

*Membership Meeting
Sunday December 5, 2010
Drs. Sonnya Crawford & Scott Ford
Bald Eagles - Anatomically*

*1:30 pm – 3 pm
Pearsall Building
2109 Sumner Avenue, Aberdeen*

November/December 2010



The Sandpiper

Oil and birds: too close for comfort

Louisiana's Coast six months into the BP disaster

Edited from Audubon report

The beaches, islands, wetlands, and waters of the Gulf of Mexico play an essential role in the life cycles of hundreds of North America's bird species, some of which breed and remain in the region year-round. Others, like the Semipalmated Sandpiper, pause to rest and refuel at this "Grand Central Station" on the Mississippi Flyway, en route between their Arctic breeding grounds and wintering sites farther south. And for still others, like the Piping Plover and the American White Pelican, the Gulf is the ultimate destination of fall migration and a place to spend the winter. The long-term impacts of the BP disaster on each of these groups will be determined by the different ways they depend on the Gulf.

Risks associated with this summer's crisis are only the latest in a series of ongoing insults to Gulf ecosystems already in severe decline. Many species are already experiencing population decreases due in large part to a broad array of environmental ills: Louisiana loses an alarming 25 square miles of coastal habitat each year, largely as a result of shortsighted management of the Mississippi River and the loss of sediments needed to replenish the state's rapidly eroding coast. Beach nesting sites are frequently disturbed as a result of overdevelopment. These pressures are compounded by the escalating threats from global cli-



AP photo/Charlie Riedel

mate change; its projected toll includes the gradual loss of coastal island and marsh habitat to rising seas.

In essence, the birds of the Gulf are indicators of its broader ecological health—as well as the health of other habitats on which they depend. There are no quick fixes for the problems that face this vital region. And dealing with the oil disaster alone is not enough. Protecting the future of Gulf birds, other wildlife, and human communities requires long-term efforts that address a wide range of challenges and that ultimately restore the health of the coast's imperiled ecosystems.

The Brown Pelican

Five months before the BP oil disaster started, the Brown Pelican was removed from the U.S. endangered species list thanks to years of effective conservation measures. The banning of DDT, repatriating pelicans to Louisiana, and years of special stewardship efforts all contributed to the

species' recovery from near extinction. Throughout the summer of 2010, repeated images of oiled and dying pelicans made the state bird of Louisiana familiar to many as a symbol of oil's deadly impact. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that hundreds of dead Brown Pelicans have been collected in the Gulf, making it second only to the Laughing Gull in confirmed spill-related deaths. Experience from previous spills makes it clear that the recovered birds represent only a fraction of the total that perished.

As Audubon's survey revealed, pelicans are not yet safe from the effects of the oil and the cleanup. Direct contact and disturbance, food-chain issues, and long-term toxicity all remain serious threats. The oil disaster struck sensitive nesting areas at the beginning of the pelican's breeding season. Though Audubon's survey showed that birds successfully fledged from nests in oiled areas, their long-term prognosis is uncertain. Many young in Gulf colonies were exposed to oil when their parents came back to feed them or when the juveniles first left the colony to begin feeding on their own. Only population monitoring will provide clues about the extent of impacts on the young and on breeding populations. Pelicans' relatively lengthy maturation process means that the true toll of the spill on reproductive success and population stability will not be revealed for several years.

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The Vice-President's perch



By Arnie Martin

OK, Mary O'Neil is exploring Central India, and I'm at home. What will I write about? I'll write about what I've been doing in Tokeland. I've been attending meetings in Tokeland that started from a Tokeland/North Cove Chamber meeting in May. That meeting was in reaction to a comment made by a part-time Tokeland resident at the Chamber's March meeting regarding the marbled godwits at the Tokeland marina.

The Port of Willapa Bay owns and manages the Tokeland Marina, but, not being birders, they weren't aware of the importance of the marina and the floats in providing refuge for the godwits at high tide. The Tokeland Marina is a shallow harbor, with extensive mudflats surrounding the area at low tide states, providing good feeding sites for the godwits. During the high tides the floats provided them a place to avoid the predation of coyotes and perhaps even cats.

The birding community saw that the floats had been beached, and assumed, probably incorrectly, that they were going to be removed. The floats were actually moved out of the way to provide room for the Port to dredge sediment that had accumulated over years, making the marina unsuitable for larger boats to enter or leave at lower tidal states.

The godwits still had a "high tide refuge" on the marina breakwater (not the portion that has the road), but that provides limited flat space, so the hundreds of birds have to use the spaces



Tokeland Marina photo by Ron Arel, Coastal Images, Westport

between the rocks, on both the inner side of the breakwater and the outer side which is less protected from the wind and waves. Fortunately, the dredging is expected to be completed by this fall's dredging season, and the floats will be returned to their former location.

That discussion led to a meeting about the feasibility of putting up a blind for birders to observe the godwits, much like the new blind at Bottle Beach State Park in Ocosta. Mary O'Neil and I went to the marina, and noted that the godwits, dunlin, and other shorebirds weren't disturbed by our presence without a blind, but we noted that there were no facilities available for visitors: limited parking, no restrooms, no stores close to the marina, and not even a small restaurant.

We weren't the first to notice this, the local residents were well aware of the lack of amenities for visitors, whether birders or just tourists admiring the scenery. The meeting in March led to additional meetings in June and the months following that resulted in planning for a "Sustainable Tokeland". The meeting was organized by the local residents (about 340 full-time and about 200 part-time) and a few interested non-residents. I attended representing the Grays Harbor Audubon Society (those who know me may remember that "I'm for the birds"). The majority of the birders visiting

the Tokeland area come through Aberdeen on their way there, so even though Tokeland is actually in Pacific County; it has much closer ties to our Audubon chapter than the Pacific County chapters.

The residents had already noted the lack of local stores (other than Nelson's Crab) and they had many suggestions, with the most popular being a boardwalk from the marina to at least the Tokeland Golf Course, possibly extending to the Shoalwater Indian Tribe's Recreation Center.

The committee wanted to get input from the local residents, so the committee invited the entire community to a meeting. The meeting attendees were asked to list their wishes for improvements that would lead to a Sustainable Tokeland. An extensive list of ideas resulted, which were then categorized. The categories were: "What is Valuable & Liked about Tokeland", "Ideas for Tokeland", "Ideas for the Marina", "Possible Events for Tokeland", and "Facilities & Services needed".

As you can imagine, doing everything that might be included on these groups of lists would be prohibitively expensive for such a small community. The most expensive suggestion is a very logical one: a community sewage treatment facility on this sandy peninsula. There were some ideas that were much less expensive that could be implemented at little cost.

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Travelin' Rain
by Janet Strong

*Rain is a traveler
Strolling through the countryside
Drifting this way and that
Stopping at times for a serious chat.*

*Rain brings us the news
Of tin roofs overhead
Of gutters and downspouts
And the voices of legions of leaves*

*Rain awakens our senses
Brings the smells from the earth
Enlarges the song of the stream
Delivers cold slaps from the trees and the grass.*

*Rain paints the world in new colors,
Darkens pale tones
Brightens and polishes the rest,
Lest we forget the sparkle in things.*

*Rain bridges the barrier
Between us and the rest of life,
Gives substance to the space between,
Is the glue that cements us together,
Is a blanket which we can share.*

Perch continued from page 2

The next meeting, held in mid-October, had the community members rank the previous lists of ideas into the top 3 long-range projects, and the top 2 short-range projects. These rankings will be developed into a final list of projects, and with this list, and the community support generated, they will consider applying for grants to plan one or more of the long range projects, and will likely form committees to execute some of the short range (low cost) ones. This will start after the next community meeting, in mid-November.

It has been interesting to be an outsider sitting in on these meetings, both just the Sustainable Tokeland committee and the Community meetings, and seeing the cooperation between the community members, including both the native and non-native members. It's so pleasant to see that cooperation, and I hope that the native and non-native members continue to work together so effectively.



Palm warbler photo taken October 29th at Johns River Wildlife Reserve in Grays Harbor by Andy Melnick



Oil continued from page 1

To gain an understanding of the effects of the oil spill on bird populations and the environment, Audubon science teams designed a survey to assess conditions at a series of sites across southern Louisiana. Survey sites were chosen to represent both habitat areas that received oil during the BP spill (10 such sites were included) and those where little or no oil came ashore (13 such sites were included). Teams also surveyed 10 marsh habitats, one of which had visible evidence of oil. They collected data on three characteristics at each site: bird numbers, species, and observable condition; the visible presence or other evidence of oil in beach sand; and habitat disruption from oil clean-up activities.

Teams surveyed the birds by undertaking one-kilometer transects along beach habitat and 15-minute stationary counts at marsh habitats. Walking slowly along each transect, survey teams recorded total numbers of birds of all species seen on either side of the transect lines. All birds were also observed for evidence of oil on their feathers, whether on the beach or flying by. Teams were able to confidently make this determination for about half the individual birds. Marsh surveys were conducted from a single point. Team members listened for species songs or calls for five minutes; they then lis-

tened for five more minutes following the playing of a Clapper Rail call, plus 5 additional minutes following the playing of a Seaside Sparrow song. During both beach and marsh surveys they watched birds for abnormal behavior that might suggest exposure to toxins.

Teams also collected information on habitat on the transects and marsh surveys. For beach sites, this included information on the wrack—vegetation that washes up on shore during high tides—which provides extremely important feeding areas for many shorebirds and was often cleaned up during the response to the oil spill. They scored wrack on a 0 to 3 scale, in which 0 was “no wrack present” and 3 was “contiguous cover of wrack along the beach.” They also recorded the presence of oil, tarballs, and other evidence of oil along the beach using a relative scoring system from 0 (no evidence of oil) to 3 (contiguous coverage). Additionally, team members assessed impacts from human activity, either from cleanup crews or from recreational use. As part of this effort they recorded both direct human use along the beach and evidence of use such as tire tracks, presence of booms, cleanup stations, and piles of trash and sand from cleanup.

To look for evidence of oil and dispersants in sand, teams collected sand samples from the surface and from within trenches. At select locations they dug a six-foot-long trench parallel to the beach and one foot deep. After checking for evidence of layering of oil in the sand, teams took sand samples from within the trench for testing. These samples will be analyzed in the lab for hydrocarbons from oil and for remnants of dispersants. Sampling and chemical analysis will reveal oil not present on the

surface but still present in the sand. This hidden oil has the potential to affect prey availability and quality.

Audubon will use all information gathered to form the baseline for ongoing study and increased understanding of disaster impacts and implications, as well as how they relate to other challenges facing Gulf ecosystems. Understanding these problems is a critical step in creating effective solutions.

To read more and access the full report, please visit <http://gulfoilspill.audubon.org/oil-and-birds-too-close-comfort>

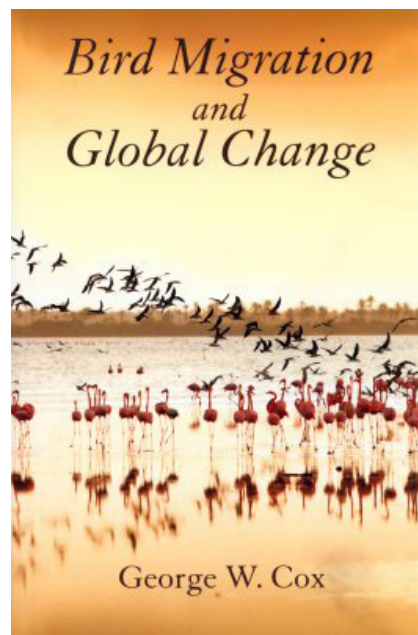
Grays Harbor Christmas Bird Count or “How to Get A Jumpstart on Your New Years Resolution to Get Outdoors More”

By Dianna Moore

For all of you who have gently hinted at my lack of scheduled field trips this past year, here is your opportunity to participate in a doozy! The 111th Annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Wednesday, December 29th, 2010. Rain or shine, we must go out there and count birds to uphold the honor of the Grays Harbor CBC, one of the premier CBC’s in the state. But it’s not just about status; this is a fun event...really. There is a good reason the same core group shows up year after year. We enjoy the challenge and the camaraderie of fellow birders.

I won’t go into why this needs to be done...in short, to track the status of our birds...I would just like to say you will be glad you did it if you choose to join us. Please take a day to get outside and look at birds; it’s worth it.

For more information and to sign up, contact Dianna Moore at 360-289-5048 or e-mail at dlmoor2@coastaccess.com



Bird Migration and Global Change - a new book

Because of their dependence on specific habitats and resources in different geographic regions at different phases of their annual cycle, migratory species are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Therefore, conservation scientists and birdwatchers are very interested in changes in the seasonal movements and population dynamics of migratory birds.

In *Bird Migration and Global Change*, eminent ecologist George W. Cox brings his extensive experience as a scientist and bird enthusiast to bear in evaluating the capacity of migratory birds to adapt to the challenges of a changing climate.

Cox reviews, synthesizes, and interprets recent and emerging science on the subject, beginning with a discussion of climate change and its effect on habitat, and followed by eleven chapters that examine responses of bird types across all regions of the globe. The final four chapters address the evolutionary capacity of birds, and consider how best to shape conservation strategies to protect migratory species in coming decades.

The rate of climate change is faster now than at any other moment in recent geological history. How best to manage migratory birds to deal with this challenge is a major conservation issue.

George W. Cox is Emeritus Professor of Biology at San Diego State University and a lifelong student of birds and their migrations.



Getting to know GH-NWR's new Education Coordinator

Maya Elson is very excited to be the new Education Coordinator for Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. She came back to Olympia to begin her position on October 1st. Originally from Western Massachusetts, Maya moved to Olympia in 2004. She graduated from The Evergreen State College, where she studied environmental justice and field biology. She loves the Pacific Northwest, but she has spent much of the last few years in different places to work on environmental campaigns, do ecological surveys, and work in environmental education.

Maya has re-worked the curriculum for the Shorebird Sister School Program and will begin doing class presentations on November 5th. The program this year includes six in-

class lessons that will engage students in hands-on learning activities about shorebirds, migration, habitat, wetlands, ecology and more. It also includes a field study trip to GHNWR in the spring, using the refuge as an outdoor classroom to integrate the learning from the in-class lessons. Maya is helping to organize this year's Shorebird Festival. She will be coordinating the Nature Fun Fair and the Shorebird Poster Contest. She is also the volunteer coordinator for GHNWR and would love to have more volunteers. In particular, she would very much appreciate new volunteers that can help move learning materials in and out of the classroom, be an extra pair of eyes on the kids and bring more enthusiasm about shorebirds! Refuge volunteers are also needed to help with pulling invasive plants, trail roving, maintenance and the Shorebird Festival.

Feel free to contact Maya with any questions and let her know if you would like to volunteer.

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68 groups join call to ban lead in ammo, fishing tackle

Sixty-eight organizations in 27 states have now signed on to the Center for Biological Diversity's petition to ban toxic lead in hunting ammunition and fishing tackle.

The Center and allies filed a legal petition in August asking the Environmental Protection Agency to require ammo and tackle to be free of lead, which needlessly kills and harms 10 million to 20 million birds each year -- including bald eagles, trumpeter swans and severely endangered California condors -- and jeopardizes human health to boot. Animals are poisoned when they scavenge on carcasses containing lead-bullet fragments or ingest spent lead-shot pellets or lost fishing weights, mistaking them for food or grit.

The petition, citing nearly 500 scientific papers on lead's deleterious effects, was submitted with the American Bird Conservancy and three other groups -- and now, with the help of the Bird Conservation Alliance, we've enlisted signatures from scores of other organizations representing birders, hunters, zoologists, American Indians, physicians, veterinarians and public employees. "It's encouraging to see so many types of organizations unite for the common goal of ending lead poisoning of wildlife in this country," said the Center's Jeff Miller.

"Extensive science links lead poisoning in wildlife to spent ammunition and fishing weights. Now that there are safe and available alternatives for these outdoor sports, there's no good reason for this poisoning to continue."

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GHAS Website	http://ghas.org

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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- Heron \$25.00
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- I am renewing my membership
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To join National Audubon or renew your National Audubon Membership, call 1-800-274-4201.

A SPECIAL GIFT

We know that the economy is causing difficulties for everyone, but we know that GHAS provides special effort to protect habitat for birds and other living things. Enclosed is a special gift to GHAS to keep our organization off the endangered species list.

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How Do I Know When My Membership Is Due?

If we have mailed your copy, look in the upper right hand corner of your label and it will give you your renewal date! For those of you on email, we will notify you via email of your upcoming renewal date.

News & Editorial

send materials to
P.O. Box 1044
Westport, 98595-1044
or email to
rd@olearycreek.com
Copy deadline ongoing

***Membership Meeting
Sunday, December 5, 2010
1:30 - 3:00PM
Pearsall Building***

Dr. Sonnya Crawford and Dr. Scott Ford of the Grays Harbor Veterinary Service in Montesano are specialists in avian health care. Their lecture will feature the unique anatomical structure of our signature bird, the Bald Eagle. Please join us for a fascinating discussion and, of course refreshments.

Interested in being more involved in GHAS?

*Become a member of the Board.
contact:
Linda Orgel
ldotorg@olearycreek.com*

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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

The Sandpiper

P.O. Box 470
Montesano,
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