

*Program Meeting  
Suzie Gilbert  
Rehabilitating Birds  
Via Zoom, December 5th  
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
see page 2 and/or page 9 for access*

November  
December  
2021



# The Sandpiper



*Abert Lake by Alexandra Cravener & Karen Austin, BLM, 2016.*

## **Oregon's Abert Lake keeps shrinking, becoming so salty Congress is taking notice**

A bill in the U.S. House, which came out in late September, would set out to study the hydrology of saline lakes in the Great Basin, including Lake Abert, and the migratory birds that depend on them. It would include a \$5 million annual appropriation for six years.

"This is the first time, really, that I've seen much attention paid to it and it's desperately needed, especially in the face of climate change right now," says Susan Haig, a courtesy professor of wildlife ecology at Oregon State University who has worked on water birds conservation issues in Oregon and California for 25 years.

Like the nearby Klamath Basin, Haig says, Lake Abert is very low this year. That's on top of a long-term warming trend that has reduced water flowing into Great Basin wetlands.

That can make an already salty lake so saline that the brine shrimp that birds feed on can't even survive there.

"If we lose those wetlands, we are going to lose the flyway, the Pacific Flyway, which is a huge, huge loss to biodiversity and to this part of the world," Haig says.

The House legislation is a companion to an identical

Senate bill, proposed last April, that was sponsored by Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley and Senator Mitt Romney from Utah, home of the Great Salt Lake which is also shrinking fast.

The Senate legislation would provide \$25 million to monitor and assess wildlife in the Great Basin, create partnerships to conduct studies and find solutions to preserve habitat and develop outreach to create water budgets to help migratory birds.



## **The Shorebird and Nature Festival Returns**

The Festival Committee is busy planning for an in-person festival in 2022, to be held on April 29 to May 1. We will invite you all to join us as vendors or exhibitors and of course, as visitors. Please indicate via email to me [janet.strong4@gmail.com](mailto:janet.strong4@gmail.com) whether you plan to participate. I will be sending out information and applications in December or early January. We would love to have you join us. As with other events, our festival is subject to restrictions due to Covid. But we hope for lots of participation and a return to normalcy.

## The President's Perch



*By Janet Strong*

### To All our Members and Friends

*'Tis the season to be grateful. We are grateful that you support Grays Harbor Audubon Society!*

Grays Harbor Audubon Society is looking for fresh faces to join its Board of Directors, starting January 2022. We welcome all and are accepting applications until December 1st.

Grays Harbor Audubon Society is a volunteer organization of community members who support the vision of enjoying birds and wildlife and protecting the habitats that support them. The mission of Grays Harbor Audubon Society is to seek a sustainable balance between human activity and the needs of the environment, and to promote the enjoyment of birds and the natural world.

Please consider joining our Board of dedicated members. We work hard, but we also have a lot of fun along the way.

The ideal candidate:

- Is passionate about birds, birding and wildlife
- Seeks to engage the greater community in enjoyment and protection of the natural world.
- Would actively participate in board discussions and chapter activities

Board members are expected to:

- Attend monthly meetings (first Sunday, BOD and Program mtgs alternate months; currently zoom)
- Volunteer on committees and at events
- Act as an ambassador for birds and the Society

If you're interested, we'd love to meet you! Please apply by emailing our Board President, Janet Strong, at [janet.strong4@gmail.com](mailto:janet.strong4@gmail.com) no later than December 1, 2021.

If joining the Board isn't right for you, would you volunteer on a Committee?

There are many opportunities: Field Trips, Conservation, Membership, Program and Publicity, Website. Just Email Janet.

To learn more about Grays Harbor Audubon Society and our offering to the community, please visit our website at [ghas.org](http://ghas.org).



High tides ebb and flow  
Frantic sandpiper races  
Erases footprints

*Artwork and Haiku by Deborah Ann Baker, PhD  
Artist, Author & Illustrator  
<http://deborahann-baker.pixels.com>*

Join GHAS Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82118695964?pwd=dDVqOXFlbUJrakxLWXhLNTRQL1ovUT09>

Meeting ID: 821 1869 5964  
Passcode: 579465



## How I learned to love Wild Turkeys by Anne Readel

When my husband and I moved to Eagle Heights in Madison, Wisconsin, last December, we were caught off guard. In many ways, Eagle Heights had everything you would expect from a residential area in a college town: a big cluster of apartment buildings with sprawling lawns, parking lots, community gardens, playgrounds, and woods at the edge of the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. If that sounds typical, it was—with one major exception. It was also one of the hottest neighborhoods in town for Wild Turkeys.

Most days, we saw between four and seven groups of turkeys—around 30 birds total—casually eating or sleeping around the apartments. Meanwhile, people went about their daily lives around the birds. Children swung on swings with a turkey or three nearby. Drivers routinely stopped to let turkeys cross the road, occasionally getting out of their cars to shoo them along. Cyclists whisked by, sending the turkeys scampering away. Pedestrians walked mere feet from them, sometimes stopping to take photos but more often glued to their phones. “For the most part, people kind of ignore them,” says PhD student Audrey Evans, founder of the Turkeys of UW Madison Instagram page, who has lived in Eagle Heights since 2017.

That’s not easy. If you’ve never seen a Wild Turkey up close, they are big! Toms (adult males) weigh more than 20 pounds, which makes them the second heaviest North American bird after Trumpeter Swans.

I learned that other communities around the country are experiencing ballooning Wild Turkey numbers, originating in efforts to save the overhunted birds from extinction in the mid-1900s. Live Wild Turkeys were trapped and transferred from areas where they were flourishing to areas where they had disappeared. Those measures were extremely successful—perhaps too successful. Today there are around six million Wild Turkeys in the United States, and hordes of them

flock to residential neighborhoods, where they sometimes cause trouble by occasionally raiding gardens, leaving droppings, and acting aggressively to pets and people.

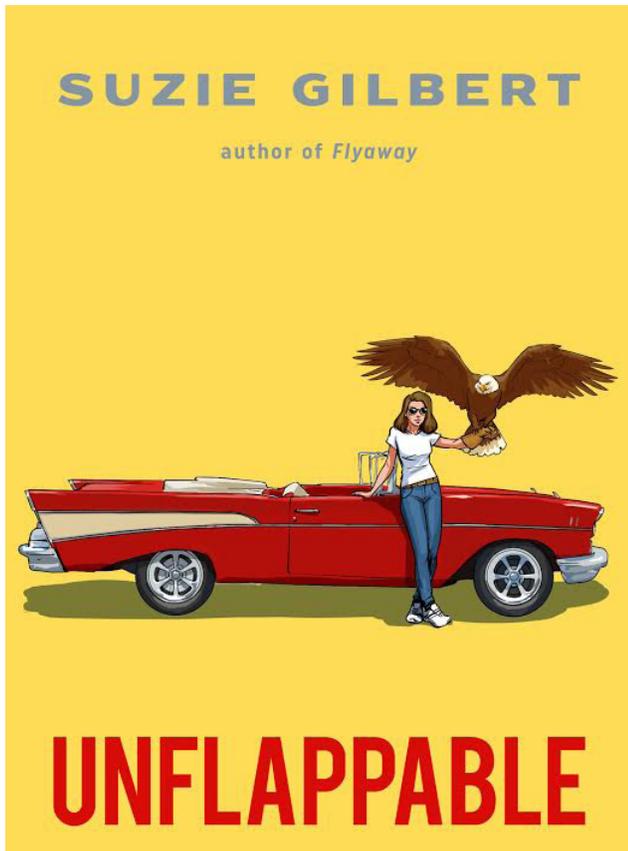
My husband and I had experienced turkey neighbors before: Years ago, when we lived in Illinois, a couple of turkeys appeared in our yard. Then, when we moved to Wisconsin, we started to notice them in neighborhoods throughout Madison. But the number of birds in Eagle Heights was like nothing we’d encountered. Our new neighborhood was likely especially appealing because it had an abundance of turkey-friendly foods (for example, acorns, crabapples, plants grown in community gardens—plus, the occasional hand-out from humans). Also, dogs, which may deter turkeys in other neighborhoods, were generally not permitted in Eagle Heights. Fascinated, we began to learn all we could about turkeys. We learned, for example, that each flock is generally made up of siblings. Brothers (“jakes” when they are young) band together in all-male groups, and their sisters (“jennies” when they are young) form flocks with their mothers, called hens.

I began photographing our neighborhood birds, which helped me learn more about them. I have been a photographer since 2019, and this project was unusual for me because I typically document much smaller creatures, such as insects and amphibians. During the week, I would squeeze in an hour or two with the turkeys; on weekends, I’d sometimes spend an entire day following them, from dawn when they flap down from their roosting trees to dusk when they flap back up.

During the spring breeding season, the turkeys were especially awe-inspiring. Toms puffed out their iridescent copper-colored feathers, fanned their tails, and inflated their bright red “wattles” and “snoods” (fleshy protuberances that hang off their faces). Bands of puffed-up brothers strutted around the community, dragging their wings on the ground to make an unmistakable scraping noise (“I’m big!”). The sound of synchronized turkey gobbles reverberated across the neighborhood (“We’re coordinated, so don’t mess with us!”). Flocks of hens drifted from band to band, acting coy but slyly checking out their options for a mate.

To read the entire article visit

[https://www.audubon.org/news/how-i-learned-love-wild-turkeys?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-newsletter-engagement\\_20211115\\_wingspan\\_&utm\\_source=ea&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=engagement\\_20211115\\_wingspan&utm\\_content=&emci=2ca97ace-0344-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=c73dba67-4a46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=4558787](https://www.audubon.org/news/how-i-learned-love-wild-turkeys?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-newsletter-engagement_20211115_wingspan_&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_20211115_wingspan&utm_content=&emci=2ca97ace-0344-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=c73dba67-4a46-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=4558787)



### Member meeting

Please join us on Sunday, December 5 at 1:30 p.m. as we welcome bird rehabilitator and author Suzie Gilbert who will regale us with stories about her bird rehabbing days and talk about her new novel “Unflappable.” Suzie hails from her home in the Hudson River valley in New York State, where she has rescued and released countless wild birds from hummingbirds to great blue herons.

She will also talk about her new book and its inspiration from her rehabbing days. See the book review at column to the left. The meeting will be via ZOOM.

### Book Review - Unflappable by Janet Strong

You will hold your breath all through this fast-paced page-turner as you follow the exploits of a young zoo manager determined to carry a kidnapped Bald Eagle back to reunite with his mate in another part of the country. Our heroine is chased by a wealthy bad actor with unlimited resources and professionals of both federal and state agencies. But she is helped by a whole network of unforgettable characters arising in part from the vast community of wildlife “rehabbers.”

All this ying and yang makes for wild gyrations between times and places coupled with wild surprises that will keep you guessing. You will find cleverness, resourcefulness, humor, violence and romance all between the covers of this book. Author Suzie Gilbert draws upon her long experience as a bird rehabilitator for the details in this tale. I couldn't put it down.





*American Crow. Photo: Carter Kremer/  
Audubon Photography Awards*

## **Crows: more than a symbol of the season**

*by Rachael Fritts, National Audubon Society*

American Crows are a familiar sight across the country, common everywhere except our hottest and driest deserts. While crows in folklore and fiction are often associated with trickery and death (a group of crows is, after all, called a “murder”), recent research has shed new light on just how intelligent and family-oriented these birds can be. So throw out any preconceived notions you might have about crows, and get to know one of America’s cleverest birds a little better below.

1. Wondering what that big black bird is overhead? The American Crow is one of just two species of crow commonly seen in the mainland United States, the other being the Fish Crow. Until recently, there was a third species called the Northwestern Crow, but it was absorbed into the American Crow in 2020. Another species, the Tamaulipas Crow, is an infrequent winter visitor to the southern tip of Texas.

2. American Crows are easy to confuse with Fish Crows, as well as their other close relative, the Common Raven. Luckily, there are some tricks for telling them apart. The Fish Crow is slightly smaller, but the surest way to distinguish it from an American Crow is to listen for its distinctive nasal call. Fish Crows typically stick near water and are most common near the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, but they also can extend far inland along river valleys. Common Ravens are heftier, with a bigger beak, shaggier throat feathers, and a wedge-shaped tail. Listen for their croaking call.

3. If you still have a hard time telling these spe-

cies apart, don’t beat yourself up too much—crows and ravens are all members of the same genus, *Corvus*. There are more than 40 different species in the genus, spread out across every continent except South America and Antarctica, as well as several Pacific islands. We typically refer to the big ones as “ravens” and the smaller ones as “crows,” but there’s no real genetic basis for the two categories.

4. Crows and ravens are some of the smartest animals in the world, with their intelligence considered on par with chimpanzees. The New Caledonian Crow is probably the most famous example of one sign of intelligence—tool use—but this behavior has been recorded in several other species of *Corvus* as well. Examples of tool use in American Crows include a captive individual dipping a cup in some water to moisten a container of dry food and a wild crow ripping off a splinter of wood from a fence to try to spear some prey in a hole.

5. Crows might be associated with carrion, but the crafty corvids are opportunistic eaters who use their intelligence to eat just about anything—from crops to other birds’ eggs—they can get their beaks on. American Crows have been seen digging pits to forage for clams, distracting river otters to steal fish, dropping nuts on hard surfaces to open them, and stealing pet food from outdoor dog dishes.

6. Crows’ penchant for crop thieving in particular has made them some enemies over the years. (Scarecrows and other figures meant to frighten crop-destroying birds go back centuries.) In the 1930s, there was even a brief attempt to eat away at their numbers by popularizing them as a dinner item. A man in Tulsa, Oklahoma hosted a series of “crow banquets” to prove how tasty the birds were, and apparently impressed the governor of Oklahoma so much that he established a “Statehouse Crow Meat Lovers Association.” Luckily for the crows, however, eating crow never really caught on—the fad faded by the early 1940s.

7. That’s probably for the best, because crow communities can hold a grudge for generations. A team of researchers at the University of Washington ran an experiment where they captured American Crows in nets while wearing a caveman mask, then released them back onto campus. When the researchers later walked across campus wearing the same mask, the crows scolded and dive-bombed them. More than 10 years after capturing just seven crows, more than half of the crows on campus still raised the alarm at the sight of a caveman mask.

continued on page 6



Fish Crow. Photo: Alejandra Lewandowski/  
Audubon Photography Awards

### ***Crows continued from Page 5***

8. Recent research has also shown that crows are also known to hold “funerals” and “wakes.” When an American Crow finds the dead body of another crow, it will call out to alert others in the area, who will gather and begin to make a ruckus themselves. Researchers think the behavior helps crow communities learn about potential threats (like those researchers in caveman masks), so that they know which locations and predators to avoid in the future.

9. This communal learning is possible because crows are particularly social and family-oriented birds. American Crows will form large flocks to forage at garbage dumps and farms during the day, and they roost in numbers ranging from hundreds to two million in the winter. They also form close family units of up to five generations. Yearlings and two-year-olds will even give their parents a hand with chick-rearing, helping to build the nest, keep it clean, and feed their mother while she’s sitting on the nest.

10. American Crows’ smarts and adaptability have served them well in the Anthropocene. They’ve been getting more numerous in recent decades, especially in urban centers. According to BirdLife International, their population has grown by nearly 20 percent each decade for the past 40 years. The total breeding population of the species is currently estimated to be 27 million.



### **Join the 122nd Christmas Bird Count**

For 122 years and spanning two global pandemics, Auduboners have braved the elements for the beloved tradition of the Christmas Bird Count. This year’s count is from December 14 to January 5. Find your local count circle and join in the tradition! Christmas Bird Count data is used to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation action. Anyone can view and use this valuable database, which is one of the first community science run ecological surveys in history. “The reason the whole database is freely available and downloadable is so people can use the data.” says Geoff LeBaron, Christmas Bird Count director. You can peruse the data too, and read about what we’ve learned over the 122 years of collecting data on birds. The Grays Harbor Christmas Bird Count will be held January 1, 2022. Contact Dianna Moore for time, places and information [osdlm1945@gmail.com](mailto:osdlm1945@gmail.com)

[https://www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count?ms=aud-email-engagement\\_\(wa\)\\_2021\\_1117\\_november\\_newsletter&utm\\_source=ea&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=engagement\\_\(wa\)\\_2021\\_1117\\_november\\_newsletter&emci=7cf953f7-0348-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=2effee96-0748-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=332601](https://www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count?ms=aud-email-engagement_(wa)_2021_1117_november_newsletter&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_(wa)_2021_1117_november_newsletter&emci=7cf953f7-0348-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&emdi=2effee96-0748-ec11-9820-c896653b26c8&ceid=332601)

***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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National Audubon	(212) 979-3000
GHAS Website	<a href="http://ghas.org">http://ghas.org</a>

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

*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 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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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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### ***Program Meeting***

### ***Rehabilitating Birds***

*Suzie Gilbert*

**Via Zoom 1:30 pm, December 5th**

Join GHAS Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82118695964?pwd=dDVqOXFlbUJrakxLWXhLNTRQL1ovUT09>

Meeting ID: 821 1869 5964

Passcode: 579465

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## **The Sandpiper**

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