September
October
2021

The Sandpiper

Program Meeting
David Linn
Creating wildlife habitat in your back yard
Via Zoom, October 3rd
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm
see page 2 and/or page 9 for access

Both male and female White-necked Jacobins fan their tails during courtship or aggressive interactions. . Photo by Brian Sullivan/Macaulay Library.

Some Hummingbird females look like males to evade harassment

New research on the glittering White-necked Jacobin hummingbird reveals nearly 20% of the species' adult females have male-like plumage. This strategy is all about dodging bullies and getting better access to food. The findings were published today in the journal Current Biology.

"What's interesting about the White-necked Jacobin is that all the juveniles start out with male-like plumage," explains lead author Jay Falk. "Among most other bird species, juvenile plumage looks more like the female's, presumably to be less obvious to predators." Falk did this work while a Ph.D. student with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and is currently at the University of Washington.

As the birds mature, all the jacobin males retain the fancier plumage but so do nearly 20% of the females among the population Falk studied in Panama. The remaining 80% of females still develop the muted green and white coloration of a typical adult female. Though plumage ornamentation is usually attributed to sexual selection and attracting a mate, researchers ruled out that explanation for this species after field experiments.

Scientists observed the reactions of live jacobin hummingbirds toward stuffed mounts placed on nectar feeders during breeding season. The mounts were stuffed specimens of adult White-necked Jacobin males, typical adult females, and female adults that looked like males.

"If females having male-like plumage is the result of sexual selection, then the males would have been drawn to the male-plumaged females," says Falk. "That didn't happen. The male White-necked Jacobins still showed a clear preference for the typically plumed adult females."

So, what's the benefit to females of this species when they look like a male? To get to the root of that puzzle, Falk and his assistants put radio frequency ID tags on birds and set up a circuit of 28 feeders wired to read the tags. By tracking the number and length of visits, they honed in on the answer.

"Our tests found that the typical, less colorful females were harassed much more than females with male-like plumage," Falk says. "Because the male-plumaged females experienced less aggression, they were able to feed more often—a clear advantage." The researchers found that the male-like females got to feed longer than the typical adult female—about 35% longer at feeders filled with high-sugar nectar. That can make a big difference because hummingbirds have the highest metabolic rate of any vertebrate. They need to eat constantly in order to survive.

Bottom line: female White-necked Jacobins retain the male-like plumage of their youth for social reasons—they avoid the bullies by looking like them. It is still not clear whether male-like females behave just as aggressively as the males. The actual physical mechanism that allows females to retain male-like plumage is also not known.

The White-necked Jacobin is hardly alone when it comes to having some females that look like males. Falk says studies have found that 25% of the world's 350+ hummingbird species also have some females that look like males.

Plumage Artwork by Jillian Ditner
The left and center images show adult female and adult male plumages, respectively. Right image shows juvenile plumage.

The President's Perch

By Janet Strong

At our Board Meeting on the 5th of September the group explored several interesting activities and projects. We thought GHAS' members might like to hear about some of them.

You undoubtedly have noticed many beautiful murals on building walls around the cities of Hoquiam and Aberdeen. These have been executed mainly by local artists. Board members have taken note and introduced the idea of a mural featuring our local birds, both shorebirds and the others we see in our yards, on the beach and in the woods. Linda Orgel and Robin Moore are pursuing costs, rules, locations and potential artists for such an endeavor. If you have ideas or information, please email Linda or Robin.

The Chehalis River Basin Land Trust has held conservation easements on many of our GHAS properties since 2011, under an agreement signed by both organizations. Members of CRBLT have conducted annual field reviews of the lands under easement since 2011. A small committee consisting of members of the Boards of GHAS and CRBLT convened recently to examine the Agreement to create necessary revisions after 10 years. This discussion is ongoing and a second meeting is planned for late October. At this point no additional easements are anticipated.

Board member Jude Armstrong is also interested in creating a wooden sign at the West entrance to Hoquiam highlighting our Shorebird Festival. It would be similar in size to the Logger's Playday sign.

Grays Harbor Wind, a commercial firm, has proposed a 75 unit wind farm to be located 25 miles off the coast within the QIN's protected area. Many people have expressed concerns, among which are the effects on diving birds, surface birds and migrating birds and mammals.

A ZOOM presentation will occur on Friday, September 24th, from 8:30 to 11:00, with information from the company, from agencies and from Audubon. This will be worth the attention of all members.

To join the Wind Zoom Meeting:
https://washington.zoom.us/j/9840058743
Meeting ID: 984 005 8743

Enjoy the rain and our stimulating fall weather.

Audubon Coucil of Washington

There are just a few days left to register for the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) annual chapter meeting this Friday and Saturday. Registration is free since we decided to move ACOW to a virtual format this year. If you previously paid the registration fee for the in-person meeting, you were reimbursed on August 30th but you will have to re-register with the links below.

Friday, September 24th, 2:00pm – 4:00pm, WSACC Register for WSACC
Saturday, September 25th, 10:00am – 2:30pm, ACOW Register for ACOW

The big draw this year is hearing from National Audubon's new interim CEO, Dr. Elizabeth Gray, who will have a presentation on the direction of National Audubon and have a Q&A. Our other big draw is an equity, diversity, and inclusion talk and breakout sessions with Jamaal Nelson, National Audubon's new Chief Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer.

Wildlife non-profit forms

A new non-profit, ***Washington Wildlife First*** has formed in Washington (https://wawildlifefirst.org). Their goal is "To leverage the power of the law, informed advocacy, and strategic partnerships to reform Washington state's environmental and wildlife management agencies, and to protect and preserve the state's fish, wildlife, and wild spaces." The Board includes our guest speaker David Linn as Treasurer. For many of us who have interacted with State agencies, we know how important this work will be. Please visit their web page, learn more about what they are proposing, and donate.

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

Meeting ID: 821 1869 5964
Passcode: 579465

Program Meeting

Creating wildlife habitat in your backyard

Our Speaker, David Linn has been a resident of Ocean Shores since 2008 where he has acquired 8 vacant lots adjacent to his house and is re-developing them as a wildlife habitat. Five of the lots remain in their native state and three were partially cleared for camping. On those three lots, David has built a wildlife pond and has been replanting trees and native vegetation. These properties now comprise more than 1 ½ acres providing sanctuary for a variety of wildlife in Ocean Shores ranging from frogs to black bears.

Since retiring, David has been an advocate for environmental and wildlife issues at all levels of government. He has presented information to the city council on issues such as excessive lot clearing, deer feeding and the spraying of chemical pesticides throughout the city. David has provided testimony before the Washington state House and Senate committees on legislation concerning wolf recovery, net pen aquaculture, chlorpyrifos spraying and whale watching. He has been a frequent commentator at the Department of Fish and Wildlife Commissioners' meetings and during the Wolf Advisory Group public comment period. He has been an active local coordinator for environmental campaigns by a number organizations to bring public awareness to important issues.

David has had a special focus on wolf recovery in Washington and has been outspoken in opposition to the Fish and Wildlife Department's unnecessary killing of our wolves. He keeps a keen eye on the Department's activities and is quick to remind the commissioners and the staff of their fiduciary responsibilities to the citizens of Washington to protect all of our wildlife.

During his working career, David was an investment manager and consultant for various teachers' and public employees' pension funds as well as a number of trade union pensions plans. He invested over three billion dollars in commercial real estate properties, including office buildings, retail centers, industrial parks and multi-family residential developments on behalf of his clients

Editor's Note: David is also an accomplished poet and photogrqpher

Red legs/ white breast
And tan overcoat
On a summer's day

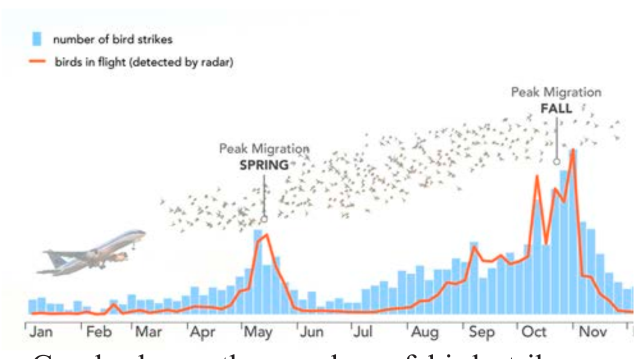
Study identifies patterns in bird-plane collisions

The time of year and the size of the bird are key

Worldwide, the cost of bird collisions with planes has been estimated at $1.2 billion per year. But information on bird movements throughout the year can help avoid damage to aircraft and risk to passengers. Scientists from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and partners have been looking for patterns in bird strike data from three New York City area airports. Their findings were published today in the Journal of Applied Ecology.

"Out of all the bird strikes recorded at Kennedy, Newark, and LaGuardia airports during a six-year period, the highest number occurred during migration, especially during the fall, perhaps due to many inexperienced young birds born earlier in the year," explains lead author Cecilia Nilsson. "Ninety percent of the strikes involved a migratory species. Our model predicts that the risk for damaging strikes during periods with very high migration intensity increases by as much as 400% to 700%." Nilsson led this study as a Rose Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cornell Lab, and is now at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark.

Migration & plane strikes graph



Graph shows the number of bird strikes per aircraft movement (blue bars) and level of bird movement (red line), averaged for each five-day period for the years 2013 to 2018 and combined for three New York City commercial airports. Both spike during migration, especially in the fall. Graphic by Jillian Ditner, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Study authors used weather surveillance radar from two nearby stations to learn when migration was the most intense at the airports studied. Data from the Lab's eBird online bird observation program helped define which species occurred near the airports throughout the year. A third source of information came from an invaluable dataset of detailed bird-strike records kept by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates the three airports. Species that most often caused damage were assigned a hazard score.

"The damage caused by a bird strike very much depends on the weight of the bird struck and the tendency of that species to move in flocks," says Nilsson. "When large bodied birds are moving through, the risk for damaging strikes is the highest."

Species with high hazard scores include Canada Geese, Great Blue Herons, Mallards, and Turkey Vultures—with Canada Goose being the species most likely to cause damage. The greatest number of bird strikes at the three airports involved a familiar medium sized songbird, the American Robin.

Commercial aircraft are most vulnerable to bird strikes during takeoff and landing where birds and planes share the airspace; military aircraft are also at risk at the lower altitudes, because they fly low and fast during training exercises. At cruising altitudes aircraft are generally too high to encounter most flying birds.

"It's important to realize that the timing and species composition of bird movements will differ for each location," Nilsson points out. "But both the eBird data and the radar data are continental datasets so the method used in our study can be applied to other airports to save time, money, and possibly lives." *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

Laysan Albatross
photo by Steven Siegel

Tell Congress to save birds from plastic waste

Every year, 17 billion pounds of plastic enter the marine environment. Despite efforts to promote recycling, less than nine percent of plastics in the U.S. are actually recycled.

Birds are particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution. Many seabirds, like Laysan Albatross, are seriously injured or killed when they ingest or become entangled with plastic trash.

To address the plastic pollution crisis, Congress has introduced the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2021 (S.984/H.R.2238). This bill would put the onus on manufacturers to take care of the plastic waste that they produce, ultimately reducing the amount of plastic that gets into our oceans and the toll it takes on birds.

Take action today: Contact your U.S. Representative and Senators and ask them to pass the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act.

Songbirds benefit from clean air provisions, just like we do

by Ariel Wittenberg - E & E News

Caged canaries brought deep underground into coal mines served as living, breathing carbon monoxide detectors for workers throughout the last century. Still today, the mention of "canaries in the coal mine" connotes a warning of imminent danger to humans.

But the reverse of that maxim is rarely considered: How does bad air that harms human health affect birds?

Two years ago, a landmark study published in the journal Science documented a staggering decline in North American breeding bird populations—nearly 3 billion birds lost since 1970. The declines occurred among birds in every biome, with more than 300 species suffering population losses. But the study did not examine what caused the declines. Lead author Ken Rosenberg, a conservation scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, said he and his coauthors figured the bird losses were driven by a number of overlapping causes, habitat loss chief among them.

Then he attended a Zoom presentation at the virtual North American Ornithological Conference last summer about increasing mercury levels in blood samples from birds, and he began to wonder: What role might air pollution have played in the bird declines?

That presentation by Marie Perkins, assistant professor of wildlife ecology at University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, described her research examining mercury levels in songbird feathers from seven species. She found that mercury increased over time in six of the seven bird species she studied, with samples collected after 2000 showing two to 17 times more mercury than historic samples. Air pollution was "the major source" of mercury contamination, according to Perkins. The greatest increase was in the Rusty Blackbird, a species that has declined by 90% since the 1960s.

But it was the Red-eyed Vireo that caught Rosenberg's attention, as the lone species in the study without increased mercury levels.

"That happens to be one of the few songbirds in our big study whose population is increasing, not declining," he said. "That did make me think, 'Wow, maybe there is some relationship to mercury and this overall decline.'"

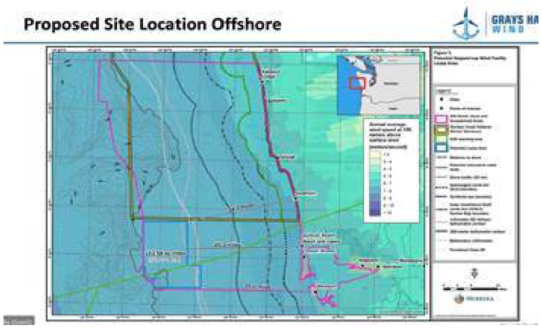
Other recently published research draws a more direct link between air pollution and birds, showing how government regulations aimed at making air cleaner for humans helped birds, too.

"The big take-home message is, what's good for birds is good for people," said Amanda Rodewald, senior director of the Center for Avian Population Studies at the Cornell Lab, and coauthor on a study published last December that showed the Clean Air Act helped save the lives of 1.5 billion birds.

According to Rodewald, the linkage between air pollution and birds is a ripe area of study that deserves more attention, especially because, with a new presidential administration, the time is right for gathering as much evidence as possible to support clean-air policy.

"We actually stand to gain multiple benefits—not only for human health, but for birds and conservation—when we control air pollution," Rodewald said.

To read the full article visit https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/birds-need-clean-air-safeguards-just-as-much-as-we-do-heres-why/?utm_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm_campaign=2893b5eebc-Cornell-Lab-eNews-September-2021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-2893b5eebc-278051769



Quinaults, wind energy companies explore project off Grays Harbor

The *Nagwia'sup* floating offshore wind project blew in like a squall, surprising many in the seafood industry of its presence.

In late July and August, proponents of Grays Harbor Wind LLC, https://www.graysharborwind.com/ opened discussions with seafood industry stakeholders to talk about a proposed offshore wind project of 75 wind turbines in the Quinault Indian Nation's usual and accustomed fishing areas about 25 miles offshore. But unlike a squall that arrives quickly, then passes, this project may take on the qualities of a full storm.

According to the company's website, Grays Harbor Wind is a joint venture between EnBW North America and Trident Winds.

"The proposed project could provide jobs and long-term economic benefits for tribal and non-tribal communities in the region while helping to combat the impacts of climate change. The [Quinault Indian Nation is] vulnerable to climate change and this project offers an opportunity to be part of the solution and build the new, clean energy economy," the site states.

However, fishermen and processors remain concerned. The area has expanded by roughly 50% in a month. The proposed area west of Grays Harbor, Wash., was reported as 102 square miles reported in a July 2021 preliminary environmental assessment https://tethys.pnnl.gov/sites/default/files/publications/GHW-Environmental-Report-2021_0.pdf but grew to 153 square miles as reported by the companies in a slide presentation to fishing groups in August. Permitting and construction will take years.

"The area lies on the relatively shallow slope of the continental shelf at a water depth of 360 to 700 feet," the assessment reads. "Immediately offshore from the proposed project area, the water depth deepens quickly onto the continental slope."

Fishermen and processors say this area is prime fishing area for shrimp, halibut, sablefish, hake and other species. Sport fishermen also use this area routinely, especially for halibut.

However, Grays Harbor Wind plans to submit an unsolicited lease request to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management soon, Trident Winds and Grays Harbor Wind CEO Alla Weinstein said to fishing industry groups earlier this month.

As CEO of Trident Winds, Weinstein submitted an unsolicited lease request to BOEM for a project off of Morro Bay, Calif., a few years ago. BOEM is still working with the state and other stakeholders to consider other bids for that area and has since expanded the area to 399 square miles.

Prior to Trident Winds, Weinstein also was a leader at Principle Power, another offshore wind company that proposed a five-turbine array off Coos Bay, Ore., in 2013-2015. That project eventually failed for lack of a power purchase agreement and concerns from the seafood industry about fishing grounds.

However, Trident Winds and EnBW are forging ahead in a joint venture with the Quinault.

"The Quinault Indian Nation has established an exclusive relationship with Grays Harbor Wind to develop the proposed offshore wind project," the website states.

"The name was chosen to honor the legend of Nagwia'sup, an ancient Quinault hunter from the Taholah family known as the great provider. In the same way that Nagwia'sup could catch enough food to feed his entire village for the winter with one trip to the ocean, the Quinault Indian Nation believes this project presents an opportunity to provide jobs and economic opportunities for current and future generations while accomplishing the important missions of addressing climate change and contributing to Washington's statewide clean energy goals," the Quinault Nation's newspaper, the Nugguam, stated in its August 2021 issue.

Quinault Councilman Larry Ralston's statement, as reported in Nugguam, said: "We are in the very early stages of exploration of offshore wind through a deliberative, multi-year process. We look forward to working with tribal members and our Grays Harbor neighbors as we all learn more about how this development could benefit our communities as well as any concerns."

The Pacific Fishery Management Council recently created an ad hoc Marine Planning Committee to consider marine developments in federal waters, including offshore wind. Grays Harbor Wind, along with California projects and Oregon considerations, will be discussed at its first meeting at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021. Meeting details can be found here: https://www.pcouncil.org/events/ad-hoc-marine-planning-committee-to-hold-online-meeting-september-1-2021/ .

Susan Chambers for SeafoodNews.com

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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Grays Harbor Audubon Society
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Inside this Issue

Program Meeting

Creating Wildlife Habitat in your own Backyard

David Linn

Via Zoom 1:30 pm, October 3rd

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