

*Membership Meeting
Climate Effects on Birds
Kim Adelson
June 4, 2017
1:30 - 3:00 pm
Hoquiam Library
Downstairs Meeting Room*

May - June 2017



The Sandpiper



The Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel is the only Storm-Petrel that is all gray. They are petite birds of the cold North Pacific Ocean and small numbers nest on islands off the Olympic Peninsula.

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels a Treat for “Land-loving” Birders *by Judith Rowe Taylor*

It has been two weeks now (at the time of writing) that small numbers (12-30) of very active Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma furcata*) have been delighting birders visiting Point Chehalis in Westport. This normally ‘open-ocean’ species was reported to be easily seen from land by the fortunate participants of one of the Grays Harbor Shore-bird and Nature Festival field trips! Word quickly spread, especially among those who have an aversion to the “pitching and tossing” and other possible side-effects of pelagic birding. The zooming, turning, hovering, and fluttering of these avian acrobats is a joy to behold.

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels (FTSPS) are small (8 - 8.5 inches) silvery-gray birds found only in the North Pacific. Swooping in low and fast (It’s no surprise they have been called the “Swallows of the Sea”!), they skim over the water’s surface in search of food: small fish and crustaceans, animal oils, fish eggs, and carrion or refuse scraps. Feeding behavior includes dipping into the water, usually without completely stopping, although they sometimes do float on the water and feed. Storm-Petrels also hover above the water with feet barely touching the surface, and when they take off it appears as if they are walking. It is from this behavior that the com-

mon generic name of petrel comes. Petrel is Latin for Peter and St. Peter is said to have “walked on water”.

FTSPs are the second commonest storm-petrel, and the only one that is all gray. They are also one of the most common of the marine birds. Total population estimate is 5-10 million individuals. *O. furcata* is a bird of cold water, breeding on small islands off both the North American and Asian sides of the North Pacific Ocean. Nesting pairs found along the North American coast are most abundant in the Aleutians, with smaller numbers further south. In Washington, breeding colonies are located on a few islands off Clallam and Jefferson Counties.



Chehalis. They can deftly grab bits of food from the surface without actually stopping, although they sometimes do float on the water to feed.

Fork-taileds gather at their breeding sites in March and April where they nest in burrows or natural rock crevices. The breeding birds are active at the nest during nighttime and forage over the open ocean, even more than 100 km from the colonies.

Eggs are incubated by both males and females and both parents feed the young. Incubation of eggs takes about 50 days, on average, and young Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels fledge approximately 2 months after hatching. Predation by invasive rats is given as one of the biggest threats to colonies. Dispersal from the breeding sites occurs mainly from late August into September.

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JJ The President's Perch



By Arnie Martin

There's still not a lot to report on the Crude by Rail front. As mentioned in the last Sandpiper, Contanda (formerly Westway) has not decided what bulk liquid commodity they will propose to receive by rail for shipment by barge or bulk liquid carrier. They are trying to find a commodity that has a high enough value to warrant this expensive facility, that will not be precluded by the ORMA decision, and will be acceptable to WA Dept of Ecology and the City of Hoquiam without triggering a complete re-write of their Final Environmental Impact Statement. The only bulk liquid that they will not be handling is crude oil, the material on which the FEIS was based.

Similarly, the FEIS for REG (formerly Imperium Renewables) is also trying to get approval for expanding their biodiesel facility without much additional paperwork, as they have also said they will not receive and ship crude oil from their proposed expansion – which was covered by the FEIS issued last year. We are confused about what their FEIS has to do with expanding their biodiesel production above its current capacity, but they seem to believe that making larger quantities of biodiesel will not pose a hazard to the shoreline, the harbor, the ocean, or the global climate.

Perhaps the Quinault Indian Nation will have more insight into a possible solution to the situation we all have with the receiving and shipping of bulk liquids from the Port of Grays Harbor terminal 1 than I have.

Thanks to all the GHAS members who again provided their time, help, and monetary donations to the 2017 Shorebird Festival. We had good weather for most of it, good numbers of birds, and enthusiastic festival attendees. We were pleased with the help from the Friends of Nisqually NWR Complex and especially pleased with the help from the Grays Harbor NWR AmeriCorps volunteer, Vashti Engebretson, the Nisqually AmeriCorps volunteer, Taylor Blomquist, as well as that Shorebird Festival expert – Davy Clark. They filled in all the holes in our planning and smiled while doing that!

We should all be worried about the changes in federal funding that are proposed by the new administration. Cuts in funding for the wildlife refuges, cuts in research funding, elimination of cli-

mate research, are only the tip of the icebergs that are being proposed for the next fiscal year. We can only hope that wiser heads prevail, keeping the gains made during the last twenty years.

Take advantage of the emails which are being sent daily warning of the further changes being proposed weakening protection of the Arctic, allowing offshore drilling, and removing endangered species protection. These emails will usually offer a way to send messages to your congressmen and senators, urging their consideration of ways to mitigate the damages from the proposed changes.

As R.D. would say, "Keep Slugging!"

Storm-Petrel continued from page 1

O. furcata is a swift and strong flyer - less likely than other Storm-Petrels to be found inland due to storms. In addition to predation and disturbances about the nesting areas, ingestion of pollutants and oil spills are hazards faced by these small birds.

How long the Storm-Petrels will continue around the marina is a big unknown; they may well have moved further north by the time you read this. However, if you haven't seen this lovely species and hear of them coming in around the marina in the future, it might be worth a visit. This May the Fork-tailed have been very active around the observation platform and groins at Point Chehalis; and good numbers have been easily seen from Fisherman's Walkway as they foraged around the mouth of the harbor. It is not just the gulls that are benefitting from the abundance of scraps discarded by fishing parties and sea lions!



FTSPs flock around a sea lion that has just caught and consumed a fish; here they will pluck scraps of the fish remains from the water. Floating oily animal fat is also part of their diet.

Species Composition



Common murre
(n=60)



Northern fulmar
(n=13)



Gulls
(n=11)



Western grebe
(n=4)



Rhinoceros auklet
(n=4)



Shearwaters
(n=3)



Black-footed albatross
(n=2)



Cormorants
(n=2)



Loons
(n=2)

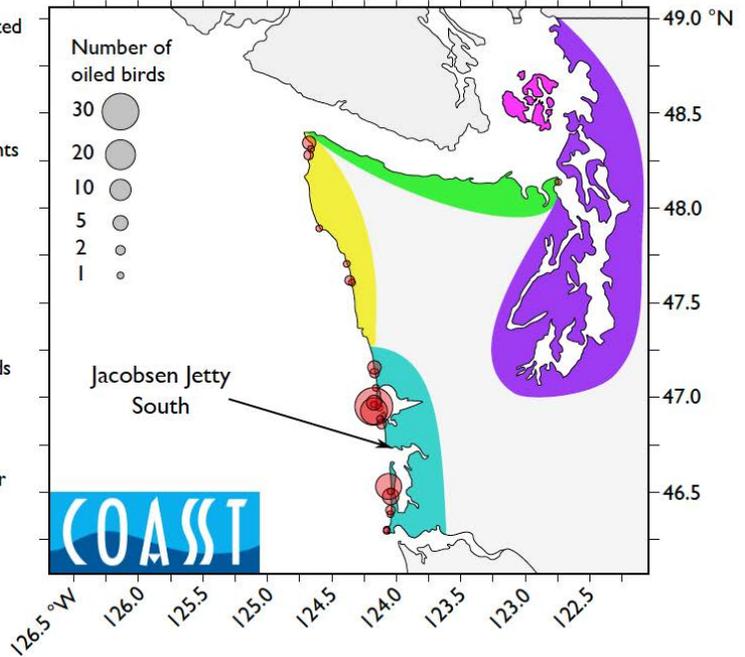


Small Alcids
(n=2)



Surf scoter
(n=1)

Map of Oiled Bird Abundance in Washington



Oiled-birds on Washington's Coast

For those who attended the 22nd annual Shorebird Festival dinner you were treated to the engaging and informative program about COASST (Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team). presented by Dr. Julia Parish. A recent blog post from COASST documented oiled-birds in Washington State, Alaska, Oregon and California. The complete report and details of the oiled-birds found at Jacobsen Jetty can be found at <http://blogs.uw.edu/coasst/2017/04/21/the-risk-of-chronic-oiling/>



Membership Meeting

According to Audubon's "Birds and Climate Change Report", 314 species are on the brink. Shrinking and shifting ranges could imperil nearly 50% of U.S. birds within this century.

Kim Adelson from Black Hills Audubon Society joins us for a discussion on the effect of climate change on birds. Don't miss this important discussion.

As always we will gather at the Hoquiam Library, downstairs meeting room, starting at 1:30 pm. We will have a wide variety of treats and of course, bird-friendly, fair traded coffee, as well as a variety of teas to drink.



Non-breeding plumage Bonaparte's Gulls are distinguished by their small size, nearly completely white head (may be some smudging) with a distinctive black ear-spot behind the eye, small and pointed all-black-bill, narrow wings, snowy white underside lacking any streaking, and pink legs and feet (when visible). First summer birds have some white on the forehead and around the base of the bill, maturity is a two years of age.

The Bonaparte Gull *by Judith Rowe Taylor*

One notices for sure that not all gulls are created equal when looking at a Bonaparte's. This dainty, gracefully-shaped gull with a slender, pointed black bill has even been called "dove like" by some admirers. Bonaparte's are also atypical for a gull in that they usually nest in trees - spruce being the favorite choice - rather than on the ground. Their call is also much different from that of other gulls commonly seen around Grays Harbor County. Bonaparte's Gull, named not after the French emperor, but after his nephew Charles Lucien Bonaparte¹ who was an ornithologist, is a common migrant through our state (though only fairly common along the coast), with a strong winter present in the Puget Trough. Their breeding grounds are in Alaska and across much of Canada's boreal forests.

Adults in breeding plumage are unmistakable, having a solid black hood about the face and crown and a broken eye-ring, which appears as crescents above and below the eye. During the non-breeding season the head is almost entirely white - there may be dark smudges on the top and in front of the eye - with a prominent, dark ear-spot behind the eye. Legs are pink, tending to be a deeper orange-tinged color in breeding plumaged birds (per my observations). Mantle is a soft slate-gray and underparts are white and unstreaked. On the nesting grounds, diet consists primarily of insects; small fish, krill, and crustaceans are the main sources of nutrition during the winter.

Check out Bonaparte's four volumes of American ornithology, or, The natural history of birds inhabiting the United States, not given by Wilson: with figures drawn, engraved, and colored, from nature at this url: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/DLDecArts.AmOrnBon01>





Field Trip Diary

go birding with Judith Rowe Taylor

April field trips were scheduled with shorebird migration in mind. During the last week of the month we made two visits to Bottle Beach where Short-billed Dowitchers, Western Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers and Semi-palmated Plovers were the most numerous species seen. Caspian Terns were present in small numbers. Fresh-plumaged migrants of non-shorebird types included Savannah Sparrows and Orange-crowned Warblers. Both Bewick's and Marsh wrens were seen, as well.

After visiting Bottle Beach, we checked out the Westport Marina. Highlight of that stop on the 25th was waiting for us at Float 17 – three Harlequin Ducks (adult male, adult female, and a sub-adult male). On the 28th several breeding plumaged Common Loons were a delight to watch, as were the Pigeon Guillemots.

These field trips were a good opportunity to see a couple of common summer songbirds that are often overlooked – Savannah Sparrow and Orange-crowned Warbler. However, although these are small birds, both are easy enough to identify in the field. It just takes a little practice and application of two of our best birding senses: sight and hearing.



Savannah Sparrows have a distinctive yellow spot in front of their eyes, and crisp stripes on the underside. In spring, in addition to migrants that will breed in Washington, those on their way to Canada or Alaska will also be seen. State breeding birds arrive in mid-March and generally leave by mid-October; wintering in the southern US or further south - as far as Central America.

Savannah Sparrow (Passerculus sandwichensis)

Savannah is a medium-sized sparrow with well-defined streaks and a distinctive yellow spot before the eye (supraloral) which often extends lightly back above the eye. They are brown with black streaks above, black-brown streaks on white below and have a short, forked tail. The head is smallish with a small (for a sparrow), thick-based bill (typical of seed-eaters). There are usually some gray and buffy areas on the cheeks and some buffy color on the underside.

Although many regional subspecies exist for this North American sparrow – variations in both size and plumage – the above description fits most Savannah Sparrows seen in Grays Harbor County. Around the state one might easily notice paler (east of Cascades and migrants)/darker (western WA) plumaged birds. There are two recognized regional subspecies in Washington State, separated by the Cascades; in spring individuals of each subspecies tend to return to the area where they were born, a trait known as natal philopatry.

Savannah Sparrows are birds of open areas with few trees: grasslands, roadsides near farms, beaches with grassy dunes, tide flats, and are also often seen on the jetties at Ocean Shores and Westport. During the breeding season they thrive on a rich diet of insects and spiders; in coastal areas they also eat small crustaceans. During non-breeding months Savannahs eat mostly seeds gleaned from low growing grasses and forbs. Newly arrived migrants are often seen nipping seeds from vegetation in yards and open weedy areas, such as parking lots.



Orange-crowned Warblers are common in the lowlands of western Washington from April through September. They forage low in trees and thickets and nest on the ground. The partial eye-ring and bright yellow underparts contrasting with drab olive-green and brown upperparts help identify this small warbler.

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Field trip continued from page 5

Orange Crowned Warbler (Oreothlypis celata // Leiothlypis celata // Vermivora celata)

Orange-crowned Warblers have a distinctive call - a raspy accelerating trill that drops in pitch at the end. They are small warblers with a broken eye-ring and a faint partial eye-stripe. The tail is short and square. Lack of wingbars and no streaking, which add to this warbler's nondescript appearance, also aid in identification. Upper parts are generally a drab olive green, sometimes with a browner head (may be very gray if you have spotted the taiga subspecies *V. c. celata* migrating through our area). Both male and female have an orange patch on top of the head, a patch that is seldom clearly visible; it is more often seen in spring on males who have raised these cap feathers when excited/agitated for some reason. Underparts are yellow, bright in Western Washington birds, with even brighter undertail coverts. The Pacific coast subspecies, *Vermivora celata lutescens*, is the brightest of the four Orange-crowned Warbler variations. Orange-crowned Warblers prefer shrubby thickets and willows or aspen woodlands. They occur from low elevations along the coast to stunted timberline forests. *V. celata* is one of the few warblers more common in the West than in the eastern US. Intense logging in Western Washington has actually increased favorable habitat for this slender little bird; however, numbers have in fact significantly declined since 1966 (per Breeding Bird Survey data).

Diet consists primarily of insects, which they glean from the undersides of leaves and flowers. They supplement this fare with berries, nectar from flowers, and tree sap gathered from woodpecker holes. They sometimes visit hummingbird feeders or suet.

NEXT FIELD TRIP

Here's hoping you all got out to participate in shorebird and nature festival activities during early May. Our next field trip will be on Thursday, June 8th at the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge where we will look for woodland birds and other summer visitors. Details will be emailed soon.

All photos taken and provided by Judith Rowe Taylor

Parachuting birds into long-lost territory may save them from extinction

By Amy Lewis

Saving the Spanish imperial eagle was never going to be easy. This enormous bird, which once dominated the skies above Spain, Portugal, and northern Morocco, saw its numbers drop to just 380 breeding pairs in 2014, thanks to habitat loss, poaching, poisoning from farmers and hunters, and electrocution from power lines. Now, a new study highlights a potential way of restoring eagle populations to their former glory: dropping them into long-abandoned habitat.

One common approach for bringing threatened species back from the brink is to reintroduce them to the places they were last known to live. For example, the sea eagle in Scotland—which was hunted to extinction on the Isle of Skye in 1916—was successfully reintroduced in 1975 to Rùm Island near its last known breeding ground. But not all such efforts bear fruit: When scientists tried to release the same bird to its former range in western Ireland in 2007, the newcomers fell victim to the same poisoning that had done them in 107 years earlier.

“The tendency is to think that the last place that an animal was present is the best place for the species, but this isn't always the case,” says Virginia Morandini, a biologist with the Spanish National Research Council's Doñana Biological Station near Seville.

So Morandini and her colleagues teamed up with conservation biologist Miguel Ferrer of the Migres Foundation at Doñana to try a different approach. Along with the Andalusian government's Spanish Imperial Eagle Action Plan, they introduced imperial eagles into a territory they last inhabited some 50 years ago, far from established populations. Their method had some strong theoretical underpinnings because relict populations that have been pushed into small, low-quality habitats—often the “last known address” of threatened species—are thought to have relatively low breeding rates.

From 2002 to 2015, the Doñana team monitored 87 eagles that had been released in the south of Cádiz province of Spain, some 85 kilometers from the nearest established eagles. Meanwhile, the researchers monitored a naturally occurring population of eagles in south-central Spain. When scientists analyzed the breeding success of the two groups—a proxy for how well the eagles might survive over the long run—they found that the relocated population produced nearly twice

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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

Parachuting birds from page 6

as many chicks, they reported last month in Ecology and Evolution. Morandini attributes their success to the ready availability of prey and breeding partners, as well as efforts to reduce threats from hunters and exposed power lines.

The results suggest such reintroductions can be helpful in recovering endangered populations, especially when natural range expansion isn't a possibility, says Doug Armstrong, a conservation biologist at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. But Armstrong, who was instrumental in rehabilitation efforts in New Zealand of a honeyeater-like bird called the hihi, also warns that this method won't work for every threatened species. Lots of factors can lead to failure: selecting an inappropriate site, unpredictable environmental factors, and stress after reintroduction.

Cornell University ecologist Amanda Rodewald says that—even with its upsides—the approach should be seen as a last resort. “With ongoing climate change and habitat destruction, we are likely to be turning to [reintroduction] methods more and more,” she says. “However, taking proactive conservation steps such as habitat protection before a species becomes critically endangered is always going to be the most cost-effective and successful approach.”

*Posted in: EvolutionPlants & Animals
DOI: 10.1126/science.aal1151*

http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/05/parachuting-birds-long-lost-territory-may-save-them-extinction?utm_campaign=news_daily_2017-05-05&et rid=88239711&et_cid=1311697

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Membership Meeting

Climate Effects on Birds
Kim Adelson
from Black Hills Audubon Society
June 4th

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