

*Program Meeting  
Alexa Brown  
The Grays Harbor Stream Team  
Via Zoom  
see page 2 and/or page 9 for access*

May  
June  
2021



# The Sandpiper



*photo by Chokchai Leangsuksun/Audubon Photography Awards*

## **Migrating Birds Need Our Help** *An update on Audubon's policy efforts to protect migratory birds - Audubon*

You might find yourself in more conversations about the birds you are seeing and hearing lately. Billions of birds are flying across our continent on a migration journey that in some cases defies logic. From tiny warblers to Sandhill Cranes, many of the birds you are seeing and hearing travel hundreds and even thousands of miles roundtrip moving up and down the Western Hemisphere. Some cross continents and oceans, some up and down coastlines. We're in the middle of the peak period of spring migration, which is why May is when we celebrate World Migratory Bird Day.

Right now, in the United States, those migrating birds lack long-standing protections they had held for decades. The Trump administration, despite court losses and significant public opposition, implemented a rule to weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a 100-year-old law that has long stood as the foundation of bird protection in this country. The rule, finalized in January, limits the MBTA's protection only to activities that purposefully kill birds, exempting all industrial hazards from enforcement.

This means that any "incidental" death—no matter how inevitable, avoidable or devastating to birds—became immune from enforcement under the law. If this change had been in place in 2010, BP would have faced no consequences under the MBTA for the more than one million birds killed in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The Biden administration has introduced a new rule to revoke this change. This is an important step,

but not the end of what we need to do to bring birds back.

"Reinstating Migratory Bird Treaty Act protections is a critical step, and at a time when we have lost 3 billion birds in North America since 1970 and climate change threatens extinction for two-thirds of bird species, it is a baseline for what we should be doing for birds," said Sarah Greenberger, senior vice president of conservation policy, National Audubon Society. "Birds are telling us they are in trouble and we are running out of time to act."

New science has revealed the loss of 3 billion birds in North America since 1970 and that two-thirds of North American birds are at risk of extinction due to climate change. Audubon is calling for a multi-front approach to tackle this alarming bird emergency. That starts with not only reinstating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, but strengthening it for the future.

"We're asking the Biden administration to prioritize the adoption of a permitting program for incidental take," said Erik Schneider, policy analyst, National Audubon Society. "Establishing permits to help industry manage and reduce its impact on birds is a common-sense approach to clarifying these longstanding protections and providing businesses with certainty."

Audubon is also looking for Congress to get involved. Reintroduction and passage of the Migratory Bird Protection Act is a critical priority. The Migratory Bird Protection Act was passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee in the 116th Congress and had a bipartisan group of more than 90 co-sponsors.

The bill would secure protections for birds and direct the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to develop a permitting process for "incidental take" through which relevant businesses would implement best management practices and document compliance, further driving innovation in how to best prevent bird deaths. It would need to be reintroduced in this 117th Congress in order to be considered again.

Audubon is also working to backstop the lost protections at the state-level. Over the last three years California, Vermont, and Virginia have established state-level migratory bird protections.

continued on page 3

## The President's Perch



*By Janet Strong*

I hope all of you are keeping up with the two-step forward, one-step backward pace of spring's advance. The birds and plants seem to pay scant attention to the weather fluctuations. The shorebirds arrived in Grays Harbor to feed, murmurate and fly off to the north right on their schedule, rain and cold notwithstanding. Wild and garden flowers are showing off their glory without pausing much for cool and rainy weather. (However, the irises do seem to be earlier and more spectacular this year.) If you don't have a blooming garden, feel free to walk or drive around to enjoy the gorgeous visual treats that others provide.

Although there is a glimmer of light at the end of the Covid tunnel, it looks like we may still not be able to celebrate our annual picnic this year. People are rightfully cautious about gathering in numbers and, mostly unvaccinated, folks are still getting sick. We will offer a June membership Zoom program on June 6, featuring Alexa Brown, GH Stream Coordinator, and her habitat restoration accomplishments for the past year. See the enclosed article. Have a wonderful bird-rich, flower-rich summer and a healthy one as well.



A good day hunting  
Catching a mouthful of food  
For kids in the nest

David Linn



## Seward Park Audubon Center reopens

A sense of renewal and rebirth is amongst us. The migrants have returned; spring is in full swing; we are seeing signs of progress on the pandemic. For us, after many long months we are re-opening our Seward Park Audubon Center! Beginning Saturday, May 29, the Seward Park Audubon Center will restart outdoor programs and we are elated to welcome Ed Dominguez back in his role as Lead Naturalist. We are kicking off our return to the park with a bevy of free guided walks and a reforestation event. Check the events page to learn more. The Nature Store begins its new operating hours on May 29th: Saturdays and Sundays, 10 AM - 5 PM. Come over for a visit!

We strive to conserve birds through education, science, policy, and engaging our strong network of bird lovers. This year, together, we had many successes in the legislature. Thank you for joining us through thick and thin to protect birds and the places they need. Hope we can see each other out birding soon!

Join GHAS Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84122539452?pwd=Q3o2aURQMFdVOHQ0a2J3Q05kSDhOZz09>

Meeting ID: 841 2253 9452  
Passcode: 618973

### ***Bird Migration continued from Page 1***

Strengthening the MBTA will be an incredible victory for birds, but just as there is no single cause of declining migratory bird populations, there is no single policy solution, program or approach that will suffice. Audubon's policy priorities, from reducing emissions to restoring and conserving our lands and waters, are focused on addressing the threats to birds, people, and the places we need. But the loss of 3 billion birds requires a special focus.

That's why Audubon, the American Bird Conservancy, and other organizations are working to build broad support for a suite of actions that foster on-the-ground protection, mitigation, and restoration of bird populations and the habitats they need to thrive.

*The Bring Birds Back Policy Agenda* is focused on three main objectives:

- 1) Reinstate and strengthen the Migratory Bird Treaty Act through administration and legislative action.
- 2) Increase funding and coordination for federal and state fish and wildlife agencies to address the needs of declining and vulnerable species and landscapes the agencies manage.
- 3) Revitalize and enhance the framework for national and international conservation of migratory birds through a suite of administrative and legislative actions.

This will require action by both the administration and Congress.

There are already early signs of hope in 2021. In addition to the administration reinstating critical migratory bird protection, the "America the Beautiful" vision which was just announced includes important goals for expanding migratory corridors and investing in habitat restoration.

We have also seen Congress on the move. The Bird-Safe Building Act, which passed the House of Representatives last Congress, was reintroduced earlier this year as was the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. You can learn more about both bills and tell your Member of Congress today that you support them by clicking the links above.

We expect to see more progress as the appropriations process for the next fiscal year begins and we'll keep you updated on how you can get involved.



### **Program Meeting**

Grays Harbor Stream Team - Alexa Brown

Our speaker, Alexa Brown graduated from Western Washington University with a B.A. in Environmental Policy and a B.S. in Environmental Science. During her time at the University, she interned with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) as a Stream Restoration Intern. "I loved the work that NSEA was doing so much that I became a Student Board Member and then went on to work as the Administrative Assistant. While at NSEA my fondness of working with the community and the environment blossomed." Following her time at NSEA she worked two seasons with the Department of Natural Resources removing invasive species within Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor. "Both watersheds grew on me and I yearned to work with the community in the area. I found the position as the Grays Harbor Stream Team coordinator and became very excited at the prospect of working to bring the community closer together around increasing the health and resiliency of our streams and waterways. This position has fostered my deep commitment to the Chehalis Basin and ensuring its well-being into the future".

"Personally, I enjoy exploring and learning more about the Chehalis Basin. Paddling the basin has become one of my new favorite hobbies along with looking for freshwater mussels. Rock hounding and exploring the beaches within the basin is also one of my favorite pastimes. There is always more to explore and I look forward to the chance to build an intimate knowledge of the basin".

Alexa will present on the Grays Harbor Stream Team accomplishments and growth over the past year. The Team has participated in a number of long-term maintenance projects along with new and exciting projects with a number of community partners. The volunteer work of the Grays Harbor Stream Team is inspiring and we are excited to share more about what they have accomplished.



## How I repurposed a Blink camera to create the ultimate for birdwatching

By Julie Strietelmeier - *The Gadgeteer*

My sister and I have recently become obsessed with birds when she opened her curtains one morning and saw two Baltimore Orioles on her suet feeders. She was so excited to see a new bird that she'd never seen before that it made me start birdwatching too.

I began keeping an eye on my own small feeder to see if anything new would show up due to the spring migration of birds. A day or two after her Oriole sighting, I happened to be looking outside at my feeder and caught the quick flash of black, white, and red as a bird flew off.

A few minutes later it landed on top of the shepherd's hook that we use to hold our feeder. I was excited to see a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. I hurriedly pulled out my iPhone 12 Pro Max and zoomed in quickly to capture the bird so I could show it to my sister. You can also see that image above. The picture is grainy and not very clear, but you can tell what it is if you're a birdwatcher.

Then early the next morning I was lucky to see this little guy and again, I captured a quick grainy shot of a Yellow-breasted Chat with my iPhone.

I started thinking about buying a better camera with a telephoto lens just so I could get better bird pics. But after checking prices, my brain came up with another idea to repurpose the gear I already have to create an automatic birdwatching camera. That way I wouldn't have to stand around all day waiting for the birds to show up so I could take thier picture. I wanted something that would take the pictures for me and I found a great solution. The Blink camera.

If you aren't familiar with Blink cameras, they are small wireless battery-powered security cameras that you can put anywhere inside your home and they will capture video clips when motion is triggered. Check out my Blink security cam-

era review for more info. <https://the-gadgeteer.com/2016/03/02/blink-wire-free-hd-home-monitoring-system-review/>

As I mentioned, the Blink cameras are small, battery-powered, and wireless. The outdoor version of the Blink camera is designed to be placed outdoors and is weather and water-resistant which makes it the perfect birdwatching camera.

The Blink camera settings are customized using a mobile app to set the sensitivity for the motion detection and video clip length that it will capture. The cool thing is that your phone will notify you when the camera captures motion so that you can either look out and see what's on the feeder or you can view the camera in real-time through the app. That means that even if you are not at home, you can see cool birds at your feeder.

In my setup, the Blink camera is approximately 10 inches from my hanging feeder. I was worried that it would be too close and that the captured pictures and video would be blurry, but I'll let you see a compilation of some video clips and see what you think.

I know that this setup isn't going to impress a serious birdwatcher who is also a photographer, but I think it's a fun and easy way to create a birdwatching camera that will automatically capture birds in action without much effort at all other than having a Blink camera or similar wireless battery-powered camera that you can put near your bird feeder.





(photo Corey T. Callaghan)

**Four Species Reign Supreme: House Sparrows, European Starlings, Barn Swallows and Ring-billed Gulls all occupy the billion-bird club**

*Researchers found that the House Sparrow Passer domesticus had the biggest population out of the total bird species surveys at 1.6 billion individuals.*

By Elizabeth Gamillo smithsonianmag.com

According to a new study, there are at least 50 billion total wild birds—or six birds for every human on the planet.

The new paper, published this month in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, examined data collected by users of the citizen science database eBird and compared it with data collected by *Partners in Flight* and *BirdLife International* to check the accuracy. The researchers then combined the three pools of data to create an algorithm that estimated the population sizes for other species that were not the subject of the professional studies and lacked significant data, reports Adam Vaughan for New Scientist.

“The really big breakthrough in this paper was we could take the scientific data and the citizen science data and then fill the gap for birds which are not studied by professional scientists,” says ecologist and co-author Will Cornwell of the UNSW to Lisa Cox for the Guardian.

Out of all 9,700 species analyzed, four birds reached what the researchers call the “billion club,” or species with an estimated global population of over a billion. These included the house sparrow at 1.6 billion, the European starling at 1.3 billion, the ring-billed gull at 1.2 billion, and the barn swallow at 1.1 billion.

In contrast, 1,180 species, or 12 percent of the population numbers, have fewer than 5,000 indi-

viduals, reports New Scientist. Some of these species included the great spotted kiwi at 377 individuals, the Javan hawk-eagle at 630 individuals, and the Seychelles kestrel with under 100 individuals remaining, per Douglas Main for National Geographic.

“It’s really ambitious—it’s a big undertaking to try and figure out how many birds there are in the world. They thought really deeply about it and took as many steps as possible to make it as precise as possible,” says Lucas DeGroot, a researcher at the Powdermill Avian Research Center at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, to National Geographic.

When the last review of bird populations was taken 24 years ago, estimates reached between 200 billion and 400 billion individuals, New Scientist reports. The vast discrepancy between the old and new data reflects different methods used for analysis and data collection; it does not reflect an overall decline in birds, reports New Scientist. Overall, the study helps provide a baseline for researchers interested in future bird populations’ calculations, improve conservation efforts of rare species, and help researchers find what makes a rare species scarce, study author Corey Callaghan, a biologist at the University of New South Wales, explains to New Scientist.

“Quantifying the abundance of a species is a crucial first step in conservation. By properly counting what’s out there, we learn what species might be vulnerable and can track how these patterns change over time - in other words, we can better understand our baselines,” Callaghan said.

**The Raven**



Bringing in a stone  
Submerging in bathwater  
Cleaning ritual

David Linn

## Springtime

*Riding the blue ribbons of air,  
the monarchs of the spring  
Have returned. Now their glory glides  
Before our eyes in majestic condescension.  
Ill at ease in our ungainly walking,  
We stand still and gaze,  
Weighed down by the guilt and shame  
Of earthbound winter appetites.*

*Tonight, we'll float on down-breast  
Softness in our dreams, until we hear  
The low pitched trumpeting at dawn when,  
Feathers dripping silver and wingtips  
Dipped in rose, the swans take off  
Into the every faithful rising sun  
And, wheeling sharply towards East,  
Head for ancestral Yellowstone*

Franz K. Schneider

*Editor's Note: With great sadness we report that our friend and long-time Audubon and environment supporter Franz Schneider died April 14, 2021 at his home in Mennonite Village, Albany, Oregon. He was 93. He was a gentle man, and will be greatly missed.  
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/gazettetimes/name/franz-schneider-obituary?pid=198386611>*



March 17, 1928 - April 14, 2021

## Chestnut-Backed Chickadee



Old tree in decay  
Provides superb habitat  
For new nesting spot

David Linn

## Nature Niche

Beneath the blooming cherry tree  
There lies a place for you and me  
A carpet of purple blooms galore  
And to the side so many more  
Tall shrubs dressed in scarlet globes  
Pink, blue and gold beneath their robes.

Within this rainbow buzz the bassoons  
Of bumblebees.  
Staccato drums of pounding beaks  
Send bark flying everywhere.  
Chips, trills and whistles rise and descend  
To complete the orchestral rendering.

Lucky us if we have a place  
Apart from the teeming human race.  
Let's cherish whatever niche we find  
That brings some solace to our mind.

Jan Strong

### ***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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GHAS Website	<a href="http://ghas.org">http://ghas.org</a>

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If you would like to join Grays Harbor Audubon Society (GHAS), please fill out the form below, ***make 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. All Chapter Memberships above the Sandpiper category provide financial support to our Chapter. The Grays Harbor Audubon Society is totally self-supporting.

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month preceding  
membership meeting

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## **The Sandpiper**

P.O. Box 470  
Montesano,  
WA 98563



### ***Program Meeting***

## ***Grays Harbor's Stream Team***

***Alexa Brown***

**Via Zoom 1:30 pm**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84122539452?pwd=Q3o2aURQMFdVOWQ0a2J3Q05kSDh0Zz09>

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