

# The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)

*Presents*

## *“Shorebirds Talk”*

By:

The 2014 Bird Interpreters

### Scene 1: Introduction

**HILARY:** Thank-you, thank-you. Welcome to *Shorebirds Talk* and I am your host, Hilary Hicks. We are so excited to have our show outside, on location, today at the 2014 Dorchester Sandpiper Festival! (*cues audience to applaud*) Please also give it up for all the amazing planning that went into making this event and our appearance here possible! Such fabulous people and a really fabulous event!

(*changes tone*) For years researchers in this area, and elsewhere, have been watching shorebirds and reviewing their stats to determine what they eat, what they like, and where they go, but no one has actually stopped and asked the birds! That is why we are here today and that is what we do here on our show, *Shorebirds Talk*. Today we have an especially exciting show with five famous fabulous guests that will blow. you. away. (*Goes through the following like a batting line-up*) All the way from the sub-arctic, we have an unsatisfied female Sandpiper, a precautious juvenile Sandpiper, and we even have the misunderstood Falcon- just to name a few! You are in for a fabulous show here in Dorchester so please get comfortable and please put your wings together for our first guest, Professor Plover!

### Scene 2: Professor Plover

**HILARY:** Welcome Professor Plover and thanks so much for flying inland to join us in Dorchester square today. So, I hear you are a pretty big deal; we don't see very many plovers around.

**PROFESSOR:** No! We Plovers prefer space and privacy while we migrate. None of this huge group tour nonsense the Sandpipers go for. Of course, I don't expect their tiny brains to understand that travelling together means competing for food. They can be so thick.

**HILARY:** And how do you feel sharing the mudflats, your feeding ground, with such a huge group of Sandpipers? Tell us what that's like!

**PROFESSOR:** To be Frank, it's awful. The way they act, you'd think the Sandpipers own the beach! They are so worried about staying together that they push us to the edges of the roosting sites and away from prime beach area! Their feeding habits are also far from pleasant. They just madly peck away using their specialized beaks with sensor nodes and never using those beedy little eyes to look at what they're eating or, better yet, look at where they are going! Some of us don't want to get into accidents. Some of us actually look at what we are doing. Honestly, it's enough to drive a shorebird right into the nest of a Peregrine Falcon.

**HILARY:** That sounds a lot like a guy that I dated one time; eating out with him was SO embarrassing! So why do you bother sharing the mudflats with the Sandpipers? Why not find another beach? Why not break it off with him... uh, the Sandpipers, I mean.

**PROFESSOR:** The Nature Conservancy of Canada has a five star resort at Johnson's Mills! The food is the best in North or South America and there is an abundance of it... even with the vulture Sandpipers around. I can also eat in peace and not worry about some huge furry... what do you humans call them? Dogs? Running at me full speed- trying to catch my feathers. I can get a good tide's sleep at Johnson's Mills.

**HILARY:** That sounds like a resort that I would check into for sure! It sounds fabulous!

**PROFESSOR:** Yes, but I don't like how the Sandpipers get all of the attention! We're semipalmated too! See?!? (*holds up his hand to show*) We are specially equipped to stand on the mudflats- just like the semipalmated Sandpipers, but where is our fame? (*Getting fairly angry*) They get the Sandpiper festival. Where is our Plover Parade?

**HILARY:** (*Trying to avoid conflict*) Well, unfortunately, that concludes our time with you here today, Professor Plover. Thank-you so much for coming out and speaking with us today.

**PROFESSOR:** Yeah... yeah.... (*Sarcastic*) bring out the main act- the Sandpiper!

**HILARY:** What a perfect segway, Professor, let's bring out our next guest, Lady Urma! One of the oldest Semipalmated Sandpipers around! Give it up for Lady Urma!!

### Scene 3: Lady Urma

**HILARY:** Thanks so much for flying out today, Lady Urma! You just look fabulous, but everyone is dying to know! How old is one of the oldest Semipalmated Sandpipers?!?

**URMA:** Don't you know that a Lady never reveals her age, Hilary?

**HILARY:** And she is charming too, isn't she ladies and gentlemen??

**URMA:** Gentlemen?? OU! Where they at? What are the men like here in Dorchester because I've been in the game for a number of years now and I'll tell yah! The sub-arctic has some slim pickins! Here we are...supposed to pick a male and mate for life and I have yet to find one male that has impressed me!

**HILARY:** You mean you're still looking? Don't you already have a life partner?

**URMA:** Oh yes.... technically, but I still have a wandering eye. Gary gets the job done, but I am always after him to work on this or improve that-

**HILARY:** Can you give us an example of something you want him to improve on?

**URMA:** Oh, His scrapes mostly.

**HILARY:** His scrapes?

**URMA:** Yes, his scrapes! A man has to have good scrapes, you know! The digs he makes in the earth so that I can lay my eggs! They are never deep enough! I keep telling him, say, “Gary, go deeper. You gotta make the scrapes deep to protect my babies. Now go and make a better one!” Oh, I don’t know- Sometimes I feel like I’m talking to a tree! Maybe it’s me though.... Hawk Knows my feathers aren’t as bright or as sharp as they once were.

**HILARY:** And why is that?

**URMA:** Age, dears! We age just like you and the other giants that are here today! I am almost 18 years old, don’t cha know! Feathers are going to wither. I may molt and shed old ones and grow new ones back in, but they will never be as bright. If only I had more jewelry to distract from these tattered feathers! My friend, Gladys got the most beautiful silver bracelets the other day. She got one silver bracelet on one leg and on the other leg she got two! One as white as a newborns feathers and the other a lime green like a fresh piece of sparkly beach glass! One of you giants took her and we all thought she was as good as dead and then she re-appeared strutting on the mudflats a couple of hours later looking so shiny and new!

**HILARY:** I believe the “giants” you’re talking about are researchers and the “bracelets” that they put on your friend, Gladys are bands that they use to track where she goes.

**URMA:** Bracelets... Bands- they’re all the same thing! Hey, you think you can talk to one of those researchers and get me one? Oh my, those researchers wear some pretty nice sparkly jewelry themselves! They know how it’s done! I bet they happily mate for life!

**HILARY:** I can’t comment on the caliber of their mates, but I would like to know more about your mate, Gary. I’m sure all of the men in the audience here today would like to know what else he needs to improve on.

**URMA:** Where do I start?! I just need a more dependable man. After my eggs hatch, I stay for a little while, but then I head here to Johnson’s Mills because Mommys gotta eat! I need a man who knows how to look after my young when I leave! While I’m here, Hawk Knows what he is doing in the sub-arctic! I worry about my babies, yah know?!

**HILARY:** Absolutely! I think every parent worries about their babies, but then why do you leave so soon after your babies hatch?

**URMA:** Ladies night at Johnson’s Mills of course! We get only the biggest and the best mudshrimp and mudworms! I tell yah! We eat until we are loopy! Weee—heeeeww

**HILARY:** That certainly sounds like a fabulous time after such a tremendous flight from the sub-arctic! Listen, we're out of time, but I would like to thank-you so much for flying out and talking with us today. Actually, we have a surprise in store for the audience and yourself today. We have tracked Gary down using our sensor nomes (brought to you by Dr. Phil from Acadia University). For those of you who don't know, sensor nomes are what scientist use to track banded birds. We have been tracking Gary for the past few months and have asked him to join us here today. So, let's hear Gary's side of the story shall we! Let's bring out Lady Urma's life partner who we have already heard so much about- Gary!!!

#### Scene 4: Old Dog Gary

**HILARY:** So, Gary. We've heard quite a bit about you already... some of it not so flattering. You haven't been put in the greatest light; care to set the record straight for us?

**GARY:** My sweetheart Urma and I... or Lady Urma as you like to call her, have been hooking up in northern Manitoba for the last 15 years. We have the quaintest little spot in La Perouse Bay, where we first met when she picked my scrape. We used to really heat that place up, but now the only thing heating that place up is climate change.

**HILARY:** We have actually heard about your scrapes, Gary. According to Lady Urma, they weren't that impressive.

**GARY:** They used to be! But nowadays, there's plants growing up everywhere! How do you expect an old man like me to push his tired chest through that? Darn climate change. We used to sit for hours peeping to each other and now all she does is complain about my scrapes. Sometimes I feel like she regrets picking my scrape in the first place.

**HILARY:** Oh Gary! Lady Urma talked about how thick you were, but she forgot to mention how romantic you are. I bet you're good with kids, too.

**GARY:** Well, I have to be good with the young! My sweetheart leaves us just a week after our eggs hatch. She used to hate leaving and now she can't get out of there fast enough.

**HILARY:** So how do you take care of four young babies? That sounds like a nightmare!

**GARY:** Well, they are basically born running. I mostly just guide them to a good food source and make sure that they're putting on lots of weight and exercise regularly. I also love to watch them make friends because I know they'll have company on their first flight. There's safety in numbers, you know!

**HILARY:** Wow! You sound like you're a great dad! What was Lady Urma complaining about? A nice guy like you is hard to come by, believe me! Gary, one last question before you go! I can't figure out why all you shorebirds that feed and live so close to the Bay of

Fundy can't swim! Haven't you ever thought about enrolling your chicks in swimming lessons?

**GARY:** Nope. I haven't.

**HILARY:** Well, why not?!

**GARY:** It's not in our nature. My grandparents didn't swim, my parents didn't swim, I don't swim, and my kids sure as heck aren't ever going to swim.

**HILARY:** Well, Gary. You, and all the shorebirds, have a fabulous flying migration that is astounding enough- you don't need to know how to swim, too! No one can do it all, right?

**GARY:** Well, if we all just try to the best of our natural ability then there should be no complaints about that.

**HILARY:** Well said. Thank-you, Gary.

#### Scene 5: Falcon

**HILARY:** So far we've heard from a plover and a couple of sandpipers, but we are all about finding fresh perspectives on *Shorebirds Talk*. When we asked our next guest to appear on *Shorebirds Talk*, there was not a moment of hesitation. Please give a warm Bay of Fundy welcome to our shorebirds' worst enemy and predator, Peri the peregrine falcon!

**PERI:** Where'd that juicy old fellah go?! I've gotta start my catchin' early now and he looked pretty fat and slow.

**HILARY:** uhhhhh... Hi, Peri. We'd appreciate if you didn't eat our guests here on *Shorebirds Talk*. (*under her breath*) Remember...? We talked about this! (*Changing the subject*) So! Tell me. What does this time of year mean to you?

**PERI:** Oh, it's just like Christmas, Hilary Hicks. All those little birds doubling their weight; getting fat. Just waiting for me to scoop them up and dig my talons in. Mmmm mm

**HILARY:** I love Christmas too, Peri! The twinkly lights.... getting lots of presents! My man taking me out for dinner... Eh, Ladies?

**PERI:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. All you have to do is look pretty and you get fed. I actually have to work for my food! I spend so much time and energy catching a nice meal just to give it away to my needy children. My chicks are so helpless and SO hungry when they're born. Somedays, I hunt down six shorebirds for them to feast on and they still want more meat!

**HILARY:** You think I'm pretty? Oh, thank-you! So, tell us! Which shorebirds are the most fabulously delicious?!

**PERI:** Any fat ones. Those plovers are always fat... got any fat plovers on the show today?

**HILARY:** Perii.... So, tell us how do you catch them? Aren't shorebirds, like, really fast?

**PERI:** Hilary, if you haven't heard. I am the fastest diving bird in the world. I can dive at a speed of 400km/h and catch one of those delicious, juicy shorebirds (*Cocky, puffs his chest*).

**HILARY:** Well, it's a good thing there's no speed limit in the sky! It's also a relief that you won't have any interest in eating our next guest, Jimmy the Juvenile because, unlike the plump plovers you love so much, he is just a baby Sandpiper hardly any meat on him. Ladies and gentlemen, let us please give Jimmy a warm welcome to our show and to the Bay of Fundy! (*audience applauds, but no Jimmy*) Jimmy? Jimmy? Jimmy, it's alright! Come on out. The falcon is gone now. You're safe.

#### Scene 6: Jimmy

**HILARY:** (*once he arrives on stage*) There you go. You're alright! Hi there Jimmy! Can you tell us how your journey has been so far?

**JIMMY:** Hilary, I'm freaked out! I was born, I was happy, mom left, I was sad, dad left, now I'm mad. And scared. I was all alone in the sub-arctic! Freezing cold! I had to feed myself! Thank goodness I'm smart and have good insects!

**HILARY:** I think you mean you have natural instincts?

**JIMMY:** Yeah, that's what I said, I have good innnn-sects. I really miss my brother and sisters! Have you seen them!?! KATHY KATHYYYYYYY They flew away! One day we were playing hide and go seek, the next day, they're gone! I can't find them! Where'd they go? No one woke me up! Next thing I knew everyone was leaving! So I just joined in!!

**HILARY:** And look at you- you arrived at Johnson's Mills! You knew exactly where to go.

**JIMMY:** Yeah! Cause I got those natural innnnnsects! But some chick said there's like 100 000 birds here! That's like a BAJILLION! Now I'll never find my family. I've been looking everywhere! Do you know how hard it is to find them? Real hard! Real... Hard. MOOOOOOOOM MOOOOOM I'M REALLY SCARED

**HILARY:** It's normal to be scared, especially when you have to protect yourself against the falcons and other threats.

**JIMMY:** OH MY HAWKNESS THE FALCONS! I forgot about the falcons! Are you sure that falcon is gone?? I'm never going to make it to South America! I heard only one in four young sandpipers make it! ONE IN FOUR! That's like... that's like...

**HILARY:** That's 25%.

**JIMMY:** 25%!? WHAT! That's really small!! I'll never make it! Basically impossible! Why do I even bother?? I'm just going to get eaten! Or drown! Or caught by a poacher!!

**HILARY:** But I hear the beaches here are fabulous! Have you been enjoying yourself since you arrived?

**JIMMY:** Yeah! Some charity... Nature... Conservancy... of Canada! Bought all this land, and they tell you hoomans to leave us alone! I feel so safe, they're my favourite babysitter!

**HILARY:** Well, it already sounds like things are looking up! I'd better let you go, the tides dropping and you need to fill your tummy if you want to make it to South America.

**JIMMY:** BEY! Wish me luck! I'll tweet you from South America!

#### Scene 7: Conclusion

**HILARY:** Well there you have it, folks! We asked, and they answered. Honestly, what do these researchers know anyway! Remember, you heard it here first on Shorebirds Talk. If it happens in the sky, Hilary Hicks knows why! I'm Hilary Hicks and have a fabulous festival.

The End