



Alan Vernon/Wikimedia Commons

Bird-watchers spotted a common ground dove (like the one pictured here), the smallest dove in the U.S., during the Columbia Estuary Christmas Bird Count late last month.

Birds: First event started with 27 birders at 25 sites

Continued from Page 1A

El Niño weather conditions, including a persistent warm blob of water off the West Coast, have collapsed the food chain in lower latitudes and pushed many species of animals, from whales to birds, north in search of prey. The week before the count, Patterson said, all sorts of unusual species had been blown in from the sea because of heavy storms. But by the time the count came, he added, they had gone back out. He added that some birds, such as sparrows, were probably driven to the area avoiding drought.

"The big picture is that the birds are off the Pacific Coast," Patterson said. "We can't see them, but they should be in California."

Some unusual species on the Columbia count, which Patterson noted on his blog "North Coast Diaries," included an American white pelican spotted at the Ilwaco, Washington, Boat Basin, a rock sandpiper amid a flock of dunlin at

Fort Stevens State Park and a black Phoebe along Ridge Road in Warrenton.

"Most of what we had was stuff that either hung around because of the weather ... or being pushed around by larger climatic factors than El Niño," Patterson said.

Upriver from the estuary's count was Wahkiakum, Washington's, count, centered on Clifton and including Brownsmead and Knappa. Andrew Emlen, the main organizer for the count, said he is still compiling results, but it looks like his group found 116 species of birds.

"Unusual species include a northern mockingbird that has been at the same location of Puget Island for over two years," Emlen said in an email. "Six of the endangered streaked horned larks were found at their year-round colony site on Whites Island."

The data from these local scientists is funneled to the National Audubon Society, which collects data from hundreds of sites across the Western Hemisphere.



Cuatrok77/Wikimedia Commons

Andrew Emlen, organizer of the Wahkiakum Christmas Bird Count, said birders spotted a northern mockingbird (like the one pictured here) that has been seen on Puget Island, Wash., the last couple of years.

Don't shoot

Prior to the 20th century, hunters engaged in the "side hunt," in which

they would each take sides and go afield with guns and see who could produce the biggest pile of quarry.

Concern over the decline in bird populations was growing, and ornithologist Frank Chapman with the National Audubon Society proposed the Christmas Bird Count as a non-lethal way to observe birds over the holidays. The first year's event started with 27 birders at 25 sites.

The count now includes tens of thousands of volunteers. The National Audubon Society reported nearly 500 counts, along with more than 14.4 million birds counted, between Dec. 14 and Tuesday.

The southernmost count happens aboard a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research vessel in the Drake Passage between South America and Antarctica. The northernmost happens near Arctic Bay in the northern Canadian province of Nunavut. The count stretches east from Guam in the Pacific Ocean to the Canadian island of Newfoundland on the Atlantic Ocean.

Results from these counts are used to assess the health of bird populations and guide conservation efforts.

Andersons: 'We're amazed at the sense of community'

Continued from Page 1A

Paige Anderson, 16, attends Seaside High School, and Michael, 18, attends Astoria High School. A violinist, pianist and composer, Michael plans to attend music school after graduation. Paige sings in the choir and recently performed in the school's '80s musical.

After 20 years, Alexa was ready to retire the scissors.

In Seaside, she went for a manicure at Shear Pleasures, happened to mention her prior experience and promptly received an invite to cut hair.

"If you ever want to know anything about where you're living, cut hair," Alexa said. "Sometimes women can get catty, but not in this shop."

She now cuts hair four hours a day, four or five days a week. Alexa loves the "whole feel" of Seaside. "It's magical," she said.

The Andersons first visited the coast in 2012, when they drove from Seattle to San Francisco. "One of the places we stopped was Seaside," he said. "We pitched a tent at Fort Stevens. The first day, we drove down the Promenade. We said, 'We love this place!' I still have the map. I circled it."

"Everyone was happy here," Alexa added. They took a second trip in September 2013, drawn by fishing, the ocean, restaurants, golf and shops. That tipped their decision to make the move.

"You go into the convenience store next door, and they say, 'Oh, you're here for your Grape Crush.' They know what you want."

Chris Anderson
new Seaside resident

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they found a small, but welcoming, community in Seaside.

"There are a lot of good friends you have with the church," Chris said.

They share the church's commitment to volunteerism and community, Alexa added, volunteering with the homeless shelter, beach cleanup, Seaside Kids, and always ready to help a neighbor in need.

"We're very happy to be here," Chris said. "We're amazed at the sense of community. You go into the convenience store next door, and they say, 'Oh, you're here for your Grape Crush.' They know what you want."

Port: It pays \$6,000 annually to be a CREST member

Continued from Page 1A

Butch Smith, a Port of Ilwaco commissioner that Hunsinger invited to talk about sea lions, said the Washington port pulled out of CREST because the port manager, Guy Glenn, said the agency wasn't using their services. Smith said many of CREST's services have been provided by the private sector, adding he does not think the government should be competing with the private sector. "We decided if we needed CREST, we would pay the non-membership fee to hire them."

The estuary task force's activities have recently run afoul of Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton and the agency's interest in South Tongue Point.

The Port recently sent a letter to the Oregon Department of State Lands stating its interest in acquiring South Tongue Point, a former depository of dredge sediments by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. CREST is working with Clatsop Community College and the Columbia Land Trust to turn the land into a living classroom and restored salmon habitat. The land has interest to the Port and other entities as an industrial site located next to a deep-draft shipping channel on the Columbia River and a derelict railroad spur.

Fulton serves as the Port's representative on CREST's council of governments. Scott Lee, chairman of both the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners and of the task force council, recently asked for Fulton's resignation. Lee said Fulton has been noncollaborative, threatening



Daily Astorian/File Photo

The Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force reported in December that it had performed about \$600,000 in wetland mitigation on 8.5 acres around Liberty Lane. CREST has sent a letter urging the state not to sell the restoration site, which the Port of Astoria is interested in buying.

and aggressive to CREST staff and the organization as a whole.

Of particular concern is opposition by Fulton and his employer — Warrenton Fiber — to the replacement of the Eighth Street Dam in Warrenton with a fish-friendly bridge paid for by the Bonneville Power Administration, a primary source of funding for CREST's various salmon habitat restoration projects. Lee has questioned whether Fulton, as an elected official, is serving the Port or his employer.

Fulton has never responded publicly to the accusations, and didn't touch on them at Tuesday's Port Commission meeting.

Fulton said Tuesday that CREST originally formed to assist local governments on

issues regarding wetlands, representing governments in their negotiations with other governments. CREST has morphed over the years, he said, "to be primarily an agent of BPA building salmon habitat."

Fulton said the Port pays \$6,000 annually to be a member of CREST, compared to an equivalent amount from Clatsop County, \$7,000 from Astoria, \$500 from Cannon Beach and similarly smaller amounts from other cities.

Robert Mushen, in his first meeting as the new chairman of the Port Commission, recommended the Port have CREST's director, Denise Löfman, come speak to the Port. He said Löfman told him the fees paid for membership are based on the amount of work CREST does

for a member, adding there is bound to be a record of such work.

"I think it's important for the commission to hear both sides of the story," said Executive Director Jim Knight, adding Löfman indicated she is willing to come speak to the Port Commission.

Knight said staff could prepare a presentation on the work the task force has done for the Port.

One common criticism of the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, which only holds four meetings a year, is the lack of a chance for council members to provide input to a group primarily run by the staff.

The Port Commission reached a consensus to have Löfman come speak at the next regular meeting, Jan. 19.