



Harlequin Happenings

Newsletter of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS)

www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org (www.olybird.org)

Clallam County, Washington

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Issue 3 May-Jun 2014

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



OPAS Programs for May and June

by Bob Boekelheide and Ken Wiersema



May Membership Meeting

Program: Nomination of Officers, 2014-15

Birdathon '14 Report

Bird Sightings for April and May

Speaker: Richard (Rick) Jahnke Ph.D., "Climate Change is (not) for the Birds"

May 21, 7:00 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center

Discussion of climate change and its impacts suffers greatly from ideological divides, misinformation campaigns, promotion of un-quantified solution strategies, plus the burnout and apathy of many citizens caused by repetition of these factors, and a slow rate of change in our climate.

Periodic letters in the local and national press remind us of disparate opinions and recent polls reveal that many Americans remain confused as to what extent current changes are caused by human activities, and whether significant changes will occur within their lifetimes.



Rick Jahnke



Rick Jahnke at Sea

Rick's presentation provides us up-to-date, direct measurements of factors driving climate change and their impacts. Nearly all metrics demonstrate an unrelenting march toward a changed climate and ecosystem. In many cases, trends over the last few decades provide a clear predictive path for what is to be expected in the future without resorting to complex models.

Rick earned his B.S. in chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1974 and his M.S. (1977) and Ph.D. (1981) in chemical oceanography from the University of Washington.

He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia's Skidaway Institute of Oceanography; AND he is President of our neighboring Admiralty Audubon Society. He and his wife Debbie live in Port Townsend.

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President's Message

by Jim Gift



We had a very successful BirdFest, raising money for the educational programs at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. I want to thank everyone who participated in this program. Vanessa Fuller did an excellent job leading the overall effort. Enid Phreaner did a great job with the silent auction at the dinner, and many members participated on the BirdFest committee, leading field trips, organizing and setting up for the banquet, and dealing with many details which must be addressed to successfully complete an effort like BirdFest.

While BirdFest raises money to support the activities of the Center, our upcoming 2014 Birdathon on May 10 is the primary fund raiser for the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS). We hope many of our members will participate in our census of Clallam County Birds. Bob Boekelheide, who is organizing and compiling the bird count, can be reached at 681-4867, or email *bboek@olympus.net*. Use the tally sheet provided in this issue of Harlequin Happenings to record your observations and send them back to Bob right away after the count.

OPAS relies on this funding to cover operating expenses, which include supporting our monthly speakers at our meetings; the costs of publishing our Newsletter, Harlequin Happenings; presenting educational programs in local schools; insuring participants on field trips and activities; and supporting conservation advocacy. You may participate in Birdathon by contributing a lump sum, by pledging an amount for each bird species counted by OPAS birders (last year we counted 189 species), or you may sponsor a bird counter who is participating in the count.

Please take part in this important event and thank you.

OPAS Programs for May and June

(Continued from page one)

June Membership Meeting

Potluck Dinner will begin at 6 p.m.

Program: Presentation of Annual Awards

Election of Officers

Bird Sightings and Summer Field Trips

Speaker: Bob Boekelheide, "Birds With Kilts"

June 18, 7:00 p.m. at The Dungeness River Audubon Center

Barb and Bob Boekelheide traveled to Scotland in 2012, searching for ancestors and birds. Barb's family, of Clan MacKinnon, hails from the Inner Hebrides of Scotland, home of Drumbuie, Jacobite rebels, and superb scenery. While touring the coastline of Scotland, Barb and Bob found great spots for birding, particularly nature reserves managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. From lapwings to wagtails, from Chiffchaffs to Chaffinches, they searched the Highlands and the Islands for interesting birds, some unique to the North Atlantic, along with others widespread across Eurasia. *(Continued on next page)*



Redshank
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

Along the way they visited World Heritage sites such as the Callanish Standing Stones on the Isle of Lewis and Skara Brae on the Orkneys. During his talk, Bob will share tidbits about Scottish history and culture, along with info about the birds and birding sites they experienced during their trip.

OPAS Field Trips in May and June

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.

Birdathon Warmup

Date: Saturday, May 3, 2014

Time & Meeting places: 8:00 a.m. at Dungeness River Audubon Center at Railroad Bridge Park, and 11:00 a.m. at Dungeness Landing County Park.

Cost: Free

Leader: Bob Boekelheide

Features: This is a preview of the Birdathon which occurs Saturday, May 10. You can expect to see and hear late spring migrants and other forest and grassland birds at Railroad Bridge Park. Later at Dungeness Landing County Park gulls, waterbirds and shorebirds will be the featured attractions.

Bring: Binoculars, snacks, water and appropriate clothing for any weather expectations.

Further information: Bob Boekelheide 360-681-4076



Cape Flattery
Photo by Robert Hutchison

Neah Bay

Date & Time: Monday, May 5, 2014, 9:00 a.m.

Leader: Denny Van Horn

Meeting place: Washburns Hardware Store on Hwy 112 in Neah Bay

Cost: Field trip is free, however a Makah Nation Recreational Pass (\$10 and good for one year) is required for each vehicle. It can be purchased at Washburns.

Features: Spring migrants at Denny's favorite hot spots. Anything is possible.

Bring: Optics (including scopes if available), snacks, water, lunch and appropriate clothing for all kinds of weather

Further information: Denny Van Horn 360-390-8128, dennyvanhorn@gmail.com

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Harlequin Happenings

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (located in Southeast Oregon)

Dates: Tuesday-Thursday, May 13-15, 2014

Cost: Free. Participants are to make their own arrangements for lodging and meals. There are motels in Burns, 30 miles north of the refuge; Narrows RV Park is located 6 miles from the refuge headquarters and Malheur Field Station (located on the refuge), which has RV spaces, rental trailers and dormitory rooms). Advanced reservations are recommended. For lodging contact: Narrows RV Park- www.narrowsrvpark.com, 800-403-3294; Malheur Field Station- www.malheurfieldstation.org, 541-493-2629.

Leader: Bob Iddins

Meeting place & Time: Tuesday, May 13 2014, 7:30 a.m. at the Malheur NWR Headquarters and Visitor Center, 36391 Sodhouse Lane, Princeton, Oregon 97721.

Starting times and meeting places for the following days will be determined on Tuesday.

Bring: Binoculars, scopes (if you have one), field guides, snacks, lunches, sunscreen, **insect repellent**, plenty of water and appropriate clothing.

Details: Malheur National Wildlife Refuge is located in the high desert of southern Oregon about 30 miles south of Burns. It is considered one of the jewels of the National Wildlife Refuge System with over 320 species of birds and 58 mammal species. Malheur NWR is over 187,000 acres in size, including about 120,000 acres of wetlands, located on the Pacific Flyway. Expect to see an abundance of ducks and geese (Redheads, Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy Ducks), Sandhill Cranes, Loggerhead Shrikes, Golden Eagles, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, etc. For complete bird list go to <http://www.fws.gov/malheur/wildlife/birdlist.html>

Further information: Bob Iddins 360-681-2840, cell 360-775-5945 email briddins@olypen.com. Please pre-register prior to May 8 and provide contact info. **Note:** I will be leaving Sequim on Friday, May 9 and arriving at Malheur on Sunday, and staying in my motorhome at the Malheur Field Station.



Malheur NWR Bobolink

Photo by Carolyn Iddins

Palo Alto area

Date: Monday, June 9, 2014

Time: 8:28 a.m.

Cost: Free

Leader: Bill Parker

Meeting place: Sequim QFC parking lot, and we will carpool (maximum of 5 vehicles).

Features: The focus will be on spring migrants and resident birds of the field and forest.

Bring: Binoculars, snacks, water and appropriate clothing for weather changes.

Further information: Bill Parker 360-504-2391 cell 412-327-2801, email whparker@surfbirder.com

Lost Mountain

Date: Saturday, June 14, 2014

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Cost: Free

Leaders: Bob Iddins & Gary Bullock

Meeting place: Graywolf Elementary School on Carlsborg Road, just north of Hwy 101.

Features: This is THE trip to see and hear the amazing array of land birds that breed on the North Olympic Peninsula! We expect Sapsuckers, MacGillvray's Warblers, House Wrens, Olive-sided and Pacific Slope Flycatchers, Purple Finches and much more. *(Continued on next page)*

We will carpool to DNR land off Olsen Place and make short walks along forest roads.

Bring: Binoculars, snacks, water, sun block and gear for any weather changes.

Further information: Bob Iddins 360-681-2840

River Center Birding Classes

Birding by Ear Seminar

Dates: Thursday mornings, May 8, 22, June 5, 19

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

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

Leader: Dave Jackson

Features: This continuing 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 or call (360)-683-1355.

Upcoming Birding Opportunities

WENAS Audubon Campout

Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26, 2014) | Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg)

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

The Wenas Audubon Campout will take place on Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26) at the Wenas Creek Campground. This annual event invites campers to participate in a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website (www.wenasaudubon.org) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information. Pre-registration is not required. The campout is free and open to all ages; however, donations are encouraged. Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass (<http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/>). For more information, contact: Doris Johnson, dellenj@comcast.net.

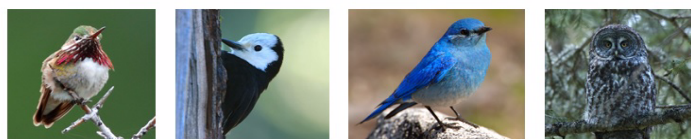
Mountain Bird Festival

May 30 - June 1, 2014, Ashland, Oregon

Mountain Bird Festival

Citizens and Science Elevating Bird Conservation

May 30th—June 1st, 2014 Ashland, Oregon



Photos © Jim Livaudais

The Mountain Bird Festival is hosted by **Klamath Bird Observatory**, a scientific non-profit organization that achieves bird conservation in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the migratory ranges of the birds of our region.

www.KlamathBird.org/Education/MountainBird

2014 Clallam County Birdathon/International Migratory Bird Count

by Bob Boekelheide



This year Saturday, May 10th, is the OPAS Birdathon and International Migratory Bird Day, a day to go birding and raise money for OPAS projects at the same time. In 2012 our Clallam County Birdathon set a record for the most number of species seen in one WA county in one day with 202 species, the first time 200 or more species had ever been seen in one WA county in one day. We learn a huge amount about birds of the Olympic Peninsula through this count, so please plan to hit the roads and trails to count the birds.

The International Migratory Bird Count is different from the Christmas Bird Count, because it includes all birds counted in Clallam County in one day. No matter where you are in the county you can help out, whether you live here or are just visiting. You can count all day, count a few hours morning or evening, or just hang out around your house and count your yard and feeders. You could find a special out-of-the-way place to discover what birds are there. If you need some ideas about habitats and locations we don't usually get to, please call me for suggestions.

Please use the tally sheet included with this issue of Harlequin Happenings. During and after the count, tally the birds you see, keep track of the miles and hours you walk, drive, or boat, then promptly email your information or snail-mail the sheet to me at the address on the back. I then load all the data into my computer and try to make sense of the numbers.

Before the Birdathon, we plan to have a field trip to review common birds and bird songs in our area. On Saturday, May 3rd, meet us at Railroad Bridge Park at 8 a.m. to see and hear songbirds of the local forests, then travel to Dungeness Landing Park at 11 a.m. to see birds of shorelines and bays. If you're a late sleeper you can just meet us at Dungeness Landing.

Please call Bob Boekelheide at 360-808-0196 or email bboek@olympus.net to sign up for the Birdathon, or just do your counting and send the tally sheet back when finished. And remember to line up some sponsors for your count, to help support OPAS, the River Center, and our wonderful programs. If you're so inclined, please sponsor me and I'll be honored to represent you counting our local birds. Thank you very much for your help!

Education News

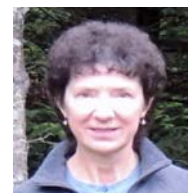
The **Backyard Birder** series concludes this spring with the final session on June 7. Ken Wiersema will present a class entitled "Out of the Nest". The class will be held at the River Center from 10 a.m. to noon.

Conservation Matters

by Mary Porter-Solberg

Marine Birds and Forage Fish

OPAS is an active participant in a Pacific Flyway campaign to increase awareness and encourage stewardship for forage fish resources for the benefit of marine bird populations. The number of marine birds wintering in the Salish Sea has declined significantly in the last 30 years, and migratory, fish-eating birds appear to be at the greatest risk. Many naturally occurring and human-caused factors are potentially responsible for these trends; the degradation of breeding and foraging habitat, and changing ocean conditions due to climate change are recognized to be of particular concern. Seventy-two bird species are considered highly dependent on the marine and intertidal habitats of
(Continued on next page)



the Salish Sea, and an additional 100 species depend on the marine and intertidal habitats for a portion of their life history needs.

Forage fish, such as herring, sand lance, smelt, and Pacific sardine form a critical link in the marine food chain, providing an energy-rich food source for larger fish, marine mammals, and birds. Concern about the over-exploitation and decline of these and other species has led to recent efforts to transform management of forage fish at the state and federal level using a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach.

In March, OPAS signed on to support Audubon Washington's comments to the federal Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) proposed alternatives for the management of forage fish in the California Current Ecosystem. We can report success - PFMC adopted the ecosystem approach alternative that OPAS and Audubon Washington supported.

At the state level, our Marine Bird/Forage Fish advocacy efforts are now being directed towards the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's request for public comments on potential changes to commercial and recreational surf smelt fishery regulations in Puget Sound. Audubon Washington has again drafted comments and supports the alternative that would end commercial harvests in Puget Sound and reduce the recreational harvest of smelt. Individual comments are encouraged and can be submitted online until May 30th at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/smelt/comments.html>.

Olympic National Park Wilderness Stewardship Plan Draft Alternatives

Public input and comments are being accepted for the Olympic National Park (ONP) Wilderness Stewardship Plan draft alternatives. The OPAS Conservation Committee is currently reviewing the key issues and differences of each alternative and plans to submit comments by the May 17th deadline. ONP staff have crafted all alternatives with environmental stewardship that maintains all the purposes and elements of the Wilderness Act. There are four alternatives to choose from: The no action alternative (Alternative A), is defined as the continuation of existing management practices. There are also 3 action alternatives identified as Alternatives B, C, and D. All of the alternatives would protect the qualities of wilderness character as required by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Olympic National Park is an incredible environmental resource for many species of birds, fish, and wildlife that thrive in or near the rivers and forests, and within the diverse ecosystems of the Park's wilderness areas. You can participate by submitting comments online after reviewing the alternatives at this link: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=329&projectID=29224&documentID=58015>.

"Spring Fling" Becomes "River Center Rally"

by Julie Jackson

Although the name for the Dungeness River Audubon Center's annual activity-based fundraiser has changed from 'Dungeness Spring Fling' to 'River Center Rally', the goal is the same: to help support River Center educational programs and to maintain Railroad Bridge Park. Our goal this year is to raise \$30,000 and have a lot of fun doing it.

The four-part Outdoor Fanatics Series generously sponsored by Columbia Bank started the fun in April this year with presentations on "Biking" by Powell Jones, and "Birding" by Denny Van Horn. John Bridge will regale us with hiking tales on May 7, and Driftwood Sculptor Tuttie Peetz will demonstrate the ins, outs, ups, and downs of her art on May 14. Their Wednesday evening presentations will start at 7:00 p.m. at the River Center. Admission will be by donation to support the Center and Park through the River Center Rally. We hope you'll join us!

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Harlequin Happenings



It's Spring!

Become a Sponsor

Sponsorships of any amount are always welcome. The team leaders will be happy to give you details:

>**Broom Busters** Leaders: Gretha & Doug Davis, gretha.d@wavecable.com. We'll be yanking out the invasive Scotch Broom along the Olympic Discovery Trail, every Wednesday in May from 9 a.m. to noon. We need donations of dollars and time, loan of weed wrenches, and your blessings!

>**Dirty Face Racing**, Leader: Powell Jones, rivercenter@olympus.net. Our mountain bike team races through the summer. Our team name is a tribute to the Dirty Face Loop, one of our favorite mountain bike trails in Olympic National Forest.

>**Green Gardeners**, Leader: Sue Chickman, organicallysue@olympen.com. For every hour Bob and Sue spend gardening during May (typically four hours per day), they will donate \$1.50 to the Dungeness River Audubon Center. They will welcome your donations as well.

>**Salmon Runners**, Leader: Becca Nissley, rceeducation@olympus.net. We're running and training for the North Olympic Discovery Marathon/Half-marathon/10k in June. We're running to get in shape and to support the River Center and Railroad Bridge Park.

>**Sand Dollars**, Leader: Tuttie Peetz, trpeetz@tfon.com. I plan to sand three hours daily on a driftwood sculpture for the entire month of May – that's a LOT of sanding! I love working for a good cause.

>**Splashettes & Splashers**, Leader: Kendra Donelson, kendrad@q.com. I'm counting the hours I swim at SARC and feeling good by doing good.

>**Spring Strollers**, Leader: Lyn Muench, lynmuench@olympen.com. Lyn says, "This team is for those who do not have the time, stamina or knees for serious hiking." Your pledges are welcome.

>**Swift Swallows**, Leaders: Dave & Julie Jackson, juliejackson@wavecable.com. We're raising funds for the River Center while having fun birding, and we'll match all per species pledges.

River Center Romp

Come celebrate the accomplishments of the River Center Ralliers by taking part in the **Rally Fun Walk** and the **River Center Romp** on **Saturday, June 14, 2014**. Join the 10.1 mile walk, bike, or run on the Olympic Discovery Trail from Blyn to Railroad Bridge Park. We will start from the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center's Heron Hall at 10:30 a.m. and arrive at the River Center by 3:00 p.m. Do as much or little of the route as you wish, but do join us for awards and root beer floats from 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the River Center. Check the River Center web site, www.DungenessRiverCenter.org, for River Center Rally details, special events, and updates.

Bird Sightings

by Bob Boekelheide

Once again, March came in like a lion and went out like a lion, following a very dry January and early February. In contrast, March 2014 turned out to be the wettest March on record in Seattle, with almost three times average rainfall. April rainfall also tallied well above average. So much for the drought of winter 2013-2014! Thankfully, enough snow fell in March and April to raise snow levels in local mountains close to average, likely averting water problems for
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spawning salmon this summer. Otherwise, warm weather is just around the corner, so hope the snow doesn't melt all at once.

The nesting season happens so quickly, make sure you get outside to witness it before it's too late. The robins nesting in my neighbor's shed are already fledging chicks this week. By 4/22, the Bald Eagles nesting in the big cottonwoods near the mouth of the Dungeness River had two chicks big enough to sit up in the nest, gobbling down everything their parents bring them. Michael Barry watched the adult eagles return with a Pigeon Guillemot and a male Red-breasted Merganser for the chicks to eat. Barb Boekelheide watched the male eagle carry a male Bufflehead to the nest, then saw the Bufflehead escape from the eagle and start to fly away. The eagle quickly caught up with the little Bufflehead and carried it back to the nest a second time.

Les Jones called to report at least 2000 Brant feeding along the beach between Three Crabs and Jamestown for several days in mid to late April, plus many more flocking offshore. By late April the Brant are showing "Zugunruhe," or migratory restlessness, flying around the bay in big tight flocks, but not yet ready to fly north.

In other waterfowl news, Bruce Paige found the first Blue-winged Teal of the year, a drake in a small marsh near Schmuck Road, on 4/12. Vince Lucas found the first Cinnamon Teal of the year in an irrigation canal near Freshwater Bay on 4/20. Vince also reports the three wintering Greater White-fronted Geese were still present at Kitchen-Dick ponds on 4/20. Michael Barry reported 13 other White-fronts at 3 Crabs on 4/11. Bob Iddins found what he called a "flotilla" of 22 Ruddy Ducks at the pond at Diamond Point, a good number of this little duck that seems to be increasing in our area. Could they be spill-overs from the population at Kah Tai Lagoon in Port Townsend?



*Greater White-fronted Geese
Photo by Robert Hutchison*

The BirdFest San Juan Islands trip spotted a couple nice birds while cruising on 4/6-8, a Yellow-billed Loon southwest of San Juan Island, and several Rock Sandpipers mixed in with Black Turnstones on small islets in Canada and in the northern San Juans.

Michael Barry found a cooperative American Bittern that posed for photos in the wetlands south of Hogback Road on 4/14. Bruce Paige, while looking for Wild Turkeys near Joyce, came across a covey of 12 Northern Bobwhite on 3/7. Bobwhite have been released from time to time in Clallam County, but whether they survive as a breeding species is unknown.

In raptor news, John Gatchet reports that Bob Bagwell photographed a soaring Golden Eagle flying over Clallam Bay on 3/13. Late winter is the time for Golden Eagles to migrate through our area, possibly going as far north as Alaska. Michael Barry watched a Peregrine Falcon hunting shorebirds at 3 Crabs on 4/22. As Michael described it, the Peregrine did a bunch of acrobatics and just like that all the shorebirds disappeared. Funny how that works. On 4/14, Pat MacRobbie discovered and photographed a dead "Prairie" Merlin at Dominion Terrace south of Sequim on 4/14. This is the very pale subspecies that nests in the northern Plains. Unfortunately, when she went back to recover the specimen it was gone, adding to the mystery of how it died. Bruce Paige photographed another light Merlin at 3 Crabs on 4/22, possibly a Prairie Merlin as well. Sue Nattinger and Coleman Byrnes win the Turkey Vulture High Count with 87 flying over Salt Creek County Park on 3/20.

The spring shorebird migration is going full-tilt right now. Bruce Paige reported the first group of 6 Western Sandpipers on 4/16 hanging out with Dunlin and Sanderlings at 3 Crabs. By late April there are hundreds of Westerns with the Dunlin. Vince Lucas discovered 5 Lesser Yellowlegs feeding at Dungeness Landing Park on 4/16, where they remained for at least one day, seen again by Bruce Paige. Up to five Marbled Godwits (Continued on next page)

Harlequin Happenings

hung out in Dungeness Bay in late March and early April. Michael Barry discovered the high count of 11 Greater Yellowlegs and 15 dowitchers at Dungeness Landing Park on 4/11.



Marbled Godwit

Photo by Robert Hutchison

A number of immature Glaucous Gulls have turned up lately. Vince Lucas spotted an immature Glaucous Gull at the golf course near Old Olympic Highway and Cays Road on 2/22, hanging out with other gulls. It apparently stuck around the same area until at least 3/4. Bruce Paige discovered another immature Glaucous in Dungeness on 4/18 that he says looked different than Vince's. Another GLGU roosted with gulls at the Village Creek mouth in Neah Bay on 4/3, seen by the BirdFest field trip, and another was there on 4/23, seen by Bob and Barb Boekelheide.

There was a large feeding flock of 3000+ gulls at the mouth of the Dungeness River on 3/6, madly dipping into the plume of fast muddy water washing downstream into Dungeness Bay following a couple days of hard rain and snow melt. Most of

the gulls in the flock were Mew Gulls, delicately picking prey near the water's surface. I wonder whether the gulls were going after pink salmon smolts, which go to salt water almost immediately after emerging from the gravel. The flooding water may have speeded up the movement of little salmon into the bay, whether they liked it or not.

In the alcid department, the Thick-billed Murre present for the Port Angeles CBC on 12/28/13 remained in the PA harbor until at least 2/14/14, last seen by David Spletha. Barb and Bob Boekelheide spotted the first Tufted Puffins of the year near Tatoosh Island on 4/24.

Look up for swifts! Gary Bullock and Bob Phreaner, while standing near 4th and Peabody in Port Angeles after sunset on 4/26, noticed a large flock of 50+ Vaux's Swifts circling overhead. The swifts disappeared over a nearby wooded area, undoubtedly looking for a night roost.

Flycatchers that normally arrive later in the spring have made a couple early showings this year. Bruce Paige wins the coveted "First Empidonax Award," seeing a Hammond's Flycatcher along the Lower Dungeness Dike on 4/14. The first Pacific-slope Flycatcher surprised Bob Boekelheide on 4/19, flitting in a neighbor's tree in Dungeness.

A very early Purple Martin passed by John Gatchet at Gardiner Beach on 4/8, circling twice then heading east. Gary Bullock reported the first Purple Martins at the 3 Crabs nest boxes on 4/23, one male and two females. A BirdFest field trip on 4/4 discovered the first Rough-winged Swallows of the year at the pond behind Lake Farm School.

Michael Barry asks a good question: Could the Barn Swallows that nest on his porch remember him from last year? He says they arrived on 4/12 and acted like he was the same human they knew from before. I can hear their chittery conversations now, including some juicy comments about that tall nosy voyeur that keeps watching them. A little privacy, please!

Bruce Paige found a singing Cassin's Vireo at Lake Farm between Sequim and Port Angeles on 4/17. Over the years there is a strong pattern of Cassin's Vireos first showing up in our area in mid-April, like along the Dungeness River or other locations in the lowlands. The odd thing is that these early birds don't seem to stick around for the nesting season, so likely heading further north. A persistent Northern Shrike continued to be seen off Hogback Road, last seen and photographed by Vince Lucas on 4/13. Michael Barry reported a group of 20 Cedar Waxwings along 3 Crabs Road on 3/29, very early for a large flock of waxwings.

Early thrushes have made a nice presence this spring, including bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaires, and
(Continued on next page)

Hermit Thrushes. Michael Barry reported two male and one female Mountain Bluebirds feeding in the seaweed along the Graysmarsh Beach on 3/29, then the next day two males and one female showed up near the mouth of the Dungeness River, seen by Bob Boekelheide. Then, on 4/11, Sue Chickman found two males and one female back at Graysmarsh Beach. Could they have been the same birds, moving back and forth along the Dungeness shoreline?



*Female Western Bluebird
Photo by Sue Chickman*

Sue also photographed a female Western Bluebird at Graysmarsh on 4/20. On 4/11-12, a Townsend's Solitaire showed up in the Boekelheide's yard in Dungeness, then another appeared at Denny Van Horn's yard in Dungeness on 4/12. The Wed morning bird walk at RR Bridge Park found two other solitaires on 4/23. Bruce Paige reported at least 10 Hermit Thrushes in the area of Schmuck Road on 4/12. John Gatchet observed one earlier Hermit Thrush at Gardiner Beach on 4/8. Not coincidentally, the Wed morning bird walk on 4/16 spotted three Hermit Thrushes, the most seen there in a long time.

It's been a great spring migration for Chipping Sparrows throughout western WA and particularly in Clallam County. First, Dave Galvin photographed one lone Chipper on Sucia Island on 4/7 during our San Juan cruise. A Chipping Sparrow surprised Bob Boekelheide in Dungeness on 4/12, sitting in a bush by Bob's driveway. Denny Van Horn heard one singing its buzzy trill in Dungeness on 4/14. Another

Chipper turned up at Bruce Paige's home near Graysmarsh on 4/16. Michael Barry found one on the north side of Robin Hill Park on 4/21. Are all these Chippers migrants, destined to nest somewhere else? Likely so, although we've recorded adult and juvenile Chipping Sparrows during summer at Robin Hill Park in the past, so possibly they are nesting in the Olympic lowlands.

Iris Sutcliffe located a Snow Bunting at Ediz Hook on 3/16, which apparently stuck around for a few days, last seen by Vince Lucas on 3/19. Vince asks whether it's the same bird that was present in December, but unfortunately we'll never know.

We do know that it has been the slowest year on record for irruptive finches, particularly Pine Siskins. Following the lowest number of siskins ever counted in the 38-year history of the Sequim-Dungeness CBC, they have yet to return to our area. Evening Grosbeaks, totally missed on our CBC but still present at some locations during the winter, have begun to return, including 8 seen on the 4/16 Wed morning bird walk at RR Bridge Park. Kris Ecklund discovered her first-ever Eve Beak, one lone male, at her home south of Sequim on 3/23. Similarly, crossbills are absent throughout the Olympic Peninsula, even on the coast.



*Snow Bunting
Photo by Robert Hutchison*

Late-spring Neotropical migrants are starting to arrive, with the first Western Tanager seen by Enid and Bob Phreaner and Ken Wiersema in Dungeness about 4/22. Hopefully you'll spot more of these flashy birds on the Clallam County Bird Count on May 10th. And remember to call Bob Boekelheide at 681-4867 or email at bboek@olympus.net when you see something interesting or unusual. Thank you very much for your sightings!

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