

*Membership Meeting
 Sunday October 2, 2011
 Wild Olympics
 Al Carter
 1:30 pm – 3 pm
 Pearsall Building
 2109 Sumner Avenue, Aberdeen*

September/October 2011



The Sandpiper

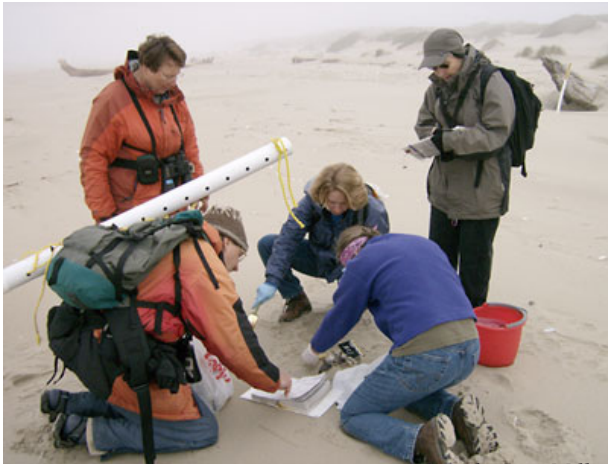


photo by Lois Miller

COASST meets in Taholah

COASST is the acronym for Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team. On Friday evening, August 26, 2011 an enthusiastic group of dedicated “Coassters” and friends of Coassters met at the Quinalt Nation’s Community Center in Taholah to listen to Prof. Julia Parrish offer the latest information about those birds that visit our shorelines --both dead and alive.

In case you are not familiar with the program, it was developed almost thirteen years ago by Julia Parrish, Executive Director of COASST, Professor, School of Aquatic and Fishery Science & Department of Biology, University of Washington. It is a citizen science program in partnership with the University of Washington, State, Tribal, federal agencies, environmental organizations and community groups that monitor the beach for carcasses of marine birds along the coastlines from Alaska to California.

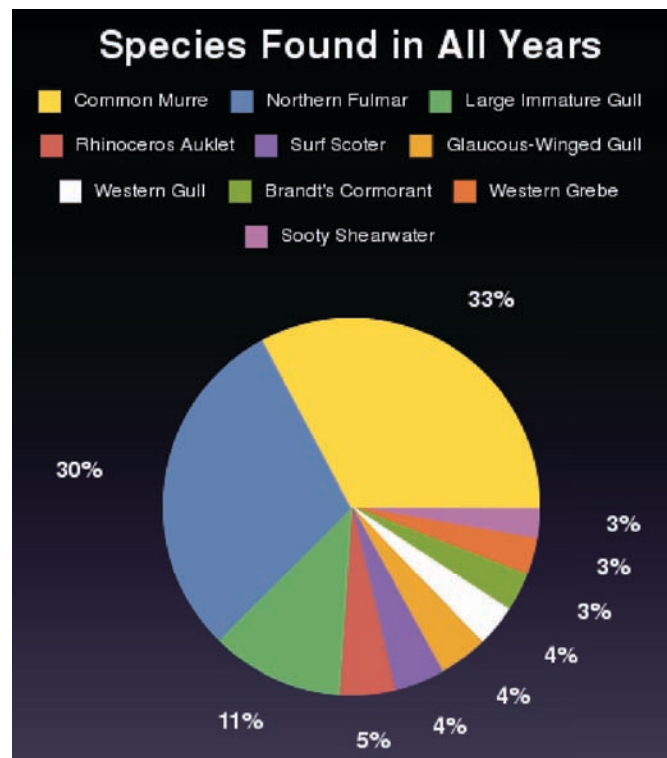
Julia and some of her staff were in Taholah for the public presentation on Friday and to train volunteers on the skills of bird surveying the following day. Julia is not only a wonderful speaker but is incredibly knowledgeable about the birds that live and visit our shores. She talked about both live and dead bird habits and habitat, illustrated by exceptional photos and well-researched statistics.

At the hands-on training session, participants learn how seabirds, and particularly beached birds, fit

into marine conservation, are introduced to bird identification using *Beached Birds: A COASST Field Guide*, have the opportunity to try out their ID skills, and learn everything they need to know about how to conduct a COASST survey.

Local Audubon members, Wolter and Anneka van-Doorninck are longtime members of COASST and Wolter was specifically mentioned by Julia as one of their most prolific contributors to the database.

“Realizing the pressing needs of marine natural resource management, coastal conservation, and the need for good science and a stewardship ethic among citizens, COASST sees a future in which all coastal communities contribute directly to rigorous and vital data,” Prof. Parrish wrote on their website, <http://coasst.org>. For more information and volunteer opportunities, please visit their website.



<http://depts.washington.edu/coasst/patterns.html>

The President's Perch



By Arnie Martin

A dusty trail

You probably have read the article in the July 28th Aberdeen Daily World about the possibility of having a coal export facility in Hoquiam for shipping coal from the Powder River Basin (in Montana and Wyoming) to Asia (primarily China and Japan). The location of this coal export dock is to be at the Port of Grays Harbor "Terminal 3", which is located near the southeast corner of the Hoquiam sewage lagoon.

This location is currently occupied by Willis Enterprises, which grinds small logs into wood chips for barge shipment to Longview. The proposed coal export facility would result in Willis Enterprises having to move their chipping equipment to another site on the harbor, but the coal facility requires several times the land area that Willis Enterprises uses. The coal would be shipped in using "unit trains" of from 120 to 140 cars length, which are open (uncovered) bottom-dump rail cars, each car holding 100 – 115 tons.

Why is this project being welcomed by Hoquiam government?

The only positive outcome from this proposal is the possible generation of additional local jobs. Any of these jobs may be filled by many out-of-town workers from the Seattle-Tacoma area, similar to what has occurred so far during the current pontoon construction project. The downside from the proposal is the building of a facility which has the potential to pollute the area with noise, unsightly equipment and piles of coal, and, if not scrupulously maintained and operated, with large quantities of coal dust, which contains known carcinogens. Does this seem like the highest and best use of an area next to the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge, a location that has been designated an area of Western hemispheric, world importance to bird migration?

Who is proposing this?

This project is being proposed by a company in Jacksonville, FL called RailAmerica, which is the parent company of the local rail carrier, the Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad. The stated capacity of the coal export facility is 5 million metric tons (11 billion pounds) per year. This will require handling one loaded unit train and one empty unit train per day, every day. Each train will require

approximately 4 locomotives, and the total length of a train will be between 1.25 and 1.5 miles. The facility will require a track loop of this length at the facility to allow the handling of the loaded and just-emptied cars. They will have to construct an 8,000 foot long siding to allow the loaded and empty trains to pass each other somewhere on the single rail line from Chehalis through Aberdeen and to Hoquiam.

Emergency access

The passage of two additional 1.25-1.50 mile long trains each day through the Aberdeen & Hoquiam areas will further restrict passage of cars into and out of the Gateway Mall area just east of the Wishkah River. Additional choke points are located in Hoquiam at the 8th Street, 5th Street, and Adams Street rail crossings. It is unlikely that the trains will be stopped to allow emergency vehicles to cross the tracks, and I doubt that any expensive automobile overpass will be constructed in Hoquiam to allow such passage. The 8th street crossing is only 1 block south of the Hoquiam Fire Station. This would leave the businesses south of the tracks without access to emergency services, unless the train unloading facility allows through-access via Paulson Road and Airport Way.



All photos this article by Paul K. Anderson

Unloading & Loading

The coal export requires unloading the coal from these rail cars, and when there is a ship at the dock, directly loading the coal via conveyors into the ship's hold. During the time when there is no ship at the dock the coal will be put into storage piles on a large concrete pad for later loading into the next ship. RailAmerica states that they will wash the inside of each rail car after unloading, and put the waste water into a pond for later re-use. The safety of the storage piles and the waste pond during possible earthquake and tsunami events would be a large issue.

Noise

Those of us who live close enough to the Willis Enterprises chipping plant know from the noise

continued on page 3

A dusty trail continued from page 2

that they start up at 6:00 AM and work until at least 8:00 PM and sometimes until 10:00 PM. The coal unloading is supposed to use an “indexing unloader” which pulls (pushes?) each car in turn over the unloading pit, which is emptied by a conveyor system, either to the waiting ship’s hold, or to the storage piles. The start/stop motion of the unloading system will cause the familiar clanking/banging sound we who live close enough to the rail lines hear when the train starts and stops. This sound may equal or surpass the Willis chipping plant in volume and duration.

The reloading of the coal onto ships will also be a noisy procedure, with the conveyors continually running. The coal will be falling 60+ feet into the ship’s holds, and the ships will be among the largest and widest to enter the harbor. The ships will have a capacity of from 40,000 to 80,000 tons. The draft of the loaded ships will be on the order of 37 to 39 ft, which is barely below the limit of ships west of the Chehalis Bridge (channel depth is 40 ft).



Coal Storage in piles

During the unending daily unloading process, there will be times when there is not a ship at the dock to be loaded, resulting in a need to store the coal in piles. This will later require having the coal being loaded from the coal piles, which will be accomplished using some of the largest Caterpillar-type tractors made; large clanking beasts similar to those used in open-pit mining in Montana. Unloading one coal train would make a pile with an approximate diameter of 2/3 the length of a football field and a height of 1/3 that length (209 ft dia. x 104 ft. height assuming a 45 degree slope). Most likely there would be two piles.

Wind Effects on coal piles

The coal piles will be possible sources of wind-blown coal dust. The tremendous storms that have occurred during the past 50 years, including the Columbus Day Storm (Oct 12, 1962) and the December 2007 storm would have overwhelmed any

normal wind fence that might be installed around the coal pile location. Any conveyors would need to be constructed to withstand the 100+ mph wind speeds in these storms.



Coal dust loss during rail transport

The shipping of coal in open top cars, according to the Burlington Northern Railroad, results in a 3 to 5 percent loss of the coal contents along the shipping route. These losses are primarily coal dust blown from the cars by the motion of the trains and by cross-winds during the shipment. This coal dust will be unevenly distributed along the tracks in Northern Idaho, Eastern Washington, the Columbia Gorge, and some will be lost to the environment on the harbor. The total loss of coal dust per year could be as high as 550 million pounds per year, just from the shipment of the coal to this proposed unloading-reloading facility. An example of the dust losses can be seen in the video included in this link (note the dust at the 2-minute mark): <http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2011/08/01/18-coal-trains-a-day>.

Unloading rail loop location

The unloading will require that the railroad tracks have a loop long enough to hold the entire unit train and the locomotives. The railroad tracks currently end near the intersection of Paulson Road and State Route 109, just across Paulson Road from the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge sign. The loop will have to connect somewhere before this location, and travel over the area where the Hoquiam sewage pond was. The sewage lagoon, where many hundreds of waterfowl used to rest, has been drained and is being filled with the material excavated from the SR-520 pontoon facility in Aberdeen. The rail loop will cover some portion of the filled lagoon, the former log storage area north of the current Willis Enterprises site and east of Paulson Road. The unloading and storage section will cover the current Willis Enterprises site.

continued on page 4

A dusty trail continued from page 3

This unloading loop will be directly east of Paulson Road, where it borders the Refuge. That part of the refuge is the proposed site of the hoped for Visitors Center. That part of the Refuge area west of Paulson Road is currently occupied by wildlife, including nesting geese. The location of the only nesting pair of osprey near the refuge, is on the Port property where the unit train unloading loop will be located.



area as they pass by on their way to Ocean Shores and the North Beach will be lost. If you doubt this statement, view the video about the coal export facility in Newport News, Virginia <http://www.dailypress.com/videobeta/0e7be2a2-8793-4c77-9022-5d239ff04669/News/Newport-News-Coal-Terminals>. This video shows the the Mayor of Newport News as he comments about what could be done if the coal terminal wasn't there.

Water pollution

The tidal currents will carry some coal dust (from the coal unloading & reloading) into the harbor, and eventually the tides and the river current will carry the dust out of the harbor, past oyster beds, Ocean Shores, and Westport. Currents will carry some portion of the coal dust into the Bowerman Basin, causing fouling of the mudflats, the source of food for the migrating shorebirds.

Should the US export our natural resources?

The export of coal mined in the US to Asia is worrisome, as the United States has not been a large exporter of natural resources, as are Canada, Australia, and Indonesia, which are the principal current exporters of coal to China and Japan. Should the US send coal to China to burn in their poorly regulated thermal power plants, generating large quantities of sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, mercury, and arsenic emissions upstream of our prevailing Westerly winds? Should we aid and abet the Chinese in generating more greenhouse gasses which may result in further global warming and sea level rises? The Bowerman airport elevation is 14 feet currently.

Effect on Hoquiam's appearance

Once this facility is built, the existing vistas, which attract thousands of visitors during the annual shorebird migration, will be forever irreparably changed. The possibility of increasing the percentage of the tourists who stop in the Hoquiam

Conclusion

I do not believe that placing a coal export facility this close to the Grays Harbor NWR is a correct decision. Please note that the Port of Tacoma has said that they will not allow the construction of a coal export terminal there, due to potential opposition from environmental activists. The proposed terminal in Longview has had their permit revoked due to misleading information about the tons per year. The government in Bellingham has not allowed a terminal due to opposition from the public and health concerns from 100 local doctors. Why would Hoquiam and the Port of Grays Harbor not reach the same decision?

All photos used in this article were courtesy of Paul K. Anderson. To see more visit <http://paulkanderson.com> select Coal and the American West.

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

Franz's Corner
The poetry of birds
contributed by Franz Schneider

Sparrowhawk

*Just a shape at first, wide and blank, merging
for a moment with my own dark outline on the road,
the shadow of a hawk passed over my shoulder, crossing
the top of my flattened self so suddenly I flinched, I started,
as if some vague and unexpected hand had touched my actual
body, but gently, without a sound, seeming to dissolve then and
rise, pulling away from the surface and becoming three dimensional,
a sparrow hawk, golden, gliding just before me along the curve,
buoyant as balsam, nearly mechanical, a single feathered muscle
pushing off finally above the fields, behind it the gathering clouds
and the delicate sky and there, in a gap, rounding in air, paling,
as huge and sudden as a world, the afternoon moon.*

Chris Anderson, November 29, 1997

Wind and Bird

*The wind in the cedars is pure.
It sings and sings. I stand where I can hear*

*A woodthrush on a bough, repetitive singer
Of only one tune, slow but sure.*

*He says what he means and what he means is true.
I watch the shy bird zigzag away through ferns.*

*I stand where I can hear the wind and the bird.
The wind is still. The bird has not returned.*

*Between the light of the dying sun
In late afternoon and the light of the moon*

*Rising with the stars, what is that voice I hear?
The voice of another bird or the voice of a different wind?*

Harold Enrico

*Franz and Anne Schneider recently moved to Albany, Oregon. They are rapidly
adapting to their new habitat and welcome the closeness of their family. The
first poem in this series is from Cris Anderson, a son-in-law. We hope that
Franz will continue this from his "corner" and send some of his own.*

Membership meeting talks wild

Our October 2nd meeting begins at 1:30pm at the Pearsall Building and features former County Commissioner Al Carter as he discusses the plans for conservation efforts to protect wild forest and river watersheds on the Olympic Peninsula.

Wednesday field trips

By *Dianna Moore*

Field Trip Chairman

Field trips have been noticeably absent from our chapter, mostly because of me. I have been on many field trips in the past where it became a social event, and no self-respecting bird will come out to see what is going on if a lot of people are tramping around, chattering amongst themselves; they will stay hidden.

So...I propose to visit areas where we can stand out in the open and see what there is to see without having to be real quiet, such as the Tokeland Marina, or Damon Point, or even the Westport Marina area... which has lately been hosting a Bar-tailed Godwit. Our first field trip is scheduled for September 14th, when I will be heading over to Westport to see if the godwit is still there. If not, then I will see what IS there. The high tide is at 2:41PM at Westport, so this will not be a meet-at-the-crack-of-dawn-type of field trip, rather a civilized mid-to-late-morning stroll around the marina and area.

If you would care to join me, call me at 289-5048 or send me an e-mail at dlmoor2@coastaccess.com. Meeting time will be around 10:30AM at the Westport Marina... far east end of the docks.



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**Grays Harbor Audubon Society
P.O. Box 470
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If your newsletter is stamped with **Last Issue-Please Renew**, be sure to fill out the Membership Form above and send it in to keep your membership active and keep receiving the newsletter! Thanks!

News & Editorial

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Copy deadline ongoing

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Wild Olympics
Al Carter

Inside this Issue

COASST at Taholah	1
Pres. Perch on coal	2
Coal export cont.	3
Coal export cont.	4
Franz's Corner	5
Membership Meeting	5
Field Trips	6
Board & Officers	6
Member Application	7

How Do I Know When My Membership Is Due?

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If we have mailed your copy,
look in the upper right hand
corner of your label and it will
give you your renewal date!*

The Sandpiper

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