



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 2 Mar-Apr 2015

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

OPAS Programs for March and April

By Ken Wiersema and Bob Boekelheide

March 18, 2015 Program - "History of the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge", 7 p.m. at the River Center

Presented by John Maxwell



John Maxwell at DNWR 2015 Kickoff Celebration

On January 20, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed Executive Order 2123 establishing the Dungeness Spit Reservation as "...a refuge, preserve, and breeding ground for native birds." Presidential Proclamation 2416 in 1940 changed the Reservation's name to the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge.

As part of 2015's year-long celebration of the Refuge's founding, John Maxwell, the volunteer Refuge historian, will present an illustrated program on the history of the Dungeness Spit, His

topics will include its designation as a Wildlife Refuge, the highlights of the Spit's relationship with the native peoples of the Salish Sea, its exploration by Europeans, and changes that resulted from American settlement of the Olympic Peninsula. John will relate some stories of the early years, and also outline how the Refuge has met an array of challenges from both natural and manmade events in its role of protecting wildlife and in its critical, unique habitat.

John is an OPAS member, volunteer at the DNWR, amateur historian, and avid birder. He and his wife Margaret are involved members of our community. Margaret is currently serving as President of the Friends Group supporting the DNWR. OPAS, the Dungeness River Audubon Center, and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe are also partnered with the Friends Group and the Refuge's staff to celebrate the Centennial of the Refuge. *(April Program on page two)*



Olympic Gull and Franklin's Gull
Photo by Dow Lambert

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OPAS Programs for March and April

(Continued from page one)

April 15, 2015 Program—"A Few Words About Bees, or Biodiversity Begins with a B ", 7 p.m. at the River Center

Presented by Jerry Freilich, Ph.D., Research Coordinator for the Olympic National Park



Most people can name perhaps three kinds of bees. Did you know that there are actually 4,000 species of native bees in North America, and probably several hundred just in the Olympic National Park and adjacent lands? This program will be(e)

about the haunts and habits of some of those hundreds of species unfamiliar to the public. Most bees are tiny, don't bother people, and are vital to the ecosystem as pollinators. This illustrated talk will focus on where and how these important insects fit into the larger spectrum of biodiversity. Jerry even promises to mention birds! So come and listen for the interactions. Perhaps, bees pollinate wildflowers, which then attract and sustain hummingbird species?

Dr. Jerry Freilich is the Research Coordinator for the Olympic National Park. He is a long time OPAS member, past OPAS board member, led many owl prowls for BirdFest, and was our featured speaker at a past BirdFest. He's been with the National Park Service since 1978 working at six national parks all across the country. He earned a PhD in entomology and is particularly interested in the birds and bees. Aren't we all?



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OPAS Field Trips in March and April

by Bob Iddins

Note: The Dungeness River Dike field trip, scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2015 has been cancelled.

In addition, because they occur so early in the month, two May field trips have been added.

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.

Kah Tai Lagoon and Port Townsend

Date & Time: Thursday, March 12, 2015, 9:00 a.m.

Cost: Free

Leaders: Jim Gift & Bob Iddins

Meeting place: Kah Tai Lagoon parking lot.

Features: Winter water and land birds of Kah Tai Lagoon park and Port Townsend while watching for early spring migrants.

Bring: Optics (scope if you have one), water, snacks and appropriate clothing for the weather. Discovery Pass required to visit Fort Warden State Park.

Further information: Jim Gift, 681-2989 or Bob Iddins 681-2840.

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

Date & Time: Tuesday, March 31 2015, 9:30 a.m.

Meeting place: Nisqually NWR entrance and Visitor's Center (for directions- <http://www.fws.gov/nisqually/visit.html>).

Leaders: Bob Iddins & Gary Bullock

Cost: Field trip is free however the refuge requires an entrance fee for those without passes (Interagency Annual Pass, Senior Pass, etc.)

Features: Nisqually NWR features lots of waterfowl with a possibility of Great Horned Owl with young and American Bitterns.

Bring: Optics, field guides, water, lunches and

snacks and appropriate clothing for iffy weather.

Further information: Preregistration required, contact: Bob Iddins, 360-681-2840 rriddins@olympen.com .

Neah Bay

Dates & Time: Friday & Saturday, May 1 & 2, 2015, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Note: Although this is a 2 day trip, participants are welcome to attend either day or both (starting times and places are the same for each day). Come and campout overnight at Hobuck with Denny on the 1st. We'll listen for owls, make s'mores, tell tall tales, and laugh!

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 calendar year) is required for each vehicle. It can be purchased at Washburns.

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

Bring: Optics (including scopes if available), snacks, water, lunch and appropriate clothing for any variations in the weather.

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

Birdathon Warmup

Date: Saturday, May 2, 2015

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 9. 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 360-808-0196.

President's Message for March 2015

By Jim Gift



On returning home recently from a two-day field trip to Skagit Flats, I was impressed by how far advanced spring is this year. We saw fewer of the winter birds than is usual for this time of year, and daffodils were blooming everywhere. Swallows were common and we saw many fewer shorebirds than usual. In many places green leaves were close to bursting out of their winter drabness. So spring is coming early this year. Our first swallows are back and we are seeing our first Band-tailed Pigeons of the year.

So get out and bird. Look for our early spring migrants and enjoy this beautiful place in which we all live.

A River Runs Through It

by Powell Jones

If salmon and the Pacific Northwest culture associated with them are important to us, then rivers should be free to go where they want. The restoration of the Elwha River is a perfect example of how creating and promoting healthy habitat by freeing a river is the best thing we can do for salmon. Healthy rivers are complex, with large woody debris creating and promoting essential habitat, such as hiding spots, multiple channels, and assorted gravel beds of the right sized rocks for redds (salmon nests). This is just the type of habitat that is



Damage to Railroad Bridge Trestle
Photo by Chris Perry

Olympic Peninsula 2015 BirdFest

Come bird with us!

- San Juan Island Cruise
- Neah Bay Birding Excursion
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or 360-681-4076

being created in Railroad Bridge Park by our recent flood events.

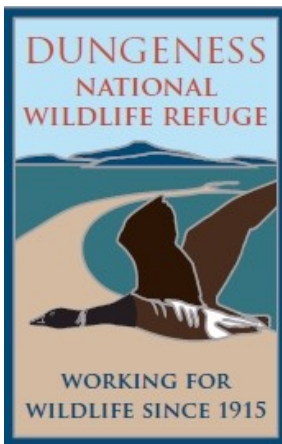
On February 6th, 2015, the Dungeness River had another flood that was 2/3 of the size of the flood in December. The (3900 cfs) peak flow turned out to be more than enough to finish the job started six weeks earlier. The river removed large amounts of material in the newly rejuvenated west side channel, and it became the main course of the Dungeness River. In a 100-yard stretch, well over a dozen alders, cedars, and cottonwoods toppled from the banks, both up and downstream of the bridge. The river's powerful eroding forces took their toll on our landmark, western approach trestle, and eight pilings were undermined, with six being completely swept away. Just like that, one of the scenic parts of the Olympic Discovery Trail was disabled for the foreseeable future.

So, does this leave a broken bridge and unusable trail within spectacular salmon habitat? The definitive and long-term answer is no, but at this point the timing of repairs is unknown; it will be done as soon as possible. Repairing the trestle and re-opening the trail are essential to the community and to Railroad Bridge Park. Currently the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, owners

of the Railroad Bridge Park, is researching and assessing all funding options for the two major repair components' design and construction. Repair designs vary widely with funding sources, often driving the design. An ideal design will interact with the natural movements of the river, and not try to force a river or land managers to react. In the end, learning to interact with rivers in ways that encourage diversity, and most important, freedom, is a must.

Through all this, the support from the public has been nothing short of amazing. The Dungeness River Audubon Center and staff would like to thank the community, the Peninsula Trails Coalition, Clallam County, and our partners the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society. for jumping in to help. We are just beginning to figure out the solution to this situation, so please keep in touch because we may need your help. If you would like to donate, please visit our website and click "support", call 360-681-4076, or email RiverCenter@olympus.net.

Other Events



DNWR Events in March and April

The Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge celebrates 100 years with activities throughout 2015. Activities scheduled for March and April are:

- March 14, Saturday 1–3 p.m. A presentation about the New Dungeness Light Station by a member of the New Dungeness Light Station Association at the Olympic Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Agnew.
- April 18, Saturday 9–11 a.m. A Spring bird walk on the Refuge led by members of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society.

Visit: www.dungeness100.com as the year goes on for up-to-date information on the many events planned for the year-long celebration.

Bridgehenge

March 20, when the sun sets directly through Railroad Bridge's 100-year old trestle and trusses, marks the Spring Equinox. Just like Stonehenge in England, our bridge marks the changes in seasons. We'll gather at 7 pm in RR Bridge Park's amphitheater, the "River Stage." Wear layers; bring your cameras and flashlights. Join us to welcome spring and celebrate a special moment in the Bridge's illustrious 100th birthday year! Contact (360) 681-4076; www.DungenessRiverCenter.org.

First Day of Spring Tea



Celebrate the Return of Spring while supporting Railroad Bridge Park, Friday, March 20, 1:00-3:00 p.m. at the home of Dave and Julie Jackson. Indulge in an array of sweet and savory delicacies and enjoy spectacular views in the company of friends. Admission is by donation (\$25.00 suggested minimum). Seating is limited; reservations deadline: March 17. For reservations contact Julie Jackson (360) 683-1355 or juliejackson@wavecable.com.

Financial Planning Seminar at the River Center "Ten Things to Do While Planning Your Legacy"

Thursday, April 30th, 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Cost: FREE. In this 10th financial planning seminar, Phil Castell will cover:

- Income Planning
- Retirement Planning
- Planning your Final Wishes
- Asset Protection
- Healthcare Planning
- FFF (You have to attend to find out what this means)
- Charitable Gifting

Phil Castell is a licensed insurance agent in WA. He assists with navigating the health insurance marketplace, from individual plans -- including the Affordable Care Act -- to all aspects of Medicare. Owner/operator of Castell Insurance in Sequim, Phil's business offers auto, home, health, and investment services. *(Continued on next page)*

Harlequin Happenings

He serves on the "Life and Disability Agent/Broker Advisory Committee," an appointment made by Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler. The immediate Past President of the Sequim Dungeness Valley Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Castell supports numerous organizations in the community. **Seating is Limited. To register, contact 360-681-4076 or rceducation@olympus.net.**



Education: Backyard Birding for March 7, 2015

by Shirley Anderson

"Bird Migration: Why, Where, When and How Birds Migrate" will be the topic Saturday, March 7, the fifth in a series of eight classes for Backyard Birders. From 10 am until noon, Ken Leuthold and Jim Gift will lead an exploration of the astonishing world of long-distance flying, without any stopovers to rest or refuel! Imagine an 8 day, 7000 mile, non-stop flight every autumn to New Zealand for the Alaska Bar-tailed Godwits, compared to the three and a half day record of an unmanned solar-powered aircraft! Even though the Godwits may not stop over in Sequim, we will be seeing hummingbirds and swallows returning from their winters in the south. Most of the swans which have spent their winter with us have left for the north.

The series of classes, hosted by members of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, is intended for residents of this area who are interested in knowing more about birds seen locally each season of the year and learning how to develop good habitats for wild birds.

"Backyard Birding" can be taken either as individual classes or in a series. The cost of each session is \$5 and is free for anyone under 18. Participants who complete five sessions will be offered a free membership in OPAS for one year.

The April class in this series is on Saturday, April 18, "Spring Gardening for Birds" with Joe Holthrop, Executive Director of the Clallam Conservation District. The final two classes are May 16, "Enjoying spring Sounds"; and June 6, "Out of the Nest".

Bird Sightings

by Bob Boekelheide



Winter 2014-2015 will certainly go down in history as one of the warmest ever on the north Olympic Peninsula, with high temperatures most days in the 50s and low temperatures in the 40s. We've received about average precipitation, but it's all fallen as rain instead of snow. Snow pack measurements in the Olympics are less than 5% of normal, which will certainly lead to low stream flows this summer unless record-breaking snow falls in the next couple months.



Violet-green Swallow
Photo by Chris Perry

Typically this time of year I warn people to watch for the first Turkey Vultures and swallows. But this year they've already arrived, certainly one of the earliest years ever. Lee Bowen wins the coveted First TV award, seeing 3 vultures over 3 Crabs on 2/14. Denny Van Horn recorded the first Tree and Violet-green Swallows at Dungeness on 2/15.

Late-breaking news — Nancy Wiersema wins the First Rufous Hummingbird Award! The hummer appeared at the Wiersema feeder in west Dungeness on 2/28, as Harlequin Happenings went to press. Congratulations, Nancy!

Many people claim that the first Rufous Hummers fly to the exact spot where their feeders hung last year, as if the same birds expect to find the same feeder

already filled up. The Rufi will be pleased this year because with the warm winter we never had to take our feeders down, keeping the Anna's happy all winter as well.

Robins, Song Sparrows, Hutton's Vireos, Black-capped Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Bewick's



Rufous Hummingbird
Photo by Chris Perry

and Winter Wrens sing their lovely spring songs right now. Scott Gremel reports White-throated Sparrows also singing in Port Angeles on 2/23. Migrant White-crowned Sparrows should start singing in the next few weeks, along with Savannah Sparrows in the second half of March.

It's clearly time to tune in to bird songs, which will reach full-throated bliss in the next couple months. By July the songs will be over and we'll grieve for the ones we miss, so get out there now and listen up.

Rare birds continue at Neah Bay, following the madness last fall. Brad Waggoner discovered a Tufted Duck at the Neah Bay sewage ponds on 1/25, but it only stuck around for a couple days. The Orchard Oriole continued visiting hummingbird feeders in town, and at least one Tropical Kingbird continued through 1/3, seen by Bruce Paige. Ryan Merrill discovered a House Wren near the Neah Bay CG station on 1/12, very unusual in the winter, still found there by Brad Waggoner on 1/25.

John Gatchet reports a Snow Goose hung out in Gardiner for four days in early February, and four Tundra

Swans flew over on 2/8. Trumpeter Swans seemed to have peaked at 86 birds in the Sequim-Dungeness area this February, sharing their time between the Clapp Farm off Anderson Road and the fields off Schmuck Road. It's a little surprising that swan numbers aren't higher this year, because reports come from Skagit and Whatcom Counties that swan numbers are bulging, with more than 17,000 swans there this winter. Could the warm winter have kept them further north? One forlorn immature Tundra Swan is also hanging with the Trumpeters at Clapp Farm, first noticed by Michael Barry in mid-January, along with 9 faithful White-fronted Geese. Michael Barry also found a Canvasback at the Kitchen-Dick Ponds on 1/9.

Curiously, vegetarian waterfowl such as Brant and wigeon have largely ignored the 3 Crabs shoreline this winter, with hardly any eelgrass or Ulva beached there. Some Brant have been feeding in the inner bay near Dungeness Natl Wildlife Refuge, and others have been feeding further east off Graysmarsh, but a large section of beach where Brant normally feed in winter has been deserted. Similarly, wigeon numbers seem very low on saltwater this winter, likely because the warm weather has kept all the ponds and pastures ice free. Upwards of 1400 wigeon have been foraging in Clark Farm pastures off Anderson Road this winter, along with at least 8 Eurasian Wigeons and 2 hybrid Eurasian X Americans.

Even though they say this is a weak El Nino year in the central Pacific, sea surface temperatures from Baja to Alaska have been consistently above normal this winter. This bodes poorly for ocean productivity this spring, and it will likely be a lousy seabird nesting season. Thousands of dead Cassin's Auklets washing ashore from California to British Columbia, along with many weakened young California sealions, may be the vanguard of more bad news to come. Cassin's Auklets feed lower in the food web than most fish-eating seabirds, favoring euphausiids (krill), other zooplankton, and larval fish, but I expect the effects to work their way up to higher trophic levels.

(Continued on next page)

Harlequin Happenings

In other seabird news, Ryan Merrill found a dead Laysan Albatross at Tsoo-yess Beach on 1/13, along with many dead auklets and a dead Northern Fulmar. John Gatchet spotted a very alive Black-legged Kittwake at Hobuck Beach on 1/15, and Bruce Paige found 3 at La Push on 2/24. Curiously, Ryan Merrill reported an intriguing 845 Ancient Murrelets at Neah Bay on 1/12, including several flocks streaming west out the Strait. Could these be our wintering Ancients going back to nest up north? Rhinoceros Auklets have similarly returned to Protection Island, with hundreds visible rafting off Port Williams on 2/15. They're un-



Rhinoceros Auklet
Photo by Robert Hutchison

doubtedly visiting their burrows at night, making hay while the sun don't shine. Ryan Merrill also reported a Yellow-billed Loon in Neah Bay on 1/12, and Sue Nattinger found another Yellow-billed Loon off Tongue Point on 2/16.

The most interesting Bald Eagle news of the winter is an immature with patagial tag #41 on its right wing hanging out in Dungeness Bay. Mel White first saw the bird on 1/23 in a tree along Marine Drive. Mel notified the Bird Banding Lab, who says this eagle was banded as a chick last July at Santa Catalina Island in Southern California, over 1000 miles to the south. We've assumed that young eagles hanging out here are local birds, but so much for those assumptions. Among other raptors is an interesting sighting from the Waatch Valley of a Gyrfalcon seen by Whittier Johnson on 2/17.

The number of Marbled Godwits peaked in Dungeness Bay on the Sequim CBC with 45, then dwindled after that. Only 18 were left on 1/30 for John Gatchet, 12 were left on 2/7 for Evan Houston, and Cindy Fullwiler photographed only 3 on 2/21. Bruce Paige found the same 3 godwits along with 3 Western Sandpipers and a Least Sandpiper at Dungeness Bay on the same day. Bruce also found 13 Surfbirds at Shipwreck Point on 2/23. The two (maybe three?) Ruddy Turnstones continued all winter at Ediz Hook. A Red Knot hung out with Black-bellied Plovers for a couple weeks at 3 Crabs, first seen by Bob Boekelheide on 1/16 and last seen by John Gatchet on 1/30.

In owl news, the most intriguing sighting was a Snowy Owl way up on Blue Mountain, seen by Kari Williamson and others on 1/7. We've had no reports of Snowy Owls from the lowlands this year. Ryan Merrill watched an unusual Long-eared Owl hunting at dusk in the Waatch Valley on 1/12, the same place Brad Waggoner watched a Short-eared Owl on 1/24. Sean Murphy heard and recorded a W. Screech-owl along the Olympic Discovery Trail near the Sequim airport on 1/25, Bob Bagwell heard one at his home off Kitchen-Dick Road on 1/28, and Michael Barry and Bob Boekelheide heard another screech-owl in the Olympic foothills on 2/16. Short-eared Owls continue to be seen in Dungeness through the winter.



Snowy Owl
Photo by Dow Lambert

Hermit Thrushes made a few appearances this winter. Carolyn Wilcox watched one skulking near the Elwha River mouth on 1/9, and Jerry Freilich spotted one in Port Angeles on 2/16. One appeared for Bob

Boekelheide along the Olympic Discovery Trail west of Sequim on 2/15.

Pine Grosbeaks continue at Neah Bay, with 3 seen there by Ryan Merrill on 1/12, 13 seen the same day by Ryan at Tsoo-yess Beach, and one male seen by John Gatchet along the Cape Flattery Road on 1/15. Michael Barry spotted a Pine Grosbeak at Hurricane Ridge on 2/16, and photographed a lovely 3-toed Woodpecker besides. A Rusty Blackbird, possibly the same one seen on the Sequim CBC, was spotted on 1/21 at Schmuck Road by Bruce Paige, Mr. Rusty Blackbird himself. Michael Barry found a nifty Swamp Sparrow at Kitchen-Dick Ponds on 2/1.

Barb Blackie, compiler of the Port Angeles Christmas Bird Count last Jan 3rd, says the final species count was 123, likely putting the PACBC in the top 10 for counts in Washington. The most abundant species was Pine Siskin, with 1558 birds, followed in the top five by Glaucous-winged/Olympic Gulls, Dark-eyed Junco, European Starling, and American Robin. Unusual species for the count included a Thick-billed Murre in Port Angeles harbor for the third year in a row, and two Snow Buntings on Ediz Hook, first seen by Scott Gremel on New Years Day.

Early spring migrants will be here very soon, so get ready. Who will hear the first Orange-crowned Warblers and Common Yellowthroats? 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 360-808-0196 or email bboek@olympus.net when you see something interesting or unusual. Thank you very much for your sightings.

Don't forget!! — Sign up now for Olympic BirdFest events at www.olympicbirdfest.org!

Special events include a two-day birding excursion to Neah Bay on April 8 & 9; many events, classes and field trips to local birding hotspots on April 10 - 12; a gala banquet on April 11; and a three-day wildlife cruise around the San Juan Islands on April 12 - 14. All proceeds go to the Dungeness River Audubon Center and its nature education programs.

Sign up now before they fill up!

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River Center Classes

by Dave Jackson



Birding By Ear

Dates: Eight Thursday mornings -- first class on Mar 19; subsequent classes on Apr 2, 16, 30; May 14 & 28; Jun 11 & 25.

Times: All sessions 8:30 am to 11:30 am

Meeting place: Dungeness River Audubon Center (first session).

Leader: Dave Jackson

Features: This eight-session class, led by Dave Jackson, is designed for intermediate birders. Master the principles of birding by ear, mostly birding outdoors at Railroad Bridge Park and trips elsewhere. In early sessions, become familiar with the sounds of local residents and winter visitors before the arrival of spring migrants. In later sessions, focus on the songs of spring migrants. Extensive use of mobile bird apps (smartphone or tablet) and recordings. Limit: 16 people.

Costs: \$60.00 for River Center partners; \$80.00 for non-partners.

Pre-registration: Please register with the River Center at 360-681-4076 or e-mail rceducation@olympus.net.

For further information: E-mail Dave Jackson (djackson@wavecable.com) or call 360-683-1355.

Introduction to Birds and Birding

Dates: Six Tuesday evenings – first class on March 31st; subsequent classes on Apr 7, 14, 21, 28; and May 5th.

Times: All sessions from 7 to 9 p.m.

Meeting Place: Dungeness River Audubon Center.

Leader: Dave Jackson

Features: This six-week class, taught by Dave Jackson, is designed for beginning birders, new residents who wish to learn and recognize our local birds, and anyone wanting to better understand birds. Classes include bird identification, feeders, houses, field guides, and optics. Two field trips. Limit: 16 people.

Costs: \$50.00 for River Center partners; \$70.00 for non-partners.

Pre-registration: Please pre-register with the River Center.

For further information: Send email to Dave Jackson (djackson@wavecable.com) or call 360-683-1355.

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Harlequin Happenings

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Annual Membership (\$20.00) 3 Year Membership (\$50.00, saves \$10.00)
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