

Amor de Lonh, Calidris Maritima

(Love from Afar, Purple Sandpiper)

Short film / Poem / Pastel paintings / Photograph

an Installation by: **Nicole Peyrafitte**

Amor de Lonh, Calidris Maritima is an installation attuned to the Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*), a colony of medium-sized migratory shorebirds that winters along the Shore Road Promenade in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn—next to the Belt Parkway, a major route to JFK Airport. Their seasonal return to this wave-battered strip of shoreline unfolds against a backdrop of traffic, jet noise, and dense urban infrastructure.

The installation includes paintings, photographs, pages from field notebooks, and a film accompanied by my poem *Amor de Lonh*. The title comes from that poem and draws on the troubadour notion of “love from afar” (*amor de lonh*), a concept from the Occitan country—where I’m from—which resonates with the birds’ long migration, the layered distances in the work, and the interspecies relationship explored through *Bird-State*.

Bird-State is a mode of perception shaped by sustained, embodied attention to birds in their environment. It arises from returning, observing, and documenting over time.

The installation invites viewers to notice what’s often overlooked and to reflect on how sustained attention—through art or observation—can be a form of restoration. It also calls for protecting the marginal habitats that support these birds. At the same time, this work engages *Art’s Response-ability As Healing Practice*—a sustainable, process-based approach rooted in nature observation. Through regular engagement with the natural world and the artistic process, it fosters grounding, clarity, and a sense of continuity.

Film:



Running Time: 04:29

All footage shot on the Shores of Bayridge between December 2024 & March 2025 (see poem below.)

Click on image or:

<https://vimeo.com/1075854378>

(DCP available)

Paintings:

Calidris Maritima White
21" x 30"
Paper/dry pastels
(2025)



Calidris Maritima Black
18" x 24"
Paper/dry pastels
(2025)

Photographs

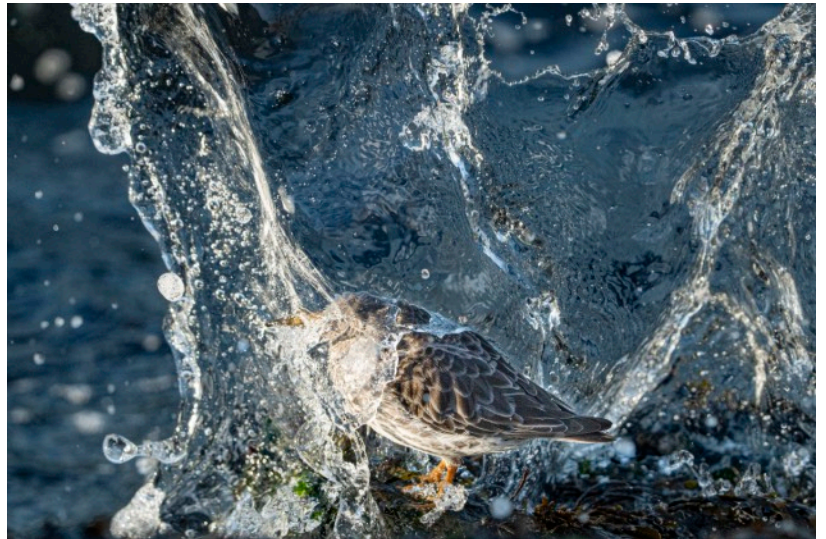


Purple Sandpiper looking up
8"x 12"
2025

*Sample of photographs.
Printed on Hahnemuhle photo rag
bright.
Finished with a hand-torn deckled edge.*



Purple Sandpiper foraging
8"x 8"
2025



Purple Sandpiper underwater
8"x12"
2025

Display Exemple

View of the *Amor de Lohn* installation featured at Stand 4 Gallery
for a Public Art & Ecology Biennial
Essential Shore / Permeable Future



*All printed materials—posters and cards—feature the
Purple Sandpiper in the exhibition.*

Amor de Lonh

un Fin'Amor

Purple Sandpipers

Calidris Maritima

the Arctic-breeding waders

settle on our shores

from late November into May

A Love from Afar

that exists for real

within a paradox

love of distance & love of presence

pleasure of contradiction

a form of love sans physical possession

but not a courtly love

thought also defined by persistence

& connection despite separation

a threshold between species

a liminal intersection

yes! presence & distance merge

without reciprocity

ausèths / birds

unconcerned by human gaze

no validation in play

an intimacy without possession

Amor de Lonh & Bird State

defined by separation & longing

not acknowledgment a

connection sustained despite absence

Fin'Amor & Bird State

possibility of fulfillment via

presence & observation

no control

unlike the idealized Occitan lyric tradition :

no yearning	just	peace contentment
no withholding	just	yielding
no absence	just	reliable presence
not love from fate	just	love from will
not ideal	just	concrete real
not imagined	just	lived
not perfect	just	present
not an ache	just	a release

love as
phenomenon
arising embodied
a tide-bound ritual
a fleshed feathered
primordial elemental
emergent offering
attuned / in tune
body knows
mind follows

Nicole Peyrafitte
April 2024

The Clapper Rail

Fall 2022

Notes on Purple Sandpipers

By Nicole Peyrafitte



The *Calidris maritima* are back foraging on Shore Promenade's slippery green rocks. Our holarctic winter residents have returned from their Arctic tundra breeding grounds. *Les bécasseaux violets*, s'il-vous-plaît! are bi-continental, yes! They can be found on both shores of the Atlantic, from Greenland and Iceland to northern Spain and infrequently in North Africa. In my birth country, France, they winter along the coasts from Dunkirk to Biarritz and on our American coasts their wintering extends to Maryland. How smart of them to avoid all the tourist traffic! Dedicated couples they are, with very little extra-pair copulation, as some DNA studies have confirmed their essential monogamy. Voilà!

One more important thing: the sandpipers are in the Scolopacidae family, dating from as early as the Early Oligocene period, around 30 million years ago. Native populations dwelled on this land for thousands of years before the first colonist reached these shores less than 500 years ago. Except for a few occurrences,

their native names are hard to find. After several days of online research and contacting various cultural outfits, here are the names I came up with for sandpiper—more need to be recovered. If you have any sources please contact me at np@nicolepeyrafitte.com.

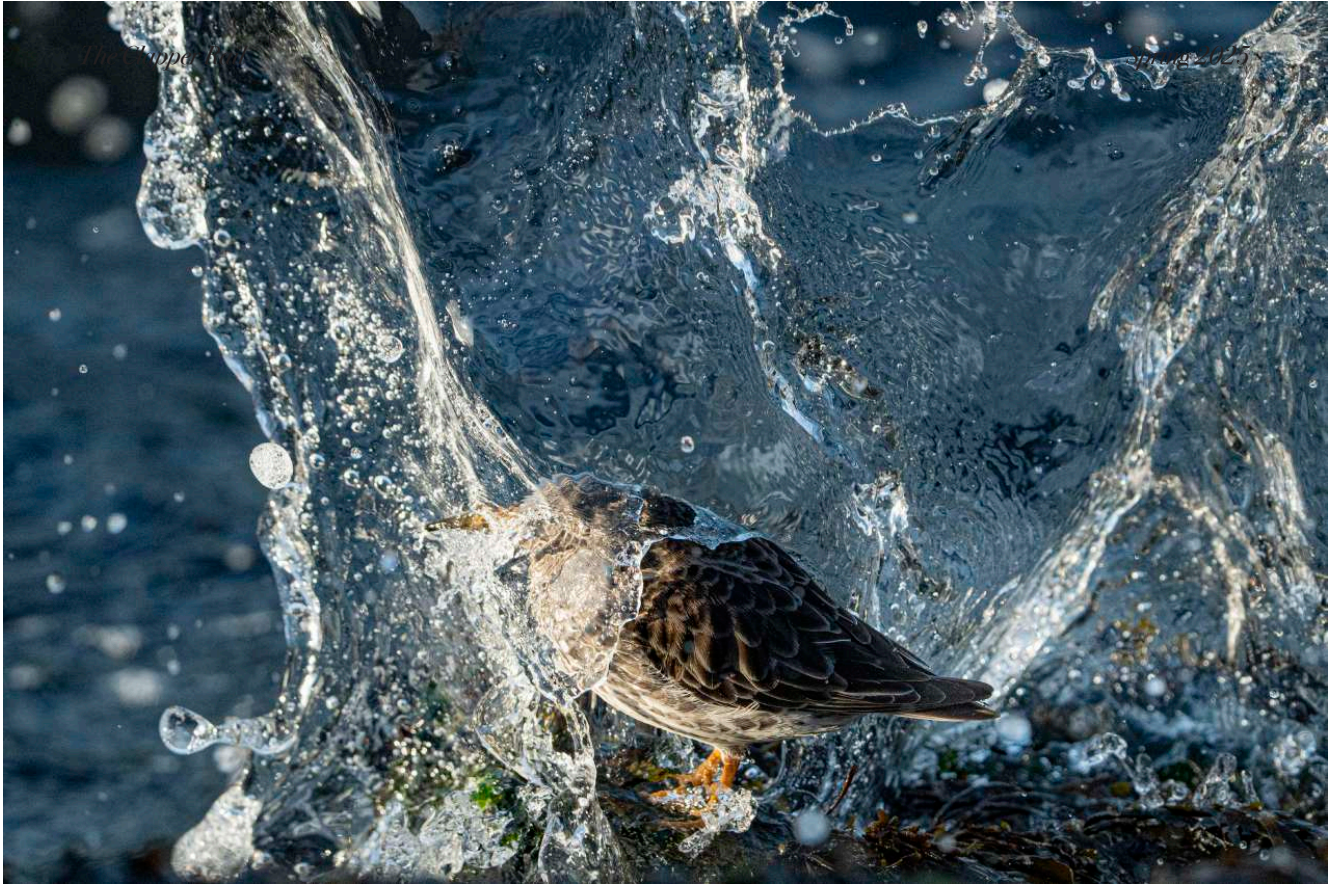
Lekau in Lenape. This is by deduction, as I found that the totem of the Boy Scout Lekau Lodge, chartered in 1935 in the Camden County Council located in West Collingswood, New Jersey, was the sandpiper¹. It makes sense since the Lenape-English dictionary gives the translation lekau to mean sand, gravel. *Ji-twish'-ki-wen* in Chippewa². 🐦

¹ <https://oa-bsa.org/article/news-you-can-use-history-behind-merger-lenape-lodges-ancestral-tree>

² *Bird Nomenclature of the Chippewa Indians*. Author(s): W. W. Cooke. Source: The Auk, July, 1884, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 242-250. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4066840.pdf>



Excerpt of field journal and photos of Purple Sandpipers at Shore Promenade.
All work by Nicole Peyrafitte.



Purple Sandpiper at Shore Road Promenade, Brooklyn. All photos by Nicole Peyrafitte.

Bird-State

By Nicole Peyrafitte

Many birders likely experience what I call “Bird-State”: an enhanced state of perception and presence where the body becomes the primary site of connection with the more-than-human world. In my case, Bird-State emerges through close observation and engagement with avian life and coastal environments. Whether exploring by bike, kayak, or on long walks, I emphasize the embodied experience of connecting with the natural world. It reflects my journey of rediscovering profound

connections between self, place, and nature, and my responsibility to honor and nurture the delicate relationships that sustain life. This echoes what David Abram refers to as “animal sense and sensuous terrain.”

I have grown deeply fond of the unexpected urban beauty and wilderness along Brooklyn’s south shore. This ongoing project celebrates the enduring rhythms of life that persist amid bustling cityscapes and decaying industrial remains, highlighting the remarkable resilience of nature in urban spaces.

A good example of my experience is my connection with the Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*). I have featured them

in a previous publication of *The Clapper Rail*, but they continue to inspire me and deepen my Bird-State each time I encounter them. Beginning in late November or early December, these remarkable birds grace the Shore Road Promenade until early May. I live nearby, and they truly are my winter companions, feeding the Bird-State phenomenon with each encounter.

Resilient, they thrive in rugged coastal environments. Often overlooked due to their subtle beauty and elusive behavior, they blend seamlessly with the jagged, weathered rocks where they forage. With steady determination, they navigate the rocky, wave-battered terrain with

purpose—under sun, rain, snow, or ice.

Purple Sandpipers aren't rare birds; they're regular winter visitors to these shores before returning to their Arctic breeding grounds in the spring. But Bird-State is not about rarity or the thrill of seeing something new—it is about presence, attentiveness, and the act of deep observation. This way of seeing can arise with any bird, whether in the lively chatter of House Sparrows gathered in tight clusters on bare winter branches or pecking together at scattered crumbs, a pair of Northern Cardinals chasing each other, or the sharp call of a Blue Jay sounding an alarm to its community. My goal is not to

pursue after the next species—though I certainly appreciate the thrill of seeing a rarity when the opportunity arises!—but to engage fully with what is before me; to notice patterns, gestures, and relationships, and in doing so, to cultivate a deeper sense of connection with the living world.

In these times of uncertainty, I find great solace in this ongoing project. Through this work, I aim to inspire ecological reflection and encourage viewers to engage with the natural world wherever they are. By reimagining our relationship with nature, anyone, anywhere, can cultivate a more intentional and responsive presence in daily life, finding connection and inspiration in even

the simplest interactions with the environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to deepen this work, as some of the photos published here, along with my drawings, will be featured in the Bay Ridge Public Art & Ecological Biennial: *Essential Shores, Permeable Future* (April 19–June 21, 2025).



Purple Sandpiper. Painting on paper by Nicole Peyrafitte.



Purple Sandpipers at Shore Road Promenade, Brooklyn.