

Program Meeting
Hoquiam Library Meeting Room
April 7, 2024 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm
Life at the edge
Estuary Birds and Mammals
-Laura Busby-
AVAILABLE VIA ZOOM see page 9

March
April
2024



The Sandpiper



Northern Mockingbird - photo by Cyrus Allen

10 fun facts about the Northern Mockingbird

By Natalie Wallington, Audubon Reporter

The Northern Mockingbird is one of North America's most beloved mimics. The skilled singer has also become inextricable from American popular culture, providing inspiration for the fictional "Mockingjay" of the Hunger Games franchise to being a central theme in the iconic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. John James Audubon was a fan of the mocker as well. Here are some facts you might not have known about this American classic.

1. There are a total of 16 avian species in the world with the name "mockingbird," but the Northern Mockingbird is the only one native to the United States. Other nearby species include the elusive Blue Mockingbird of Mexico and the island-dwelling Bahama Mockingbird, both of which can occasionally appear in the U.S.
2. The Northern Mockingbird is a year-round resident across much of the U.S., but an expansion into the northeast has been successful due in part to the multiflora rose, or rambler rose. Native to Asia, this invasive rosebush was introduced to the United States in the late 1700s as a root stock for ornamental roses. It makes an ideal nest site for mockingbirds because of its tasty berries and thick tangle of branches. (Editor's note: If you want to provide food and shelter for the Northern Mockingbird and other backyard favorites with native plants, try our handy native plants database.)
3. The mockingbird's Latin name is *Mimus polyglottos*, which literally translates to "many-tongued

mimic." A polyglot is a person who speaks many languages, referencing the bird's ability to imitate sounds from its environment. While mockingbirds are known to sing several hundred different songs, some research suggests that they might not learn to copy new sounds in adulthood, as previously thought.

4. A study released in October 2019 found that, in addition to mimicking the calls of other birds and manmade noises like music and machinery, Northern Mockingbirds have been known to imitate at least 12 different species of North American frogs and toads. In fact, John James Audubon was so in awe of this bird's singing ability, he wrote of the Northern Mockingbird in *Birds of America*, "There is probably no bird in the world that possesses all the musical qualifications of this king of song, who has derived all from Nature's self."

5. Because of the Northern Mockingbird's impressive vocal talents, the illegal pet trade depleted their populations by poaching wild birds across the east coast in the 19th century. The best singers were worth up to \$50 in 1828—that's more than \$1,300 in today's dollars.

6. Northern Mockingbirds have easily adapted to human development, taking up residence across suburban towns and cities. Wide-open lawns and parks are perfect for hunting their insect prey, and males often sing from perches like the tops of houses and telephone poles, where their performance can involve leaping into the air and fluttering back down.

7. Mockers are prolific breeders. They have been known to make as many as seven nesting attempts during a breeding season, and one female even set an astonishing record of laying 27 eggs in a single season.

8. The white patches on a Northern Mockingbird's wings and outer tail feathers serve dual purposes: The birds often show off these plumes during mating rituals, and they also flash them when defending their territory from potential predators like hawks and snakes.

Continued on page 2

The President's Perch

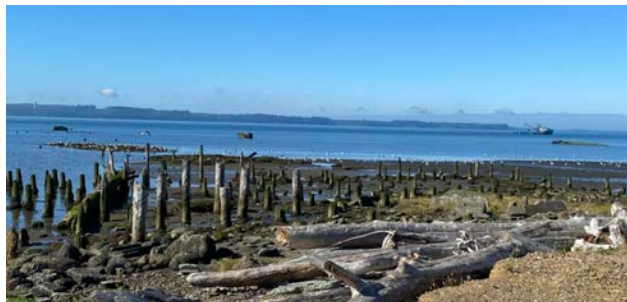


By Janet Strong

Well, technology is wonderful, until it's not. Unfortunately my computer was the target of malware and is experiencing life support at our local computer repair shop. So this Perch will be unusually short.

It's time to polish the lens on our binoculars and sharpen our skills on bird identification. Spring-like weather has encouraged the rufous hummingbirds, robins and a variety of "little brown birds" to fill the bushes, ground and trees with sounds and spectacular avian action. Make sure you set aside some time to get out-of-doors to enjoy their presence.

Don't forget the *Shorebird and Nature Festival* is only a few weeks away. You can make reservations for field trips, the Keynote Speaker and dinner online by visiting <http://www.shorebird-festival.com/>



Member Meeting

Life on the edge: estuary birds & mammals Laura Busby

Explore one of the most biologically rich ecosystems on Earth! The transition between fresh and salt water creates a variety of habitats, providing homes for diverse organisms. They become a feast for birds and mammals that have amazing adaptations for exploiting this critical food source.

This presentation provides excellent background for appreciation of our estuaries and the life they support as highlighted in the upcoming Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival!

Our presenter, Laura Busby works for the Department of Ecology as a grant manager. Previously, she worked for Washington State Parks as an Interpretive Specialist (educator) in Kittitas and Yakima counties. Laura is a nature nut, spending her free time hiking, birding, wildlife tracking, traveling, gardening and enjoying this beautiful planet we call home.

Mockingbirds continued from Page 1

9. Mockingbirds can be extraordinarily territorial. They've been known to swoop and dive at pretty much anything, including people, that gets close to their nests, which are usually placed between 3 and 10 feet off the ground. They will also regularly chase other birds away from their preferred food sources, like fruit-bearing trees, in the winter.

10. The Northern Mockingbird is the state bird of Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. In true Texas fashion, the 1927 legislation declaring the Northern Mockingbird the state's official bird reasoned that the species is "a fighter for the protection of his home, falling, if need be, in its defense, like any true Texan."

Grays Harbor Audubon depends on you.

As a non-profit volunteer organization we rely on your generosity and the kindness of friends to keep GHAS going. Don't forget to renew your membership now. We know that it is tough out there and we appreciate anything that you can do to help out your Chapter to continue to achieve the great things we've done in the name of birds and people.

1. The Habitat Protection Program has placed into conservation close to 4,000 acres of sensitive land in Gray Harbor, Pacific and Jefferson Counties. If you have property or want to donate to help with acquisition of property, please contact the Habitat Committee.

2. Membership meetings introduce subjects and people to our membership that affect our lives and of those around us.

3. We provide the organization and direction for the Christmas Bird Count and annual Backyard Bird Count.

4. The Annual Shorebird and Nature Festival is cosponsored by GHAS and brings thousands of birders to our shores to view the annual migration of shorebirds.

Join us May 3 - 5, 2024.

5. We produce *The Sandpiper*, our bimonthly newsletter, which is chock full of tidbits that help us get out the word about birds.

Your Chapter provides so much, for so little. If you can make an additional donation please include that in your membership update.



This February the folks at O’Leary Creek were delighted to see a yellow Anna Hummingbird. GH Audubon people confirmed it was a partially albino (leucistic) Anna. Shelby Terry, the photographer and current resident is happy to report it is still visiting.



Bird flu strain raises alarm as H5N1 virus kills wildlife

Reuters article

The deadly H5N1 bird flu virus has spread more aggressively than ever before in wild birds and marine mammals since arriving in South America in 2022, raising the risk of it evolving into a bigger threat to humans, according to interviews with eight scientists. Of more immediate concern is evidence the disease, once largely confined to bird species, appears to be spreading between mammals. This strain has already killed a handful of dolphins in Chile and Peru, some 50,000 seals and sea lions along the coasts, and at least half a million birds regionwide.

To confirm mammal-to-mammal transmission, scientists would likely need to test infections in live animals. “It’s almost certainly happened,” said Richard Webby, a virologist at St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. “It’s pretty hard to explain some of these large infections and die off without having mam-

mal-to-mammal spread.” The strain has shown up in dozens of bird species, including some migrating species, which can spread it beyond the region, scientists told Reuters.

As climate change escalates, animals will be forced to move into new territories, mixing with one another in new ways and possibly boosting opportunities for the virus to further mutate. “It’s a matter of time before you will detect the first South American strain in North America,” said Alonzo Alfaro-Nunez, a viral ecologist at University of Copenhagen.

The growing concern has prompted the 35 countries in the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to convene regional health experts and officials at a meeting this week in Rio de Janeiro. The group plans to launch the world’s first regional commission to oversee bird flu monitoring and response efforts, a PAHO official told Reuters. This has not been previously reported. Since the virus was first detected in Colombia in October 2022, there have been two known cases in humans on the continent, one each in Ecuador and Chile. Both came from exposure to infected birds. While those patients survived, H5N1 bird flu is deadly to humans in roughly 60% of cases worldwide. The World Health Organization is unlikely to raise the risk level for humans from the current “low” without evidence of human-to-human transmission or mutations adapted to human receptors, experts said. Drugmakers, including GSK (GSK.L) and Moderna (MRNA.O), have said they are developing bird flu vaccines for humans, and have the capacity to produce hundreds of million so doses within months utilizing production lines used for seasonal flu vaccines.

Great Backyard Bird Count Results

https://www.birdcount.org/2024-final-results/?_hsmi=298408396&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8fNTiGQIM17qN5OKjWbbjlaop_IKYsxux-Utn_tZ5Cf8rpA1-6dT4Tzy9g7H6qf0u.JCQRNpc-NJkHGHdGWNmnkNu6vm9cw

7,920	species of birds identified
210	countries or subregions
384,416	eBird checklists
313,874	Merlin Bird IDs (step-by-step, sound, or photo)
164,740	photos, videos, and sounds added to Macaulay Library
642,003	estimated global participants
385	reported community events



Red-throated loon - photo eBird.org

In the field birding field trips up and running *by Mary O'neil*

This year, 2024, I have promised to organize and lead 2 birding field trips per month. I took the whole month of January to firm up my resolve, but by the time February arrived – Success at Last!! There have been no organized field trips since 2020 when COVID shut the country down. So, we are all rejoicing that 2 great trips in February and March is off to a terrific start.

On February 7, a beautiful sunny pre-spring day, 3 of us met up around 9:30 am and traveled to Tokeland, WA. All through the winter months rare bird reports were listing one rare bird after the next being seen at Tokeland and nearby. Unfortunately the rarities were not showing themselves that day, but we were happy to spot and identify 15 different species including 2 very difficult to ID female Surf Scoters and a relatively rare Red Throated Loon. Although the sun was bright, the temperature was chilling us to the bone so come 12:00, we headed to Nelsons Crab for a very heart-warming lunch.

After lunch, we decided to move on to Westport to take in their marina. Only a few miles north of Tokeland, we made a quick U-turn in the highway to check out a raptor - a Coopers Hawk - resting on a power line enjoying the view of the ocean at the roadside viewing station. At the Westport Marina we logged some Black Scoters which have been hanging out there. But of the 17 species recorded the best sighting of all was a Western Grebe carrying her little tiny chick on her back. Little baby grebe kept trying to get a better view of the world, but Mama would keep thunking him back down in her feathers with her bill. We ended our day back in Aberdeen around 3:30pm.

The second field trip in February was scheduled for Copalis Beach where I planned to trek the trails at Griffiths Priday Ocean State Park. But as everyone knows, "...the best laid plans of mice and men..." invariably go astray. Even so, we

managed to salvage a day of great camaraderie and land a total 21 species. Wanting to introduce participants to the great birding off the backroads around Ocean Beach Road, we dawdled from one field of standing water to the next idling the car while we watched the Red Tail Hawk disturbing the crows and the Great Blue Heron taking it all in from the top of an alder tree. By the time we stopped at the fishing site on the Humptulips River, steam was coming out from under the hood of my car and water was boiling out of my radiator. Several stress-filled hours later we arrived back in Hoquiam. "Never say Die." Once back in town, we changed cars and headed out again but this time to the Hoquiam sewer ponds. The rest of the afternoon was very relaxing as we counted ducks and geese including 35 Greater White-fronted Goose along with the Canadas and Cacklings. The 7 species of ducks was combed from over 200 individuals bobbing and diving and some just sleeping.

In scheduling the first field trip for March, I was again hit with the unexpected: a sudden change in the weather. The trip was planned for Lake Quinalt, but two days before the trip, there was 2 inches of snow in my yard in Hoquiam. One thing you can be sure: if there is snow in the Harbor, there is more snow at Quinalt. Fortunately, I have set up a list of emails for all who have indicated that you are interested in the field trips. I quickly sent out a message that we would switch destinations for the Thursday field trip. Instead of going to Quinalt, we would do the Brady Loop. Five participants showed up. Since nobody had a 5-passenger vehicle, we had to caravan. At first I felt really sad that the people in one car would not benefit from what was being seen by the members of the other car. I called the second car on my cell phone to find out what they thought. They turned on speaker phone. I turned on speaker phone. Both cars were connected and everyone raved at the fun time we all shared together.



*Golden Eagle
photo by WDFW
Continued on page 5*

In the field continued from page 4

Reports had been coming in about an over-wintering Golden Eagle in the Brady area. Also, a Red Shouldered Hawk had been seen in the area as well. Our hopes were set high to get these two rarities on our trip list. In the end, we might not have been able to add these to our list, but then again: maybe that hawk in the alder at the end of the road with his back to the sun really was the Red Shouldered. Who could tell when you can't focus your binoculars into the sun. And again, later in the day at the other end of the loop when everyone is scanning the Western sky where the Golden Eagle has reportedly been seen, I turn towards the east to see a very large, very dark bird coming out from behind a lone tree wildly flapping its wings. Before I could get anyone else to focus on it, the bird disappeared into the forest alongside the Chehalis River. Maybe we really did see the Golden Eagle. Without another pair of eyes, who could tell? Even without these two rarities, we ended up with a list of 31 species including 8 Trumpeter Swans, 8 Green-winged Teal, 4 Ring-necked Ducks, 7 Common Mergansers in gorgeous breeding plumage and how many Brewers Blackbirds?? 150?, 200? more??

If you were with us, I know you had a great time. If you missed it, you really missed out. But stay alert – more field trips are coming. If you haven't already got your email on my Birders list, be sure to let me know if you want to be added for last minute news and up-to-date reports.

Field Trips for April and May are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, April 9 Willapa Bay

Meet at Tractor Supply Parking Area closest to Hwy 12 at 8:00 am. We will travel south to Raymond and South Bend.

Sunday, April 21 Ocean Shores

Meet at The Flooring Company parking lot on the corner of 6th and Simpson in Hoquiam at 8:30 am. We will check various birding strongholds including the trail at Ocean City State Park, The North Jetty, The sewage treatment plant, Oyuhut Wildlife Refuge, and Bill's Spit depending on tide and time. If you live in Ocean Shores, contact me directly for a convenient meeting place.

Sunday, May 12, Mima Mounds near Littlerock, WA

Meet at Tractor Supply Parking area closest to Hwy 12 at 8:00am. If you live east of Aberdeen, contact me for a meeting place more convenient for you. Enroute, Hwy 12 offers overviews of

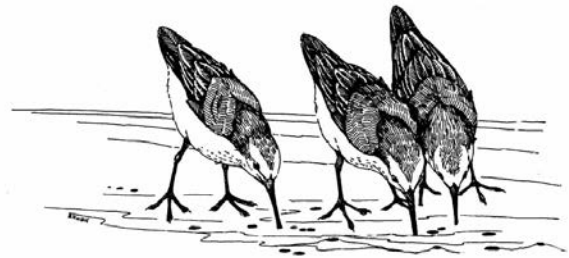
the Chehalis River valley. We will spend most of the time at Mima Mounds walking the trails and the forested roadway. If we have extra time there are some small parks in Littlerock where we can check for birds.

Tuesday, May 28 Julie Butler Hansen Wildlife Refuge near Cathlamet, WA

Meet at Tractor Supply Parking area near Hwy 12 at 8:00 am. This is a 2 hour drive, but it offers an excellent mix of driving and walking trails. Located close to the Columbia River, there is a wide mix of songbirds, raptors and water fowl.

Just a reminder, if you would like to be included on my Birders email list, be sure to contact me so you can get the latest reminders of what's happening in the birder's world.

Mary O'Neil
deed2et2et@yahoo.com
360-810-7995



2024 Shorebird and Nature Festival

Registration for this year's festival is online and can be found by visiting <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>. Don't miss this opportunity to help celebrate the natural world and the spring migration of hundreds of thousands of shorebirds as they rest and feed along the Washington Coast and in Grays Harbor on their flight northward. Coming from as far south as Argentina, these travelers are Arctic-bound and are among the world's greatest migrants. Some of the birds travel over 15,000 miles round trip.

This year's festival provides activities to interest and engage everyone from the solitary bird enthusiast to the whole family.

Best Shorebird viewing times for 2024 on the Sandpiper Trail at the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge

2024	High Tide	Tide Height (ft)	Best Viewing
Saturday, April 20	11:52 am	8.3	9 am - 3 pm
Sunday, April 21	12:39 pm	8.6	9:30 am - 3:30 pm
Monday, April 22	1:24 pm	8.9	10:30 am - 4:30 pm
Tuesday, April 23	2:07 pm	9.0	11 am - 5 pm
Wednesday, April 24	2:51 pm	9.0	Noon - 6 pm
Thursday, April 25	3:33 pm	8.8	12:30 - 6:30 pm
Friday, April 26	4:16 pm	8.6	1:15 - 7:15 pm.
Saturday, April 27	5:01 pm	8.2	2 - 8 pm
Sunday, April 28	5:50 pm	7.8	3 - 9 pm
Monday, April 29	4:28 am or 6:45 pm	9.7 or 7.5	1:30 - 7:30 am - 3:45 - 9:45 pm
Tuesday, April 30	5:27 am	9.2	2:30 - 8:30 am
Wednesday, May 1	6:45 am	8.8	3:45 - 9:45 am
Thursday, May 2	8:11 am	8.5	5 - 11 am.
<i>Friday, May 3</i>	<i>9:31 am.</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>6:30 am - 12:30 pm</i>
<i>Saturday, May 4</i>	<i>10:44 am</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>7:40 am - 1:40 pm</i>
<i>Sunday, May 5</i>	<i>11:49 am</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>9 am - 3 pm</i>
Monday, May 6	12:49 pm	9.4	9:45 am - 3:45 pm
Tuesday, May 7	1:46 pm	9.5	10:45 am - 4:45 pm
Wednesday, May 8	2:41 pm.	9.1	11:40 am - 5:40 pm
Thursday, May 9	3:33 pm	9.3	12:30 pm - 6:30 pm
Friday, May 10	4:24 pm	9.0	1:30 - 7:30 pm
Saturday, May 11	5:13 pm	8.6	2:15 - 7:15 pm
Sunday, May 12	6:02 pm	8.2	3 - 9 pm
Monday, May 13	5:02 am or 6:52 pm	9.0 or 7.9	2 - 8 am or 4 - 10 pm
Tuesday, May 14	5:56 am or 7:44 pm	8.2 or 7.7	3 - 9 am or 4:40 - 10:40 pm

** bold italics indicate festival days*



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

GHAS Board of Directors

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National Audubon	(212) 979-3000
GHAS Website	<i>http://ghas.org</i>

****all area codes 360, unless otherwise noted****

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Please Fill Out and Mail Back

**ANNUAL GRAYS HARBOR AUDUBON
CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

If you would like to join Grays Harbor Audubon Society (GHAS), please fill out the form below, **make your check payable to Grays Harbor Audubon Society** and return it with your check to:

**Grays Harbor Audubon Society
P.O. Box 470
Montesano, WA 98563**

Chapter Memberships include a subscription to *The Sandpiper* newsletter. The Grays Harbor Audubon Society is totally self-supporting. Please note that the Sandpiper Newsletter is sent via email, so please include your email address on this form or send it to Linda Orgel at Ldotorg@olearycreek.com

Name _____ *Date* _____

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Phone Number _____ *E-Mail* _____

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heron | \$ 25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pelican | \$ 50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Falcon | \$ 75.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | \$ _____ |

- I am renewing my membership
 I am a new member

Please do NOT publish my name in the newsletter in the list of GHAS members

To join National Audubon or renew your National Audubon Membership, call 1-800-274-4201.

News & Editorial

send materials to
P.O. Box 1044
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or email to
rd@olearycreek.com

Copy deadline 10th of
month preceding
membership meeting

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The Sandpiper

P.O. Box 470
Montesano,
WA 98563



Program Meeting

**Life at the Edge
Estuary Birds and Mammals
with Laura Busby**

***Hoquiam Library Meeting Room
420 Seventh Street
(7th & K)***

ZOOM LINK

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82118695964?pwd=dDVqOXFlbUJrakxLWXhLNTRQL1ovUT09>

Meeting ID: 821 1869 5964

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**NOTE MEETING TIME
CHANGE 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm
April 7, 2024**