

*Membership Meeting  
Management by Fire  
December 11th 1:30 - 3:00pm  
PUD Dennis Nichols Building  
220 Myrtle Street, Hoquiam*

November December 2016



# The Sandpiper



## **Birds hold ‘funerals’ for dead** *By Matt Walker, Editor, BBC Nature*

When western scrub jays encounter a dead bird, they call out to one another and stop foraging. The jays then often fly down to the dead body and gather around it, scientists have discovered.

The behavior may have evolved to warn other birds of nearby danger, report researchers in California, who have published the findings in the journal *Animal Behaviour*. The revelation comes from a study by Teresa Iglesias and colleagues at the University of California, Davis, US.

They conducted experiments, placing a series of objects into residential back yards and observing how western scrub jays in the area reacted.

The objects included different coloured pieces of wood, dead jays, as well as mounted, stuffed jays and great horned owls, simulating the presence of live jays and predators.

### ***Alarming reaction***

The jays reacted indifferently to the wooden objects. But when they spied a dead bird, they started making alarm calls, warning others long distances away. The jays then gathered around the dead body, forming large cacophonous aggregations. The calls they made, known as “zeeps”, “scolds” and “zeep-scolds”, encouraged new jays to attend to the dead.

The jays also stopped foraging for food, a change in behaviour that lasted for over a day. When the birds were fooled into thinking a predator had ar-

rived, by being exposed to a mounted owl, they also gathered together and made a series of alarm calls.

They also swooped down at the supposed predator, to scare it off. But the jays never swooped at the body of a dead bird. The birds also occasionally mobbed the stuffed jays; a behaviour they are known to do in the wild when they attack competitors or sick birds.

The fact that the jays didn’t react to the wooden objects shows that it is not the novelty of a dead bird appearing that triggers the reaction. The results show that “without witnessing the struggle and manner of death”, the researchers write, the jays see the presence of a dead bird as information to be publicly shared, just as they do the presence of a predator.

Spreading the message that a dead bird is in the area helps safeguard other birds, alerting them to danger, and lowering their risk from whatever killed the original bird in the first place, the researchers say.

### ***Other animals are known to take notice of their dead.***

Giraffes and elephants, for example, have been recorded loitering around the body of a recently deceased close relative, raising the idea that animals have a mental concept of death, and may even mourn those that have passed.



The Cackling Goose, once considered to be a race of Canada Goose, was split off as a separate species (*Branta hutchinsii*) in 2004. Much smaller in size, it has a short, stubby bill and short neck.

## JJ The President's Perch



By Arnie Martin

Well, we made it through the comment period for the Westway (now Contanda) Substantial Shoreline Development Permit (SSDP), and we're all still alive, including the Hoquiam City Council, the Mayor, and the City Manager. National Audubon and Washington Audubon submitted over 47,000 signatures against the issuance of the SSDP and there were dozens submitted locally. What we don't have is a firm timetable for the issuance of the City Manager's decision.

After the November 14th City Council the City Manager announced to the press, and to me, that he is going to hire an outside attorney to review the legal issues raised by the Final Environmental Impact Statement, as well as the Hoquiam Municipal Ordinances and Washington laws to determine whether he must issue or deny the SSDP. If the decision is to deny the permit, he will do so, and the process is over, except for the possibility of being sued by Westway.

If the decision is to approve the permit, he will contract with ICF to write all the necessary conditions to protect the city, the public and the environment during the construction and operation of the Westway terminal. At that point we expect that several environmental organizations and the Quinault Indian Nation will be the one's filing suit against the City, the Department of Ecology, and Westway.

On a not totally crude oil subject, I, along with many of you, was stunned by the choice of Donald Trump in the Electoral College as the US President. Like many, I fear the choices he will make for Cabinet appointees and Supreme Court nominees, and the havoc that will likely ensue from their attempts to undo the existing environmental protections, some of which date back to the mid 1960's.

I fear that we will be fighting many battles, not all of which we will win, during the four years of his Presidency. We were not successful locally in retaining some of the stalwart protectors of the environment and the climate which we had. Efforts will soon be made to rebuild national and local political organizations that we hope will keep the 45th President to just one term. Work hard to begin the rebuilding of our shields against unbridled crony capitalism, starting with the 2018

mid-term elections.

In the meantime, we must be vigilant to notice proposed changes in local, county, and state governments which may threaten our environment and the world's climate, and do our best to use whatever tools we have to preserve and improve what we have.

## Membership Meeting

Caroline Martorano, a botanist for the Quinault Indian Nation will present *Management by Fire*, a fascinating project scheduled for the Moses Prairie on the QIN Reservation. Her story of this covers climate change, land management, biology, ethnobotany and the importance of fire as a management tool.

Join us December 11th at the PUD, Dennis Nichols Meeting Room, located at 220 Myrtle Street (Sumner & Myrtle) in Hoquiam.

We will have a wide variety of treats and of course, bird-friendly, fair traded coffee to drink.



Cuban Tody

## Birding Cuba

Cuba is about to open in January of 2017 providing newly accessible land in a natural environment that is a premier site for bird-watching. Cuba is home to over 350 species, 27 of which are endemic and about 30 of which are considered globally threatened. Find out more at <http://www.cubaoutdooradventures.com>





## Graceful Arctic Tern stops by Halfmoon Bay

by Judith Rowe Taylor

Here in Westport on Thursday, November 10th the day dawned with some clouds, no rain or fog and a bit of sunshine. I vacillated. Go birding! Stay home? Go birding! Stay home and complete those chores? Fortunately, as I was half-way through breakfast, I peeked out my kitchen window and saw the sun still shining. No rain appeared imminent, so I opted to go birding. One of those good decisions!

First stop was the north end of Westhaven Marina and Fisherman's Walkway where a handsome male Barrow's Goldeneye was paddling about. Although Barrow's are common during winter along Puget Sound, they are a rarity at the coast. Number 1 write-in for the day's ebird report. (O.K, make that "Add Species", but it was right after the election!) If a bird is rare for a given location and time of year, ebird reporting necessitates addition of the species to the automatically generated bird check-list for the specified area, and asks for proof in the form of a worded description, photographs, recording of the call, etc. I was also delighted to see two male Harlequin Ducks keeping the one female company. The 'Harlies' were resting out of the water near Fisherman's Walkway. After making a count of Western Grebe, Common Loon, scoters and other species that are regularly seen in the boat basin this time of year, I headed for Westhaven State Park.

It being an early November weekday, there was little traffic so I was able to stop on the spot when I noticed an unusual looking small bird perched on the utility wires at the entrance to the paid-parking lot. At first, due to the lighting, I thought it might be a Northern Shrike. Through binoculars I was surprised to discover it was actually a kingbird, and a Tropical Kingbird at that! Write-in No. 2 for the day. From there I walked the beach around the south end of Halfmoon Bay and up onto the boulders that constitute the west boundary (point) of the little cove. From this vantage point I noted

a small tern fishing out in the bay. Hummmh! What could it be this time of year? I managed some distant photos of the bird in flight, but it did not come closer so I walked on - out onto the jetty for a short distance - before returning to the point about 20 minutes later. Upon my return the tern was there, perched on a large driftwood log overlooking the cove! It flushed, but soon returned to the same spot to rest. Based on field markings I could make out, my conclusion was that it must be either Common or Arctic. When the tern flew off again I made my way back to the parking lot, which took another 20 minutes because I stopped to watch a small flock of Sanderlings busily feeding along the surf line.

First I went to the pond to see what ducks were present. Once this count was accomplished, I turned around to walk to my vehicle and "Wow!" There it was - the same beautiful small tern (most likely the same individual seen at the bay) - sitting on the pavement some 30 feet away! Not only was I able to get more photos to aid in a positive identification, but the bird called, as well. An immature gull (Western-Glaucous-winged hybrid) was conveniently standing near-by, providing a nice size comparison. Yet rarity No. 3 was not the end of the excitement.

As I was leaving the parking lot, it was necessary to make one more stop. A Western Grebe was sitting in the road! How it got there is a puzzle. Although it appeared to be unhurt, it could only flounder on land. After carefully maneuvering the 'Weeger' (WEGR) onto the grassy median, where it seemed content to settle down, a park ranger was called to complete the rescue.

Now back to the tern. During the process of filing a final report, with positive identification of Arctic Tern made through the help of local seabird experts, field guides, and online recordings of tern calls, I learned a lot about this amazing and lovely bird species, which had, at one time, nested in Washington State.

Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) are the longest-distance migrating birds in the world. Those that have breeding grounds in Greenland average around 71,000 kilometers (44,117 miles) round-trip each year from Greenland to the Weddell Sea on the shores of Antarctica, and back again to Greenland the next spring. Theirs is not a direct-line flight. Research shows they make use of productive sea areas as well as prevailing wind currents during their journeys. (See reference 1 for maps.) They are known to live for 29 (34 in one article) years, providing another amazing

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## **Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Westham Island, BC, Canada and North Puget Sound Field Trip**

***3 Full Days and 2 Nights - Tuesday, January 24th - Thursday, January 26th***

Whether you just love ducks and want to learn to identify them easily or are interested in a new birding experience, this 3-days and 2 nights field trip is for you!

Reifel Bird Sanctuary is one of the top ten birding hotspots in Canada and it is located in southwestern British Columbia, just a short distance across the border from Blaine, Washington. Nearly 300 species of birds have been recorded at the sanctuary, which consists of around 850 acres of wetlands, wooded trails, tidal marsh, and ponds. It is part of the Fraser River estuary and is surrounded by farm lands which also serve as habitat for the birds. There is a nature center with gift shop, a warming hut which overlooks ponds that support a nice variety of ducks during winter, viewing towers and blinds located along the well maintained trails. Please visit their web site at [www.reifelbirdsantuary.com](http://www.reifelbirdsantuary.com) for more information.

In addition to the wild ducks that return to the sanctuary each winter, there are wintering Black-crowned Night Herons, resident Wood Ducks, and resident breeding pairs of Sandhill Crane. There is a good possibility of seeing rails and one or two species of owl as well. We will also visit Boundary Bay, another good location for possible owl sightings.

During the first day we will bird select hotspots in Snohomish and Skagit counties on the way north (stopping for the night in either Bellingham or Blaine (preferred as there is excellent birding around Blaine, but few hotels). Most of the second day will be spent at Reifel Bird Sanctuary and Boundary Bay (other birding locations in the Ladner, BC area, as time permits; Iona Spit at the Vancouver airport is a possibility). Plan is to spend the second night at the same hotel/motel in Blaine or Bellingham. Third day - the return trip - will be for stops around Anacortes, Rosario Strait (Black Oystercatcher is a good possibility here.), and other excellent birding locations on Whid-

bey Island, before taking the ferry from Clinton to Mukilteo (Good birding opportunities are here, too; there are usually many Barrow's Goldeneye in winter.), then return via I5 through Seattle.

Costs will include transportation, gas, 2-nights hotel, and food. This will be a trip with lots of birding (main focus of the trip) and quite a bit of travel (220 miles from Aberdeen to Blaine), but we will make several food/comfort stops along with the excellent birding stops.

There are two options: share the cost of transportation and gasoline or drive yourself. If you opt to drive yourself, I will provide the itinerary with planned stops and approximate time of arrival; you would make your own hotel reservations, preferably at the same place as the group, but not mandatory. I have made an estimated cost, based on 5 persons sharing the cost of van rental, gas, and included 2-nights accommodations, of \$220.00 per person (about \$170 per person, double occupancy). These are likely maximum costs; a more exact total can be supplied once I receive RSVPs. Additional cost will be for food (moderately priced restaurants and/or deli takeout) and the entry fee to Reifel which is \$5 Canadian (\$3 senior citizen rate). They do take US currency, but give Canadian in change. You would bring cash/credit card for these additional costs.

This field trip requires commitment to happen. Please let me know if you are seriously interested and I will send more specific information about which ever option you choose. I will need commitment by January 5th so that I can proceed with the necessary transportation and lodging arrangements for those who wish to go as a group. If you opt to share the ride, a \$50 deposit confirming your participation will be due by January 10th. Balance due will need to be paid by January 21st. Payment can be made by check, cash, or PayPal. More specific details about pick-up or where to meet will be provided once I receive the RSVPs and deposits from those intending to participate.

We will be visiting some places that I know well and have enjoyed birding many winters, so I hope you can join this exciting field trip. Please email me, Judy, with any questions you might have [10ksandpipers@gmail.com](mailto:10ksandpipers@gmail.com)



### *Arctic Tern continued from page 4*

statistic: their pole to pole migration is equivalent to three trips to the moon and back over a lifetime. [1] Although their long migration is mostly well offshore, the Arctic Tern seldom rest directly on water; however, they have been seen perched on floating logs or other debris. [2]

Arctic Terns are very similar in appearance to Common Terns, though slightly smaller. In breeding plumage the Arctic Tern sports streamers which make the white tail extend beyond the wingtips, a field mark which tripped me up. But the streamers break off and, by fall, the long narrow wings do extend beyond the tail, as easily seen in my photos. The Arctic Tern also has very short legs and they molt to non-breeding plumage later in the season than do Common Terns, clenchers for identifying my sighting. When the molt is complete, the forehead is all white, legs and beak are black. The molting Arctic I saw still had its black cap extending to the bill and just below the eye; some white was starting to appear on the forehead; the legs and bill were beginning to darken from their red breeding color.

Like other terns, they hover high above the water, then dive to catch prey underwater. Fish, crustaceans, and insects are their primary foods. These feisty terns also steal food from other birds. Swooping in they startle the other bird into dropping its meal, which the Arctic then grabs.

Arctic Terns nest on far-north marshes, tundra lakes and arctic shorelines; some nest south on the east coast to New England. [2, 4]. This amazing bird used to summer in Everett, Washington (Snohomish County). The first nesting colony in Snohomish County was discovered in 1977, the southern-most known breeding site on the west coast - 825 miles south of known regular nesting areas in southeastern Alaska. After a few years of nesting on Jetty Island growth of vegetation made the location unsuitable for the terns. They moved to a less protected dirt and gravel area on the mainland, where the colony was drastically reduced in size (nest are made directly on the ground out in open areas). Eventually this area was no longer available for the terns and no known breeding has occurred since 1995, despite efforts to find new grounds for them. A pair was still present in Everett in 2000. [2, 3]

Both male and female build the nest, incubate the eggs, and feed the young until they fledge at 3-4 weeks of age. Fledglings then remain with the parents for one or two months and do not themselves breed until 3-4 years of age. [2] Although global population size does vary from year to year

(birds may not breed in years when conditions in the arctic are not favorable), the Arctic Tern is classified as of 'Least Concern' by the IUCN, while of medium conservation concern by British Trust for Ornithology, Birds of Conservation Concern Amber List. [7, 8, 9]

One can, with luck, see Arctic Terns on a pelagic trip off the coast of Washington. Data from Westport Seabirds web site indicates late July through September to be the best months for this species. May is possibly the best month to see both Common and Arctic terns on the same trip. [5] I did, however, invite the November 10th visitor to return in the spring. Same place with long tail streamers intact, please!

1. The Arctic Tern Migration Project. <http://http://www.arctictern.info> (This web site has some wonderful photos and a downloadable scientific article about Arctic Tern migration).
2. Norwegian Polar Institute. <http://www.npolar.no/en/species/arctic-tern.html>
3. Seattle Audubon Society, Bird Web. [http://www.birdweb.org/Birdweb/bird/arctic\\_tern](http://www.birdweb.org/Birdweb/bird/arctic_tern)
4. Mass Audubon. <http://www.massaudubon.org>
5. Westport Seabirds, Pelagic Birding Trips. <http://www.westportseabirds.com>
6. Terns of Europe and North America. Olsen and Larsson. 1995. Princeton University Press
7. Arkive. <http://www.arkive.org/arctic-tern/ster-na-paradisaea>
8. International Union for Conservation of Nature. <http://www.iucnredlist.org>
9. British Trust for Ornithology. <https://www.bto.org>

Good Birding, Everyone!



Molting Arctic Tern. When its molt to non-breeding plumage is complete, the Arctic Tern has an all-white forehead, black bill and black legs.



## Field Trip Diary

### *go birding with Judith Rowe Taylor*

On a late October day five of us braved the threat of rain to visit Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. We had a productive field trip, with 22 species sighted, including a surprise - 20 Snow Geese. At the beginning of the tour we spotted an adult with three juveniles foraging the grassy strips along the outer runway of Bowerman Airfield. Later, as we were on the return-stretch of boardwalk, a small flock of 16 were seen - in flight at first, then later on the ground near the west end of the airfield. Many Dunlin, Black-bellied Plovers, about 600 American Wigeon, good numbers of Northern Pintail, and nine Great Blue Herons out on the mud flats kept us busy counting. Luckily the rising tide brought many of them closer for easier viewing. Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Black-capped Chickadees were foraging through the trees in small flocks. Another nice surprise was a Greater White-fronted Goose, seen between two of the hanger buildings. Rain started up near the end of our walk; however, it lightened enough so we could use a scope to view ducks on the water treatment ponds. Among the scaup, Northern Shovelers, and Gadwall, was one female Wood Duck. And a Yellow-rumped Warbler was sighted in a small tree at the front edge of one of the ponds.

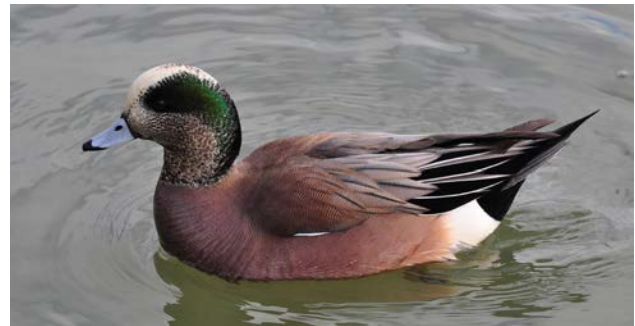
On November 17th, although it was raining "cats and dogs" along the coast, the conditions at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge were quite nice. The sun was out and no wind hampered birding. Seven of us spent almost 4 hours slowly walking the extensive trails. Several mixed foraging flocks of small birds were encountered, giving us great views of both kinglet species, Black-capped Chickadees and several Brown Creepers! Spotted Towhees and American Robins were feeding on the ground. Raptors included Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon and four Bald Eagles. A Cooper's Hawk had been spotted by other visitors, but it did not show for us. We had much fun watching a male Mallard dig for roots in a muddy hole; completely submerging his head and neck repeatedly, he was

lavishly coated with a thin layer of mud! It must have been a very tasty root.

We had close looks at Green-winged Teal and American Wigeon. One beautiful male Eurasian Wigeon was a stand-out with its dark red head and buffy-golden forehead. Canada Geese were present, with several Duskie in the flocks. And we had excellent viewing of four Cackling Geese. Last species sighted as we neared the visitor's center was a male Belted Kingfisher, which perched on a snag for all to see well. Ring-necked Ducks, both male and female were paddling about in the pond behind the visitor's center. In breeding plumage, the female of this species is quite distinguished in appearance, as are the males. We saw a total of 34 species on this fun-filled day.

Next field trip will be in late December.

**Contact Judy (10ksandpipers@gmail.com; 360-591-2463) if you have any questions.**



American Wigeon males are especially easy to spot from a distance because of their white forehead. It is from this appearance that the former nickname of "baldpate" was derived. Up close, the iridescent green patch, which extends back from the eye in a graceful arc, is easily seen.



The female American Wigeon has an all gray head, which contrasts with the brown breast and can be seen in some areas of Washington during any month of the year. During summer they nest in freshwater wetlands in the northeastern part of the state. From fall through early spring, this small round-headed duck is numerous around the Grays Harbor Estuary and the Puget Trough.

### ***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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