual contributors.



## Rockin' the Refuge

Be on the lookout for your 2021 shorebird festival souvenir! Find me hiding in plain sight around our community. Come see us in person at Hoquiam's Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge (Bowerman Basin) during the *Shorebird and Nature Festival* April 24th-30th. My friends and I will be passing through on our way to the Arctic and promise some spectacular aerial displays as part of the show.



### ***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



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Montesano,  
WA 98563



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**Lee First Liz Schotman**

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