What makes Seattle a great place for bird lovers

The song of Swainson's thrush is considered among the most lyrical to be found in the lowland forests of Puget Sound. Photo: Education Images/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

By Christine Clarridge

**AXIOS Seattle, May 24, 2023**

The Seattle area is home to a wide range of native birds as well as migratory visitors who make their way to Puget Sound in spring, making some excellent reasons for birders of all levels to get out right now.

**Why it matters:** Research shows that a connection with nature improves our mental and physical health, and that watching and listening to birds provides special healing results.
Driving the news: Bird-watching enjoyed an explosion of interest during the pandemic and continues to lure newcomers, according to Birds Connect Seattle, formerly known as Seattle Audubon.

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A greenwasher’s playbook
By Olivia Rudgard

Bloomberg Green, DATE
1. The promise of guilt-free flying
Two airlines, Deutsche Lufthansa AG and Etihad Airways, have had adverts banned in the UK for overstating their environmental impact....

2. Banks can’t leave out their oil work
Finance and banking are at the center of the global systems that fund fossil fuel investment and expansion. Those relationships are often opaque for consumers, and the UK advertising watchdog has taken a tough line on marketing that keeps it that way....

3. Kinder cleaning products
Even consumers with a sense of laundry’s environmental impact might not know the specifics: Washing machines and clothes dryers use significant energy and water, and excessive washing and drying degrades fabric quality, which can lead to fashion waste and clothing fibers polluting waterways....

4. Plant-based promises
Two different claims that non-dairy milk is environmentally superior to cow’s milk have resulted in action from the ASA....

5. Clean as you drive
Hydrogen cars may mean cleaner air, but do they clean the air? That distinction tripped up the Korean car company Hyundai Motor Co. in a 2021 advert for its NEXO car, which is powered by a hydrogen fuel cell. On its website, the automaker claimed its car was “so beautifully clean, it purifies the air as it goes.” ....

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Researchers Detect 5,000 Species Threatened by Deep Sea Mining
Scientists have only identified a fraction of the species in the region of the Pacific Ocean targeted for the mining of EV battery metals

By Todd Woody
Researchers have released the first tally of deep ocean animals that inhabit the seabed targeted for strip mining, finding more than 5,000 species — nearly all of them unknown to science.

The peer-reviewed paper published in the journal *Current Biology* on Thursday highlights the lack of scientific knowledge about the biodiversity of the deep ocean, and arrives as the United Nations-affiliated International Seabed Authority (ISA) prepares to allow mining to commence as soon as next year. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea established the ISA in 1994 with a mandate to manage the exploration and exploitation of the seabed in international waters while at the same time ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment.

The scientists estimated there may be more than 8,000 species living in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ), a region of the Pacific Ocean that stretches from Hawaii to Mexico. Of the 5,580 species so far detected, only 438 have been identified, according to the study.
US says Mexico failed to stop illegal wildlife trade threatening vaquita

By Carolina Pulice

Reuters, May 26, 2023

A mother and calf vaquita, a critically endangered small tropical porpoise native to Mexico's Gulf of California, surface in the waters off San Felipe, Mexico in this handout picture taken in 2008. Paula Olson/NOAA Fisheries/Handout via REUTERS/File Photo

MEXICO CITY, May 26 (Reuters) - The U.S. interior secretary on Friday declared that Mexico has failed to halt the illegal wildlife trade threatening the world's smallest porpoise, the critically endangered vaquita, a move that opens the path for a possible trade embargo.

The vaquita, native to Mexico's Gulf of California, is imperiled by black market fishing for an endangered fish called the totoaba, whose bladder is highly valued in Asia for use in traditional medicine. Mexico's government has been under pressure to crack down on this illicit fishing.

Can the United Nations help save Pacific salmon?

Read More ...
The U.N. High Seas Treaty is a historic agreement for marine conservation, but its impact on the plummeting fish population is still uncertain.

By Sarah Trent

Crosscut, April 24, 2023
The high seas — the ocean waters that begin 230 miles offshore — cover 43% of the planet’s surface and are home to as many as 10 million species, yet remain one of the least understood places on Earth. Among the region’s many mysteries are how Pacific salmon, one of the West’s most beloved and economically important fish, spend the majority of their lives — and why many populations are plummeting. Combined with how little we know about what climate change is doing out there, such questions make the area an international research and conservation priority.

These sprawling waters, though, are a mostly lawless zone, beyond the reaches of any national authority and governable only by international consensus and treaties. They face tremendous challenges that no nation can address alone: Climate change is causing marine heat waves and acidification, while overfishing and pollution are crippling ecosystems, even as pressure grows from companies and nations eager to drill and mine the ocean depths. In early March, negotiators representing nearly 200 nations came to a historic agreement aimed at protecting the ocean’s creatures and ecosystems. When the new United Nations High Seas Treaty was announced, marine scientists and conservationists around the globe rejoiced.

But what will the treaty actually mean for conservation in a region about which humanity knows less than the moon? When it comes to Pacific salmon, will the new treaty’s tools — and the international symbolism and momentum involved in agreeing to them — aid efforts to manage and protect them? Do the provisions go far enough? Here’s what the experts say.

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14 Biggest Environmental Problems of 2023
While the climate crisis has many factors that play a role in the exacerbation of the environment, there are some that warrant more attention than others. Here are some of the biggest environmental problems of our lifetime, from deforestation and biodiversity loss to food waste and fast fashion.
1. Global Warming From Fossil Fuels
As of May 2023, CO2 PPM (parts per million) is at 420.00 and the global temperature rise is 1.15°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

The last time carbon dioxide levels on our planet were as high as today was more than 4 million years ago. Increased emissions of greenhouse gases have led to a rapid and steady increase in global temperatures, which in turn is causing catastrophic events all over the world – from Australia and the US experiencing some of the most devastating bushfire seasons ever recorded, locusts swarming across parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, decimating crops, and a heatwave in Antarctica that saw temperatures rise above 20°C for the first time.

2. Poor Governance
According to economists like Nicholas Stern, the climate crisis is a result of multiple market failures. Economists and environmentalists have urged policymakers for years to increase the price of activities that emit greenhouse gases (one of our biggest environmental problems), the lack of which constitutes the largest market failure, for example through carbon taxes, which will stimulate innovations in low-carbon technologies.

To cut emissions quickly and effectively enough, governments must not only massively increase funding for green innovation to bring down the costs of low-carbon energy sources, but they also need to adopt a range of other policies that address each of the other market failures. ...

3. Food Waste
A third of the food intended for human consumption – around 1.3 billion tons – is wasted or lost. This is enough to feed 3 billion people. Food waste and loss account for a third of greenhouse gas emissions annually; if it was a country, food waste would be the third highest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind China and the US.

4. Biodiversity Loss
The past 50 years have seen a rapid growth of human consumption, population, global trade and urbanisation, resulting in humanity using more of the Earth’s resources than it can replenish naturally.

5. Plastic Pollution
In 1950, the world produced more than 2 million tons of plastic per year. By 2015,
this annual production swelled to 419 million tons and exacerbating plastic waste in the environment....

6. Deforestation
Every hour, forests the size of 300 football fields are cut down. By the year 2030, the planet might have only 10% of its forests; if deforestation isn’t stopped, they could all be gone in less than 100 years....

7. Air Pollution
One of the biggest environmental problems today is outdoor air pollution. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that an estimated 4.2 to 7 million people die from air pollution worldwide every year and that nine out of 10 people breathe air that contains high levels of pollutants....

8. Melting Ice Caps and Sea Level Rise
The climate crisis is warming the Arctic more than twice as fast as anywhere else on the planet. Today, sea levels are rising more than twice as quickly as they did for most of the 20th century as a result of increasing temperatures on Earth. Seas are now rising an average of 3.2 mm per year globally and they will continue to grow up to about 0.7 metres by the end of this century....

9. Ocean Acidification
Global temperature rise has not only affected the surface, but it is the main cause of ocean acidification. Our oceans absorb about 30% of carbon dioxide that is released into the Earth’s atmosphere....

10. Agriculture
Studies have shown that the global food system is responsible for up to one third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, of which 30% comes from livestock and fisheries. Crop production releases greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide through the use of fertilisers....

11. Food and Water Insecurity
Rising temperatures and unsustainable farming practices has resulted in the increasing threat of water and food insecurity and taking the mantle as one of the biggest environmental problems today. Globally, more than 68 billion tonnes of top-soil is eroded every year at a rate 100 times faster than it can naturally be replenished....

12. Fast Fashion and Textile Waste
The global demand for fashion and clothing has risen at an unprecedented rate that the fashion industry now accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions,
becoming one of the biggest environmental problems of our time. Fashion alone produces more greenhouse gas emissions than both the aviation and shipping sectors combined, and nearly 20% of global wastewater, or around 93 billion cubic metres from textile dyeing, according to the UN Environment Programme.

13. Overfishing

Over three billion people around the world rely on fish as their primary source of protein. About 12% of the world relies upon fisheries in some form or another, with 90% of these being small-scale fishermen – think a small crew in a boat, not a ship, using small nets or even rods and reels and lures not too different from the kind you probably use. Of the 18.9 million fishermen in the world, 90% of them fall under the latter category.

14. Cobalt Mining

Cobalt is quickly becoming the defining example of the mineral conundrum at the heart of the renewable energy transition. As a key component of battery materials that power electric vehicles (EVs), cobalt is facing a sustained surge in demand as decarbonisation efforts progress. The world’s largest cobalt supplier is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where it is estimated that up to a fifth of the production is produced through artisanal miners.

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