



# 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 2014

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



## OPAS Programs for March and April

by Bob Boekelheide and Ken Wiersema



### March Membership Meeting

**Speaker: Jamie Michel, "3 Crabs Restoration Project"**

**March 19, 7:00 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center**



Jamie Michel

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and North Olympic Salmon Coalition (NOSC) have partnered together to design, fund and implement a comprehensive habitat restoration project at the former 3 Crabs Restaurant and adjacent properties to improve ecosystem function and provide public access at the new wildlife area. The first stage of this project, demolition of the restaurant buildings, was completed in October 2013. Jamie Michel, the Project Manager representing the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, will present an overview of the Coalition along with the restoration plans and timeline of the 3 Crabs work. Bob Boekelheide and Ken Wiersema will also provide summary comments on the Project's expected and potential changes to birds in and adjacent to the Project.

Jamie earned a M.S., focused on Restoration Ecology, from Western Washington University, and a B.S. in Zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Jamie has lived on the Olympic Peninsula since 2006 conducting field studies and working on restoration projects for the U.S. Geological Survey, Olympic National Park, a private sector environmental consulting firm, and as a graduate student.

### April Membership Meeting

**Speaker: Kathleen Kaska,**

**"The Man Who Saved the Whooping Crane: The Robert Porter Allen Story"**

**April 16, 7:00 p.m. at The Dungeness River Audubon Center**

Kathleen is a writer of fiction, nonfiction, travel articles, and stage plays, and has recently completed her most challenging endeavor, a true tale about Audubon ornithologist Robert Porter Allen, whose mission was to journey into the Canadian wilderness to save the last flock of whooping cranes before encroaching development wiped out their nesting site, sending them into extinction. Published by University Press of Florida, the book was released on September 16, 2012 and has been nominated for the George Perkins Marsh award for environment history. *(Continued on next page)*



Kathleen Kaska

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## President's Message

by Jim Gift



We have been in a long winter period, but spring is coming, and with it, spring brings flowers and the return of migrating birds. Listen carefully and every week we can hear new birds as they return and stake out breeding territories.

The Olympic Peninsula BirdFest is coming up fast on April 4-6 2014, a wonderful festival and an important fund raiser for the educational programs at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. Registrations are filling up fast. We have an excellent speaker, Noah Strycker for the Banquet. He will give a presentation entitled: Bird World – Insights for Humans from the amazing lives of birds.

Space is limited for the banquet, so sign up soon.

Enjoy spring and get out and bird!

## OPAS Programs for March and April

(Continued from page one)

When she is not writing, Kathleen spends much of her time traveling the backroads and byways around the country, looking for new venues for her mysteries and bird watching along the Texas coast and beyond. It was her passion for birds that led to the publication *The Man Who Saved the Whooping Crane*.

Kathleen also writes the award-winning Sydney Lockhart mystery series set in the 1950s. Her first mystery, *Murder at the Arlington*, won the 2008 Salvo Press Manuscript Contest. This book, along with her second mystery, *Murder at the Luther*, were selected as bonus-books for the Pulpwood Queen Book Group, the largest book group in the country. Her fourth mystery, *Murder at the Driskill*, will be out later this year.

After graduating from University of Texas at Austin with a degree in physical anthropology, Kathleen taught middle-school science for 25 years. She was a staff writer for *AustinFit* magazine from 1997-2002. Her articles have appeared in *Cape Cod Life*, *Marco Polo*, *Agatha Christie Chronicle*, and *Home Cooking Magazine*. She is a frequent contributor to *Texas Highways* magazine.

Kathleen will present a slide show about Whooping Cranes and autograph books and answer questions after the presentation.

## River Center Legacy Circle Gathering Rescheduled

The Legacy Circle gathering that was set for February 9<sup>th</sup> has been rescheduled to Sunday, **March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from 2:00–4:00 p.m.** (Please refer to the Jan-Feb 2014 Harlequin Happenings for prior gathering summary.) If you would like more information or March 16<sup>th</sup> gathering location, please contact Julie Jackson at 360-683-1355 or [juliejackson@wavecable.com](mailto:juliejackson@wavecable.com).

## OPAS Field Trips in March and April

by Bob Iddins

### Bird Walks

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

Meet at the River Center for a lovely walk to see and hear the birds of the Dungeness riparian forest. Information from walks helps us understand the annual cycle of birds in RR Bridge Park.



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### Nisqually & Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuges

Dates: Monday & Tuesday, March 25 & 26 2014

Times and Meeting places: 9:30 am, Monday, March 25 at Nisqually NWR entrance, and 9:00 am, Tuesday, March 26 at the River "S" unit of the Ridgefield NWR (for directions- <http://www.fws.gov/nisqually/visit.html> & <http://www.fws.gov/ridgefieldrefuges/ridgefield/index.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. 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 an abundance 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.

**Note: There will be no OPAS field trips in April because of Birdfest, San Juan Cruise, and cancellation of the Columbia Gorge field trip!**

## River Center Birding Classes

### Birding by Ear Seminar

Dates: Eight Thursday mornings, March 13, 27, April 10, 24, May 8, 22, June 5, 19

Time: 8:30-11:30 a.m.

Cost: \$60 members; \$80 non-members

Leader: Dave Jackson

Features: This seminar is designed for intermediate birders, to master the skills of birding by ear. The March and April sessions will focus on familiarizing ourselves with winter birds, while the May and June sessions will be learning spring migrants. The seminars will include birding in Railroad Bridge Park and other locations to be determined. Please contact the River Center to register; limit 16 students.

More Information: Further questions, e-mail Dave Jackson at [djackson@wavecable.com](mailto:djackson@wavecable.com) or call (360)-683-1355. (Continued on next page)

## Harlequin Happenings

### Introduction to Birds & Birding

*Dates:* Tuesday Evenings, April 1-May 6

*Time:* 7-9 p.m.

*Cost:* \$50 River Center members; \$70 non-members

*Leader:* Dave Jackson

*Features:* This six-week course is designed for beginning birders, newcomers, and anyone who wishes to recognize and learn our local birds. The class will cover such topics as bird identification, optics, bird feeders, and field guides. Two Saturday field trips are included. Please contact the River Center to register for this class. Limit 16 students.

*More Information:* If you have further questions, contact Dave Jackson at [djackson@wavecable.com](mailto:djackson@wavecable.com) or call (360)-683-1355.

## Education Committee

by Shirley Anderson and Kendra Donelson

**The Student Art Show**, sponsored by Sequim Arts, will be on exhibit for the month of March at the Landing Mall in Port Angeles. OPAS provides cash awards for the top three places in "Bird Art": \$75, \$50 and \$25, as well as certificates for those deserving Honorable Mention. Kendra Donelson and Pat MacRobbie have arranged the details for judging entries that illustrate **BIRDS** in any medium.



Judges will be local watercolor artist Judy Priest, Kendra Donelson, and Pat MacRobbie. Kendra will present the prizes at a ceremony on Saturday evening, March 8. The winners, including those awarded honorable mention, are invited to show their pieces at an OPAS meeting later this spring.

The **Sequim Education Foundation** sponsors a **Student Film Festival** for budding videographers in middle school and high school. Each video must be no more than 7 minutes long. For the best environmental video, OPAS provides a cash prize of \$50 per student, and up to \$150 for a group effort. Watch local news for the date and time of the showing of all the student videos.

The **Backyard Birder** series concludes this spring with four sessions: See the table below for details on these final classes.

Date	Topic	Presenter(s)
March 1	"Spring Gardening for Birds"	Gary Bullock, Enid and Bob Phreaner
April 12	"Bird Migration"	Bill Parker and Terry Martin
May 3	"Enjoying Spring Sounds"	Dow Lambert and Ken Wiersema
June 7	"Out of the Nest"	Ken Wiersema

## Conservation Matters

by Mary Porter-Solberg

### Trumpeter and Tundra Swan Study Report

A group of dedicated OPAS volunteers have participated for the last 3 years in a winter Trumpeter and Tundra Swan count. Volunteers count once a week by driving to known swan locations in the Sequim/Dungeness area and recording their observations on data sheets provided by Martha Jordan of the Trumpeter Swan Society in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). *(Continued on next page)*





Covered Carrots at Nash's Farm  
Photo by Shelly Ament

Trumpeters make up the majority of our winter swan population with a few Tundra Swans found among the flocks in the agricultural fields in Sequim. A preferred food is Nash Huber's field of prized carrots. In early February, Nash's workers covered the carrots with solid white mesh to protect them from consumption by the swans.

Power line strikes are one of the hazards faced by swans. The Clallam County PUD has been working cooperatively with Martha Jordan and Shelly Ament, WDFW Biologist, to mark some hazardous power lines in the Sequim area. The PUD purchased a supply of flap markers and a special tool used to install them. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, PUD installed flap markers on lines at the Delta Farm off Towne Road and along Port Williams Road.

These markers should make the lines more visible for swans that are regularly seen flying in these areas.

Over 100 swans have been observed and counted each week during February. Be sure to grab your binoculars and look for them before these magnificent birds begin their travels north in the spring.



Flap Markers at Delta Farm  
Photo by Shelly Ament

### Proposed Wilderness Protection in Washington State

With leadership from the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, Audubon Washington welcomed new federal legislation that would provide significant protection for over 126,000 acres of wilderness habitat and 19 pristine rivers in the Olympic Mountains. To read full details, go to the **Audubon Advisory website** by copying the following link in your web browser:

[http://www.audubonaction.org/site/News2?abbr=aa &page=NewsArticle&id=5803&pgwrap=n&autologin=true#skip\\_interests](http://www.audubonaction.org/site/News2?abbr=aa &page=NewsArticle&id=5803&pgwrap=n&autologin=true#skip_interests).

Conservation News and Action Alerts are now posted on the OPAS website. Be sure to click on the News tab to find the most up to date information.

### River Center Partners Present *Hazel Speaks*

by Julie Jackson

On **April 26**, at 2 p.m., four seasoned actors voice the humor and passion of the amazing **Hazel Wolf** (1898-2000), Audubon champion, activist, and community leader with strong ties to the Northwest. The play is based on the book *Hazel Wolf: Fighting the Establishment*, by Susan Starbuck. Author Rebecca Redshaw's staged reading—in honor of this extraordinary woman—is in Hazel's own words, wit, and wisdom. Fittingly, April 26 is also the birthday of John James Audubon (1785-1851).



The benefit performance will take place in the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center's Red Cedar Hall. A reception with light refreshments and a tour of the Tribal campus will follow the reading. Admission will be by donation and proceeds will support education programs of The Dungeness River Audubon Center and Railroad Bridge Park. The River Center and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society are proud to sponsor this event in recognition of the contributions of both Hazel Wolf and of her granddaughter Ann Sargent, who serves as secretary on the River Center Board.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings



*The Hazel Speaks cast includes Helen Carrick, Charlotte McElroy, Marianne Trowbridge, and Elizabeth Kelly*

*Photo by Rebecca Redshaw*

Playwright and author **Rebecca Redshaw** worked in the film industry in Los Angeles for 20 years before moving to the northwest to write full time. She has published articles and short stories in national publications and magazines.

Visit the River Center web site, [www.dungenessrivercenter.org](http://www.dungenessrivercenter.org), or call the Center at (360) 681-4076, for additional information.

## Bird Sightings

*by Bob Boekelheide*

First, many thanks to Denny Van Horn for writing this column while I tended my father over the last couple years. Everyone interested in local birds should bookmark Denny's Clallam County Bird Blog (<http://clallamcountybirding.com>) and check it often, to keep tabs on sightings in Clallam County. Denny does a great job tracking the local bird world, dear to the hearts of all OPAS members.



Some relief from the Drought of 2013-14 occurred during the second half of February, thanks to a series of storms that brought rain to the lowlands and snow to the mountains. From mid-January to mid-February our area went almost a month without precipitation, almost unheard of in winter. January precipitation at local SNOTEL sites rivaled the driest years on record. After a couple weeks of Pacific storms in February, the Olympic snowpack went from a tiny fraction of "normal" to a little above 50%, better news for local streams but still a big deficit. More precipitation is on the way for the entire West Coast, particularly California, where the drought has reached catastrophic proportions. Meanwhile, some regions of Alaska have experienced a warm, wet winter, as Pacific storms moved north around "locked" high-pressure on the West Coast.



*Violet-green Swallow  
Photo by Chris Peters*

How might birds respond to these events? It's hard to draw inferences from few sightings, but there have been some curiosities. For example, Barn Swallows once again graced our area this winter, particularly in early January in coastal areas between Dungeness and Jamestown, and all the way out at the Waatch River. Long-term data show that winter distributions of many species are creeping north. Other species may nest earlier. Dry years often mean shortened, less successful nesting for songbirds, due to contracted insect populations.

Curiously, nearly all the unusual species found during our Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) have stuck around. This includes 1) the Emperor Goose first located in Gardiner on the Sequim-Dungeness CBC and last seen with Canada Geese near

Center, WA, 2) the Thick-billed Murre in Port Angeles Harbor, last recorded on 2/14 by David Spletha, 3) a male Bullock's Oriole in Dungeness, last seen by Shannon King on 2/24, 4) a female Rusty Blackbird in the

*(Continued on next page)*

flock at lower Bell Creek, still present on 2/20, and 5) two Harris's Sparrows at 3 Crabs, including one first located way last Halloween. I can't remember such an unusual variety of birds hanging around for such a long time. If you see these birds, please let us know so we can record how long they stay in our area.

The Emperor Goose first sighted on the SDCBC hung around Gardiner until mid-February, always with Canada Geese. John Gatchet recorded its movements, along Knapp Road and near the Gardiner boat ramp. It was last seen at Knapp Road on 2/15, but coincidentally an Emperor Goose appeared 2/19 in the Center Valley by Chimacum Creek, about 8 miles away as the goose flies. Must be the same goose? Vince Lucas discovered a female Canvasback at the Kitchen-Dick Ponds on 1/30, also still present in late February.

John Gatchet reported a possible Arctic Loon in Discovery Bay on 1/24, noting the white sides and different head shape than a Pacific, but decided it was too far away for confirmation. You may remember a record number of Yellow-billed Loons on the SDCBC. Bruce Paige spotted one in Neah Bay on 1/1, possibly the same one seen there by Jim Owens on 1/4; a group of us found a Yellow-billed and possibly two while on a boat ride outside Sequim Bay on 1/6; John Gatchet reported one off Port Williams on 1/13, then Blair Benson saw one there on 1/14; and finally Carolyn Wilcox and Steve Skrunk saw one off John Wayne Marina on 2/15. Conversely, Common Loons continue their decline in some local waters, largely absent from Sequim and Dungeness Bays this winter but still a few in Port Angeles harbor.

What happened to Dungeness Bay shorebirds this winter? We recorded very low numbers of Black-bellied Plovers and Sanderlings during the CBC. These species fell even further to almost zero in Dungeness Bay in mid-January, even though feeding tides seemed okay. Some have returned, but numbers continue low. Where did they go?

Two Ruddy Turnstones present on the Port Angeles CBC were relocated by Adam Sedgeley on 1/24 and by Doug Schurman on 2/16. Adam also reported a Greater Yellowlegs in PA harbor on 1/24, the only one seen in our area since last fall. The two Marbled Godwits seen on the Sequim-Dungeness CBC continue through the winter in Dungeness Bay.

Vince Lucas spotted an immature Glaucous Gull near Woodcock Rd and Sequim-Dungeness Way on 2/22, which prompted him to search for other gulls. He came up with eight species, all in the local area. Can you name all eight? John Gatchet spied a Cassin's Auklet in Discovery Bay on 12/22, far off-course for this little pelagic alcid.



*Barred Owl*  
Photo by Robert Hutchison

As expected, after two years of Snowy Owl irruption we have none this winter. It's the East Coast's turn, where Snowies have appeared all the way to the Deep South. One Short-eared Owl flew near the mouth of the Dungeness River on 1/14, seen by Denny Van Horn, Michael Barry, and Bob Boekelheide. Another Short-eared flew near the east end of 3 Crabs Road on 2/15, seen by Lee Bowen. Powell Jones says Barred Owls are hooting nearly every night near Guiles Road east of Sequim. Are you hearing owls?

You're undoubtedly seeing Anna's Hummingbirds every day, since their population is now firmly fixed as year-round residents. Anna's are renowned in California for laying eggs in the dead of winter, possibly triggered by winter rains. Nests with eggs have similarly been found in winter in the Pacific Northwest. Let me know if you find one.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings

Wintering Western Meadowlarks are singing their bucolic songs. Take an early morning stroll along Schmuck Road, like Bruce Paige did on 2/13, to hear them sing. At least 30 meadowlarks are in this flock, likely the largest local concentration. Two other meadowlarks sang near the Dungeness River delta on 2/14. Old timers say meadowlarks used to be a fairly common nesting species on the Sequim prairies, but the local breeding population disappeared in the late 1990s. If you hear them singing in May or June, let me know.

Something happened that scattered Harris's Sparrows all over the Pacific Northwest this winter. Several have been reported in western WA, including three in Clallam County -- one present along 3 Crabs Road found by Vince Lucas last October, one visiting Denny Van Horn's feeder in Dungeness, and one reported by Gail Cortese near Joyce on 12/20.

Bruce Paige, starting New Year's Day off right in Neah Bay on 1/1, found a Swamp Sparrow near the Transfer Station, where they were seen off and on last year. At Shannon King's feeder in Dungeness for several days in February, she not only had a beautiful male Bullock's Oriole, but also a striking Orange-crowned Warbler, both enjoying Bark Butter from Wild Birds Unlimited.

If you're patient, you may spot the female Rusty Blackbird in the flocks hanging out at Maple View Dairy and the Sequim sewage plant. This bird was first seen and even photographed last fall by vigilant Michael Barry and Bruce Paige. Andy and Ellen Stepniewski and Bob Boekelheide last saw it on 2/20 as it sat on the concrete wall around the sewage plant, then it flew off to examine cow pies next door.

You've undoubtedly noticed how few finches have been around this winter. On the Sequim CBC we recorded the lowest number of Pine Siskins in its 38-year history, and not a single Evening Grosbeak. On bird walks at RR Bridge Park we've recorded only one Eve Beak all winter, one female on 1/29. Being irruptive species, some years we have them and some years we don't. But get this -- amidst the dearth of finches everywhere else, Jim and Audrey Gift recorded 25 grosbeaks on 2/5 and 40 grosbeaks on 2/15 at their home on Bell Hill. What's their secret? Jim and Audrey won't tell, but I suspect they're soaking seeds in special finch pheromones. Bruce Paige also located 24 Eve Beaks at Diamond Point on 1/21.



*Western Meadowlark*  
Photo by Robert Hutchison



*Rufous Hummingbird*  
Photo by Chris Peters

You may be too late to win the First Turkey Vulture Award. On 2/16, Doug Schurman watched a TV circling overhead while watching the Emperor Goose at Knapp Road. Likewise, you're too late to win the First Swallow Award, which goes to Denny Van Horn for spotting white-bellied swallows at 3 Crabs on 2/25. A Violet-green Swallow and a Turkey Vulture also appeared for the Wednesday morning bird walk at RR Bridge Park on 2/26. But it's not too late to win the first Rufous Hummingbird award, and several other "firsts." Please call Bob Boekelheide at 360-808-0196 (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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