

Harlequin Happenings

Newsletter of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org

Clallam County, Washington

A Chapter of the National Audubon society

September-October 2008

*"Promoting Birding and Conservation
as Community Educators, Volunteers, and Stewards"*

President's Message - Jim Richard

As your incoming President, I cannot overstate the value of Bob Hutchison's service as President these past 18 months. He took on the OPAS presidency at a time when the organization was struggling, and exerted strong, decisive leadership that put the OPAS on solid footing. Bob worked tirelessly for OPAS, devoting so much of his time to the organization. He maintained the BirdFest website, handled most of the communication with other chapters, took charge of laying out fliers, posters and advertising. Bob worked to strengthen OPAS' role as a partner in the Dungeness River Audubon Center. He volunteered his time at all OPAS and River Center events.

Under his presidency, membership grew, fundraising increased, and OPAS became stronger as an organization. When our treasurer resigned, Bob took on those responsibilities as well. He even served as editor of the last two issues of *Harlequin Happenings*. I am a bit daunted to follow in his footsteps.

Bob is an excellent birder, and I hope he has time now to really enjoy the birds and the amenities of the Olympic Peninsula.

New Officers

In the summer edition of the *Harlequin Happenings*, the names of the incoming OPAS officers for 2008-2009 were presented, but I want to remind members that the new officers are Jim Richard, President; Sara Ellen Hoffman, Vice president; Ken Leuthold, Treasurer; and Audrey Gift, Secretary. Please treat us nicely.

(Continued on Page 2)

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS:

OPAS FALL POTLUCK, Sep 17. Come at 6 PM and share a dish with friends; then stay to hear Nate Chappell speak on the "Birds of Ecuador", 7 PM.

DUNGENESS RIVER FESTIVAL, Sep. 26 & 27. Our Amazing Watershed!! Help us celebrate the watershed that keeps the Sequim-Dungeness Valley alive. There will be activities for kids and adults, music, art, food, and much more. We need help organizing this big event, so please contact the River Center if you're available to help.

SAN JUAN ISLANDS 3-DAY CRUISE: Oct. 6 to 8. Join Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society for a three-day cruise and birding adventure through the San Juan Archipelago. We depart from Sequim Bay aboard the 65-foot M/V Glacier Spirit, stay two nights at Roche Harbor Resort on San Juan Is., and visit Sucia Is. State Park for picnic lunch and cruise back home by way of spectacular Deception Pass. Lots of birds and hopefully orcas. Watch for further details at www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org. For additional information, contact 360-681-4076, or e-mail: rcoffice@olympus.net.

OPAS Early Fall General Meetings

Season kickoff potluck, September 17, 6 PM;
Speaker, Nate Chappell, "Birds of Ecuador", 7 PM

October 15: Speaker, Jim Gift, "Wildlife of Deep South Texas", 7 PM

OPAS Board of Directors

Officers:

President, Jim Richard 681-5407
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The Ecosystem in Politics

Protecting and preserving habitats, ecosystems and open space – necessary to sustain our treasured native birds, fish and wildlife populations – requires a number of different approaches. Many conservation and environmental organizations with diverse missions play vital, but different, roles in fish and wildlife protection. Ducks Unlimited and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation are examples of organizations that contribute to habitat preservation by raising substantial money to fund specific projects. Land trusts protect open space, agricultural lands, and habitats, primarily through conservation easements or land purchases. The federal government and many states have public programs that support conservation or directly preserve critical wildlife lands.

These efforts are crucial pieces of ecosystem protection. But, frankly, there is not enough money to buy and protect all the land and habitat that deserves protecting. Therefore, enter organizations like the Audubon Society, sportsmen clubs, wildlife federations, and all the others that slug it out in the political arena. Lobbying, convincing, persuading, negotiating, collaborating, and compromising to influence agency and legislative decisions are quite literally “... *dirty work but someone has to do it.*”

I believe the **heartbeat of the ecosystem pulsates in the statehouse (or courthouse or The White House)**. The health of our environment is subject to the thoughtful, or thoughtless, agency regulations, executive fiat, and legislative policies that can protect or debase..

DU, RMEF, and most land trusts are effective at raising funds from corporate and affluent donors, partly because those organizations minimize political involvement. Their extraordinary results in preservation speak for themselves. But a huge void needs filling. While beating up on lobbyists is fashionable this election year, I, for one, salute OPAS, Audubon Washington, and National Audubon for pounding away (and getting pounded) at all levels of government to protect the habitats that sustain our beloved creatures.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 1 President’s Message
- Page 3 OPAS Field Trip Schedule
- Page 4 Early Fall Field Trips
- Page 5 OPAS Meeting Calendar
- Page 5 Conservation Matters
- Page 7 Ed. & Outreach
- Page 8 Purple Martins Report
- Page 9 The Treasurer’s Chest
- Page 10 River Center Events
- Page 11 Bird Sightings

Important River Center Meeting!!!

On Thursday, September 11, at 5:30 PM, the River Center Foundation membership meets to ratify its new bylaws and proposed name change to Dungeness River Audubon Center. OPAS Board and membership who are also members of the River Center Foundation are encouraged to attend and vote.

OPAS Field Trip Schedule (2008-2009)

Field trips scheduled by OPAS for 2008-2009 are:

Date	Trip	Leader(s)
September 13	Dungeness Landing/3 Crabs	Dave Jackson/Mary Mira
September 28	Vulture Migration at Salt Creek County Park	Larry Rymon
October 6-8	San Juan Islands Cruise	Bob Boekelheide
October 25	John Wayne Marina/Sequim Bay	Ken Wiersema/Bob Iddins
November 8	Ediz Hook/Port Angeles Harbor	Dave Jackson/Mary Robson
December 6	CBC Warmup	Bob Boekelheide
December 15	Christmas Bird Count	Bob Boekelheide <i>et al</i>
January 10	Local Bays & Shores	Dave Jackson/Judy Mullally
January 23-24	Raptor Workshop	David Drummond
January 31	Winter Corvids	Ken Wiersema
February 7	Owl Prowl	Bob Boekelheide
February 13-16	Great Backyard Bird Count	All of us
February 21-22	Skagit Flats	Bob Iddins/Judy Mullally
March 7	Owl Prowl	Bob Boekelheide
March 14	Nisqually NWR	Dave Jackson/Judy Mullally
April 3-5	Olympic BirdFest 2009	OPAS Volunteers
April 5-7	San Juan Islands Cruise	TBD
April 18	Bainbridge Island	Doug Watkins
May 2	Birdathon Warmup	Bob Boekelheide
May 9	Birdathon	Bob Boekelheide <i>et al</i>
May 23	Neah Bay	Bob Iddins/Judy Mullally
June 6	Lost Mountain DNR	Bob Boekelheide
June 13	Anderson Lake/Oak Bay	Judy Mullally/Mary Mira
July 11	Hurricane Ridge	Bob Iddins/Judy Mullally
July ?	Salt Creek Tidepools	TBD
August 8	Local Bays & Shores	Dave Jackson/Judy Mullally
August 29-30	Ocean Shores	Bob Iddins/Judy Mullally

OPAS Early Fall Field Trips

Dungeness Landing/3 Crabs

Date: Saturday, September 13, 2007 9:00 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Cost: Free

Leaders: Dave Jackson and Mary Mira

Features: Migration is in full swing. We will look for shorebirds, early arriving sea birds, and raptors. At this time of year the shores of Dungeness Bay may offer a resting spot to interesting vagrants. We have selected the time of the most favorable tides, so join us in the morning.

Meeting place: Viewing platform at Dungeness Landing County Park (aka Oyster House).

Bring: Snacks, water, scopes if available. Dress for a range of weather conditions.

Further information: Dave Jackson (360-683-1355)



Vulture Migration at Salt Creek County Park

Date: Saturday, September 29, 2007, noon

Cost: Free

Leaders: Diann MacRae, Larry Rymon

Features: This is a unique opportunity to take part in a major study of the fascinating migration of these big birds. Diann has studied their annual move south for over a decade. Each year at this time, the birds gather on the south shore of Victoria Island and, when the air warms, cross the Straits of Juan de Fuca before continuing south. Come around noon when the birds should start coming over and help with the count. Flights can go as late as 4:00 p.m.. Drop in and leave as you wish. Of course, there will be other birds to watch, especially returning sea birds.

Meeting place: Tongue Point overlook which is at the west end of the campground loop at Salt Creek Park.

Bring: snacks, water, scopes if available.

Further information: Larry Rymon 360-681-6399

Note: Please see OPAS website or call Larry Rymon for final confirmation of this trip.

San Juan Islands Cruise



Date: October 6-8, 2008

Features: Join the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society this fall for a three-day cruise October 6-8, 2008, through the spectacular San Juan Archipelago. We will depart from John Wayne Marina aboard the MV Glacier Spirit (a 65-foot motor vessel, well-known from our many cruises around Protection Island), and cruise to Roche Harbor Resort; then touring various sites on San Juan Island for either birding or sightseeing. On day two, we will cruise onward for a mid-day visit to the Sucia Island State Park for a walk-about and picnic lunch, returning to Roche

Harbor Resort on San Juan Island for the second night. On day three, we will cruise back home again to John Wayne Marina by way of dramatic Deception Pass, pausing for a close look at Smith Island for birds and sea mammals.

Further Information: Find registration materials on our website (www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org), or contact 360-681-4076, or email rcoffice@olympus.net.

John Wayne Marina/Sequim Bay

Date: October 25, 9 a.m. to noon

Leaders: Ken Wiersema and Bob Iddins

Features: Sequim Bay, one of the great protected embayments of the north Olympic Peninsula, attracts a wonderful variety of shorebirds, alcids, gulls, and waterfowl. Shorebirds include plovers, dowitchers, yellowlegs, several sandpipers, Whimbrels, and godwits. The bay provides great opportunities to see Rhinoceros Auklets and Marbled Murrelets. Ducks include Barrow's Goldeneyes, Hooded Mergansers, Whitewinged Scoters, and Long-tailed Ducks.

Meeting place: South parking lot of John Wayne Marina

Bring: Snacks, water, scopes if available. Dress for a range of weather conditions.

Further information: Ken Wiersema (360-683-4763)

Ediz Hook/Port Angeles Harbor

Date: November 8, 9 a.m. to noon

Leaders: Dave Jackson and Mary Robson

Features: Port Angeles Harbor is a classic northwest embayment, providing shelter inside Ediz Hook for a wide variety of diving ducks, alcids, loons, grebes, gulls, and shorebirds. Barrow's Goldeneyes, Harlequin Ducks, Red-necked Grebes, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Pigeon Guillemots swim the harbor waters. The harbor is full of surprises, where rarities such as Common Eider have shown up in the past.

Meeting place: City Pier parking lot, Port Angeles.

Bring: Snacks, water, scopes if available. Dress for a range of weather conditions.

Further information: Dave Jackson(360-683-1355)

OPAS Meetings	Date/Time/Topic
OPAS Board	Thursday, September 4, 6:30 PM
Conservation Committee	Monday, September 8, 10 AM at RC
General Meeting	Season kickoff potluck, September 17, 6 PM; Speaker, Nate Chappell, "Birds of Ecuador", 7 PM
Education & Outreach Committee	October meeting, date and time to be announced
OPAS Board	Thursday, October 2, 6:30 PM
Conservation Committee	Monday, October 6, 10 AM at RC
General Meeting	October 15: Speaker, Jim Gift, "Wildlife of Deep South Texas", 7 PM

Conservation Matters - Jim Richard

Jim Gift is the new chairman of OPAS' Conservation Committee. Jim brings a lifetime of environmental experience to the position. He has been an environmental consultant for 27 years, with emphasis on water quality and waste/toxic management. Jim also has 17 years experience as a wildlife and nature photographer, and currently operates a professional photography firm. Many of you attended his excellent presentation at our May monthly meeting. Welcome, Jim.

Undermining the Endangered Species Act

Currently, under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), federal agencies proposing projects that may affect a listed species must consult with fish and wildlife experts at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service to determine the effects of the projects on threatened and endangered species. The Bush Administration is proposing a change that would waive the consultation requirement and allow each agency to decide unilaterally whether a proposed project would affect T&E species. The

Harlequin Happenings

Administration's proposed rule change is significant, and would undermine the effectiveness of the ESA. The required consultations with USFWS and NMFS have been crucial over the years in preventing loss of habitat and other debilitating impacts on listed species.

Anyone wishing to comment publicly on this issue may do so by email at audubonaction@audubon.org. Comments are due by September 15th. Audubon members may also subscribe to Action Alerts – periodically issued by National Audubon about current national problems. I urge you to subscribe to these alerts and to use the above email address to speak out on national issues.

Dosewallips River Road

In 2002, a major storm washed out a section of the Dosewallips River Road, rendering the 5.5 miles of the road past the washout impassable for vehicles. The washout, 500 feet in length, is located on the Olympic National Forest (ONF), about 10 miles west of Brinnon. Another smaller road washout occurred upstream in 2003. The Dosewallips Road provided access to two campgrounds, Elkhorn on the ONF and Dosewallips in Olympic National Park (ONP).

The ONP, ONF, and Federal Highway Administration intend to reconstruct the Dosewallips Road, and have issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In the DEIS, the agencies only considered re-establishing road access; thus the DEIS only analyzes three alternatives for rebuilding the road. The DEIS does not address a conservation alternative that would close the road and convert it to a hiking, biking and equestrian trail.

Two reconstruction alternatives would construct new road routes with grades up to 10% across extremely steep sideslopes, composed of highly unstable glacial soils. The proposed routes also would traverse a number of small streams, springs, seeps, wetlands, and riparian areas. Up to seven acres of timber, including old growth trees, would be removed.

Reconstructing the road on very unstable slopes and soils would result in sloughing and erosion that will increase sediments in the river, impairing aquatic life, and degrading stream habitat vital for coho and chinook salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout.

Removing the timber would affect old growth forest ecology, including soils, vertebrates, invertebrates, herbaceous and woody undergrowth, and would degrade habitat for federally-listed Marbled Murrelets and Northern Spotted Owls. The rerouted road segment would traverse and thus destroy existing wetlands and riparian habitat.

The DEIS' third alternative would construct a 700-foot bridge across the washout. The bridge would be located at a point where the river makes a nearly 90-degree bend. Experts believe that the bridge would likely fail because of the unstable glacial soils at the bridge abutments and the hydraulics at the bend in the river.

OPAS' Position - OPAS and other conservation organizations have urged the agencies to draft a new DEIS that includes an alternative that would close the Dosewallips road above the washout, construct a hiking, biking and horseback trail to the two campgrounds. This conservation alternative would offer high quality, low impact recreational opportunities, as well as including operating the two campgrounds as backcountry campgrounds, constructing parking areas, turn-arounds, restrooms, and a horse-loading ramp near the washout. The Forest Service could develop a vehicle campground downstream from the washout to replace some of the camping opportunities lost at the Elkhorn and Dosewallips campgrounds because of the washout.

Audubon Washington has adopted a resolution (promoted by OPAS) supporting the trail alternative. The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe has joined the many conservation organizations opposed to reconstructing road access and favoring a trail alternative.

I-985

Initiative 985, purporting to reduce traffic congestion, will appear on the ballot in November. This initiative will have consequences that should concern us all.

I-985 would:

- Open HOV lanes to all vehicles from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm – 6:00 am (Monday through Friday) and all day on weekends.
- Require synchronization of traffic lights on all major arterials and heavily-traveled streets.
- Divert 15 percent of vehicle sales tax revenue (\$127.5 million) from the general fund to reduce traffic congestion.
- Require that any new toll revenues be diverted to an account that can only be used to fund the construction and operation of the toll lanes and reduce traffic congestion (expand road capacity, road assistance, synchronizing traffic lights). Also, it diverts revenue from red light traffic camera violations and other traffic infractions into this account.
- Prohibit the use of toll revenues to increase transit, vanpool, carpool, and trip reduction services in the corridor.

The initiative 1) encourages increased vehicle traffic, 2) discourages transit and carpooling, and 3) diverts toll revenues and \$127 million from the state General Fund to activities that would increase vehicle traffic.

I-985 is bad public policy. First, by encouraging automobile use at the expense of transit, carpooling, and other alternatives, the initiative contributes to global warming and urban/suburban sprawl, which impact habitats. Second, I-985 siphons off funds from the general fund that otherwise would be available for worthwhile programs including fish and wildlife enhancement and habitat protection.

You may be interested to read the complete text of I-985 on the Washington State website <http://access.wa.gov/>.

Education & Outreach - Shirley Anderson

Plans for Greywolf and Haller Schools - You are invited! For several years, volunteers have presented classes to the second and third grades in Sequim. Started about twenty years ago by Annette Hanson and Jodie Hoekstra and others; rejuvenated four years ago by an Americorps staff member at the River Center; Powell Jones suggested that the OPAS Education Committee consider continuing the program. The team of volunteers has included: Quenn Charrier, Sally Holm, Sharlene Miller, Laura Anderson, Sheila Joyce, Joan Henry, Jodie Hoekstra, and Shirley Anderson.

Each class includes a discussion of a specific group of birds in the second grade and mammals in the third grade. In the past three years we have had classes once a month in each class, February, March, April and May. A plan is all ready, or you may work with Bob B. and Powell to devise your own. We will be glad to work with your individual wishes and scheduling needs. We invite you to join this team! Do you like learning and teaching about the animals of the Dungeness area? Do you enjoy the enthusiasm of the seven or eight year old child? Then this opportunity is for you!

We will gather in October to set plans for the coming school year. Call or email Shirley Anderson if you think you would like to help with this delightful age group (681 - 3950 or sanderson22@olypen.com).

The Dungeness River Festival - Our Amazing Watershed - Mark your calendar for Friday, September 26, and Saturday, September 27, 10 am - 4 pm. The Festival has something for everybody (See inset, Page 1)

The River Center Education and Outreach Committee has been meeting throughout the spring and summer to plan an exciting weekend. Thanks to steering committee members: Laura Hall, Bob Boekelheide and Powell Jones, staff of the River Center; Laura Anderson, Shirley Anderson, Gretha Davis, Annette Hanson, Clare Hatler, Julie Jackson, Lyn Muench, Sara Ellen Rutkoski.

The Dungeness River Festival - Sale and Silent Auction - Local Artists have been invited to participate in an art exhibit featuring the Dungeness Watershed. About 25 artists will have pieces on display in the River Center during the Festival. Some of the pieces will be for sale and the artists have agreed to donate 25% of the price to the education programs of the River Center. In addition, two artists have donated watercolor paintings to be sold in a silent auction during the Festival. Saudra Cutsinger has donated a watercolor painting of a Robin and John Adams has donated a watercolor of a forest stream.

Thanks to the generosity of all these fine artists! Be sure to stop by the River Center during the Festival, make your bid and vote for a "People's Choice Award"!

Purple Martins at Dungeness- Ken Wiersema

As many of you know, OPAS has for several years installed and maintained Purple Martin (PUMA) nest boxes on the abandon pilings in the tide flats north of the 3 Crabs Restaurant. It is the only documented nesting site for PUMAs in Clallam County. We've had reports of PUMA sightings and possible nests near La Push and at several other West-end locations. If OPAS members suspect or can confirm a nest location, please let the River Center or me know.

By mid July 2007, we had counted some 17 adult birds at 3 Crabs and we had evidence (eggs or chicks) of 30 potentially new PUMA. On 16 Aug 2008, Stan Kostka, the coordinator of PUMA projects in Western WA, along with several OPAS helpers, went back out to check our boxes. We saw only six adults. We were saddened to find but two live chicks. We found 19 dead chicks or cold (dead) eggs. Our findings have been typical of many PUMA nesting sites around Puget Sound. We think that this year's wet spring and almost non-existent summer resulted in fewer or delayed broods of larger flying insects; consequently, adults and chicks appear to be starving, and nests/eggs/chicks were in turn abandoned. We live close to the northern limit of PUMAs range, so as late in the year as it is, it's unlikely the birds will try again. In fact as cool as it is, they are preparing to head south.



This year we also installed three new boxes on Protection Island in cooperation with the USFWS. I checked our new boxes on Aug 10th; one had a cold egg, and another had two live chicks in it (the same number as our 3 Crabs site). I saw five adults in the vicinity. We plan to continue to assist the USFWS to establish a PUMA breeding site on the island.

Many OPAS volunteers helped. My thanks to Sue Chickman, Bob Iddins, Larry Rymon, Mary Porter-Solberg, Bob Hutchison, Jim Richard, Jim Monahan, Mark Freed, Margaret Levitan, Eftin Strong, and Steve Solberg. A big thanks also to Stan Kostka for his help and counsel, and to Pam Sanguinetti, USFWS, for her support. In early Sep, Pam is leaving the USFWS for a job with the US Army Corps of Engineers; we wish her well in her new job, and look forward to working with her replacement.

From the Treasurer's Chest - Ken Leuthold



Credit Card Usage - An easy, and efficient, way to pay your annual pledge drive contribution to OPAS for support of River Center operations is through a periodic charge to your credit card. We currently have twenty members participating in the "E-giving Program". Although the main push for this year was concluded last month, you can join the program at any time simply by contacting any chapter officer for information and a form.

One concern some members have is whether their credit card information is safe, so let me explain the procedure. When the form with your pledge information including the credit card number is received, it is given to Laura, who serves both as Office Manager for the River Center and as Bookkeeper for OPAS. She enters the financial data in OPAS' accounting records. In the future, if we develop a computer based credit card processing system, she will also enter the credit card information in the computer. However, only the President, Treasurer and Bookkeeper have access to the password protected computer financial files.

After Laura enters the financial data, she gives the form with your pledge and credit card information to the Treasurer. I place the documents in a separate binder which is filed in a secure off-site location. Each succeeding Treasurer will be responsible for safeguarding these records in a secure location separate from the regular fund-raising/accounting records. Monthly, Laura and I process the E-giving transactions through the credit card machine located in the River Center, and I file the customer copy of the credit card slip in your credit card file and Laura retains the merchant copy for our accounting records. You receive confirmation of the transaction through your monthly credit card statement. You can contact Laura or me at any time to change your pledge or credit card information.

In summary, after the credit card numbers are passed to Laura, no one except Laura and I will see them. OPAS looks forward to adding you to our E-giving team.

River Center Operations Support - OPAS fund raising activities in support of the River Center operations resulted in a payment of \$27,100 this month. Currently, our various contributions such as the Annual Fund Drive and Birdathon, along with earnings from special activities such as the Birdfest and OPAS sponsored boat trips, are accumulated and invested until the River Center requests our support to meet it's fiscal year cash flow requirements.

Earlier this year OPAS paid \$11,288 for River Center Operations and we also processed payments of over \$7,000 for the RC Endowment which one of our couples raised from their Birdathon activities.

OPAS contributions remain a vital part of the River Center operation, both financially and through the many hours of volunteer support provided to it's various programs. Thank you to every individual who contributes in any way.

OPAS MEMBERSHIP - Ken Wiersema

We have numerous new folks moving into Clallam County, and we each have neighbors who ask us questions about birds. The OPAS Board believes that we can increase our membership by at least 100 by next summer. Think about a friend, family member, or neighbor who you know would enjoy and benefit from OPAS membership and programs. Bring them to a meeting, give them a copy of the newsletter from the River Center (or print one from our website), take them on a field trip, and tell them about Wed birdwalks and classes at the River Center. I have had several longtime Audubon members tell me that OPAS is one of the best chapters to which they have ever belonged. So spread the word ... our most valuable asset is our membership!

River Center Events



Bird Walks

Date: Every Wednesday morning Time: 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Meet at the River Center for a weekly walk to see and hear the birds of the lower Dungeness riparian forest. Information from these on-going walks helps us understand the annual cycle of the birds of Railroad Bridge Park.

Sequim Open Aire Market

Saturday, Sept 20, 9 AM to 3 PM.

Last Thursday Work Parties

Dates: Sep. 25, Oct 30; Time: 1 to 4:00 p.m.

Cost: Three short hours helping RR Bridge Park

Please help keep RR Bridge Park looking bright and

beautiful! Bring your work gloves to assist with gardening, cleaning, trail maintenance and other chores that make our park shine. Snacks and drinks provided!!

Dungeness River Management Team

The experts and informed public groups that oversee the management of the Dungeness River meet monthly at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, second Wed. of the month, from 2 to 5 p.m.

Natural Science Study Group

Dates: 2nd Mon. each month, Sep. 8, Oct 13; Time: 10 a.m. to noon.

This adult discussion group focuses on the most interesting aspects of the natural world that affect the north Olympic Peninsula, including climate, weather, rivers, geology, botany, and wildlife. Discussion topics vary with group interests. September 8, will feature a presentation by Harry and Eloise Bergtholdt on their explorations over the years of Lassen National Park and the mountain terrain in Northern California, 10 AM to noon. The October meeting is currently in development. Come add your two cents and gain some knowledge at the same time. Contact Welden Clark (clark@olympus.net) or the River Center (360-681-4076).

Migrant Shorebirds and Gulls

Date: Three Thurs., Sep. 4, 11, and 18; Time: First session start 9 a.m. (times may vary each week depending on tides). Cost: \$30 for River Center partners, \$50 for non-partners

New varieties of shorebirds and gulls migrate through our area in late summer. Learn the identification and natural history of these beautiful birds. Includes field trips to local habitats. Limit: 16 Please pre-register.

Summer River Talk - *The History and Use of Railroad Bridge*

Date: Sat., Sep. 20; Time: 2 p.m.

Ken Wiersema, civil engineer and River Center Board member, describes the construction and tells stories about the use of our very own Railroad Bridge, from 1915 to present.

Beginning Bird Seminars

Date: Six Tuesdays, Sep. 23 to Oct. 28; Time: 7 to 9 p.m. Cost: \$40 for River Center partners, \$60 for non-partners

Weekly seminars and field trips designed for beginning birders, new residents who wish to learn local birds,

and anyone who wants to better understand birds. Seminars include basic bird identification, bird feeders, birdhouses, field guides and manuals, and birding optics. Limit: 16. Please pre-register.

Wells 101

Date: Thu. Sept 18, Oct 16; Time: 6 to 8 p.m.

Clallam Co. Environmental Health is back to teach homeowners the care and maintenance of their wells. Safe drinking water is essential for homeowners, and this class takes you through the steps to make sure your water is safe.

Septics 101

Dates: Wed., Sep. 24, Oct 29; Time: 6 to 8 p.m.

The septic system is one of the most expensive parts of many homes, requiring regular inspection and maintenance. This class, taught by Clallam Co. Environmental Health Div., teaches homeowners how septic systems work and how to keep systems in good working condition. You must pre-register with Clallam Co. by calling 360-417-2258.

Fall Birds of the North Olympic Peninsula

Dates: Five Thursdays, Oct. 2 to Nov. 6; First class meets at 9 a.m., other class times depend on weather and tides

Cost: \$40 for partners; \$60 for non-members

This intermediate birding class teaches identification and natural history of the common and not-so-common birds of the north Olympic Peninsula during fall. Class will be outdoors nearly every session plus field trips to local habitats; weather permitting. Limit: 16 people.

Bird Sightings - Bob Boekelheide

As predicted by Northwest weather prognosticators, summer didn't start this year until after the 4th of July. Before the 4th it was cool and cloudy, but after the 4th the weather turned warm and dry for much of July and early August. But by the middle of August we were back to the usual passing weather systems and occasional showers – thank goodness for Pacific Northwest weather.

As a result, many local songbird species apparently started their nesting attempts late and ended them early this year, resulting in relatively poor nesting success and few chicks fledged. Unfortunately we have no data for most, but Violet-green Swallows never laid eggs in nest boxes by the Dungeness River Audubon Center and our backyard Song Sparrow only fledged one big chick in place of the usual two clutches.



Clearly, the place around here for summer bird watching is saltwater, where migrant shorebirds, gulls, and waterfowl returned from northern and inland nesting areas in abundance. It's amazing how quickly shorebirds reappear from the Arctic. Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, dowitchers, Sanderlings, Least and Western Sandpipers, and both yellowlegs have been visible around Dungeness Bay through July and August. There has been a flock of up to 18 Marbled Godwits in Dungeness Bay since at least June, apparent non-breeders that never left for the breeding season. With them have been one Long-billed Curlew (perhaps the same individual that spent the winter and spring wandering Dungeness and Sequim Bays) and up to five Whimbrels.

Not many sightings of unusual shorebirds so far this summer, with a couple exceptions. On 8/4, Bob Norton spotted a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Blyn, which unfortunately flew away over Sequim Bay and hasn't been

seen since. On 8/15, Charlotte Watts photographed a beautiful juvenile Solitary Sandpiper visiting her pond at Chicken Coop Hollow, also near Blyn.

Speaking of Whimbrels, the College of William and Mary Center for Conservation Biology has a fantastic website at <http://ccb.wm.edu> that uses satellite transmitters to track movements of Whimbrels banded on the east coast. One bird in particular, named Winnie the Whimbrel, was banded in coastal Virginia last spring. In late May 2008, Winnie flew 3200 miles over 146 hours (six days!), apparently non-stop, from Virginia to the MacKenzie River in northern Canada. Through June Winnie remained on the North Slope of Alaska, perhaps nesting, but by mid July it moved to western Alaska and then, over a four day period in early August, it flew non-stop from Alaska to Gray's Harbor, WA. So much for regional populations and flyways -- Winnie is making a giant loop around North America!

There are a number of excellent websites available that track birds and other animals using satellite transmitters. One of the best is seaturtle.org/tracking, which not only reports on sea turtle migration, but also a host of birds from albatrosses to wood storks. Peregrine Falcons can be followed on the Falcon Research Group website, and shorebirds migrating to and from the South Pacific and Alaska can be followed on the Alaska USGS website, <http://alaska.usgs.gov>. Awesome stuff!

There is an interesting seabird mystery occurring along the Pacific coast of North America, namely where are all the Manx Shearwaters coming from? The most recent sighting was by Scott Downes, who reported a Manx flying by Cape Flattery with a group of Sooty Shearwaters on 7/25. Manx Shearwaters are renowned for breeding in the North Atlantic, particularly the British Isles, and up until about 10 years ago they were very rare around here. During the last decade, more and more Manx have appeared in the North Pacific, and now there's speculation that they're nesting somewhere between Alaska and Oregon. One suggestion is Destruction Island right off Kalaloch. Another is Triangle Island north of Vancouver Island.

This is the time of year for Brown Pelicans, which usually stay on the outer coast (look for thousands from Willapa Bay to La Push) but occasionally enter the Strait. Ken and Mary Campbell spotted a pelican at Ediz Hook on 7/29, and two subadult Brown Pelicans hung around Port Angeles harbor in August, seen by Michael Woodruff on 8/10 and by Bob Kiernan and Bob Boekelheide on 8/12.

Adding to last year's discovery of Common Loons nesting at Lake Ozette is Jim Karr's discovery this year of calling Common Loons at Wentworth Lake northwest of Forks on 6/8. Someone else reported that loons may nest at Lake Pleasant along Hwy 101 north of Forks, so the loon plot thickens.

Right now is peak time for gull migration to the Olympic Peninsula, as they move here from breeding colonies throughout North America to feast on local forage fish populations. We are at the intersection of gull migration from many different directions: Black-legged Kittiwakes, Mew, Bonaparte's, Herring, Thayer's, and Glaucous Gulls from the north; Ring-billed and California Gulls from the interior; Heermann's and Western Gulls from the south; along with our local breeding Glaucous-winged Gulls and Olympic Gulls (Glaucous-winged X Western Gull hybrids). Thousands of California and Heermann's Gulls can be found roosting along the Olympic coast right now, and two early Mew Gulls have been hanging around John Wayne Marina, first spotted by Bob Sundstrom on 8/5. Check the big gull roosts at river mouths, floating log yards, beaches, and headlands for any unusual species.

Michael Woodruff hiked to Dungeness Lighthouse on 8/10, spotting a wonderful variety of sea and shorebirds, including seven Black Oystercatchers, one Peale's Peregrine Falcon (the coastal breeding subspecies), two Red-necked Phalaropes, a fly-by Tufted Puffin, and about 1200 Caspian Terns with nearly-grown chicks. Back on 6/5, I watched a coyote working the Caspian Tern colony on the spit, so their nesting success may not have been as good this year as in the past. Ken and Mary Campbell also reported two Red-necked Phalaropes off Port Angeles harbor on 8/14.

Rick Klawitter has been keeping track of ducks nesting up the Elwha River this summer, discovering a female Barrow's Goldeneye with a flightless chick plus eight other females and three males at Lake Aldwell in June. Rick also spotted a pair of Blue-winged Teals on 6/15, making us wonder whether they, too, nest in that area.

The best raptor news of the summer was a White-tailed Kite seen by Sherry and Angus Anderson near Robin Hill Park on 7/24. Other raptor news has been depressing, as this is the first year that Ospreys did not nest along East Sequim Bay Road where their nest blew down during winter 2006 and eagles harassed them off their new nest. Rick and Kathy Bush, who usually keep track of the nest, say they saw an Osprey flying off the north shore of Miller Peninsula on 6/25, so maybe the birds have moved to a better site with less harassment. Jim Karr reported an active Osprey nest at Wentworth Lake near Forks on 6/8, so hopefully some Ospreys are thriving somewhere in the county.



Summer is the time when Common Nighthawks appear, particularly chasing insects like winged termites in the evening skies. Bruce Moorhead saw a couple nighthawks over Lake Sutherland on 7/19, so possibly they nest nearby. BettyLou Doern-Zeff reported four nighthawks flying on the back side of Bell Hill on the evening of 8/4, the first she'd seen in three years in Sequim. Bill Huizinga spotted 15 more nighthawks over Sequim on 8/6. Also in the aerial flying department, the Wed AM bird walk at the River Center spotted ten Black Swifts soaring over west RR Bridge Park on 8/20.

Eurasian Collared Doves may be here to stay, with a pair consistently visible in downtown Dungeness and along Marine Drive and Twin View Drive this spring and summer, the third year they have been here. On 8/22, four collared doves traveled together near the Dungeness Landing Park, including two birds that looked like recent fledglings. The collared dove invasion of North America has been extremely fast, with the first imports occurring in Florida in 1982. Will collared doves affect other dove and pigeon species? Curiously, they seem to occupy a niche between Mourning Doves and Rock Pigeons, both of which seem to be doing fine in our area.

Sara Blake, who lives near Carrie Blake Park in Sequim, has had incredible success with Western Bluebirds in her backyard, thanks to non-stop mealworms she places by her back door. Sara began putting out mealworms for bluebirds earlier this spring, and now has bluebirds finishing up their fourth clutch of the year in the two boxes she has available near her house. The first male appeared at Sara's boxes in mid-February, and then they fledged young in May, June, July, and August. It's really quite an amazing story, showing what birds will do if food is available. The other bluebird story is a Mountain Bluebird seen by Ken and Mary Campbell at Salt Creek County Park on 8/20, an unusual summer record.

Steve Acker, while walking along Ediz Hook on 6/10, spotted a very lost male Lapland Longspur, perhaps the first ever June record for this species around here. In mid-June Lapland Longspurs should be in the peak of breeding activities in the high Arctic, not hanging around Port Angeles. Chipping Sparrows appeared in the lowlands in late spring, with Harry Bergtholdt seeing one along Towne Road on 5/26 and one on the OPAS field trip to Lost Mountain on 6/7.

Among finches, it's been a great year for Red Crossbills, particularly in the mountains, but we're very pleased that Bob Sundstrom discovered a flock of about 35 White-winged Crossbills at Hurricane Ridge on 8/4. White-wingeds showed up last winter in the Cascades, but this is the first we've heard of them in the Olympics in a long time.

Much more late summer and fall migration is on its way. If you see something noteworthy, please call Bob Boekelheide at 681-4076 (w) or 681-4867 (h) (email at rivercenter@olympus.net). Thank you very much for your sightings.



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