

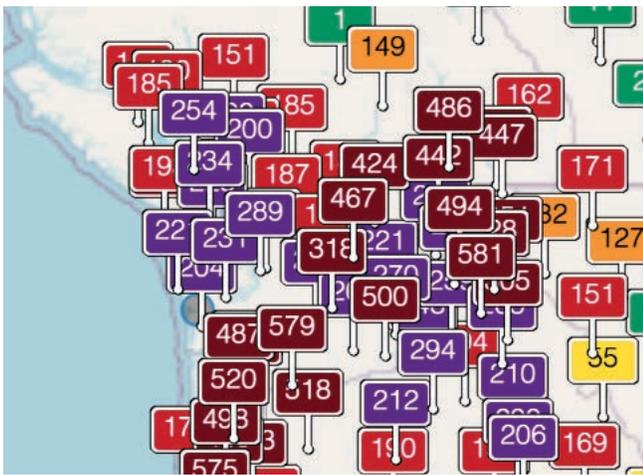
Program Meeting

*Planting for the Birds
Kelly Rupp, Master Gardeners
1:30 pm October 4th Via Zoom
details via email to follow*

September
October
2020



The Sandpiper



Source : <https://aqicn.org/city/usa/washington/aberdeen/division-st/>

Extreme temperatures and fires stoked by climate change can have dire consequences for creatures living on the edge *By Deborah Petersend*

As many Westerners awoke this week to a sky so muted by smoke from raging wildfires that it looked like night, backyard bird watchers noticed something else: Silence at their bird feeders. Or worse yet, dead birds.

“I live in Folsom—have not seen a bird or heard a bird chirp this morning,” said Jodi Root, a member of the California Birding group on Facebook.

“We live in northern Nevada and have noticed the same thing,” added Karen Holden of Gardnerville.

“Same here in Napa,” said Tammy Saunders “very quiet which just adds to the eeriness of the orange colored dark sky.”

And on it went. Nearly 100 serious birdwatchers from throughout California and parts of Nevada responded to an impromptu survey posted on the Facebook group. And the majority said they had observed a pronounced drop in the number of birds flying in for a nibble at feeders or sips of water at bird baths, as well as a reduction in the variety of species.

So what is going on? Wild bird populations are already in major decline. But in recent weeks they

have been subjected to smoke and extreme high temperatures that reached a crescendo when an extraordinary upper atmospheric layer of smoke turned wide swaths of the California sky into palattes of orange and brown. The sky was so dramatic that former President Barack Obama tweeted a photograph of it to call out the need to address climate change.

Birds have highly sensitive respiratory systems—canaries were brought into coal mines in the early 20th century to detect the presence of toxic gases. Now the missing birds seem to be playing a similar role for a planet on fire. While not all that much is known about how birds respond to smoke, Andrew Stillman, a doctoral candidate at the University of Connecticut who studies birds in burned-out habitats, said this much is clear: Birds live on the edge, and extreme changes can have dire consequences.

Teasing out the answers can be complicated, because research on the long-term impacts of wildfire smoke on birds is severely lacking. But Olivia Sanderfoot, a researcher and doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, said the anecdotal evidence is overwhelming. “Overall, it seems like the anecdotes suggest that there is a decline in bird activity during smoke events,” she said. Stillman, whose work focuses not on smoke but on what happens to bird habitat in the Western United States after the embers have cooled, said there have been reports of dead birds being found in smoky areas, just as some California birders are finding dead hummingbirds in their backyards this week. “One thing that is important to point out is we do know high levels of smoke exposure can be harmful to birds,” he said.

While studies have yet to nail exactly what killed these birds, the signs of stress are obvious.

Roger Lederer, emeritus professor of biological science at California State University in Chico, California, said he observes it every day when he sits in the backyard with his wife for cocktail hour. The California Towhees are puffed up, and walking around panting, the only way they can cool themselves, he said. Same with the scrub jays.

“All birds are stressed,” Lederer said.

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The President's Perch



By Janet Strong

It's getting more and more difficult to remain upbeat about the state of the world these days. Our stressors include the horribly tragic fires on the west coast, the toxic smoky air spreading here and across the U.S., the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the effects of climate change and the increasingly divisive political climate, among many, many others. There is nowhere left to hide from all this stuff.

But, somehow, we must carry on! We are very fortunate to live where we do in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Grays Harbor Audubon Society is lucky to have a good association with other members of the Chehalis Alliance. This consortium of environmentally active organizations plus the Chehalis Tribe and Quinault Nation continues its work promoting solutions for flood reduction in the Chehalis Basin that do NOT involve a dam above PeEll. Instead the group is calling for a multi-pronged group of solutions, including restoration projects throughout the basin that will reduce flooding and bring back health to its many rivers.

Our chapter has been invited to participate in a winter raptor survey in several Grays Harbor areas in addition to a potential partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service tracking the journeys of migrating and seasonally active birds near Grays Harbor. If things work out well, USFWS would erect a tower on GHAS land to collect the data. One such tower is already up and working on private land near the harbor. If you are interested in either of these opportunities, please contact Jan Strong at 360-495-3950.

We have a wonderful members' and guest program coming up on October 4 at 1:30 p.m. by Kelly Rupp, Master Gardener extraordinaire, on Gardening for the Birds. This talk will be presented via Zoom. We will send out the code by email when we receive it. Afterwards, we can all scurry out to our yards and gardens to plant a native shrub or perennial to benefit our feathered buddies next year. Fall rains make this season excellent for establishing new plants.

I feel much better now. I sincerely hope that you do, too. And that you continue to take care of your health and your families' health. And that you keep on enjoying our birds and nature in general.

Attend a virtual Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) and Washington State Audubon Conservation Council (WSACC) meeting

WSACC: October 2nd 2:00PM - 4:00PM

ACOW: October 3rd 9:30 Am - 12:00 PM

Connect with your fellow Audubon chapters in Washington to share ideas for how to build resilience and adapt to our changing environment. Share your best ideas on how to continue our important work, and discuss strategies with your fellow chapters. You can register by going to <https://audubon.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcrde-2gqD0pE9GHKzk28vBXUu78d4PdU4mO>



Program Meeting

A reminder that we will be offering our program meeting on Sunday, October 4 via Zoom at 1:30 PM. Our October program will feature Kelly Rupp from Master Gardeners who will talk about gardening for the benefit of our native birds. This will be a timely presentation because fall is the best time for getting out there and planting those perennials that will bring the birds to our yards. Kelly is a knowledgeable and entertaining presenter for the Master Gardener organization. He has been a Master Gardener for many years. Details on the Zoom link will be sent out towards the end of September.

Creatures on the Edge continued from page 1

Stillman, who works with researcher Morgan Tingley at the University of California, Los Angeles, said that birds “cannot escape like humans by going indoors.”

Birds are more at risk partly because of the way they are built: Their respiratory systems are more sensitive than those of humans, Lederer said. They do not have a diaphragm and “They are putting a lot more air through their lungs than we are,” he said.

That sensitivity is why birds have served as harbingers for dangers in the atmosphere. Sanderfoot, in a 2017 literature review, “Air pollution impacts on avian species via inhalation exposure and associated outcomes,” wrote that, “Birds have long been recognized as sentinel species for environmental change.” She added that Rachel Carson’s award-winning 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, “brought attention to the widespread impact of pesticide and insecticide applications on songbirds.”

The 2017 paper by Sanderfoot and Tracey Holmway concluded, “Exposure to air pollution clearly causes respiratory distress in birds and increases their susceptibility to respiratory infection,” as well as causing other problems such as affecting reproduction.

However, Sanderfoot, a fourth year doctoral student and National Science Foundation graduate research fellow at the University of Washington, said that her paper barely scratched the surface on how wildfire smoke impacts birds in the wild.

“We know pretty much nothing about the long-term impact of smoke on birds,” she said.

Most of the research covers just a few species, many not living in the wild, and most focuses on air pollution, not wildfire smoke, she said.

“Of the roughly 10 000 species of birds known worldwide, only a few have been studied to characterize avian responses to air pollution, and the animals used in laboratory experiments may not be representative of the wild bird species most at risk from air pollution,” Sanderfoot and Holmway wrote.

To find out more, Sanderfoot and her colleagues are now conducting studies throughout Washington, planting microphones and cameras in areas susceptible to wildfire smoke to determine if bird songs decrease when wildfire smoke is present. Her work builds on a Singapore study that used acoustical equipment to show that there was a decrease in bird sounds when it was smoky.

Tara Sears Lee, who volunteers at a nursery in Los Alto in California, is no scientist, but she observed the extreme impact of the heat and smoke

in real time this week.

“Outside for 6 hours yesterday and no jays, crows, ravens, quail, turkeys, or hawks - all usual and very vocal visitors,” she posted on Facebook. “Only hummingbirds, juncos, towhees and titmice. Worst of all was a dead hummingbird just lying on the ground - had heard they are being overcome by heat and smoke and just drop dead.”

Other birders over the last week have posted photographs on Facebook of dead hummingbirds found in their backyards, and some have reported, paradoxically, seeing an increase in the number of birds at their feeders.

“I think all the birds came to my house south of San Jose. Sometimes there will be more than 40-50 out there,” Charlotte Trethway Noriega wrote on Facebook.

Lederer is not surprised by either case. Migration can bring increases in bird visits to some neighborhoods and decreases in others, he said. And hummingbirds have a high metabolism and are less able to withstand extreme changes in conditions.

“I don’t know if it’s the smoke or the heat, but hummingbirds have been really stressed,” Lederer said.

If there is any good news, he added, it is that the multiple fires in California—where more than 2.2 million acres have burned—came after fledglings had left their nests, and most probably escaped. And, the short-term stress on birds, as on humans, is likely to lift as the fires subside.

But unfortunately, Lederer noted, neither fires nor climate change are short term phenomena.

The bird population in North America has dropped by three billion—or 29 percent—since 1970, and a warming planet is changing the migration patterns of many bird species, according to a 2019 study published in *Science*. The study’s lead author Ken Rosenberg, a senior scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, said in an article in *Scientific America* that the conversion of pastures and grasslands to cropland has reduced nesting places, and insects that many birds rely on for food are being killed by the wide use of pesticides.

As the planet gets warmer overall, Lederer said, many birds have adjusted their ranges farther north and started their migrations earlier than they did 30 years ago. If the trend continues, scientists believe that it won’t be long before the Baltimore Oriole for example, will no longer be in Baltimore.

To read the full article visit: <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/10092020/california-wildfire-smoke-birds-climate-change>



photo by Ross McMichaels

Where did all those Canada Geese in town come from?

By Pat Leonard - Cornell Labs

Even if you're not a bird watcher, chances are you know what Canada Geese look like. Love them or hate them, there sure are a lot of them—in parks, on golf courses, maybe even your backyard. It's hard to believe there was a time when these birds were on the brink of being wiped out in North America. Now, they're overrunning our city parks, golf courses, and farm fields, crowding our national wildlife refuges, and causing hazards at airports. There are even concerns about public health and water quality from all those goose droppings.

Canada Geese are a native species whose recent population explosion is thanks to human effects on the landscape.

According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2013 report there are more than 5 million breeding Canada Geese in North America. But within that vast number are two distinct populations: migratory birds that breed in northern North America and winter in central and southern North America; and resident birds that live in and around towns year-round. Both migratory and resident numbers have increased, but most of the trouble has come from resident birds.

Now, even with hunting pressure to the tune of 3.2 million geese per year in North America, the resident population continues to grow. These hunting numbers combine migratory and resident birds—it's often hard to separate them out on their wintering grounds. But most biologists believe there are far too many resident geese—more than can be sustained in urban-suburban areas.

Resident Canada Geese have adjusted well to living near people, with few significant curbs on their numbers. Resident geese in cities and suburbs are safe from most predators, many people like to feed them, and they are less vulnerable to hunting because they tend to live in settled areas where firearm restrictions often apply. By contrast, migratory Canada Goose populations are held in check by migration mortality, predation,

late winter storms, and hunting. Resident geese begin nesting at a younger age and produce larger clutches than migratory geese.

As a result, it's the resident birds that typically cause crop damage and provoke public nuisance complaints—which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says are at an all-time high and increasing every year.

Canada Geese are one of the few bird species that can digest grass, so they do well on the large expanses of lawn in parks, backyards, golf courses, farm fields, and airports. Resident geese have also overrun most native wetlands in the East, including the National Wildlife Refuges that were created to protect the migratory populations, as well as the diversity of other native wetland species. Aviation safety is a concern, too. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) estimates there are 240 goose-aircraft collisions each year nationwide, though some of these (like the flock that in 2009 notoriously caused U.S. Airways flight 1549 to go down in the Hudson River) can be traced to migratory birds.

There are also concerns about public health because goose droppings in water used for swimming or drinking may contain high coliform counts. The birds' aggressive territoriality during breeding season may result in human threats or attacks. Droppings and overgrazing may create property damage, including erosion and reduced water quality in ponds.

Canada Geese are a protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This protection applies to both resident and migratory geese. Neither individuals nor governmental entities may launch lethal control efforts without the proper federal, state, and (if needed) local permits. Finding out what rules and regulations apply is the first step, accomplished by contacting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (or Environment Canada) and your state's wildlife agency.

Experts warn that no single management technique is going to be effective in deterring Canada Geese, and it's vital to get buy-in from the community for whichever techniques are contemplated. The most commonly used techniques include preventing public feeding, altering the habitat to reduce its attractiveness to geese, hazing to scare geese away, using chemical repellents, hampering reproduction, and lethally removing the geese.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's focus is to conserve and maintain healthy populations of native wild birds. Where warranted because of health or environmental concerns, we support humane efforts to reduce the overpopulation of resident Canada Geese.



photo by Jean Ange

Why do migrating Canada Geese sometimes fly in the “Wrong” Direction?

Canada Geese migrate south in winter and north in summer, but their travels may take a few detours along the way. Photo by Jean Ange via Birdshare. Canada Geese migrate south in winter and north in summer, but their travels may take a few detours along the way. Photo by Jean Ange via Birdshare.

There are several possibilities, but in fall it’s likely that these are family groups moving around, now that the yearlings can fly, in search of feeding grounds.

Canada Geese raise their young near water, where the goslings can feed and if necessary dive or swim away to escape predators. In late summer the adults temporarily become flightless for several weeks as they molt their wing feathers. Once the young have learned to fly, and the parents have regained their flight, the whole family will take off from their nesting grounds to find more productive feeding areas—and this movement could be in any direction. This happens in the late summer before the massive southward migration as temperatures drop across the continent.

First- and second-year geese (not old enough to breed), along with those that lost nests early in the breeding season also undertake a molt migration. Individuals may move several to hundreds of miles during the late spring and summer to large bodies of water where they will be safer as they molt their wing feathers. In September and October, many of these individuals will be returning from this seasonal journey, and again may be seen flying in almost any direction.

Also, bear in mind that there are increasingly large numbers of resident Canada Geese across North America. These birds do not migrate at all and so you may see them at any time of year flying in any direction. Their numbers have been growing exponentially since the mid-twentieth century and they have begun to be seen as nuisances in some communities.

Membership Dues Due

Your local Grays Harbor Audubon Society depends on the kindness of you, and a couple of strangers. January marks the date when memberships are due for renewal. If you have not already renewed, simply turn to page 8 of this Sandpiper and fill out your renewal at a level that is comfortable for you.

We depend on your support to bring you the programs you enjoy at the bi-monthly get-togethers. Subscribing at a higher-level allows us to enhance the care and consideration we give to our over 3,000 acres of essential wetlands and habitat for birds and other wildlife species. Grays Harbor Audubon protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, but only with your support. Make sure you renew or upgrade today. If you are unsure, contact Linda Orgel at ldotorg@olearycreek.com to review your current status.

Thank you in advance for caring about the birds, and your generous support of our Chapter.



Multicolored Finch

Bold red adorning the crown

Stands boldly astride

David Linn



The not so bad big wolf

Oceans Shores resident David Linn, in addition to being an excellent birder and Haiku poet, is a champion of wildlife protections for the wolf population in Washington State.

We though thought you might be interested in David's email exchange with Alison Holloran, Executive Direct, Audubon Rockies and Vice President, National Audubon Society.

David wrote:

I received your recent email about Corner Post Meats using the Audubon's Kiowa Creek Ranch for grazing their farm animals. This ranching is referred to as being "bird-friendly". Described as conservation ranching, this is supposed to create a vibrant wildlife habitat. This all sounds very encouraging and something that I could support.

However, I have questions about how native predators would be treated should they have conflict with the livestock on the ranch. Specifically, I am concerned about wolves. I live in Washington state and when conflict between wolves and livestock occurs, WDFW too frequently kills entire families of wolves. While there are few wolves in Colorado, they are reportedly beginning to re-enter the state. There is also an initiative to increase the number of wolves in Colorado.

What is Audubon's policy with regard to predator and livestock interaction? Would you sanction predator killing to protect livestock?

Thank you,
David Linn

Alison responded:

Dear David,

Thank you so much for your question regarding predators (in particular wolves) and what are the protocols within the Audubon Conservation Ranching (ACR) program. You are certainly correct, wolves are slowly working their way into Colorado and there also have been efforts to have them be reintroduced as well. First, predators (as you well know) play a vital part of our ecosystem, keeping many things in balance and in check. When predators are eliminated we see things get really off balance. One of my most favorite examples is that of the wolves influence in the Yellowstone ecosystem and specifically, insects. As wolves made a comeback so did butterflies, bees and other pollinators. This was due to the fact that the heavy browsing done by elk was greatly reduced because of the wolves pressure on the elk population. You may have already heard that story but it is one of my favorites... just demonstrates the unintended consequences of our actions. Also, working with ranchers in WY, one gentleman specifically pointed out, "if your mama cow let's her calf be taken by a coyote, then she is not a very good mama."

That is a long way around the barn to say, no, we would not support predator control on our ACR ranches. We are in the process of incorporating that language into our protocols and have had these discussions with our ranchers as well which they understand and support.

Again, thank you for your interest in our program and let us know if you need anything else (like where you can buy ACR beef!!).

Take good care,
Alison

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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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News & Editorial

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Copy deadline ongoing

Program Meeting

Planting for the Birds
Master Gardener, Kelly Rupp
October 4th
1:30 pm
Via Zoom

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