

*Program Meeting
Hoquiam Library Meeting Room
April 13 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm*

*National Poetry Month
celebrating the locals
NOTE DATE CHANGE*

March
April
2025



The Sandpiper



artwork by Mark Witton

Loon-like waterfowl from dinosaur-era Antarctica is oldest 'modern' bird *by Will Dunham*

Near the end of the age of dinosaurs, a bird resembling today's loons and grebes dove for fish and other prey in the perilous waters off Antarctica. Thanks to a nearly complete fossil skull, scientists now have identified this waterfowl as the oldest-known member of the lineage spanning all birds alive today.

The new fossil unearthed on Vega Island near the Antarctic Peninsula of the ancient bird named *Vegavis iaai* dates to about 69 million years ago, approximately three million years before the asteroid strike at the end of the Cretaceous Period that wiped out the dinosaurs, aside from their avian descendants.

Fossils of *Vegavis* were first described two decades ago. But without sufficient cranial remains its place on the bird family tree had remained ambiguous. The researchers now were able to diagnose *Vegavis* as nesting among the anatomically modern birds based on two cranial characteristics the bones of its upper beak and the shape of its brain.

"Both of those features are observable in the new *Vegavis* specimen," said evolutionary biologist Chris Torres of the University of the Pacific in Cali-

fornia, lead author of the research published in the journal *Nature*.

Vegavis was an early waterfowl, a group that also includes ducks and geese. *Vegavis* appears to have been ecologically specialized to pursue fish and other prey underwater in a shallow marine ecosystem. Antarctica at the time was not the desolate land of snow and ice that it is today, but rather a forested landscape with a temperate climate.

Birds evolved during the Jurassic Period from small feathered dinosaurs. The oldest-known bird, *Archaeopteryx*, dates to about 150 million years ago. With a mouthful of teeth and long bony tails, the earliest birds were a far cry from modern ones. *Vegavis* is one of only two modern birds known from the age of dinosaurs. The other one, *Asterornis maastrichtensis*, lived about 67 million years ago in what is now Belgium. *Vegavis* was the size of a mallard but did not have a bill like a duck. It instead had a spear-shaped beak like a loon. Its skeletal structure indicates that it dove for its dinner.

"*Vegavis* almost certainly preyed on fish and small invertebrates that lived in the shallow marine environment near the Antarctic Peninsula, like the diet of certain birds alive today like loons, grebes and even penguins. Exactly how deep it could go and the length of time it could spend underwater is not clear," said evolutionary biologist and study senior author Patrick O'Connor of Ohio University and the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

"We know that *Vegavis* would have shared the marine ecosystem with other birds and an array of different fishes. But unlike today, it would have also shared the water with classic Cretaceous creatures," O'Connor added, including marine reptiles such as long-necked plesiosaurs and strong-jawed mosasaurs as well as large nautilus-like ammonites.

As preserved, the skull measures about 3 inches (7.6 cm) long, but would have been a bit longer in life because it is incomplete.

Noting that waterfowl are a specialized avian form, the researchers suspect that the first anatomically modern birds actually appeared millions of years before *Vegavis*.

The President's Perch



By Janet Strong

Note: This month's President's Perch will cordially invite all of you, members, friends, readers and all, to actively involve yourselves in chapter and Shorebird Festival activities. Please read on...

April is poetry month!

And we will celebrate this special month at our April 13th Members' and Friends' Meeting at 1:30 p.m. at the Hoquiam TRL Library meeting room. Our program will feature GHAS chapter member and published poet, Carol Sunde, who will read a few poems from her new book. Everyone is invited to follow Carol with a sharing of your own writings, a poem or short prose, OR a poem or prose from your favorite author, one that touches on birds and nature. Each reader will have 3 minutes at the podium, so everyone can participate.

Also, visual arts will be on display for all to enjoy, including local paintings, drawings, photography and carvings. We invite you to bring art of your own creation, or some of a favorite artist, to display for the enjoyment of all. Books of great bird photography will also be on hand for all to enjoy and you may share your own bird books.

This is our first attempt at audience participation at our meetings and we hope it brings out the artist or collector in everyone. Delicious refreshments will add an artistic flare. Please come.

GH Shorebird & Nature Festival needs our help!

Due to sudden drastic cuts in federal funding, and thus uncertainty at festival time, the Nisqually NWR staff may not be able to perform all the numerous tasks needed to make the festival a success. The major workers for Saturday and Sunday's organization, activities and clean-up, they need lots of volunteers to help with tasks on both days. Members and friends, we are needed. If you can donate a couple to a few hours on either day at the Hoquiam Middle School, please contact Julia Pinnix at julia_pinnix@fws.gov or me at janet.strong4@gmail.com. You won't be overworked and you may have some fun.



Treats needed for GHS Festival Friday evening program

Lastly, GHAS organizes the festival's dessert reception on Friday evening (April 25), before (6:45pm) the Featured Speaker talk (7:30pm) in the Hoquiam High School Theater. If you can help, please bring desserts, baked goods, fruits, etc. to the High School dining area after 5 p.m. that afternoon.

A huge THANK YOU to all who will participate in the above events during our very busy April!



THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

FEBRUARY 14-17, 2025



Final numbers for the 2025 Great Backyard Bird Count are in!

Together we smashed records, found more birds than ever before, and had a lot of fun. Thank you for being a part of it!

What we accomplished, in the numbers:

8,078 species of birds identified

217 countries or eBird subregions

387,652 eBird checklists

611,066 Merlin Bird IDs (step-by-step, sound, or photo)

189,741 photos, videos, and sounds added to Macaulay Library

838,113 estimated global participants

409 reported community events

<https://ebird.org/gbbc/region/world>

It was a record breaking event held for four days, Friday February 14th through Monday February 17th of 2025.

Mark your calendar for February 13 - 16, 2026 to engage in next years' fun. It is something that you can do alone or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds. It's simple, watch birds for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four day period. Identify all the birds you see or hear within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings. The Merlin Bird ID app <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/> is a handy tool help you identify that sound that is off in the bushes or hidden by the foliage



In the field upcoming field trip reminders

Sunday, March 30 Tokeland, WA

Meet at the Southside Swanson at 8:30. Any joining us from the Westport/Grayland area, meet at the Tokeland Marina near the restrooms. We should arrive there around 9:15 or 9:30 am.

Monday, April 14 Ocean Shores

Meet at the former Flooring Company parking lot on the corner of Simpson St and 6th in Hoquiam at 8:30 am. For those from Ocean Shores or other coastal locales, we can meet you at the parking lot with the public restrooms on the first beach access road (St. Rte 115/Damon Road) near the Lighthouse Suites Hotel.

These are all fairly local destinations. As we get into Spring with the promise of better weather we can plan more distant locations.

I will be sending reminders for upcoming trips through my Birders email list. If you are not on it and would like to be, please email me at deed2et2et@yahoo.com

*Your Field Trip Chairperson
Mary O'Neil*



hudsonian godwit



PRAIRIE APPRECIATION DAY

May 10, 2025 10:00 am – 2:00pm

30th Annual Celebration at Glacial Heritage Preserve

With no admission charge, explore Glacial Heritage Preserve, one of the largest remaining remnants of Western Washington's endangered prairie ecosystem. Thanks to on-going restoration for over 30 years, the prairie now looks much the way it may have looked 200 years ago. Here are some fun ways you can experience the 1,020-acre Glacial Heritage Preserve:

The Activity Trail, ~ 1 mile: contains a number of informative stations covering various aspects of our South Sound prairies. The stations have experts to discuss each topic as well as activities for children and the young at heart. Activities may include: making seed balls and trying your hand at writing with ink made from oak galls. Talk to experts about birds, butterflies, bees, gardening with native prairie plants, how fire is used to restore prairies, and much more..

The Self-Guided Trail, ~ 4 miles: A good choice for those who just want to absorb the ambiance and peace of the prairies, this route also includes a cut-off trail for those wishing a shorter walk. The walk takes you past an osprey nest down to an oak savanna bordering the Black River.

Black Hills Audubon Society is again hosting an early morning bird walk. With several highly experienced guides, weather permitting, over 70 bird species might be identified. For more information: <https://www.prairieappreciationday.org/activities/>

Hay Ride. Take an opportunity to ride around the prairie and associated habitats sitting on a hay bale.

Food Truck. As in previous years, we plan to have an on-site food vendor. Check back later for confirmation and to see who it will be. As Wi-Fi can be iffy, bring cash.

Gift Tent. Here you can find prairie swag such as T shirts, caps, cards and assorted other items. Proceeds go to Friends of Puget Prairies, a 501(c)3 to support Prairie Appreciation Day and south sound

prairies. *The gate closes at 2pm for entry and is locked at 4pm.

For your visit, a few things to remember:

- Temperature changes from morning to afternoon can be extensive; be prepared for cold, windy, rainy and hot weather all on the same day.
- Bring water, drinks, snacks, or a picnic.
- Bring a sun hat and sun screen.
- Please leave pets at home; pets are not allowed at this event. Parked vehicle temperatures can quickly elevate putting your pet's life in danger.
- The terrain at Glacial Heritage Preserve is uneven and hilly. It is not suitable for strollers, and it is not considered handicapped accessible. An alternative to Glacial Heritage Preserve is Mima Mounds Natural Area.

Mima Mounds Natural Areas

There is a paved trail ideal for families with toddlers and those who want a less strenuous experience while walking and witnessing the mounds in full flower. This location is fully accessible and includes wheelchair-accessible restrooms at the trailhead. Discover Pass is required.

Thurston County Food Bank. Visitors are encouraged to bring a donation for the Thurston County Food Bank. A barrel for donations is located at the Welcome Tent. Please, no glass.

Directions

For Glacial Heritage Preserve and Mima Mounds Natural Areas, Take I-5 to Exit 95. Go west through Littlerock on 128th Ave SW straight through Littlerock (note that the other two directions of traffic at the intersection with Littlerock Rd. do not stop) until you reach a stop sign at the T in the road.

- For Glacial Heritage Preserve turn LEFT at the T onto Mima Rd. Drive south 2.7 miles and turn left at the event sign onto a gravel road. Drive to the gate of Glacial Heritage and follow parking directions. Please respect the local residents and observe a speed limit of 10 mph on the access road.
- For Mima Mounds Natural Areas, turn RIGHT at the T onto Waddell Creek Rd. Drive north approximately 0.7 of a mile until you see the event sign. Turn left into Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve. This road does not have a center stripe, so drive carefully. Please park with care as tour buses will be using the access road.

A Discover Pass is required.

Signs will be posted on the roadside to both Glacial Heritage Preserve and Mima Mounds Natural Area.

Member meeting

Sunday, April 13, 2025

Note Change of date to second Sunday

In recognition of National Poetry Month, our member meeting will focus on poetry and birds.

Launched by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month is a special occasion that celebrates poets' integral role in our culture and that poetry matters. Over the years, it has become the largest literary celebration in the world, with tens of millions of readers, students, K-12 teachers, librarians, booksellers, literary events curators, publishers, families, and—of course—poets, marking poetry's important place in our lives.

We encourage members and guests to bring their poetry to share at our meeting on Sunday, April 13, 2025. We'll have refreshments and the usual goodies available. The meeting begins at 1:30 pm and is held at the Hoquiam Library downstairs meeting room. Carol Sunde will share some of her award winning poetry to get us started, as will our Audubon chair, Janet Strong.



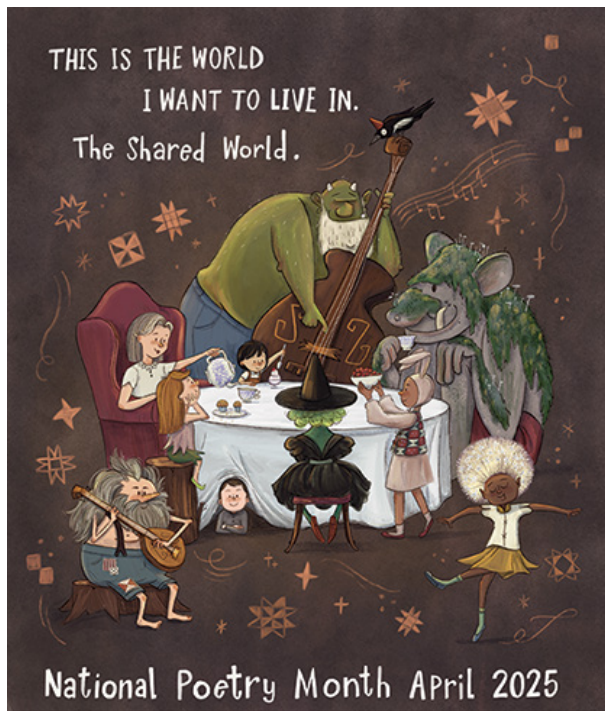
Member highlight

Carol R. Sunde's debut poetry book, *Through Pine Shadows*, has recently been published by MoonPath Press. Carol, long a member of the Grays Harbor Audubon Society, includes in her collection a number of nature poems and references to birds as well as sharing a lifetime of real and imaginary experiences, observations, and musings across a life full of lessons, loves, losses, and joys. Carol's work has also been published online and in print in journals such as *Cirque*, *Passager*, *The Comstock Review*.

Carol was born and raised in Iowa and is a retired Social Worker (Ph.D.) living in Westport, Washington. Upon retiring from a counselor position at Grays Harbor College, she earned a *Certificate in Poetry* from the University of Washington. Braving the drive back and forth to Seattle for a year taking weekly classes. She continues to immerse herself in poetry workshops, conferences, writing groups, and, of course, reading and writing poems.

Besides poetry, her other top joys include yoga, bird and sky watching, and travel. She feels lucky and fortunate to be in the Pacific Northwest with its awesome people, forests, ocean, rivers, deserts, mountains, plains, and rain.

Her book *Through Pine Shadows* is available at Bookshop.org, Amazon, Barnes & Noble.





**Washington Ornithological Society/
Western Field Ornithologists
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
*Yakima Convention & Event Center
Yakima, WA, June 5-8, 2025*

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) and Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) are teaming up for the 2025 Annual Conference.

Nestled between the majestic Cascade Mountains and the serene Columbia River, Yakima Valley offers an unparalleled diversity of habitats perfect for birding enthusiasts. From alpine tundra and evergreen forests to desert canyons, grasslands, and riparian woodlands, this region is a haven for avian species and their admirers.

Whether you are drawn to the open pine forest or marsh wetlands, Yakima and its neighboring counties provide ideal conditions for seeing a wide range of birdlife in action.

The 2025 program will combine the best of both organizations including:

- * Stump the Experts: Bird Quiz Night with Dennis Paulson and Shep Thorp
- * Sound Identification Team Challenge with Nathan Pieplow
- * Educational workshops and presentations of original scientific research
- * Full-day and half-day birding field trips will cover a diverse range of habitats from the wetlands and shrub-steppe of lower elevations to the open forests on the eastern slopes of the Cascades
- * Over 190 species of breeding birds and migrants are possible through various trips
- * Woodpeckers are a particular highlight, with 11 of 12 of breeding woodpeckers possible in Washington on field trips
- * Yakima and Kittitas Counties have a high diversity of owls; up to nine owl species could be possible on various field trips

REGISTRATION IS OPEN AND YOU CAN SECURE YOUR HOTEL ROOMS TODAY! VISIT THE WOS CONFERENCE HOTEL INFORMATION PAGE FOR HOTEL RATES AND RESERVATION INFORMATION.

<https://wos.org/annual-conference/current-year/>



photo by Dave Hayden

Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival

The annual Shorebird Festival will be April 25, 26, and 27. The Festival dates are based on the best high tides.

Friday, April 25 high tide @ 12:06 pm (9.37 ft)

Saturday, April 26 high tide @ 1:03 pm (9.67 ft)

Sunday, April 27 high tide @ 2:00 pm (9.82 ft)

Each spring, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed along the Washington Coast and in the Grays Harbor estuary during their migration northward. Coming from as far south as Argentina, these Arctic-bound shorebirds are among the world's greatest migrants. Some birds travel over 15,000 miles round trip! The concentration of birds during spring migration offers people a great chance to view a number of shorebird species. With luck you will also see the birds fly together in beautiful formation "murmurations" while trying to escape a Peregrine Falcon.

Activities over the three days include field trips, guided walks, family oriented projects, vendors and informational kiosks. Friday night John Prucich will be the Keynote speaker. (Hoquiam High School Little Theater 501 W. Emerson) He is a licensed falconer and has established *The Falconer* in 2015 out of his love of falconry, raptors, conservation and his desire to share that love with the public through education.

The Saturday night dinner speaker will be Maria Ruth, an author of non-fiction natural history. (Events On Emerson 212 4th St. Hoquiam) She will share her most recent book *Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet*.

For more information and to register for activities please visit <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/grays-harbor-shorebird-festival--2025>



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

Jude Armstrong	589-9790	<i>judearms@comcast.net</i>
Cecelia Boulais	273-9280	<i>caboulais@gmail.com</i>
Mary Lou Gregory	533-4897	<i>kuaygal@gmail.com</i>
Arnie Martin	612-0437	<i>arnold6.martin@comcast.net</i>
Sabra Noyes	891-2389	<i>finlee@q.com</i>
Mary O'Neil	810-7995	<i>deed2et2et@yahoo.com</i>
Linda Orgel	500-7228	<i>ldotorg@olearycreek.com</i>
Shelly Spalding	870-1739	<i>saschar44@gmail.com</i>
Janet Strong	495-3950	<i>janet.strong4@gmail.com</i>

Chapter Officers

President	Janet Strong 495-3950 <i>janet.strong4@gmail.com</i>
Vice President	Mary O'Neil 810-7995 <i>deed2et2et@yahoo.com</i>
Treasurer	Cecelia Boulais 273-9280 <i>caboulais@gmail.com</i>
Secretary	Linda Orgel 500-7228 <i>ldotorg@olearycreek.com</i>

Committee Chairs

Conservation	Janet Strong, 495-3950 <i>janet.strong4@gmail.com</i>
Education	<i>Vacant</i>
Field Trip Coordinator	Mary O'Neil 810-7995 <i>deed2et2et@yahoo.com</i>
Habitat	<i>Vacant</i>
Hospitality	Linda Orgel 500-7228 <i>ldotorg@olearycreek.com</i>
Membership	Linda Orgel 500-7228 <i>ldotorg@olearycreek.com</i>
Newsletter	R.D. Grunbaum, 648-2476 <i>rd@olearycreek.com</i>
Program Committee	Janet Strong, 495-3950 <i>janet.strong4@gmail.com</i>
Publicity Committee	Janet Strong, 495-3950 <i>janet.strong4@gmail.com</i>
Webmaster/Communications	Mary Lou Gregory 533-4897 <i>kuaygal@gmail.com</i>

Other Audubon Contacts

GHAS voice mail	(360) 495-3950
National Audubon	(212) 979-3000
GHAS Website	<i>http://ghas.org</i>

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

Follow us on FaceBook

https://www.facebook.com/graysharborbirding

or

Follow us on our website

http://ghas.org

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* _____

Address _____

City _____ *State/Zip* _____

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

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

News & Editorial

send materials to
P.O. Box 1044
Westport, 98595-1044
or email to
rd@olearycreek.com

Copy deadline 10th of
month preceding
membership meeting

Inside this Issue

Loon-like bird Dinosaur-era	1
President's perch	2
Treats needed	2
Great Backyard Bird Count	3
Upcoming field trips	3
Prairie Appreciation Day	4
Member meeting	5
Member highlight	5
Annual Conference	6
Shorebird Festival	6
Board & Officers	7
Member application	8

The Sandpiper

P.O. Box 470
Montesano,
WA 98563



Program Meeting

Celebrate National Poetry Month
featuring local poets, authors and artists

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

NOTE NEW DATE
2nd Sunday
April 13, 2025
MEETING TIME
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm