

*Program Meeting*  
**South Africa Through the  
Lens of a Biologist - Dan Varland**  
*February 3rd, 1:30pm*  
**Hoquiam Library**  
*Downstairs Meeting Room*

January  
February  
2019



# The Sandpiper



## **21st Annual GBBC February 16 -19**

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 21st annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19, 2018. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

"This count is so fun because anyone can take part—we all learn and watch birds together—whether you are an expert, novice, or feeder watcher. I like to invite new birders to join me and share the experience. Get involved, invite your friends, and see how your favorite spot

stacks up." -Gary Langham, Chief Scientist

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2014 GBBC data highlighted a large irruption of Snowy Owls across the northeastern, mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes areas of the United States. The data also showed the effects that warm weather patterns have had on bird movement around the country. For more on the results of the latest GBBC, take a look at the GBBC Summary, and be sure to check out some of the images in the 2017 GBBC Photo Contest Gallery.

On the program website participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during and after the count. Be sure to check out the Explore a Region tool to get an idea of what you can expect to see in your area during the next GBBC.

For questions and comments, please contact the National Audubon Society or Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

**National Audubon Society**  
[citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org)

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology**  
Inside the US: (800) 843-2473  
Outside the US: (607) 254-2473  
[gbbc@cornell.edu](mailto:gbbc@cornell.edu)

*The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from **Wild Birds Unlimited**. Content courtesy of National Audubon Society. Photo by Camilla Cerea*

## The President's Perch



*By Janet Strong*

With my first column to members and friends of Grays Harbor Audubon Society, I want to offer great kudos and eternal gratitude to Arnie Martin, retiring President. Arnie has guided our chapter since 2008, a total of ten years! He has served as representative to state Audubon and point person for contacts by the public, tribes, business and government. Arnie has been crucial in organizing activists to keep Grays Harbor from becoming a dumping ground for polluting industries, at the same time quietly influencing local decision-makers toward better decisions. Arnie's shoes will be hard to fill.

BUT, in 2019, Arnie Martin will serve as Vice-President and has promised he will continue to keep GHAS in the mix as local governments, tribes and businesses forge ahead for the future of Grays Harbor. That's good.

Others need thanking as well for their dedication to GHAS in the past and continued work keeping our chapter in good shape. Linda Orgel, Membership Chair and now Secretary as well, is our friendly contact with members and friends alike. Mary O'Neil, past President, field trip leader and program presenter, will help organize more field trips to new and interesting birding spots. Diane Schwickerath, Treasurer for many years, will continue in that capacity, keeping the chapter in fiscal good health. RD Grunbaum, our long-time Sandpiper editor, keeps us well-informed, exposing us to great articles. Jude Armstrong, newest board member, brings new contacts and creative ideas into the current mix.

Even with all this excellence, GHAS could still benefit from more direct involvement by members and interested friends. Greater educational endeavors, especially ones centered on children, more field trips, fun-filled community events, easy fundraisers, stewardship of our habitat lands – any or all of these could bring us closer to our communities in very positive ways. To get there, we need the help of YOU, GHAS' members and friends. Please consider getting involved. You will have fun doing so. You may call me at 36-495-3950 or email at [janet.strong4@gmail.com](mailto:janet.strong4@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
Jan Strong, 2019 President.



*black-crowned night-heron*

### Let's Make Summer Plans

Are you spending winter days planning your summer vacations? Why not plan your next family vacation or outdoor solo expedition around the 2019 Audubon Convention in Milwaukee? Retreat to Milwaukee for birding—and sessions to build your capacity as a leader and your chapter's effectiveness in your community. Bring the family, a close friend ... or take some needed time away.

We're want to attract more students, young professionals and people in the midst of a career change to this year's convention. Please share this video across your social media channels and chapter newsletters to help recruit them.

Scholarships will be available beginning February 1 before registration opens in March. Audubon's national board has pledged a record amount for scholarships this year. I encourage you to think about how your chapter can leverage these funds to send a new leader to Milwaukee July 26-29.

*National Audubon Society*



Whimbrel photo by Kyle Horton

## Study Finds 2 Billion Birds Migrate Over Gulf Coast

*Data from radar & bird watchers reveal spring migration details*

A new study combining data from citizen scientists and weather radar stations is providing detailed insights into spring bird migration along the Gulf of Mexico and how these journeys may be affected by climate change. Findings on the timing, location, and intensity of these bird movements are published in the journal *Global Change Biology*.

“We looked at data from thousands of eBird observers and 11 weather radar stations along the Gulf Coast from 1995 to 2015,” says lead author Kyle Horton, an Edward W. Rose Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “We calculated that an average of 2.1 billion birds crosses the entire length of the Gulf Coast each spring as they head north to their breeding grounds. Until now, we could only guess at the overall numbers from surveys done along small portions of the shoreline.”

eBird is the Cornell Lab’s worldwide online database for bird observation reports. Sightings from bird watchers helped researchers translate their radar data into estimates of bird numbers. Weather radar detects birds in the atmosphere in a standardized way over time and over a large geographical area.

The radar data reveal when birds migrate and what routes they take. The timing of peak spring migration was consistent over 20 years along the 1,680-mile coastline. But the researchers found that the 18-day period from April 19 to May 7 was the busiest—approximately one billion birds passed over the Gulf Coast in that time span. Not all locations were equally busy, with key hotspots

showing significantly higher levels of activity.

Bird migration intensity as quantified from 11 weather surveillance radars, March through May, from 1995 to 2015 along the Gulf of Mexico from Brownsville, Texas, to Key West, Florida. Animation by Kyle Horton.

“The highest activity, with 26,000 birds per kilometer of airspace each night, was found along the west Texas Gulf Coast,” says Horton. “That region had 5.4 times the number of migrants detected compared with the central and eastern Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Florida.” The data show Corpus Christi and Brownsville as having the highest level of migration traffic along the western coast of Texas.

Knowing where and when peak migration occurs means efforts can be made to turn off lights and wind turbines, which are known threats to migratory birds.

Migration timing is also critical for birds. Although migration has evolved in the past as climates changed, the current rate of change may be too rapid for birds to keep pace. This study shows that the earliest seasonal movements are starting sooner, advancing by about 1.5 days per decade, though peak activity timing hasn’t changed, which may be cause for concern. These findings provide important baseline information that will allow scientists to assess the long-term implications of climate change for migratory birds.

“If birds aren’t changing their migration timing fast enough to match the timing for plants and insects, that’s alarming,” Horton says. “They may miss out on abundant resources on their breeding grounds and have less reproductive success.”

Scientists from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the University of Oxford, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, the University of Delaware, and the University of Oklahoma conducted this research.

Funding for this project was provided by the Rose Postdoctoral Fellowship, Leon Levy Foundation, National Science Foundation, and Southern Company through their partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

### Reference:

Kyle Horton, Benjamin Van Doren, Frank La Sorte, Emily Cohen, Hannah Clipp, Jeffrey Buler, Jeff Kelly, and Andrew Farnsworth. (2019) Holding steady: little change in intensity or timing of bird migration over the Gulf of Mexico. *Global Change Biology*.

## Program meeting

Don't miss our next Grays Harbor Audubon Society Members and Friends Program! It will feature Dan Varland, well-known raptor biologist, sharing photos and stories about his recent trip to South Africa. It will be held at the Hoquiam Library, Downstairs meeting room, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 3. EVERYONE is invited. Refreshments will be served. Come early, enjoy a snack and share in the adventure of seeing Wildlife in South Africa.



Dan Varland on Safari in Africa

## South Africa through the lens of a biologist

In November Dan Varland traveled to South Africa's Kruger National Park for the Raptor Research Foundation annual conference. Dan was among 275 biologists from 41 countries attending to share research through presentations and workshops. Following the conference, he joined a week-long safari. Dan will share his experiences at the conference and photos of Africa's iconic wildlife species. Kruger National Park is home to seven vulture species, all of conservation concern. Vultures from around the world were the focus of many of the presentations at the conference. Turkey Vultures are a focus of research in western Washington by Coastal Raptors. Last year in collaboration with others, Coastal Raptors put satellite transmitters on four Turkey Vultures to monitor their movements in western Washington and beyond. If you've ever wondered where our Turkey Vultures go in the winter, this is your chance to find out!

*Dan is the Executive Director of Coastal Raptors, a not-for-profit organization focused on research, education and conservation programs for raptors in coastal environments*  
<http://www.coastalraptors.com>

## Membership Due

Your local Grays Harbor Audubon Society depends on the kindness of you, and a couple of strangers. January marks the date when memberships are due for renewal. If you have not already renewed, simply turn to page 8 of this Sandpiper and fill out your renewal at a level that is comfortable for you.

We depend on your support to bring you the programs you enjoy at the bi-monthly get-togethers. Subscribing at a higher-level allows us to enhance the care and consideration we give to our over 3,000 acres of essential wetlands and habitat for birds and other wildlife species. See the related article highlighting our North Bay Wetlands property on page 5 of this newsletter.

Audubon protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, but only with your support. Make sure you renew or upgrade today. If you are unsure, contact Linda Orgel at [ldotorg@olearycreek.com](mailto:ldotorg@olearycreek.com) to review your current status.

Thank you in advance for caring about the birds, and your Chapter.

## Olympic BirdFest 2019

*Sequim, Washington, April 12-14, 2019*

Grab your binoculars and join the 16th annual Olympic BirdFest 2019 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, April 12-14, 2019.

The stage is set... quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, Barred and Pygmy Owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tour, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker this year, John Marzluff, is a professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington and a noted author.

Check out the offerings by going online ([www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org)).

Contact us by phone, at 360-681-4076  
E-mail us at [info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org)

Or write to us at:  
Dungeness River Audubon Center  
P.O. Box 2450  
Sequim, WA 98382



### Highlighting GHAS conservation

The North Bay Wetlands Preserve conserves prime wetlands and associated uplands along the north shore of Grays Harbor and in and around the Humptulips river and estuary. The goal of the Preserve is to protect traditional native wetland ecosystems and wildlife habitat within the coastal lowland eco-region. Wetlands and associated uplands were acquired by fee-title, and where necessary, will be restored to healthy and native conditions. The Grays Harbor Audubon Society (GHAS) feels that because of the sheer diversity of habitats and species, this area needed to be given the highest priority for preservation.

GHAS land acquisitions complement the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recreation area along the east bank of the Humptulips, as well as WDFW holdings in the estuary itself. Thus, approximately two miles of Grays Harbor shoreline on both sides of the Humptulips river, together with our 793 acres of associated wetlands, uplands, and river bank, are now protected.

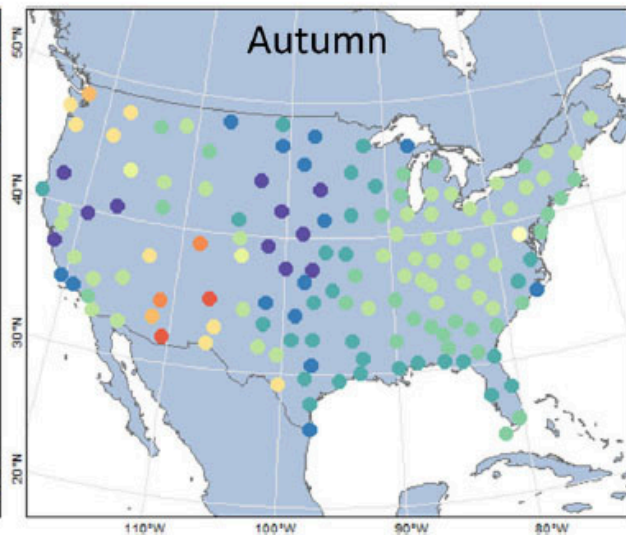
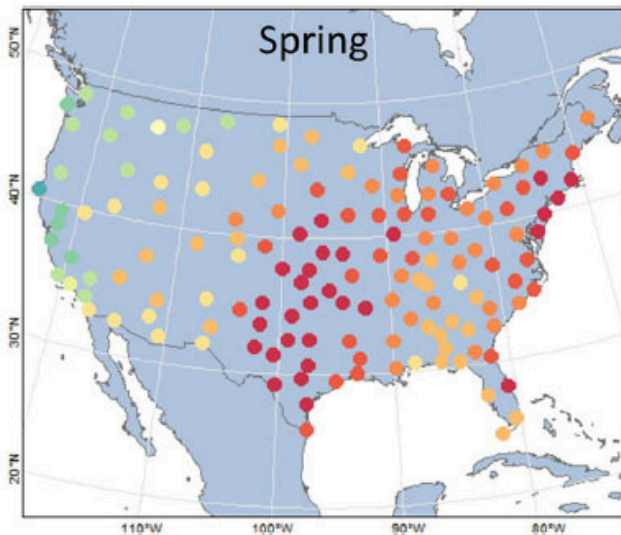
**Wetlands Values:** The Preserve lies at the interface of marine, terrestrial, and freshwater systems. A series of long, winding sloughs and branching tributaries extend from the estuary and the trunk of the Humptulips River, ensuring that most of the area remains inundated for at least some part of the year. Of the 742 acres of wetlands in the Preserve, more than half are palustrine forested wetlands surrounding and abutting shrub/scrub and emergent open wetlands. The bay area is within the Sitka Spruce zone, with local variations in vegetative composition based upon soil type and drainage patterns. Dominant tree species are Sitka Spruce, Western Hemlock, Red

Alder, and Western Red Cedar. The forest stands range in age from roughly 30 to 100 years, with many snags and downed trees. They vary from young stands of Red Alder to young and mature stands of deciduous/coniferous and coniferous forest. The deciduous tree species are predominantly Red Alder and Big Leaf Maple. Some small stands of very large Sitka Spruce remain scattered throughout the area. The understory in the younger forest stands is extremely dense, consisting of Pacific Crabapple, Black Twinberry, Salmonberry, Wild Gooseberry, Cascara, Willow, Red Alder, Evergreen Huckleberry, Salal and Red Elderberry, among other species. The shrub/scrub and high salt marsh habitats are dominated by crab-apple, stunted cedars, willow, osier dogwood and other woody species, with native sedges and rushes dominant in the open, wetter areas.

The Preserve wetlands and associated uplands are currently in good to prime condition, with little encroachment by non-native plant species. The Preserve area encompasses many wetland types that were once common to this region, but have since been lost to conversion for agricultural use, timber production, or residential development. These include marine and fresh water tidal wetlands, salt marshes, emergent freshwater wetlands, scrub/shrub wetlands, forested wetlands, and riverine wetlands. Such habitats provide flood water containment and ground water recharge, as well as habitat for large numbers of wildlife species. Wetlands functions are protected by forested uplands and meadows that buffer against human encroachment, farm and road runoff, and offer supplemental habitat for many wetland-dependent bird species. The forest stands along the North Bay will eventually provide for the recovery of some of the rarest habitat in the state of Washington: the lowland old-growth forest.

The Preserve conserves important feeding, breeding and resting habitat for a wide variety of wetland-dependent and migratory birds, including significant populations of waterfowl, such as Mallard and Northern Pintail; shorebirds, such as Dunlin and Dowitchers; and neotropic migrants, such as the Rufous Hummingbird and Pacific-slope and Willow Flycatchers.

Healthy and genetically unique runs of Chinook, Coho and Chum salmon, and fall and summer Steelhead, spawn in upstream tributaries of the Humptulips River. Smolts and young fish use the sloughs surrounding the Humptulips estuary as resting and feeding areas.



## How will the winds of climate change affect migratory birds?

Under future climate scenarios, changing winds may make it harder for North American birds to migrate southward in the autumn, but make it easier for them to come back north in the spring. Researchers from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology came to this conclusion using data from 143 weather radar stations to estimate the altitude, density, and direction birds took during spring and autumn migrations over several years. They also extracted wind data from 28 different climate change projections in the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Their findings were published today in the journal *Global Change Biology*.

“We combined these data to estimate how wind assistance is expected to change during this century under global climate change,” explains lead author Frank La Sorte, a Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientist. “This matters for migratory birds because they use more energy flying into headwinds. But they get a nice boost from tailwinds so they can conserve energy during flight.”

La Sorte and co-authors project that winds from the south are expected to become stronger by the end of the century during both spring and fall migration periods. Winds from the west may be stronger during spring migration and slightly weaker during the fall. Westerly winds are much more variable overall and harder to predict because they are tied to erratic fluctuations in the high altitude jet stream. Wind changes will be most pronounced in the central and eastern portions of the continent.

### **Future Wind-Aided Flight Changes**

Across the eastern and especially the central portions of the continent, the efficiency of nocturnal

migration is projected to increase in the spring and decrease in the autumn, potentially affecting time and energy expenditures for many migratory bird species. Warmer colors (red, orange) indicate stronger wind assistance. Cooler colors (purple, blue) show decreased wind assistance for bird flight. Graphic by Frank La Sorte, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

With an assist from stronger tailwinds during spring migration, birds would likely arrive in better condition on their northern breeding grounds with better odds of survival. Their fall migration flights into stronger headwinds would drain more energy. If headwinds are too strong, birds may choose not to fly at all on a particular night, throwing off the timing of their migrations.

“The thing to remember about these projected wind changes is that they will not occur in isolation,” La Sorte says. “There will be other global change factors for birds to contend with, including changes in temperatures, rainfall, and land cover.”

Some birds may be able to adapt because the expected wind changes are likely to happen gradually. Studies also show that migratory birds already adjust their migration strategy under current conditions, altering their headings to compensate for winds that push them from their intended flight path.

“The bottom line is that some climate change effects could be negative for migratory birds, and some might even be positive, at least during a specific phase of their migration,” says La Sorte. “There’s an awful lot of uncertainty because both climate and migration are complex systems that can intersect in many different ways.”

*Support for this study came from The Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation, Amazon Web Services, and the National Science Foundation.*

***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  
P.O. Box 470  
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## ***Program Meeting***

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