



# 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 1 Mar-Apr 2017

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

## OPAS Programs for March and April

by Bob Boekelheide

**March 15, 2017, 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 W. Hendrickson Rd, Sequim.**  
"The Marbled Murrelet: Why This Bird Matters."  
Presented by author Maria Mudd Ruth

Maria Mudd Ruth's exceptional book, *Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet*, describes the fascinating history and personalities involved in research about this enigmatic little seabird. Marbled Murrelets mix two seemingly different worlds, nesting high in old-growth forests but living and feeding in the cold north Pacific Ocean. Due to logging of these forests and loss of nesting habitat, Marbled Murrelets are now listed as endangered in Washington State.



Maria Mudd Ruth

Starting out as a National Geographic researcher, then becoming their West Coast regional editor, Maria Mudd Ruth has written more than a dozen books about natural history topics from butterflies, beetles, owls, hawks, to snakes, along with deserts, tundra, the Mississippi River, and even firefighting. This presentation is particularly

timely, considering the recent conservation work to save murrelets, and this month's deadline for comments about their Long-term Conservation Strategy. Copies of *Rare Bird* will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

**April 19, 2017, 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 W. Hendrickson Rd, Sequim.**  
"Search for the Holy Grail: Investigating the Evolution of Birds using DNA."  
Presented by John Comstock.

"They just want to sell more field guides," is the usual comment you hear about frequent changes in bird taxonomy. But there is a lot more involved in the systematics of birds than just "lumping and splitting." Behind it all is one of the greatest scientific advances of the last 100 years -- using DNA to determine evolutionary relationships between different genera, families, and orders, not just of birds, but of all living things.

John Comstock had a career in biomedical engineering, but left it behind to get his master's degree working with Charles G. Sibley at his lab at San Francisco State University. Sibley, one of the most colorful and controversial characters of 20th-century ornithology, devised methods to sort out avian phylogeny using DNA-DNA  
(Continued on page three)



John Comstock

*Harlequin Happenings* is published six times a year. Consider "going green". Receive your newsletter electronically, in living color, by contacting the OPAS Membership Chair, Audrey Gift, at 360-681-2989, or email [agift@q.com](mailto:agift@q.com).

The *Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society* meets monthly (except July, August, and December) on the third Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA. The public is welcome.

### OPAS Board of Directors

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### Reminder!

It is time for OPAS members to renew their memberships.

All annual memberships expire on December 31st. Questions about memberships should be directed to Audrey Gift at <agift@q.com>.

## President's Notes

By Ken Wiersema



**Nest Boxes '17** -- On Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, a bright sunny Sequim winter day, 6 skilled OPAS box builders guided 23 folks in the assembly of bird boxes for this nesting season. It was the 16<sup>th</sup> year we've done a box building program at the Center. The careful preparation of precut kits by Bob Phreaner, and Dan Stahler ensured proper box parts, reduced waste, reduced lines and waiting for parts to be cut, and still provided each participant with the opportunity to put "sweat" equity into their box. We build these boxes at the leading cusp of arriving migratory song birds late each winter. The cavity nesting birds readily take to boxes that are built to the size they prefer and with the right opening to give them the best chance for successful nesting and fledging their young. Many thanks to Bob Phreaner, Dan, Carl, Mark, Gary, and Powell for the generous contribution of their time and experience to this project. And, as Gary observed, "everyone went home with a box and a smile". Plus we raised over \$350 to support the Center's operation.

**River Center Operations** -- As we've discussed at our OPAS meetings and you've seen in this newsletter, the River Center is about to commence a Capital Campaign to raise funds toward constructing an addition to the Center that will more than double its meeting and operating space. More information will be out on the Campaign soon. An essential and equally important funding need continues throughout the Campaign, and that is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Center. Powell and his staff are continuing to improve and expand the education program that our Center offers to the community, so please be generous and participate in the annual funding events, such as BirdFest, River Center Rally, Nature Mart, and the Fall Fundraiser. Many of our members make a monthly contribution toward the Center's operation; please consider it in your family planning.

**Advocacy and policy** -- OPAS acts as one of the strongest voices in our community for our environment and the habitats of the birds who cannot advocate for themselves. Please study the Conservation and policy articles in this newsletter, then write and call your elected representatives, and comment to the regulatory state and federal agencies on proposed policy matters. Our OPAS conservation committee studies and prepares comments on matters on your behalf. Give them a hand. Come to a Conservation Committee meeting. Become engaged -- the birds may not thank you, but they'll know!

**Added personal note** -- Many thanks from my wife Nancy and I, to so many of you who have reached out to us with comfort and support in a very difficult time. Her spirits remain high; she's responding well to her treatments. She's even tolerating my cooking and housekeeping!

## OPAS Programs for March and April

(Continued from page one)

hybridization, hoping to determine how birds evolved using similarities and differences in their genetic makeup. John Comstock had a front row seat to this extraordinary drama, working with Sibley at the height of his influential studies. Come hear John's stories about how molecular methods are used to search for this ornithological Holy Grail.

## OPAS Field Trips in March and April

by Denny AMFJ Van Horn



**Note: There is no cost to attend OPAS field trips. Bring binoculars, scopes, and personal accoutrements, as desired.**

Winter! I guess we're finally having one? Nothing like other parts of the country, but for the OlyPen it's been a good one: freezing temps, snow, sleet, rain, thunder, wind, and just plain crappy weather all-round! But, as always, we try to offer a few out-and-about chasing birds no matter what. This round is special because we toss in BirdFest with it's myriad offerings. So, hope to see you out there with us as we begin to watch for early spring arrivals.

### Wednesday 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.

### A Walk along Morse Creek

*Date & Time: Saturday, March 11, 9 a.m. – Noon*

*Leader: Judy Mullally*

*Meeting place: Parking area on Strait View Dr. (at bottom of horseshoe-bend off Hwy 101 heading W into PA)*

*Features: This is a Walk, Look-See, & Listen outing. Besides being an excellent birder, Judy Mullally has an excellent ear for identifying bird songs and calls. This is a chance to take a leisurely walk learning about the birds that inhabit ground vegetation, brambles, hedges, shrubs,*

and trees along this stretch of Morse Creek down to PA Harbor.

*Further Information: Contact Judy Mullally <judyemull@yahoo.com> / 360 452-5797*

### Late Winter Shorebirds, Gulls, and Waterfowl

*Date & Time: Saturday, March 18, 10 a.m.*

*Leader: Bob Boekelheide*

*Meeting place: Dungeness Landing parking area*

*Features: Water birds! Loons, alcids, ducks, geese, shorebirds, gulls, and the "dicky-birds" that will be hanging back in the grasslands and brambles. Also, Bob will present an experiential lesson on just what are Olympic gulls and why - bring your stale bread!*

*Further Information: Contact Bob Boekelheide <bboek@olympus.net> / 360 808-0196*

### Gardiner Beach - Diamond Point

*Date & Time: Sunday, April 2, 9 a.m. – Noon*

*Leader: John Gatchet*

*Meeting place: Gardiner Beach Boat Launch area*

*Features: This is John's local patch, and he knows the birds here. The possibilities are anything and everything. Open saltwater, the lagoon, pastured fields, woodlands, ponds, and shoreline.*

*Further Information: Contact John Gatchet <jfgatchet@gmail.com> / 503 781 5043*

### Two Eastside Bays for Winter Seabirds & Gulls

*Date & Time: Saturday, April 15, 9 a.m. – Noon*

*Leader: Jackie OneTree*

*Meeting place: Parking lot at Port Williams*

*Features: Seabirds! Grassland birds! And whatever else we can find from alcids to meadowlarks.*

*Further Information: Contact Denny Van Horn <dennyvanhorn@gmail.com> / 360 406-1584*

### BIRDFEST - April 7—9 (See announcement this newsletter)

### An Early Spring Trip to Nisqually NWR

*Date & Time: Thursday, April 20, 9 a.m.*

*Leaders: Gary Bullock & Bob Iddins*

*Meeting place: Nisqually NWR Visitor Center @ 9 a.m.*

*Features: This is a walk through the refuge's diverse habitats for all kinds of birds.*

*(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings

Migration will have started, so the possibilities are immense.

It's possible on a good day to tally 70 or more species.

Also: If interested, connect with Gary, as he could possibly help with arranging carpooling with you and others who are wanting to travel. Drive time to Nisqually is about 2.5 hours over 115 miles.

Further Information: Contact Gary Bullock  
<gbullockak@hotmail.com> / 360 797-4556

### Carrie Blake Park - Early Spring Birds

*Date & Time:* April 30, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

*Leader:* Cindy Fullwiler

*Meeting place:* Parking lot near Doggie Play Ground

*Features:* This outing should be a good one for several reasons. First, Cindy's a good birder and really enjoys sharing knowledge. Second, she'll have her camera with its mega-long lens, so it's a chance to watch, look-see, and ask questions from someone who is an outstanding photographer. And third, it's an easy walk around this area on good ground with lots of habitat, where a worthy number species can easily be found and approached. Scopes will work well if you want to bring yours.

*Further Information:* Contact Cindy Fullwiler <cfullwiler@hotmail.com> / 951 501-9257

## Other Events

### Backyard Birding

The Backyard Birding 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 as a series. The cost of each session is \$5 and is free for anyone under 18. After the completion of five sessions, participants will be offered free membership in OPAS for one year.

The **sixth** class in the BB series, '**Spring Gardening**, will be from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, March 11, 2017, at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, Railroad Bridge Park. **Joe Holtrop**, Executive Director of the Clallam Conservation District, will present important aspects of a bird friendly yard, including food, water, and shelter, with emphasis on the use of plants native to this area. There will be an optional field trip (a two-mile hike at the Dungeness Recreation Area) to see native plants and where they are growing, following the class.



The **seventh** class in the BB series, '**Migration**' will meet at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, Railroad Bridge Park, from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 15, 2017. **Ken Leuthold** 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 will have left for the north.

Subsequent classes will include: May 13, Sounds of Spring, with Dow Lambert and Ken Wiersema; June 10, Out of the Nest, with Ken Wiersema; July 8, Gulls and Shorebirds, with Bob Boekelheide.

### The City of Sequim to Host National Park Exhibit

The National Park Fiber Arts Exhibit "Piecing Together a Changing Planet," will be on exhibit at the Sequim Civic Center, 152 West Cedar Street, May 7 – June 30, 2017. The display has been touring the country since December 2014. This is the only stop in the Pacific Northwest for the national exhibit.

The juried show of 26 art quilts was created by artists in Florida as a way to highlight a few of the many ways that America's 401 National Parks are being impacted by climate change, water pollution, air pollution, and other human-caused phenomena. Maya Schonenberger, the exhibit curator said, "the artists' goal is to help open people's eyes to the beauty of nature that surrounds them, and share their concern for its loss."

The artworks were created by members of Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA), a 3000-member national organization dedicated to promoting the art quilt through education, exhibitions, professional development, documentation, and publications. Far from utilitarian quilts, traditionally used as bedcoverings, art quilts focus on layering, "thread painting," and graphic design, as well as stitching and piecing.

The exhibit is sponsored by the Sequim's City Arts Advisory Commission (CAAC) in partnership with the Olympic National Park. For more information, contact City Clerk Karen Kuznek-Reese at 360-681-3428 or [kkuznek@sequimwa.gov](mailto:kkuznek@sequimwa.gov).

### Olympic Birdfest 2017—Come Bird with Us

Grab your binoculars and join the 13<sup>th</sup> annual **Olympic BirdFest 2017** celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, April 7-9, 2017.

The stage is set...quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready ... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, Barred and Pygmy owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tour, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker this year is noted nature photographer Bonnie Block.

Extend your Birdfest weekend with the **Neah Bay post-trip**, April 9-11, 2017: two and one-half days exploring northwest coastal Washington, a region rarely seen by birders.

Contact us by phone, at 360-681-4076, E-mail us at [info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org), or write to us at:

Dungeness River Audubon Center  
P.O. Box 2450  
Sequim, WA 98382



Olympic Peninsula April 7-9,  
**BirdFest** 2017  
Come bird with us!

- ▣ San Juan Island Cruise
- ▣ Neah Bay Birding Excursion
- ▣ Guided Birding Trips
- ▣ Bird Drawing Class
- ▣ Photography Workshop
- ▣ Gala Banquet with Speaker **Bonnie Block**

For more information:  
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or 360-681-4076

Olympic Peninsula  
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## Conservation Matters

by Mary Porter-Solberg and Bob Phreaner

### Final Days to Comment on the Conservation of Marbled Murrelet Habitat



March 9<sup>th</sup> is the last day to comment on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Marbled Murrelet Long Term Conservation Strategy. We have made it easy for you to review and edit our sample comments found on the Conservation Action Alerts page of the OPAS website.

The six Alternatives analyzed in the DEIS are not adequate to protect the Marbled Murrelet from eventual extirpation from Washington State. The proposed Alternatives do not set aside enough contiguous older forest habitat to allow our state's Marbled Murrelet populations to stabilize and recover. Can we count on you to take just a few minutes of your time to fill out our comment form? Please go to this link to speak out for our state endangered Marbled Murrelets:

<http://olympicpeninsulaudubon.org/conservation/conservation-action-alerts/>

Come bird with us and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula ...you just might go home with a new bird for your life list! Check out the offerings by going online at [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

Precede your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two night birding cruise of the spectacular **San Juan Islands** on April 4-6, 2017. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort. Get cruise information and register online at: [www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon](http://www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon).

## Earth Day

"These are the times that try men's souls..."— so began *The American Crisis* by Tom Paine. These are indeed challenging times to be a conservationist, but you only have to recall what our country was like on April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day. There was a war in Vietnam, riots opposing the war on college campuses nationwide, gas guzzling muscle cars, industrial air pollution overlooked as a sign of prosperity, untreated sewage, and toxic waste dumps.  
*(Continued on next page)*



## Harlequin Happenings

In the 1960s, birds became symbols of the way human industry infiltrated the environment and threatened human health. After World War II, the use of the pesticide DDT became widespread in U.S. agriculture. Inspired by Rachael Carson's 1962 best seller, *Silent Spring*, which publicized the effects of DDT, Senator Gaylord Nelson (Wisconsin) along with a staff of 88 community organizers promoted a national teach-in on the environment. held during Spring Break. By the end of 1970, the first Earth Day led to the creation of the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** and the passage of the **Clean Air, Clean Water**, and **Endangered Species Acts**. For many of us coming of age during that time, Earth Day helped establish our values. Now, some politicians are on a mission to attack the EPA—not for its work in keeping our air and water clean, but as a symbol for the government rules and regulations that, they say, strangle businesses and hinder the economy. Rising temperatures threaten the habitats birds need by redistributing their food and shelter, while rising seas encroach inland and put wetlands and beaches at risk. In North America, climate change threatens the survival of over 300 bird species, according to Audubon scientists. We need a strong EPA to assure air and water quality and to address the impacts of climate change.

Washington State voters missed an opportunity to deal with climate change when they failed to support I-732. After this setback, I found inspiration in the response by Gail Gatton, Audubon Washington's Executive Director. Gail stated that action at the local level would become increasingly important to promote policies that protect birds, their habitat, and our communities that steward them. "Since launching our climate initiative across the country, Audubon has a proud bipartisan tradition of working with anyone willing to protect birds and people. We'll be back for the next opportunity, and the next one, and the one after that."

We can take a constructive approach by educating future generations in the science of environmental stewardship. Voter approval of the Sequim and Port Angeles School levies is a start; however, challenges remain for education and science studies. I recently attended the Feiro Marine Life Center's "Fishes on the Fence" fundraiser where Ron Allen, Chairman and CEO of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, stressed the crucial need to strengthen science education in our community. He encouraged the audience to support teaching facilities like the Feiro Marine Science

Center and the expansion of the Dungeness River Audubon Center.

Our State legislature is considering bills that impact water supplies, protect public lands, address oil transportation safety, improve funding for oil spill response programs, provide incentives for solar energy, and revisit the issue of putting a price on Carbon. You can visit our website, [www.olybird.org](http://www.olybird.org), to stay informed and take action. Let your representatives know where you stand.

Now is the time to think globally and act locally, by responding to the action alerts on our website, joining the OPAS conservation committee, donating to DRAC or other educational facilities, and doing what you can to build on the progress that we have made since the first Earth Day.

## Notes from a Sometime Birder

by *Robert Hutchison*

Have you ever wondered what goes on inside the tiny little brain of a small bird like the Anna's Hummingbird?

How are they able to figure out complex situations and survive with so many hazards around them? Just flying the way they do seems incredibly complicated. And how do they know what's safe and what's dangerous?

During this winter, I have often brought in the two hummingbird feeders in my yard overnight to prevent them from freezing. If not, it could be mid-day before they thaw. They spend the night comfortably resting beside the door to my back patio. Occasionally, I will see one of the hummingbirds in the morning hovering near the end of the chain where I hang one of the feeders by my kitchen window. This is a not-too-subtle reminder for me to get the feeders out that morning, and stop being a slacker. Over two weeks in mid-January, it had been especially cold, requiring me to bring in the feeders every night. Then, something happened one morning.

I had donned my jacket and hat, and had opened the patio screen door to take out the feeders. There, staring me in the face, was a female Anna's Hummingbird, not two feet away from me. Like any pet owner, I immediately started to explain to the irate bird that I was on my way out that very moment. She backed away as I came out, but



hovered nearby while I attached the feeder to the end of the chain. I could see her shadow against the side of the house. While I placed the second feeder in a nearby tree, the bird was already busily feeding at the first. She paid no more attention to me as I passed by on my way inside.

How did she know that I wasn't going to make a grab for her when she was almost within arm's reach? Was she that good a judge of distance? Or had I passed some sort of avian test of trustworthiness? Was she *that* hungry? It might have been something to do with all of those factors. I don't know, but I have increased respect for a tiny living thing that shares my world, and is able to make choices very much like I do myself.

Or does she understand English?

## OPAS Western Bluebird Watch Program Report

by Joyce Volmut

Ten separate Western Bluebird sightings were reported during the months of December, January, and February on the Miller Peninsula. One male on Thompson Rd; 3 adults, one male and 2 females on Catlake Rd; 1 male on Knapp Rd; 2 on Old schoolhouse Rd; and five, 2 males, one female, or immatures on Gardiner Beach Rd. Six bluebirds were also reported: two males, one female and two immature males on January 7 on Bagley Creek Rd, and two on Highway 101 near Discovery Bay.



Western Bluebird  
Photo by John Gatchet

On February 15, John Gatchet, John Wooley, Doris Causey, Bill Volmut and Joyce Volmut installed two Bluebird Nestboxes on the Department of Natural Resources property off Thompson Rd. This is the same area where Western Bluebirds successfully nested in snags during the summer of 2016. Seemingly cheering us on was a male Western Bluebird in the canopy of trees nearby. This is the beginning of a bluebird trail on the Miller Peninsula. A third nest box was installed on private property and two more will be installed in March, also on private property.

In January, the OPAS Western Bluebird project also participated with National Audubon in a pilot program called Audubon Climate Watch. This is a crowd-sourced science program that explores how birds across North America are responding to climate change. The OPAS chapter was accepted as one of the participating chapters in December 2016.

To assist us in completing the program, the OPAS area was sectioned into 54 blocks. These are areas where a potential increase in Western Bluebird activity is expected according to the Audubon model, with the greatest area of increase around Port Angeles, Sequim, and the Miller Peninsula. The Bluebird species was selected by National Audubon as the target bird during the initial phase of the pilot. The Nuthatch species was added during the second phase that started in January 2017.



Nestbox Team: John Wooley, John Gatchet,  
Joyce Volmut, Bill Volmut  
Photo by Doris Causey

Eleven volunteers participated in the survey that consisted of a 5 minute count in selected points throughout seven of the squares. (Continued on next page)

## Harlequin Happenings

Fifty three species were reported in Clallam County. This included two Western Bluebirds, one on Knapp Rd and one on Old Olympic Highway. Additionally, twenty five species were reported in a portion of Jefferson County on the Miller Peninsula.

The next Climate Watch survey is scheduled for June 2017.

## Bird Sightings

By Bob Boekelheide

How the avian world has changed in the last 15 years. Eurasian Collared-Doves hadn't even appeared on the north Olympic Peninsula, and now they're a regular sight in the Clallam lowlands. Fifteen years ago it was very unusual to see Anna's Hummingbirds in winter, and almost no one kept hummingbird feeders operating during freezing temperatures. Fifteen years ago very few Trumpeter Swans showed up here in winter. What will the next 15 years bring?



*Eurasian Collared Dove*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

The next increasing species might be the California Scrub-Jay, a species created by the AOU last year when they split Western Scrub-Jay. Michael Hobbs, while driving on Old Olympic Highway near Cays Rd on 12/31/16, spotted a California Scrub-Jay beside the road. Gary Bullock found it again on 1/2/17, and it's probably still around. Other Scrub-Jay sightings have increased in the last couple years in eastern Clallam County. Scrub-Jays continue

their northward movements, even occasionally seen in British Columbia, so keep your eyes out for more.



*Anna's Hummingbird (Male)*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

This winter, high counts of Trumpeter Swans by OPAS swan volunteers are blowing away old records. Highest official count so far is 258 tallied by Kathy Bush and Kendra Donelson on 2/23. Two Tundra Swans have also joined the big guys, seen by Michael Barry. Nash Huber's carrot field is taking the brunt of their attacks, with over 227 swans gobbling down carrots on 2/23. According to the volunteers' data from the last five years, peak numbers of swans are here in late February and early March, so go watch them now before they're gone in early April. Other waterfowl news - a Tufted Duck continued through January at Neah Bay, likely one first recorded earlier last fall.



*Trumpeter Swans*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide



It has been an exceptional winter for swallows. It all started when John Gatchet reported one Tree Swallow and 2 Barn Swallows at Graysmarsh Beach on 1/25/17, along with another Barn Swallow at Jamestown on 1/26. Annika Willette and Eric Heisey found 2 Barn Swallows at Neah Bay on 1/28, and Bruce Paige observed another at 3 Crabs on 1/30. The floodgates really opened on 2/18, when Sue Nattinger discovered a flock of about 25 swallows zipping around 3 Crabs, including Violet-green and Barn Swallows. Sue found a Tree Swallow at the Elwha River mouth on 2/19. From then on, MObs. (=many observers) began seeing all three species of swallows (Barn, Tree, and Violet-green) nearly every day at 3 Crabs.

What gives? Why so many swallows in winter, particularly Barn Swallows? Violet-green and Tree Swallows, both cavity nesters, are thought to arrive earliest because cavity sites are limited, and, as they say, "the early bird gets the nest site." Whereas Violet-green and Tree Swallows typically migrate as far south as Mexico and Central America, Barn Swallows may go much further south into South America. But for some reason, pockets of Barn Swallows are now remaining in or returning to western WA in winter, typically seen in marshlands and estuaries where they hopefully find aerial insects. Tree Swallows are renowned on the East Coast for occasionally eating waxy bayberries during winter, but not Barn Swallows, which seem totally reliant on flying insects. Is it global warming? Or are there just more birders out there noticing early swallows? This has not been a particularly mild winter on the West Coast, so could the massive storms and flooding in California have driven the birds north? Again, it's hard to say. We'll see if this trend continues in future years.

Another harbinger of spring is the first migrant Turkey Vultures. Sure enough, Artemis Celt spotted 3 TVs lurking in a field near Dungeness on 2/6/17. Scott Gremel spotted another TV sailing over Port Angeles on 2/13, saying it was 5 days earlier than his earliest sighting in P.A.

In the raptor department, this is the time of year to look for migrating Golden Eagles, which pass by in late winter on their way to Alaska and Canada. They arrive in Denali National Park as early as mid-March, when it can still be seriously cold. John Gatchet found and photographed a Golden Eagle ripping apart a prey item near his home in Gardiner on 2/12. Barb Blackie reported an immature Northern Goshawk at a carcass at Striped Peak on 2/19.

Yellow-billed Loons are almost becoming an everyday event in Clallam County. Are they becoming more abundant, or are people just going to the right places to see them? At least one Yellow-billed Loon continued at Neah Bay, seen on 12/31/16 by Bruce Paige north of the jetty. John Gatchet and Dan Waggoner found one several days apart in early January at Gardiner Beach. John reported another in Port Angeles harbor on 1/23. On the same day, the boat survey in the Protection Island Aquatic Reserve found a Yellow-billed Loon off the northwest shore of Miller Peninsula.

Winter shorebirds have not been particularly diverse this year, although the Willet continues at Dungeness Bay, last officially reported on 2/6 by Bob Boekelheide. This is the second winter in a row that willets have wintered-over, suggesting it might be the same bird as last year. Sometimes it hangs with other shorebirds, particularly Black-bellied Plovers, and sometimes it forages alone.

One Ruddy Turnstone appeared for the Port Angeles Christmas Count on the logs at Ediz Hook on 12/31, then two were present on 1/28 for the OPAS field trip. This is perhaps the 3rd winter in a row in which Ruddy Turnstones have wintered-over in Port Angeles harbor, so might they be the same birds as well? Speaking of same birds, Alex Patia discovered a Pacific Golden-Plover hanging with Black-bellied Plovers at Fort Flagler on 1/29, about a month after the Pacific Golden-Plover here for the Sequim-Dungeness Christmas Count was last seen near Port Williams. Could it have been the same bird, or could there be two golden-plovers spending the winter in our area?

The most noteworthy gull of the winter was a third-year Slaty-backed Gull found at Village Creek mouth at Neah Bay on 1/12, by Bill Tweit and Bruce LaBar.

Gary Bullock tells an interesting story about seeing a raven carrying a dead Northern Flicker on 1/23. The most interesting part of the story is Gary could see that the flicker was a Yellow-shafted Flicker, showing yellow colors in its drooping wing feathers.

The Bohemian Waxwing invasion at Jamestown that started last December and peaked during the Sequim-Dungeness CBC continued well into January. Marcus Roening reported the very last lowland Bohemian on 1/17/17. *(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings

The best Bohemian Waxwing report this period came from Mandy Holmgren, who spotted 75 of the beauties sitting in subalpine firs at Deer Park on 1/28. What the heck were they doing up there?



*Palm Warbler*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

Even though there aren't many palm trees around here, this has been a superb winter for Palm Warblers in Clallam County. On 1/6/17, two Palm Warblers appeared on the beach at 3 Crabs, first noted by the OPAS 3 Crabs Bird Monitoring team and seen by MObs. At least one remained until 2/16/17, seen foraging within a half mile of where it was first seen. Coincidentally, another Palm Warbler, possibly two, showed up at Ediz Hook on 1/30/17, first reported by John Gatchet and seen by MObs.

In other warbler news, Tom Butler found a Common Yellowthroat at Hollywood Beach during the Port Angeles Christmas Count on 12/31/16. That bird should be enjoying New Years in Los Angeles, not Port Angeles. Bill Tweit and Bruce LaBar found a gray-headed version of Orange-crowned Warbler at Neah Bay on 1/13, possibly one of the subspecies that doesn't nest in WA.

John Gatchet has been following Western Bluebirds on the Miller Peninsula this winter, where he spotted a high number of 6 on 2/12. Joyce Volmut is leading an OPAS project to provide nest boxes to lure these beauties to stay for the nesting season. A striking Harris's Sparrow has been visiting the feeders at Butler's Motel in Neah Bay, seen by MObs throughout the month of January. Wintering Western Meadowlarks continue at their Schmuck Road hangouts, but occasionally they pop up at other places, including one photographed at Ediz Hook on 1/6 by Bill Wood.

Iris Sutcliffe reported an amazing flock of Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches at Francis and 7th Streets in Port Angeles on 2/8, estimating 300+ siskins and 200+ goldfinches in the flock. Her description said it best: "A ridiculous number of siskins." Finally, while snowshoeing with the Klahane Club on 2/25, Michael Barry found a small flock of Pine Grosbeaks at Hurricane Ridge. Hope they stick around.



*Pine Grosbeak*  
Photo by Michael Barry

The Port Angeles Christmas Bird Count, held on 12/31/16, turned up 115 species this year, not a record, but still a very admirable showing. The count is growing, with 60 participants this year. The 10 most abundant species, in order from highest to lowest, were Dark-eyed Junco, Pine Siskin, Glaucous-winged/Olympic Gull, European Starling, Canada Goose, Mallard, Surf Scoter, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Wigeon, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. The most unusual species was the Common Yellowthroat found by Tom Butler at Hollywood Beach, mentioned above. Many thanks to Barb Blackie for compiling the PACBC!

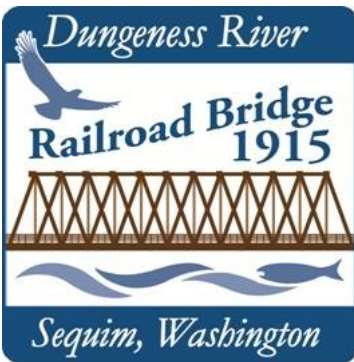
The temperatures are chilly, but the nesting season is already ramping up. Many species are singing. Who will win the coveted First Rufous Hummingbird Award this year? Please report your sightings to Bob Boekelheide, at [bboek@olympus.net](mailto:bboek@olympus.net). Thank you for your sightings.

## National Award-Winning Avian Photography to Exhibit at Sequim Civic Center



The 2016 National Avian Photographs, as awarded by the National Audubon Society, will be on exhibit in the lobby of the Sequim Civic Center, located at 152 West Cedar Street, from March 27 to April 13, 2017.

The twelve winning photographs were selected from over 7,000 entries, submitted from all 50 states and Canada. The



winning photographs were originally published in the May-June 2016 issue of the Audubon magazine, and have been touring the country on exhibit. The winning photographs were selected by a panel of five judges, and were graded on technical quality, originality, and artistic merit.

Meet the Grand Prize Winner, Bonnie Block, from Gig Harbor at the Civic Center for First Friday, on April 7, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. **(Please note the correction on the date. This was previously announced for March 3.)**

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization. Learn more at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

For more information on the exhibit, please contact City Clerk, Karen Kuznek-Reese at (360) 681-3428 or [kkuznek@sequimwa.gov](mailto:kkuznek@sequimwa.gov).

## Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring Volunteers Wanted

by Ed Bowlby

If you like early morning beach walks and birdlife, please consider volunteering to be citizen scientists monitoring pigeon guillemots this summer. This collaborative partnership with OPAS and Clallam Marine Resources Committee will be offering a training workshop in either late May or early June. Trained volunteers will monitor assigned beach segments one day a week for one hour (before 9am) from June thru Aug. (maybe into Sept). We plan to expand the 5 monitoring sites in 2016 depending on number of volunteer recruits. If interested, please send an email to Ed Bowlby ([edbowlby2@gmail.com](mailto:edbowlby2@gmail.com)).



*Pigeon Guillemots  
Photo by Sue Chickman*

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