

Program Meeting
They're Back
Wolves in Washington
October 6th - 1:30 pm,
Hoquiam Library
Downstairs Meeting Room

September
October
2019



The Sandpiper



To help birds this winter, go easy on Fall yard work

Audubon National, Photo Laura Frazier

There's a certain satisfaction in autumn chores. When the weather's right, cleaning gutters, touching up paint, or splitting some firewood can feel less like manual labor and more like a rite of the season.

But if you want to make your backyard a welcoming winter haven for birds, some fall tasks call for a laissez-faire approach. "Messy is definitely good to provide food and shelter for birds during the cold winter months," says Tod Winston, Audubon's Plants for Birds program manager.

When fall arrives, some tidy-minded gardeners might be inclined to snip the stems of perennials in the flower garden. But the seed heads of coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and other native wildflowers provide a helpful food cache for birds. "They're almost invisible, those seeds, but birds eat them all winter long," Winston says. Grasses—not the stuff you mow, but native species like bluestems or grammas—also make for good foraging after they go to seed. And letting other dead plants stick around can fill your property with protein-packed bird snacks in the form of insect larvae, such as the fly and wasp larvae that inhabit goldenrod galls.

You can help birds and other wildlife—and save yourself some backache and blisters—by skipping the leaf raking. "Those leaves are important because they rot and enrich the soil, and also provide places for bugs and birds to forage for food," Winston says. If a fully hands-off approach doesn't work for your yard, consider composting some leaves and letting the rest be. You could also rake them from

the lawn to your garden beds, or mulch them with a mower to nourish your lawn.

Leaf litter isn't just free fertilizer—it's also a pretty happening patch of habitat for a variety of critters such as salamanders, snails, worms, and toads. "If you're digging in the garden and come upon these squirmy little coppery-brown dudes, and you don't know what they are—those are moth pupae," Winston says. A healthy layer of undisturbed soil and leaf litter means more moths, which in their caterpillar phase are a crucial food source for birds.

Leave native perennials standing until spring and their seed heads will provide nutrition for birds. Build a brush pile. Along with shaking loose showers of leaves, blustery fall days also tend to knock down tree limbs. Rather than hauling them away, you can use fallen branches to build a brush pile that will shelter birds from lousy weather and predators. American Tree Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, and other wintering birds will appreciate the protection from the elements. Rabbits, snakes, and other wildlife also will take refuge there. You'll find that the pile settles and decomposes over the seasons ahead, making room for next year's additions.

In most cases, grass clippings and mulched leaf litter provide plenty of plant nutrition, and using store-bought fertilizers only encourages more non-native plants to grow. Generally speaking, native grasses, shrubs, trees, and flowering plants don't need chemical inputs. Save a few bucks and keep your yard healthy for bugs and birds.

When it comes to creating a bird-friendly backyard, it's worth putting in some hard work planting native shrubs and trees. (Cooler temperatures also make fall a more comfortable time to tear out some turf grass and expand your native plant garden.) Native dogwoods, hawthorns, sumacs, and other flowering shrubs produce small fruits that not only feed birds during the colder months, but can also provide a welcome pop of color when winter gets drab. Planted in the right place, evergreens like cedars and firs give birds something to eat and a cozy shelter. Fall is also a great time to liven up your property with late-blooming perennials such as asters or sages—and to buy spring- and summer-blooming wildflowers at a substantial discount.

The President's Perch



By Janet Strong

Birding in the Shoulder Season and ACOW

Our area is famous for its fantastic spring birding, followed by great summer and winter birding. I think of Autumn as the "shoulder season" when things seem quieter, perhaps with a slightly different species mix. For example, this week my yard has been jumping with juncos returning from their mountain domain. They join the jays, sparrows, woodpeckers and other summer yard birds. It might be fun to visit some of your favorite birding spots to see who shows up in this transitional season. Mary O'Neil will be leading a birding expedition to Lake Quinalt on Monday, September 23, to discover what mix of species hang around that area in the fall. Please join in this most interesting field trip. Details will be forthcoming.

ACOW – Audubon Council of Washington – The annual meeting will be held on the last weekend of September, with the main focus being on Saturday, Sept. 28. Cost to attend all three days in only \$30. Perhaps potential attendees could band together to save money on motels or B&Bs. Since GHAS is one of the sponsors, it would be great if we had a healthy representation. Our own Arnie Martin will be one of the presenters, talking about the oil train experience in our recent past. https://wa.audubon.org/sites/default/files/static_pages/attachments/working_acow_agenda_1.pdf

October Program Meeting – Chris Montero, Outreach Coordinator for Wolf Haven International, will present information about wolves' lifestyles, wolves living at Wolf Haven near Tenino, and other fascinating details about one of Washington's native apex predators. And the pictures will thrill us all. We meet at the Hoquiam Library at 1:30 on Sunday, October 6. Everyone is most welcome so bring your friends. Refreshments will be on hand.

Birding the basin

by Mary O'Neil

Mary O'Neil led a field trip to the Westport Marina on Saturday, August 24. The morning started out on a very discouraging note - it rained all the way from Aberdeen to Westport. A few hardy souls showed up, though: Carol Sunde, Judith Taylor and Janet Strong. Surprisingly, some

hardy birds showed up too. Starting at Float 21, there were hundreds of Marbled Godwits huddled against the wall next to the Coast Guard station. Hundreds of cormorants and gulls were holding down the breakwater by the entrance to the Marina. The sea lions were stacked like cord wood on one of the floats all the while sending a chorus of prayers to the Sun God to please show himself. Such prayers as that have to be answered, and shortly before noon, the sun did come out giving us a good hour of great weather.

We traveled along the south side of the Marina checking the various floats. A Great Blue Heron was holding up the far wall looking very brown instead of blue (Must have been his wet feathers) and a cluster of gulls had IT out in front of us over what looked like some entrails. Fully expecting some starlings to show up, we double checked some lingering blackbirds, and - guess what - they were blackbirds, Brewers Blackbirds.

Two very cool moments: while walking the Fisherman's Float Walkway, the ebbing tide dropped low enough to expose a rocky feeding spot to which the Black Turnstones landed. There we watched them as they fed, romped, and rested. Also from the vantage point of this Float, we watched the Belted Kingfisher circle the Marina - a totally unexpected sighting.

Following is the complete list of birds as it was posted on eBird.

Westport -- Marina, Grays Harbor, Washington, US Aug 24, 2019 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Protocol: Traveling 1.0 mile(s)

Comments: Ebbing tide. Started out light sprinkling, but clouds parted around 12 noon and had a beautifully sunny afternoon. This was the scheduled GHAS Audubon field trip for August, 2019. 20 species (+1 other taxa)

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 6
Marbled Godwit 300, Black Turnstone 23
Common Murre 5, Pigeon Guillemot 3
Heermann's Gull X Both adults & juveniles
Western Gull X
Western x Glaucous-winged Gull (hybrid) X
Caspian Tern 7, Brandt's Cormorant X
Double-crested Cormorant 100
Brown Pelican 15
Great Blue Heron 4, Bald Eagle 2
Belted Kingfisher 1, American Crow 15
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 10
Barn Swallow 1, European Starling X
House Sparrow X
Brewer's Blackbird 20

**Remember: When stress gets you down
Go Birding!**

Field Trips:

Dress appropriately

Monday, September 23, 2019

Trip to Lake Quinault

Mary O'Neil will be leading another great nature trip. Meet at her house, 921 Dion Ave., Hoquiam at 9:30 AM. We'll car pool to Lake Quinault.

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Birding the Brady Loop.

Meet at Tractor Supply store in the Gateway Mall, Aberdeen at 10:00 AM. For those already in East County, meet at the Brady store at 10:30 AM.

GHAS Programs:

All program meetings are at the Hoquiam Library meeting room, the first Sunday of the month at 1:30 PM, unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, October 6, 2019

They Are Back! Wolves in Washington

Chris Montero, Outreach Coordinator, Wolfhaven will discuss the introduction of wolves in Washington State.

Sunday, December 1, 2019

Twin Harbors Waterkeeper

Lee First, Twin Harbors Waterkeeper will talk about the Chehalis River and Willapa River watersheds newly formed organization, part of the international Waterkeeper Alliance.

Sunday, February 2, 2020

Chehalis Basin Alliance

Mark Glyde will discuss the Alliance and the proposed dam on the Upper Chehalis River.



Ocean Park State Park

A Nature Walk with Jan and Mary

Mary O'Neil and Jan Strong led a couple of nature walks for campers at Ocean City State Park this summer. Walks were followed by an art activity so folks could take home a memorable plant drawing. The walks were great fun for all concerned.





A Herring Gull snatches an ice cream cone.
Photo by Per Andrén via Birdshare.

Soaring, swooping gulls add to the magic of a summer day at the beach—but they’re not always a welcome sight: Herring Gulls, for example, can be aggressive around people who are eating, and on some beaches will even swipe food right out of people’s hands. Keep your guard up or else a stealthy bird may make off with your fried clams or ice cream cone.

A new study points at a way to safely deter these would-be food-snatchers: engage the gulls in a good old-fashioned stare-down.

Researchers from the University of Exeter in the U.K. wanted to know whether Herring Gulls foraging on beaches in one region of England would react to a perceived threat as they make a play for a bit of food. To do this, they designed an experiment to test the gulls’ “sensitivity to gaze.”

The scientists placed a bag full of french fries a few feet from themselves, then tracked the reactions of approaching gulls as the researchers either looked away from, or looked directly at, an approaching gull.

Out of 74 individual Herring Gulls that the scientists attempted to test, they could only get 19 of them to undergo complete trials for both conditions, indicating that most gulls are not predisposed to snatch food from people in the first place. But out of the 19 birds that met the study criteria, they found that gulls being goggled took 21 seconds longer, on average, to make a go at their quarry.

They also found a huge variation in behavior of individual gulls. When NOT being looked at, the swiftest bird took just three seconds to approach and steal the fries; the slowest took nearly three minutes. All the birds took the food eventually when not being watched directly.

Under the researchers’ gaze, some gulls were still barely deterred. The brashest gull took just

four seconds to grab the grub while being given the eye. (Interestingly, this was the same bird that was also the quickest to the food in the other part of the trial.) On the other hand, 6 of the 19 gulls failed to take the food at all after 5 minutes of steady staring from a scientist

“Those that were that quick were pretty much focused on the chips,” says Madeleine Goumas, the lead author on the paper. “Those that took a longer amount of time would often stop repeatedly, take a meandering approach, and—most importantly—were looking back at me in the eye.”

Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Fall is approaching and birds will be hungry

Fall and winter are when birds rely most heavily on backyard feeders to supplement their diets and fuel their migratory journeys. Help birds make the most of your backyard buffet by setting up an assortment of feeder types and bird seed varieties—from suet feeders to thistle, platform feeders and more. And when fall migration ends, your feeders will support your winter residents all season long.

National Audubon Society bird feeders, bird houses and bird baths are reviewed by our team of experts and designed with birds in mind. These feeders are available at True Value Hardware Stores and other retailers.



Tower toolkit for bird enthusiasts

Bird enthusiasts can play an active role in reducing communications tower collisions by urging tower owners and operators to turn off their steady-burning lights. This simple improvement will make communication towers more bird-friendly while reducing operating costs. It is worth the effort: Every tower made safer now will benefit birds for years to come.

Which Towers Are Most Dangerous?

Not all communications towers pose equal threats to birds, and basic changes to the most dangerous towers can greatly reduce tower collisions and bird deaths. Those most in need of improvements include:

Towers with steady-burning nighttime lights: these lights attract and disorient birds, leading to collisions and bird fatalities. Red lights in particular are dangerous for birds.

Towers 300 feet and taller cause significantly more avian fatalities than shorter ones. Likewise, towers supported by guy wires are responsible for more collisions than self-supporting ones.

Towers located in areas with high migratory bird concentrations. This is particularly important in areas used by rare birds.

Towers located in areas with frequent fog in the spring and fall; foggy conditions tend to increase bird collisions.

Are Flashing Lights a Threat to Pilots?

The FAA has found that flashing lights on communication towers do not pose a safety danger for aviators. Accordingly, the agency released an Advisory Circular requiring that new towers greater than 150 feet tall be lit with flashing lights. Unfortunately, existing towers are still allowed to use nonflashing lights.

Working with the Tower Industry

Everyone has something to gain by turning off steady-burning lights. And the tower industry has generally been supportive of this option, recognizing that flashing lights reduce operating and maintenance costs. The win-win aspect of this opportunity is an important point to emphasize when interacting with the communication tower officials.

How Do I Find Information About A Specific Tower?

The Songbird Saver app developed by Celiron Labs allows users on mobile devices and desktops to quickly find towers that need to change their lights and contact tower operators. To get started, visit songbirdsaver.org. Please send printed letters to ensure your letter is received. There are numerous outdated email addresses in the FCC database that we are working to update, but meanwhile, sending letters is the best option. The Songbird Saver App includes a template letter that can be used to help craft messages to the tower owners in your area. See sample letter.

You can follow up on your letter by contacting the tower engineer who will be most familiar with individual towers and is responsible for their marking and lighting. If a phone call does not suffice, consider a face-to-face meeting as these are typically most effective. Always remember to be respectful and positive in your interactions.

Do not hesitate to follow up with the tower owner after your initial meeting to check on progress. This is especially important if progress is not obvious. During interactions, it is also important to mention that bird-friendly changes provide an opportunity to generate positive media attention for tower operators and affiliate stations.

Tracking Progress: The Songbird Saver website also provides a reporting feature enabling you to inform us which towers have been contacted and the response, if any, received from the tower owner.



Program Meeting
Sunday October 6, 2019

They're back - Wolves in Washington State

Chris Montero is the Outreach Coordinator at **Wolf Haven International**. After studying Biology and Ecology in his native Costa Rica, he finished his studies at The Evergreen State College. Chris has worked for 20 years in conservation, both in Washington State and Costa Rica. For the last 9 years has been teaching Wildlife and Conservation for National Geographic Student Expeditions in Ecuador, Brazil, Australia, Belize, the Canadian Arctic and more recently in the Zimbabwe and Botswana.



After more than a 70 year absence, wolves have returned to Washington State. They were hunted to extinction, but the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reported that by the end of 2018 our state had at least 126 wolves distributed in 27 packs. As wolves continue reclaiming our wild areas, they bring change not only to our local ecosystems but also to our human culture.

Where are these wolves and how are they surviving? How are they affecting the people in our state? How is our state managing these wolves? These are some of the questions that we will explore during this presentation.



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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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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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