



# Harlequin Happenings

Newsletter of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS)

[www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org](http://www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org) ([www.olybird.org](http://www.olybird.org))

Clallam County, Washington

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Issue 2 Mar-Apr 2012

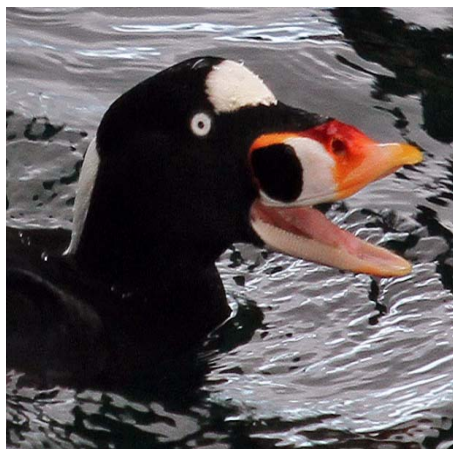
*"Promoting Birding and Conservation  
as Community Educators, Volunteers, and Stewards"*

## OPAS Programs for March and April

by Loretta Flanders and Bill Parker

### Sea of Birds: Population Patterns of Coastal Residents and Migrants,

presented by Professor Julia Parrish, Univ. of Washington, March 21, 2012 at 7 pm



Oil spills, marine debris, fisheries, disturbance, habitat loss, ocean acidification, global warming, avian influenza, predators, introduced species - what doesn't affect seabirds? Despite these serious pressures, many seabirds along the Washington coast are thriving.

Find out who is winning, and who is not, and what we can do about it.

Julia Parrish is the Lowell A. and Frankie L. Wakefield Professor of Ocean Fishery Sciences at the University of Washington, where she also serves as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Diversity in the College of the Environment. A seabird biologist for over 25 years, Julia is also the founder and Executive Director of the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST), a citizen science program that monitors the patterns of beached birds from California to Alaska.

### 10 Years of Bird Walks in Railroad Bridge Park presented by Bob Boekelheide, April 18, 2012, at 7 p.m.

Bob Boekelheide led the first of the Dungeness River Audubon Center's Wednesday bird walks in RR Bridge Park on September 19, 2001. Since then, through wind, rain, snow, lovely overcast skies, and occasional sun, the bird walk never missed a Wednesday for over 10 years, all in an attempt to understand more about the annual cycles and changing abundance of birds that use the Dungeness River riparian forest and surroundings. The River Center celebrated the 10-year milestone - 520 Wednesdays later - on September 21, 2011. In that period, bird walkers identified and counted 126 species and more than 100,000 birds.

Bob, Director of our River Center from 2001 to 2011, has sorted through a mountain of bird walk data and will share patterns and insights about the birds that nest and live in the Dungeness River valley.



## OPAS Board of Directors

### Officers:

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## President's Message

by Tom Montgomery

OPAS and its River Center partners are entering one of the busiest periods of our annual cycle of events which include Birdfest, Birdathon, Spring Fling, responses to proposals in our State Legislature and other conservation issues, and the second Olympic Theater Arts Buyout—some of which are described in other parts of this issue. I am happy to report that, amidst all this activity and much more, the transition process with our new Center Director, Powell Jones, is taking place with skill and efficiency. As always, we can use more volunteers—so if you have the time and inclination, please contact our dedicated staff, Powell Jones or Valerie Wolcott.



## Happy with the Center's Endowment

by Sue Chickman, Dungeness River Audubon Center Development Committee

We are so grateful for the vision and foresight of our members, partners, and friends when it comes to donating to the Dungeness River Audubon Center and its Endowment fund. Many of you may remember when, in 2008, a very generous friend of the Center anonymously donated a \$1,000,000 gift. The Center's Board was already in the process of setting up an Endowment to support, sustain, and enhance the mission of the Center and Railroad Bridge Park – for now and for the future. Committees and policies were created; a professional investment advisor was retained; and investments were made in a conservative yet pro-growth portfolio.

To understand its importance to the Center, proceeds from the Endowment are contributing more than \$60,000 annually towards educational and Park maintenance programs, while still maintaining its principal. That's close to 30 percent of this year's annual budget! Although this is very welcome, there is still a funding gap in 2012.

Whether by cash or through estate plans, donors to the Center's Endowment are a special group of generous and visionary community citizens and businesses. These are folks who would like to see generations of Olympic Peninsula residents benefit from an understanding of and enjoyment with our area's rich natural resources. To date, more than 60 members, friends, and partners of the Center and

Park have supported the Endowment, which has grown to over \$1,300,000, from both donations and investment returns.

As first steps toward attaining our long-range \$5,000,000 Endowment goal, the Center has held special fundraisers to honor or memorialize a few outstanding leaders. One fundraiser that's still ongoing is the "Honor Bob Boekelheide" legacy campaign. It's not too late for you to express your appreciation for all the programs, classes, knowledge, birdcalls, and friendships Bob has developed, shared, and left with us during his ten years of remarkable service at the Center. Endowment donation forms are available at the Center or at: [www.dungenessrivercenter.org](http://www.dungenessrivercenter.org).



## OPAS Field Trips in March and April

by Bob Iddins



### Ridgefield & Nisqually National Wildlife Refuges

*Dates:* Tuesday & Wednesday, March 6 & 7, 2012

*Times and Meeting places:* 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 6, at Wildlife

Drive of the Ridgefield NWR. On Wednesday, March 7, meet at Nisqually NWR Visitors' Center at 10 a.m. (For directions: Ridgefield, go to <http://www.fws.gov/redgefieldrefuges/ridgefield/index.html>; Nisqually, go to <http://www.fws.gov/nisqually/visit.html>.)

*Leaders:* Bill and Karen Parker and Judy Mullally

*Cost:* Field trip is free; however, both refuges require entrance fees for those without passes (Interagency Annual Pass, Senior Pass, etc.). There is a possibility of a visit to an area requiring the Washington State Discover Pass on Tuesday afternoon. All lodging, meals and fees are the responsibility of each participant.

*Features:* Nisqually NWR features lots of waterfowl, with a possibility of Great Horned Owl with young and American Bitterns. Ridgefield NWR also has a plethora of waterfowl including Cinnamon Teal. Various raptors and Sandhill Cranes can be expected.

*Bring:* Optics, field guides, water, lunches and snacks and appropriate clothing for iffy weather.

*Further information:* Bill or Karen Parker at 360-504-2391 or [whparker@surfbirder.com](mailto:whparker@surfbirder.com).

Several participants will be staying at the Lewis River Inn (<http://lewisriverinn.com/index.html>) in Woodland.

### Reifel Bird Sanctuary, B.C. & Point Roberts, Wa.

*Dates:* Tuesday & Wednesday, April 10 & 11, 2012

*Times and Meeting Places:*

Tuesday: 12:30 p.m. at George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, just inside the entrance at the informational signs. Directions and more info at <http://www.reifelbirdsantuary.com/index.html>.

*Since this is an international trip, you will need to have your passport or an enhanced Washington driver's license for the border crossings. DON'T FORGET THEM. There may be other restrictions for entering Canada. Check the current restrictions for Canada at [http://canada.usembassy.gov/traveling\\_to\\_canada/entering-canada.html](http://canada.usembassy.gov/traveling_to_canada/entering-canada.html).*

Wednesday: 9:00 a.m. at Lighthouse Marine Park on the southwest corner of Point Roberts (<http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/parks/lighthouse/lighthouse.jsp>). If you are staying in Canada, plan on a few extra minutes to cross the border into the USA.

*Leaders:* Bill and Karen Parker

*Cost:* Free; however, there is a \$5 (CDN) entry fee at Reifel. As always, all lodging, meals, fees and transportation costs are the responsibility of the participants. You should plan on staying overnight in Canada or at Point Roberts. There are many hotels and motels in the Vancouver area. In Canada, search Lander, Delta, and Richmond also for lodging. Point Roberts has a few B&B's and campgrounds.

*Features:* Reifel usually hosts some of the same population of Lesser Snow Geese present in the Skagit in the winter. They leave in April so this would be the time to say "Good-bye" until the fall. Reifel gets some rarities, so be prepared for anything. There are numerous trails, most of which are relatively flat for easy walking. There are also several blinds ("hides" to the Brits), which can allow for close looks and photo opportunities.

A geopolitical oddity, Point Roberts is a part of the United States (that is not an island) that is not physically connected to it, making it a pene-exclave of the U.S. It is located on the southernmost tip of the Tsawwassen Peninsula, south of Delta, British Columbia, Canada, and can be reached by land from the rest of the United States only by traveling through Canada. Lighthouse Marine Park has become known as one of the best places to view Orcas from land. There are good viewing spots for marine birds and shorebirds. On the return home we can stop at Boundary Bay. The Snowy Owls will most likely all be headed back to their arctic homes; but there should be some migrating shorebirds. *(Continued on next page)*



## Harlequin Happenings

*Bring:* Optics, field guides, water, lunches and appropriate clothing.

*Further Information:* Karen or Bill Parker at 360-504-2391, [whparker@surfbirder.com](mailto:whparker@surfbirder.com). Please contact the Parkers to preregister at least a week prior to the trip!!

### Dungeness Recreation Area and Bay

*Date:* Saturday, April 28, 2012

*Time:* 8 a.m.

*Cost:* Free

*Leader:* Ken Wiersema

*Meeting place:* The first parking area after entering the Rec Area.

*Features:* Spring migrants and the water birds of Dungeness Bay.

*Bring:* Optics, field guides, water, snacks and appropriate clothing.

*Further information:* Ken Wiersema at 360-683-4763, [wiersema@olympus.net](mailto:wiersema@olympus.net)

**Note:** The Bogachiel State Park Field Trip, scheduled for June 2, 2012, has been cancelled!!

## River Center Events

### Wednesday Bird Walks

*Date:* Every Wednesday morning

*Time:* 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

*Cost:* Free

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



*Photo by Robert Hutchison*

### Backyard Birder Series (BBS)

There are four more sessions in the first series "Being a Backyard Birder". Individual sessions are \$5 for each adult over 18. With the exception of May 5, which begins at 8 am, all classes will begin at 10 am at the River Center and end at noon. After completing five sessions, students are offered a free one-year membership in OPAS.

Myron Nelsen is the first BBS student to take advantage of this opportunity. Welcome aboard Myron!

The schedule of BBS sessions for the remainder of the year are as follows:

DATE	TOPIC	TIME	LEADER(S)	ADD'L. INFO
March 3	Gardening for Spring Birds	10 a.m.	Bob Boekelheide	Field trip to McComb Road Nursery
April 7	Bird Migration	10 a.m.	Bill Parker	
May 5	Bird Songs and Calls	8 a.m.	Bob Iddins and Bob Boekelheide	
June 2	Birds Out of the Nest	10 a.m.	Ken Wiersema and Shirley Anderson	

*(Continued on next page)*



*Photo by Robert Hutchison*

### **Owl Prowl in the Owllympics**

*Date:* Sat. Mar. 3rd

*Time:* 7 p.m. to after midnight

*Cost:* \$30 per person

Join Bob Boekelheide on an exploratory journey in the northeastern Olympic foothills to find owls and other night creatures. You must pre-register for this trip at the River Center (681-4076); limited to 10 participants. Date may change depending on weather.

### **Olympic Driftwood Art Show**

*Date:* Sat. & Sun, Mar 10th and 11th

*Time:* 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Olympic driftwood sculptors present prize-winning pieces and recent works by members, plus demonstrate sculpture techniques. Driftwood products available by order will also be present.

### **Last Thursday Work Parties**

*Dates:* March 29 & April 26

*Time:* 1 to 4 p.m.

Three short hours each month to 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.

### **Early Spring Birding by Ear - Learn the bird sounds we hear every year.**

*1st Session Date:* Thursday, Apr 19

*Time:* 7 a.m. - 11 a.m.

\$10 donation requested. Meeting place: Dungeness River Audubon Center, then carpool. Limit 15 people.

*2nd Session Date:* Saturday, Apr 21

*Time:* 7 a.m. - 11 a.m.

\$10 donation requested. Meeting place: Dungeness River Audubon Center, then carpool. Limit 15 people.

### **Introduction to Birds and Birding**

*Dates:* Six Tues. Evenings, Apr. 3 – May 8th

*Time:* 7 to 9 p.m.

*Cost:* River Center Partners: \$40; non-members \$60.

This class is designed for beginning birders, new residents, and anyone who wants to better understand birds in general. These seminars include basic bird identification, bird feeders, birdhouses, field guides, and birding optics. Limit: 16 people.



*Bewick's Wren - Photo by Robert Hutchison*

## Special Events & Announcements

### Spring Fling 2012

SAVE THE DATE: OUTDOOR FUN FAIR

April 28, 2012: 10:00 to 2:00

Dungeness River Audubon Center

2151 Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA

Games, Walks, Activities, Outdoor Fun! The kick-off for the annual Spring Fling, during the entire month of May, to raise funds for the operations of the Dungeness River Audubon Center and Railroad Bridge Park. Details soon at

[www.dungenessrivercenter.org](http://www.dungenessrivercenter.org)

### Development Consultant Sought

The Board of the Dungeness River Audubon Center is seeking a development consultant to assist the Center Director and the Development Committee of the Board. Duties of the consultant will be to assess the effectiveness of current fundraising efforts, increase funding from donations and grants, and develop new and innovative ideas for increasing support from the general public. Qualifications will include a demonstrated success in fundraising (minimum five years experience) and excellent personal and written communication skills. Knowledge of natural resources and the Olympic Peninsula would be preferred. A Scope of Work is available at [www.dungenessrivercenter.org](http://www.dungenessrivercenter.org) and at the Center. Applications are due March 23. Please email or mail your resume and rates to [RiverCenterJobs@gmail.com](mailto:RiverCenterJobs@gmail.com), or mail to Dungeness River Audubon Center, P.O. Box 2450, Sequim WA, 98382.

### Paragon Springs - OTA Performance for River Center Partners and Friends

Thursday, May 3, 2012

Reception at 6:30, Curtain at 7:30

Tickets: \$20.00 (\$8.75 of each ticket is a tax-deductible donation)

It is 1926 in the American heartland, and the famed "healing waters" of Paragon Springs have been mysteriously poisoned. Now, the town's foremost citizen-crusader, Dr. Thomas Stockman, is determined to know the truth behind this tragedy, no matter the cost. In this vibrant, often funny, and highly theatrical re-imagining of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, Steven Dietz puts the lure of capitalism and the greed of small-town self-interest squarely on trial—laced with Dr. Stockman's lasting cry that "the majority is always wrong!" This is an entertaining and illuminating drama, set amid the birth of radio and the final roar of the 1920s, about the human cost of our political gamesmanship. Tickets available from Clare Hatler – 683-6967 or [donclare@olyopen.com](mailto:donclare@olyopen.com).

### Wanted!! - Birdfest Silent Auction Items

Guided trips, art creations, one-of-a-kind items/experiences, time-shares, birder/birding-related treasures, or?

Proceeds from Birdfest help support educational programs of the Dungeness River Audubon Center

[Gretha.d@wavecable.com](mailto:Gretha.d@wavecable.com), 360-477-5407, before March 23

## OLYMPIC PENINSULA BIRDFEST

*Come bird with us! March 30 - April 01, 2012*



For more information, please visit:  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org),  
or call 360-681-4076  
Railroad Bridge Park,  
2151 West Hendrickson Road,  
PO Box 2450, Sequim, WA 98382



DUNGENESS  
RIVER  
Audubon  
CENTER  
at Railroad Bridge Park

*Scheduled Events:*  
Guided Birding Trips  
Birding Cruises  
Owl Prowls  
Photography Workshops  
Auction & Raffle  
Wine Tasting  
Gala Banquet  
Featured Speaker:  
Dr. Jerry Freilich



## Web Corner

by Dave Jackson



The joint RC-OPAS, web-based, membership database we developed in 2011 is operational. Unlike most membership databases, ours gives us capabilities well beyond handling couples as a single entity for memberships. In particular, we handle people individually for various communication purposes, including email notification of upcoming OPAS and River Center events. To support the latter feature, we request that you tell us your relevant activity interests. Data collection for this has already started, and it will continue through March 20. A data entry form is at [www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org/shell.php?page=home\\_DB\\_activities](http://www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org/shell.php?page=home_DB_activities). Participation is encouraged, but is optional.

During much of April, you will have the opportunity to review your personal membership data online, sending us corrections as needed. We will notify you by email once this feature is available. If you don't hear from us by April 7, chances are good that your email address is missing or incorrect in the database. We will also post relevant information on the OPAS and RC websites. If you don't do email, we can make special arrangements for you to review your data. Please contact your organizational representative (mentioned lower in this message).

We are taking several precautions to protect your data. The password-controlled database resides on a secure server. So does the software for processing the online features mentioned above. Both features require a secure login in your web browser using your name and email address. Results cannot be displayed in your browser, however. Instead they are sent to you by email. Thus a third party who knows your name and email address cannot retrieve your data. Moreover, we won't provide your information to any other organizations. To ease the burden on the two-person River Center staff, volunteers are handling many aspects of the new database. Both organizations have designated volunteers who are knowledgeable about it:

**OPAS:** Nancy Bargar ([nbargar@wildblue.net](mailto:nbargar@wildblue.net), 360-775-7667). Nancy is a member of the OPAS Membership Committee, and she is also the OPAS Treasurer.

**River Center:** Marion Rutledge ([rutledgem2@gmail.com](mailto:rutledgem2@gmail.com), 360-681-4512). Marion is a member of the RC Membership Committee.

If you have questions about the database, the data in it, or encounter problems working with it, please contact Nancy or Marion instead of bothering the RC staff. If all else fails, contact the database administrator: Dave Jackson ([djackson@wavecable.com](mailto:djackson@wavecable.com), 360-683-1355).

## Free Seminar - Doing Well by Doing Good

*Presented by Jim Hallett, Certified Financial Planner and River Center Endowment Advisor*

Mr. Hallett will present the fifth in a series of financial planning programs sponsored by the Dungeness River Audubon Center on Thursday, March 15th, 2012. Please join Jim to learn about exercising your important rights to your social capital and to understand how you can harness the power of charitable giving to:

- >Greatly increase current income
- >Securely fund retirement
- >Prudently diversify investments
- >Dramatically reduce income taxes

This free program will be offered at the Center at two times: 3:30-5:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:30 p.m. Please register for either the afternoon or the evening session by contacting Julie Jackson, (360) 683-1355 or [juliejackson@wavecable.com](mailto:juliejackson@wavecable.com).

## Student Art Show

The month of March will feature the annual Student Art Show at the Museum and Art Center on Cedar Street. For several years, OPAS and the Dungeness River Audubon Center have offered a special opportunity for students who wish to display artwork featuring birds. OPAS President Tom Montgomery will present cash awards of \$75 to the first place, \$50 to second place, and \$25 to third prize winners for their efforts in Bird Art. This year, the winners are:

**1st Place:** Megan Perizzo, 12th grade, Port Angeles, #37 "Night Life" pen and ink

**2nd Place:** Carson Wilder, 6th grade, Olympic Christian School, #22 "Chestnut Chickadee" colored pencil

**3rd Place:** Waverly Schreffler, 8th grade, Sequim Middle School, #75 "The Hunt" fine-point sharpie

**Hon. Men.:** Blynn Hughes, 8th grade, Sequim Middle School, #63 "Night Watcher" ink

In addition, each student will be invited to bring their winning exhibits to the June OPAS Potluck meeting so you may meet and greet each personally.

Be sure to stop by the Museum and Art Center during the month of March to enjoy and appreciate student work in the arts.



Photo by Doug Schwarz

**San Juan Islands**  
**April 1-3, 2011, Sequim, WA**

Join the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society this spring for a three-day cruise through the spectacular San Juan Archipelago. Cruise to Roche Harbor Resort and San Juan Island, whale-watching along the way. Picnic on Sucia Island State Park, and cruise home via dramatic Deception Pass. Contact 360-681-4076, or email [info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org).

## Conservation Matters

by Mary Porter-Solberg

At the local level, OPAS and the Conservation Committee are at work with volunteer efforts to provide our community with the knowledge and tools to be better stewards for the protection of bird and wildlife habitats. I invite you to learn more about our Conservation Committee and how you can make a difference by calling Mary Porter-Solberg at 360-683-8072, or email at [hikernut@qwest.net](mailto:hikernut@qwest.net). This month, I want to share a message from David Yarnold, President and CEO of the National Audubon Society.



### Audubon's New Strategic Plan – A Conservation Network

*This fall, Audubon adopted a new strategic plan, after a process that engaged more than 150 staff, Chapters, volunteers, partners, and others. At the plan's heart are two words: **conservation network**. The focus on birds is clear, as are our priorities: saving the most important places for birds; combating climate change and mitigating its impacts; building bird-friendly communities and cities; protecting our seas and shores; and collaborating with foresters, ranchers, farmers, and other landowners to make working lands work for birds. We will align our efforts along the four flyways of the Western Hemisphere in an unbroken chain of protection. (Note: The four flyways are the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific.)*

*We know that our "secret sauce" is no secret at all. It's Audubon's unparalleled wingspan—our Chapters, members, and partners—which reaches into communities throughout the hemisphere. Our commitment to science, policy, and education has been strengthened. Connecting people with nature—and letting birds lead us to that work—gives our 50 Centers and the million-plus people they serve a central role in on-the-ground conservation.*

*In the past few years alone, Audubon has racked up a remarkable list of achievements:*

- >Protecting 240,000 acres of wilderness at California's Tejon Ranch.
- >New Audubon Centers that inspire and empower urban, suburban, and rural communities alike.
- >Our Important Bird Areas program (with partner BirdLife International), the foundation for stewardship of 370 million acres of vital habitat.
- >Decades of Christmas Bird Count data that reveal how climate change and other threats affect birds and how to help.
- >Our continuing leadership role in Gulf Coast recovery and restoration.
- >Our Toyota-funded TogetherGreen program, which engages diverse communities coast to coast.
- >And innovative outreach, like Birding the Net, which is reaching brand-new audiences.

*But as I heard from Audubon staff, Chapters, volunteers, and members in the past year, we can do more—and we can do better. And we must, to prevail in the face of today's enormous environmental challenges and to ensure a healthy and vibrant future for birds and all of us who share the planet with them. (Continued on next page)*



*The Audubon legacy gives us much to be proud of. But the best is yet to come. I thank each of you for your support as we start the year by beginning Audubon's new journey on behalf of birds and the environment. – David Yarnold*

## Bird Sightings in January and February

by Bob Boekelheide



The 2011-12 fall and winter has been relatively mild in the north Olympic lowlands. Only one serious snow event occurred down to sea level, a gentle dumping of 6 to 12 inches of snow from Jan 16 to 20. Thankfully we missed the bad ice storm that crippled millions from Puget Sound to Portland during the same time. Higher elevations are a different matter; the snow pack in the Olympic Mountains remains quite healthy, now approaching 8 feet deep at the 5000 foot Waterhole Snotel site, so irrigators and salmon biologists should be optimistic about river flows this upcoming summer.



[Clipart from Clipartheaven.com](http://ClipartfromClipartheaven.com)



*Snowy Owl - Photo by Dow Lambert*

The biggest bird news this winter continues to be invaders from the north. One to three Snowy Owls remained through January on Dungeness Spit, but the last Snowy Owl report I received was from Gunnar Clem in Dungeness. While watching from his back porch along Anderson Road on 2/4, in the same general area where other Snowy Owls were seen last December, Gunnar spotted a Snowy Owl flying in from the direction of Dungeness Bay. It turns out Gunnar wasn't the only one watching, for just then a flock of crows appeared and started chasing the owl. Gunnar says the owl made a quick u-turn and flew straight back to the bay, not to be seen again.

The two Emperor Geese first spotted by Sue Chickman and Bob Lynette flying over Dungeness Spit on 12/31/11 remained through the winter, still present in Dungeness Bay on 2/23. These beautiful geese seem very content here,

nonchalantly foraging along shorelines and roosting with gulls and shorebirds. Curiously, they don't really hang out with the Brant, instead mostly off by themselves.

One day the Emperor Geese were roosting in the middle of a flock of plovers and Dunlin when a Peregrine Falcon came wooshing overhead, scaring the wits out of the geese and the shorebirds. Everybody went airborne, although the two Emperors only made it about 20 feet offshore before they flopped in the water. They swam back onshore and continued roosting, as if to say "What's all the commotion about, guys?" The Peregrine continued chasing Dunlin, but pulled up before it caught a meal.

A first-winter Glaucous Gull hung out on 1/9 with the other large pink-legged gulls along Hendrickson Road near the River Center. It remained in the area for several days and was even tallied on the River Center's Wed morning bird walk, bringing the total number of species recorded in over 10 years of bird walks to 127. Another northerly gull that sometimes shows here is the Slaty-backed Gull, including one reported by John Gatchet at Dungeness Landing Park on 2/10, but it was not seen again.

The last northern invader making news is Common Redpolls, which have apparently been present since the Christmas Bird Count in Dungeness. About 5 redpolls foraged with Pine Siskins in the alders next to the

*(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings

Dungeness fire station on 2/11, witnessed by the River Center's Raptor class. Bruce Paige found 7 redpolls at the same place the next day, and Denny Van Horn says he's heard them off and on in Dungeness through the last month.

Any day now Turkey Vultures will appear from the south, but there were two reports of TVs here in January. Jim and Joanne Roberts spotted a TV soaring over east Sequim on 1/5 and Don Wallace reported one flying south over 3 Crabs on 1/13. Were these late fall migrants, early spring migrants, or winter vagrants?

Kitchen-Dick Ponds helped with our Great Backyard Bird Count species total on 2/17, producing a female Canvasback and a female Ruddy Duck. The GBBC for the Sequim area also reported 2 Green Herons – if you know who reported these herons please let me know.

We don't get much seabird news in winter, with fewer boats heading offshore this time of year. Ken and Mary Campbell, who do a COASST survey for beached seabirds at the Soess River mouth all year, pass word that a "wreck" of dead Horned and Tufted Puffins and Rhinoceros Auklets occurred on the outer coast in early Feb, extending from 3<sup>rd</sup> Beach south of La Push all the way north to Makaw Bay. These species are renowned for spending the winter, and in fact the first several years of their lives, far offshore in the central Pacific Ocean, but every so often a significant mortality occurs and puffins wash up dead on beaches. In such wrecks it's typical that birds have starved to death, making you wonder what's happening out there in the big sea.



Green Heron - Photo by Robert Hutchison

The Raptor class at the River Center, led by David Drummond on 2/11, had great looks at all the typical diurnal raptors expected this time of year. The highlight of the day was a beautiful "Black Merlin" sitting near the corner of Towne Rd and Woodcock Rd. Black Merlins are also called "Coastal Forest Merlins," the subspecies *Falco columbarius suckleyi*, which is the subspecies that nests in forests on the Olympic Peninsula and David's study animal for many years. This bird looked like a miniature Darth Vader, so dark it showed no light bands in the tail.

The Owl Prowl from the River Center on 2/4 recorded four owl species, including a very cooperative W. Screech Owl that posed about 10 feet away from us in full view. Other species included a very chatty N. Saw-whet Owl, distant hooting Barred Owls, and numbers of Barn Owls along the Sequim Hwy 101 bypass. A Short-eared Owl flew over Margaret Levitan's house in Dungeness on 2/23, always a treat.

Scott Gremel stumbled upon a N. Mockingbird in Port Angeles on 1/19, where it hung around 11<sup>th</sup> and Peabody Streets. This is very close to where another mockingbird showed up in Feb 2002. The current mocker remained in the area until at least 1/30, seen by many observers.

Another noteworthy songbird in Port Angeles was a Rock Wren at Ediz Hook, found by Dow Lambert and Bruce Paige on 1/30. This bird, too, was at the same location as the Rock Wren found last year – could these birds be returning to the same spot?

Denny Van Horn watched a group of wintering Am. Pipits on the beach at 3 Crabs on 1/19, nonchalantly picking insects from the beach wrack. Denny also reports the Am. Tree Sparrows first reported at 3 Crabs during the CBC were still present until at least the end of Jan., including one that visited his feeder in Dungeness.

(Continued on next page)

More W. Meadowlarks seem to be wintering in the Sequim/Dungeness area, as witnessed by the record high numbers on last Dec.'s Christmas Count. Terry Martin photographed a meadowlark at 3 Crabs on 1/3 and Barbara VanderWerf spotted another near the mouth of McDonnell Creek on 2/12.

Paul and Verla Priest, who live near Carrie Blake Park in Sequim, report more warbler activity in their backyard this year, including Townsend's and Yellow-rumped Warblers visiting their suet feeder. They recorded Townsend's Warblers on three different occasions in early Feb., undoubtedly birds spending the winter.

Bob Norton reports he has a White-throated Sparrow spending the winter at his feeder near Joyce.

In finch news, Ken and Mary Campbell, while enjoying the winter wonderland at Hurricane Ridge, came upon a flock of four Gray-crowned Rosy Finches in the road above the tunnels on 1/23, likely picking up grit as rosy finches do. John Gatchet reported a calling Pine Grosbeak at Gardiner on 2/14, an interesting bird for the lowlands at anytime. Red Crossbills have been sporadic this winter in eastern Clallam Co.; high count at the River Center's Wed AM bird walk was 18 crossbills flying over on 2/16.

Quite often people report birds with pigment problems, usually leucistic birds with white feathers that stand out from the crowd, but Don Wallace reported a very unusual white-morph Varied Thrush in Sequim in early Feb. The bird looked like a normal Varied Thrush but all the normal orange feathers of the bird were colored white. Perhaps instead of being leucistic, which is the absence of all pigments, this bird may have been unable to produce carotenoids or porphyrins, the pigments responsible for reddish colors in most birds.

Early spring migrants will be here very soon, so it's time to get ready. Who will see the first local Turkey Vultures, Rufous Hummingbirds, swallows, and Orange-crowned Warblers? Put out your hummingbird feeders. Clean out your bird boxes. Remember your bird songs. Take a spring bird class at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. Please call Bob Boekelheide at 681-4867 or email at [bboek@olympus.net](mailto:bboek@olympus.net) when you see something interesting or unusual. Thank you very much for your sightings.

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