

Backyard bird count lands in Clatsop County



Katie Frankowicz/The Daily Astorian/The Daily Astorian

Naturalist Mike Patterson and park volunteer Rosemary McGrath turn their binoculars to the trees to identify a bird during a birding walk at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park on Feb. 16. The walk was part of the annual Great Backyard Bird Count.

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Daily Astorian

Here's a birding lesson: Your ears are just as important as your eyes.

On a birding walk at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Saturday, Feb. 16, naturalist Mike Patterson stopped often to listen. The sounds of birds socializing and hunting often caught his

attention before he even saw a flutter in the trees or the underbrush. There was the distinctive "dee-dee-dee" of black-capped chickadees. The harsh squawking complaints of a great blue heron.

The birding walk was one of several events the national park hosted over the weekend as part of the 22nd annual Great Backyard Bird Count, the first online citizen-science project with the purpose of collecting data on wild birds around the globe.

The park provided a number of bird-related exhibits and activities at the visitor's center over the weekend. A number of pink plastic flamingos — sorry, "great pink herons," perhaps a subspecies of the more common great blue heron — also made an appearance along trails in the park.

During the annual bird count, people around the world count the birds they see in their area and post the information online, providing important infor-

mation about the abundance and distribution of bird species.

In Clatsop County, people submitted sightings of dozens of different birds, cataloguing a total of 99 species as of Sunday afternoon, according to the bird count's website.

The settling ponds in Cannon Beach proved to be a popular spot for sightings, along with Fort Clatsop's Netul River Trail, the route Patterson took on Saturday.

Author seeks to make coho plentiful again

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
For Seaside Signal

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has developed a roadmap for getting Oregon Coast coho off the endangered species list, but it relies on cooperation from partners, including community members, conservation groups, and timber companies.

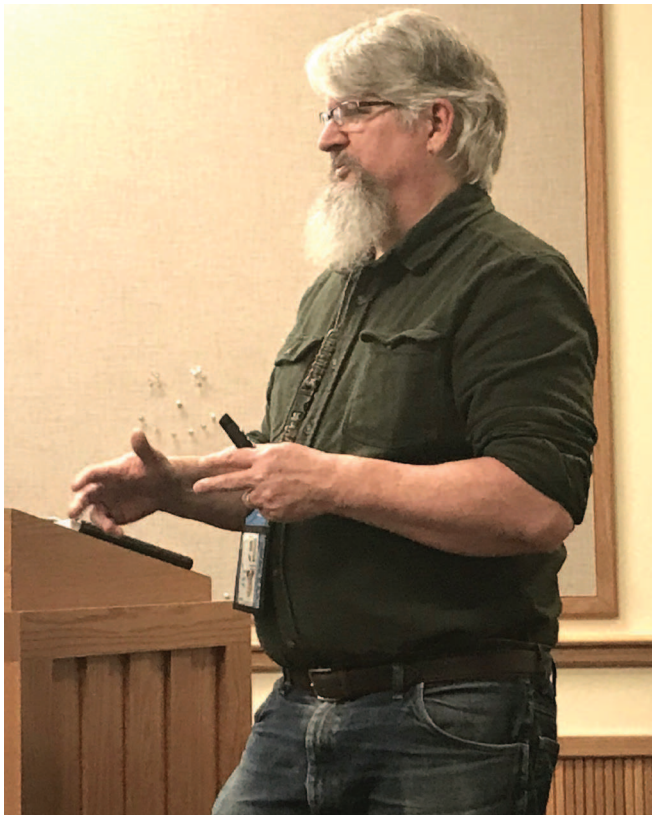
The purpose of setting a goal for recovery is to ensure "we have those species around for future generations," according to Kenneth Phippen, the Oregon Coast Branch Chief for NOAA's West Coast region.

On Feb. 20, he presented on "Breathing Life into the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Plan" as part of the Necanicum Watershed Council's Listening to the Land lecture series, hosted in partnership with the Seaside Public Library.

NOAA's long-term strategy for de-listing coho salmon — and keeping them off the list — is outlined in the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Plan, which was finalized in December 2016. The plan builds on past and current efforts to restore the coho salmon, particularly with a call for "continued actions to repair the ecosystem processes that influence the health and stability of the rearing habitats for juvenile coho salmon," according to a plan summary. Using the plan as a foundation, the department can develop focused annual work plans with specific milestones.

Too often, Phippen said, bureaucrats put together plans that sit on the shelf without leading to tangible action, when "they're supposed to be living documents." Nine months after the recovery plan was approved, the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Workshop Team worked to develop a vision statement to ensure the document remained tangible and fresh.

Additionally, the plan is supplemented by a Recovery Implementation Strat-



Katherine Lacaze

Kenneth Phippen, Oregon Coast Branch Chief for NOAA Fisheries, presents on "Breathing Life Into the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Plan" on Wednesday, Feb. 20, at the Seaside Public Library as part of the Necanicum Watershed Council's Listening to the Land lecture series.

egy, which includes excerpts for each of the five strata on the Oregon Coast. Clatsop County is in the North Coast Stratum, which includes the Necanicum, Nehalem, Tillamook and Nestucca rivers.

What does a recovery plan do?

Out of 28 salmon species from the West Coast currently listed as endangered or threatened, the coho is relatively the closest to recovery, Phippen said, adding there is still work to be done.

While there are multiple variables at play, he added, "We really need to dig down deep and figure out what we as NOAA Fisheries can do to implement the plan." To that end, the agency developed a ground strategy with several proactive and specific goals, one of which is managing the riparian area along rivers and streams and increasing the quality, quantity and diversity of winter and summer juvenile rearing habitat.

Other goals include

plan," Phippen said, adding the ground strategy does not amend or revise the recovery plan, but rather "identifies and prioritizes actions NOAA will take unilaterally or in partnership with others."

For the first time, he added, NOAA Fisheries is developing its annual work plans alongside the agency's Restoration Center staff to ensure their work is complementary and progressing toward similar objectives.

As Phippen pointed out, success is not measured by merely getting coho salmon de-listed as an endangered species, but also through creating the infrastructure and environment for the species to continue thriving so it does not become re-listed a few years down the road.

Making a difference

Phippen said they have seen success in the state when a couple smaller watershed councils or other conservation organizations build a coalition and consolidate their efforts. His agency can provide support through funding and by helping groups identify opportunities for working together.

Additionally, community members can contribute to the recovery effort by sharing detailed information at the population level to help develop and implement strategic action plans alongside the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

and other agencies and local stakeholders.

"You know that ground," Phippen said, adding that level of localized familiarity is especially valuable. "The bottom line question is, are you going to continue this exciting journey with us?"

The Listening to the Land

series runs through May. Each lecture takes place at 6 p.m. at the library. In March, Jakob Shockey, a wildlife biologist and the owner of Beaver State Wildlife Solutions, will present on "Resolving Conflicts with Beaver Using Natural Science and Design."

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