



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 2017

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

OPAS Programs for May and June

by Bob Boekelheide

May 17, 2017, 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 W. Hendrickson Rd, Sequim.

"Birds: Wise and Wondrous, Mischievous and Mystical"
Presented by storyteller, Ingrid Nixon

Ingrid Nixon is a world-traveling storyteller who loves nothing more than to whisk listeners away on journeys of imagination. After living in Alaska for many years working in the wilds as a National Park Service ranger, she now lives in Sequim.



*Ingrid Nixon
on one of her journeys*

Her program for OPAS features stories about birds in legend and folklore. A masterful storyteller, Ingrid brings

characters to life using voices, gestures, and her animated face. Her stories will make you look at the birds in your life with new eyes, because you never know when one might be, oh, a goddess in disguise. Come for a lively night of stories about our feathered friends.

June 21, 2017, 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 W. Hendrickson Rd, Sequim.

"Gaining Global Perspective"

Presented by Jenna Ziogas, Dungeness River Audubon Center Education Coordinator,

[**Note:** 6 p.m. Potluck Supper at the Center; 7 p.m. Membership Meeting begins.]



Jenna Ziogas and Friends

Jenna Ziogas spent the past three summers traveling to Tanzania to lead conservation projects with high-school students from all over the world. Jenna will share stories of her adventures, including climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, animal sightings, (Continued on page three)

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.

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.

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President's Notes

By Ken Wiersema



[Editor's note: I am providing these notes as a courtesy to our President, Ken Wiersema, who is spending time with his wife Nancy during her illness.]

OPAS just completed a successful 14th Annual Olympic Birdfest from April 7-9, 2017. Participants enjoyed guided birding trips, boat tours, auction & raffle, a gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker was noted nature photographer Bonnie Block. Prior to the festival, some folks went on a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands. Others extended their festival with our Neah Bay post-trip: two days exploring northwest coastal Washington. See the Birdfest wrap-up article for more details. Thanks to all the volunteers and staff who made this festival such a success!

Many opportunities for citizen science are available through OPAS and other organizations. Here is your chance to help gather needed scientific data and enjoy the outdoors at the same time. Check out the opportunities in the Conservation article in this issue.

The Backyard Birding series of classes, hosted by members of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, continues at the River Center in May and June with 'Sounds of Spring', with Dow Lambert and Ken Wiersema, from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 13, 2017; and 'Out of the Nest', with Ken Wiersema, from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, June 10, 2017. The final class of the series will be on July 8, 'Gulls and Shorebirds', with Bob Boekelheide.

Saturday, May 13th, is the 2017 OPAS Clallam County Birdathon and International Migratory Bird Count. This is a day for everyone to have a fun time birding in Clallam County, keeping track of all the birds we see. It also raises money for important OPAS projects on the north Olympic Peninsula. A Tally sheet and instructions can be found later in this issue. Please call Bob Boekelheide at 360-808-0196 to sign up. And come to the post-count get-together to celebrate the Birdathon at the Dungeness River Audubon Center on Wednesday, May 17, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Details can be found later in this issue.

OPAS programs in May and June take us to faraway places. Ingrid Nixon will entertain us with stories about birds in legend and folklore on May 17, 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. Finally, be sure to join us for the final meeting of the season, June 21, when Jenna Ziogas, Dungeness River Audubon Center Education Coordinator, will share stories of her adventures in Tanzania. Conservation and Harlequin Award winners will be presented before the program. Also, come early at 6 p.m. with a dish to share at our end-of-season potluck supper.

May your lenses always be dust-free.

Rob Hutchison

Hear Ye!

Final meeting of the season,
June 21, 2017

Join us for a potluck supper.
Conservation and Harlequin
Award winners will be presented,

OPAS Programs *(Continued from page one)*

meeting Jane Goodall, and lessons learned along the way. Jenna became Education Coordinator at the River Center in 2016, where she is responsible for the education programs at the Center. She hails from Connecticut, where she studied Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, before coming to the Pacific Northwest in 2013. Come hear Jenna's exciting stories about this mysterious continent on the other side of the world.

OPAS Field Trips in May and June

by Denny AMFJ Van Horn



Spring! It's been a long time coming. A few of our migrants who dwell here for a few months to raise broods are back. The rest are on their way. Swallows are squabbling over nest boxes. Dunlins are ready to head north as are the Brant, American Wigeons, and Black-bellied Plovers. Robins have nestlings, as do Song Sparrows. Bullock's Orioles will soon be building their swinging nest sacks in cottonwoods. And amid all of this wonder, we've put together a few Out-and-Abouts for the upcoming months. But watch the OPAS website, as several more will be added in the next week or so as we firm up additional outings. Hope to see you out there!

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

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.

Birdathon Warm Up

Date & Time: May 6, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Leader: Bob Boekelheide

Meeting place: Dungeness Landing

Features: This is a warm-up for Birdathon. We will be searching for everything and anything out there on the bay to the sandbars; and then back into the fields around the old Dungeness School House, and down along the dikes.

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

Birdathon

Date & Time: May 13, All Day

Please read the accompanying article on the Bird A Thon in this issue of Harlequin Happenings and on the OPAS website for further information on how to participate and contribute to this International event. Contact: Bob Boekelheide <bboek@olympus.net> / 360 808-0196

Dungeness Rec Area

Date & Time: May 20, 8:30 a.m. to Noon

Leader: Cindy Fullwiler

Meeting place: 1st parking lot to left after entering rec area.

Features: This is a walk-about for local land birds that are setting up to nest in this unique ecosystem. Sparrows, chickadees, and towhees have already started to nest; but warblers, vireos, and flycatchers are just arriving and beginning to establish nesting territories for that purpose. This will be a listening, looking, and searching outing for these new arrivals.

Further Information: Cindy Fullwiler

<cfullwiler@hotmail.com> / 951 501-9257

Carrie Blake Park

Date & Time: June 25, 9:00 a.m. - Noon

Leader: Cindy Fullwiler

Meeting place: Parking lot near Doggie Play Ground

Features: Cindy Fullwiler will be leading this OPAS outing.

Besides doing a walk-about for birds, Cindy will be toting along her photo arsenal, so you will have a chance to watch, look-see, and ask questions from a local Birder, who is also an outstanding photographer. This is an easy outing. Level ground with a chance to find some good Spring migrants moving through the area.

Further Information: 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, *(Continued on next page)*



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participants will be offered free membership in OPAS for one year.

The **eighth** class in the BB series, 'Sounds of Spring', with Dow Lambert and Ken Wiersema, will be from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 13, 2017, at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, Railroad Bridge Park. Dow and Ken will present a slide, video, and sound program about recognizing your neighborhood birds by their songs and their calls. The program will feature recent recordings of our local birds.

The **ninth** class in the BB series, 'Out of the Nest', with Ken Wiersema, will meet at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, Railroad Bridge Park, from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, June 10, 2017. Topics include adult bird roles in feeding and rearing young birds, changes in feeding needs, making your property less hazardous to young birds, and lifestyles of young birds at the most vulnerable time of their lives.

The final class of the series will be: on July 8, Gulls and Shorebirds, with Bob Boekelheide.

Yakima River Canyon Birding Festival

May 12th – 14th, Ellensburg, WA

Come bird with KEEN (Kittitas Environmental Education Network) for 3 days during the second weekend of May, and discover the natural beauty of Central Washington State! Kittitas County features diverse and spectacular habitats ranging from snow-capped mountains, thousands of acres of public forest, lush riparian corridors and endangered shrub-steppe open space. The Yakima River Canyon is an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA) with some of the highest densities of passerines and birds of prey in the State, some of them obligates to the shrub-steppe habitat. The Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest will offer expert-led field trips, vendors, extended field trips, workshops, lectures, and keynote speaker, Paul Bannick, social events, a silent auction, and a plethora of bird watching during early spring! Come join us for spring in the shrub-steppe!

Contact: www.ycic.org KEEN: 414 South Willow St, Ellensburg, WA 98926

Annual Wenas Audubon Campout

Memorial Day Weekend (May 26-29) at the Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg).

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington. This casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, 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 (2017 program coming soon). 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/>).

Contacts: Doris Johnson, dellenj@comcast.net; Laura Johnson, lejohns13@gmail.com

Birding Oregon Site Guide Update

For those who are interested in birding Oregon, check out the latest update to the **Birds of Oregon Site Guide** at: <http://www.ecaudubon.org/birding-locations>.

Olympic Birdfest 2017 Wrap-up

by Bob Boekelheide

Olympic BirdFest 2017 was a stupendous success, despite some challenging weather. Held this year from April 7-9, the BirdFest is OPAS's annual event to share north Olympic birds and raise funds for the Dungeness River Audubon Center at the same time. The BirdFest first occurred in 2004, so this was the amazing 14th year for the festival.

This year at least 240 registrants participated in field trips, boat rides, classes, and our gala banquet, which featured photographer Bonnie Block as our guest speaker. Bonnie explained the incredible Bald Eagle and Great Blue Heron photo that won the Grand Prize in National Audubon's 2016 photo contest, along with many other great photos. Our banquet venue once again was the lovely Red Cedar Room, generously provided by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe. Kokopelli's Grill served the scrumptious dinner, enjoyed by all.

BirdFest 2017 included a three-day pre-festival trip to the San Juan Islands with Puget Sound Express, then three very busy days of events near Sequim, and finally a three-day post-festival trip to Neah Bay. Participants on the San Juan trip not only found great birds, but also had front row seats watching orcas and Dall's porpoises off San Juan Island. The Neah Bay trip capped it all off with a "hawk watch" of migrating raptors at Bahokus Peak, seeing Golden Eagles, Swainson's Hawk, and numerous other western raptors soaring north.

Fifteen Birdfest visitors, including someone who came from as far away as Pennsylvania, participated in the Bird Photography class with guest speaker Bonnie Black for four hours on Saturday. The intimate, up close chance to delve into the

techniques of bird photography was enjoyed by all, and Bonnie proved to be an expert teacher who helpfully critiqued the bird photographs of the participants. Those who preferred to draw were able to join an 18 person class to study with Robert Amara for four hours. This class was so popular we may be able to convince Robert to give a second class next year on the details of bird bodies in art.

Our homegrown festival continues to grow, thanks to widespread publicity by Bob Hutchison to other Audubon chapters, and Chris Perry's excellent updates on the BirdFest website. Participants this year came from 12 states and two provinces, including Ohio, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, Alberta, and British Columbia. In total, the event will raise around \$28,000 to support River Center programs.

Many thanks to all OPAS BirdFest volunteers and field trip leaders - without you, this event would never be possible. Particular thanks go to Vanessa Fuller for handling all the behind the scenes registration and accounting headaches, along with the BirdFest Committee from both OPAS and the Audubon Center. Put next year's BirdFest on your calendars right now: San Juan trip from Apr 10-12, 2018, BirdFest trips around Sequim from Apr 13-15, and Neah Bay trip from Apr 15-17.

Volunteers Needed to Monitor Seabirds This Summer

by Ed Bowlby

If you like to watch seabirds along beaches, please consider becoming a volunteer this summer to monitor Pigeon Guillemots as an indicator species for nearshore health. It only requires one hour of your time (to be completed before 9 a.m.), one day per week, from June through August. This project was initiated last year, and was co-sponsored by OPAS and Clallam



Pigeon Guillemots
Photo by Govinda Rosling

Marine Resources Committee. We are expanding monitoring sites this year and need additional volunteers. We realize people can't always be available (vacations, etc.), so we try to train more citizen scientists to backfill for each other. You will receive protocol training to record bird attendance at their burrow nest sites on sea bluffs, to note fish prey that they deliver to their chicks, and to record any disturbance (e.g., eagle fly overs). The training date is May 16, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. If you are interested, please reserve a seat with Ed Bowlby at edbowlby2@gmail.com with your contact info. He will relay more details for both the training as well as protocols to follow.

Conservation—Citizen Science

by Mary Porter-Solberg and Bob Phreaner

Several OPAS volunteers helped to celebrate Earth Day on April 22 by staffing a booth at the Port Angeles City Pier in celebration of science. At the event, we featured OPAS citizen science projects to inform our community how data affects our approach to conservation by providing vital information about bird populations and trends. These data alert us to environmental threats not only to birds, but to the larger ecosystems we all depend on.



More than a century ago, Audubon pioneered the idea of citizen science with the first Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The data compiled from the CBC helped provide the basis of the 2014 Audubon Birds and Climate Change Report that shows how a changing climate will impact bird distribution and their habitat.

OPAS citizen science projects include the Wednesday morning bird walk, the Purple Martin nest box project, the Trumpeter Swan study, the Pigeon Guillemot study, and the Western Bluebird watch program. We also participate in the Puget Sound seabird study in partnership with Seattle Audubon.

We are always looking for volunteers to participate in these studies. The 8:30 a.m. Wednesday morning bird walk helps us better understand the annual cycle of the birds of Railroad Bridge Park, and is open to everyone. The summer Pigeon Guillemot Study will begin with training May 16 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at the River Center. Contact Ed Bowlby at edbowlby2@gmail.com. Purple Martins are back and checking out the nest boxes at 3-Crabs. For information about how you can observe or help with the project, contact Ken Wiersema at (360) 683-4763. (Continued on next page)

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Western Bluebirds are observed in our area, but are they nesting? Yes, they are nesting and you can help! Contact Joyce Volmut at joyce.volmut@gmail.com. The Puget Sound Seabird Study takes place from October 2017 until April 2018 with Toby Ross tobyross@seattleaudubon.org coordinating the study. The Trumpeter Swan Study has concluded, but we will be asking for additional volunteers beginning November 2017 until April 2018. For more information, contact Mary Porter-Solberg at mportersolberg@gmail.com.

Citizen Science studies not only provide important data, but you will have some fun while you learn more about the birds and their habitats in our area. Please join us!

2017 Birdathon/ International Migratory Bird Count

by Bob Boekelheide



Saturday, May 13th, is the 2017 OPAS Clallam County Birdathon and International Migratory Bird Count. This is a day for everyone to have a fun time birding in Clallam County, keeping track of all the birds we see. It also raises money for important OPAS projects on the north Olympic Peninsula.

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 live or visit in Clallam County, you can help out. Clallam County holds the record for the most number of species seen in one Washington county in one day, 202 species seen on the OPAS Birdathon in 2012. Our average species count for the last 20 years is 183.

Money raised during Birdathon helps support many OPAS necessities, from printing Harlequin Happenings, to insurance for field trips, to supporting conservation programs. Please send a generous donation when you receive your Birdathon letter, or please sponsor the Birdathon count with a donation based on count results.

During the count, tally the birds you see, keep track of where you are, plus the miles and hours you travel; then mail the sheet to me (Bob Boekelheide) at the River Center's address on the back. Even better, just email your list to me, at bboek@olympus.net. You can also enter your data in eBird, where I will see it. You can help whether you count all day, just a few hours in morning or evening, or hang out around your house and count your yard and feeders. THE MOST IM-

PORTANT THING IS TO DO THE COUNT! If you need some ideas about places to go, please call for suggestions.

This year we are going to have a post-count get-together to celebrate the Birdathon at the Dungeness River Audubon Center on Wednesday, May 17, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. We will go through our species list and calculate a preliminary tally of Birdathon birds. You can turn in your tally sheets and bring your lunch to eat at the same time.

Please call Bob Boekelheide at 360-808-0196 to sign up for the Birdathon, or just do your counting and send the tally sheet back when finished. Thank you for your help!

Bird Sightings

By Bob Boekelheide and Denny Van Horn

Our wet and cool winter and spring continues. The record keepers say that this has been the wettest October through April period ever in Seattle history, which is pretty startling. Snow pack in the Olympics is above normal, but nowhere near record breaking. Temperatures continue to be much cooler than average, but spring heat waves lurk just around the corner. Enjoy the cool weather and lovely clouds while you can.

Jim and Audrey Gift recorded the last Trumpeter Swans on the OPAS surveys on 3/31, but Denny Van Horn watched others fly over Dungeness and Port Williams on 4/3. One lone immature Trumpeter, possibly sick, lingered all by itself at the Waatch River Valley through April. Gary Bullock reported the last Tundra Swan hanging out with Trumpeters at Schmuck Rd on 3/5.

Gary had a big thrill on the evening of 4/22, when he stepped outside, looked up, and watched a giant line of over 1000 Cackling Geese passing overhead. He said the geese formed a long thin line in a huge V-shape, along with a smaller V nearby. Similar numbers of Cackling Geese passed over Dungeness on 4/21, seen by Gary and Denny Van Horn. Greater White-fronted Geese also passed by, including a flock of 60 seen by Ryan Merrill at Neah Bay on 4/8. Marie Grad spotted 3 White-fronted Geese taking a break at 3 Crabs on 4/28. Those 4 Snow Geese that have been hanging around the Olympic Game Farm this winter are now down to only one according to Michael Barry. Perhaps they really were wild birds.

Michael Barry reported the first Cinnamon Teal of the year, swimming with other ducks in the big pond south of Hogback Road on 4/22. Michael also reports it has been a good year for Black Scoters, with 12 visible on the north side of Dungeness Spit on 4/25. The 3 Crabs Bird Monitoring team found a

pair of Black Scoters swimming with Surf Scoters inside Dungeness Bay on both 3/27 and 4/14, an unusual spot for this species.

The biggest raptor news is an immature Gyrfalcon first found by Michael Barry near the Dungeness Recreation Area on 3/21. Michael took distant photos of the bird, which at the time stimulated indecisive discussions about the bird's identity. Amazingly, Gary Bullock re-found the bird in the same area on 4/5, where it put on a wonderful show for lots of birders. The bird was the gray-morph style Gyr, big and chunky. It killed and ate at least one mallard while in the area. Since Gyrfalcons are normally seen in WA during winter, what was this northerly falcon doing in Dungeness in March and April? A Gyrfalcon reappeared for 3 winters back in the 1990s, so hopefully this one will come back as well.



Gyrfalcon
Photo by Michael Barry

Spring raptor migration at Bahokus Peak near Neah Bay peaked in mid-April, again delighting birders. Most abundant species, as usual, were Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, and accipiters, but there were also daily Golden Eagles along with occasional Northern Goshawks and Swainson's and Broad-winged Hawks. Ryan Merrill, while watching raptors from the peak on 4/9, had a bonus sighting of Orcas swimming in the Strait of J de F. While driving up the peak on 4/21, Michael Barry scoped 21 Whimbrels faraway at Hobuck Beach. Coincidentally, Bruce Paige and Adrienne Akmajian, at Hobuck Beach at the same time, recorded the same group of Whimbrels.

Neah Bay in April is the place to see migrating Sandhill Cranes. Numbers peaked in mid-April, with hundreds flying overhead most days. The high count goes to Ryan Merrill, with 420 on 4/8. Don't forget that rails migrate as well, including reclusive Soras. Michael Barry chuckled about a Sora hanging out by his pond in late March that vocalized every time some chickens cackled nearby.

Shorebirds rush through in spring, usually heading to nesting areas to the north or inland North America. Curiously, two unusual species that showed up this spring mostly nest to the south of us. Wendy Feltham photographed a lovely breeding-plumage American Avocet at Hobuck Beach on 4/18, where it remained until 4/19. Lonnie Somer spotted 2 Snowy Plovers traveling with Semipalmated Plovers at Dungeness Spit on 4/24, far north from their usual nesting haunts along the Pacific Coast.

Sarah Peden located a Pacific Golden Plover at 3 Crabs on 3/4, continuing the trend for more golden plovers in winter in WA. The Willet that hung around Dungeness Bay all fall and winter (for the second winter) was last reported by Doug and Lisa Schmidt on 4/8. Iris Sutcliffe found 3 Ruddy Turnstones at Ediz Hook on 4/21, one more than usually reported this winter.

The early bird may get the worm, but they're also taking big risks. Jane Stewart found a lovely Killdeer nest with 4 eggs at Carrie Blake Park on 4/3, very early and very risky if the weather turns nasty.



Killdeer Nest
Photo by Jane Stewart

The Strait of J de F continues to be an excellent spot for Yellow-billed Loons. Dave Jackson and Marion Rutledge watched one YB Loon near Ediz Hook on 3/4. The Protection Island Aquatic Reserve monitoring cruises spotted YB Loons on both 3/9 and 4/21. Elston and Jackie Hill, along with Carolyn Morillo, spotted a very speckly Common Loon at Salt Creek on 4/14. Unlike most birds that molt soon after the nesting season, Common and Pacific Loons molt in late winter, becoming flightless as they do so. *(Continued on next page)*

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Again this year there are lingering Ancient Murrelets at Neah Bay, seen by Ben and Ron Barkley on 4/21. Ancients are nesting somewhere along the outer coast of WA, but the last nest was found in 1924.



Calliope Hummingbird
Photo by Judy Collins

This year's first local Rufous Hummingbird award goes to... It's a tie! Michele Canale in Port Angeles and Don Baker up O'Brien Road both recorded the first Rufous on 3/12. Even more exciting is that Judy Collins got great photos of a male Calliope Hummingbird at her feeder on the east side of Port Angeles on 4/28. We usually have only one or two Calliopes each year in Clallam.

Lucky Christina Heliker! A female Anna's Hummingbird built a nest right outside her window, allowing Christina

to document the entire nest attempt, even during February snow storms. Anna's Hummers are renowned for winter nesting in California, but this is ridiculous! The bird laid its first egg on 2/16, the second egg on 2/18, the chicks hatched in early



Anna's Hummingbird
Photo by Christina Heliker

March, and both successfully fledged on 3/30. The female continued to feed the fledglings through at least 4/6.

The best owl news comes from Valerie Wolcott, who heard 2 Western Screech-Owls tooting near her home on Palo Alto Rd on 3/28. Kathy Bush recorded the first migrant Band-tailed Pigeons at her home on 3/6, but they're now ganging up at a feeder near you. High count of Eurasian Collared-Doves goes to Charlie Wright, who estimated 275 in the trees at Butler's Motel in Neah Bay on 4/21.

This might be the first year that California Scrub-Jays nest in Clallam County. There is now a scrub-jay pair residing near Old Olympic Hwy and Cays Rd, seen on 3/31 by Gary Bullock carrying nesting material into a big hedge. This in the same location where Michael Hobbs first spotted one scrub-jay on 12/31/16.

How are migrant passerines responding to the wet and cool weather? Surprisingly, first arrivals of many species are early this year. Purple Martins led the charge, even showing up on 4/7 for the Olympic BirdFest 3 Crabs field trip led by Gary Bullock, Bruce Paige, and Bob Iddins. Barn Swallows, already here in January and February, continued in swallow flocks at 3 Crabs through March and April. Flycatchers, which we normally think of as late spring migrants, appeared early, with a Hammond's Flycatcher at RR Bridge Park on 4/12, seen by the Wed AM Bird Walk, and two Pacific-slope Flycatchers at the Lower Dungeness levee on 4/16, seen by Bruce Paige. Bruce also found the first Western Kingbird of the spring off Schmuck Road on 4/23, and a normally-early Say's Phoebe in the same area on 4/2. Sue Nattinger reported an extremely early Olive-sided Flycatcher at Wasankari Road on 4/23.

Other early birds included 1) a singing House Wren on 4/12 spotted by Bruce Paige near Schmuck Rd, 2) an extremely early Swainson's Thrush seen by Bruce on 4/15 near Schmuck Rd, 3) the first MacGillivray's Warbler at Wasankari Road found on 4/15 by Sue Nattinger, 4) the first Wilson's Warbler singing at Neah Bay spotted by John Gatchet on 4/16, and 5) the first Black-throated Gray Warbler seen by Marie Grad at the Wed AM RR Bridge Park bird walk on 4/19. The last winter Palm Warbler was seen at Ediz Hook by Alex Patia and Sarah Hemig on 3/9. Cassin's Vireos made their typical mid-April appearance, including one singing in Port Townsend for Robert Ambrose on 4/11 and one in Neah Bay for Michael Barry on 4/15.

It's been a great spring for Mountain Bluebirds, particularly in the Waatch Valley near Neah Bay. From one female first spotted by Bruce Paige on 3/31, the number of Mountain Bluebirds in the Waatch peaked at 19 (8 males and 11 females) for the BirdFest field trip on 4/10, led by Denny Van Horn and Bob

Boekelheide. Mountain Bluebirds also appeared at 3 Crabs on 4/3, seen by Eric Guzman, with up to 5 seen by Michael Barry and Gary Bullock the next day. Sue Chickman found 4 Western Bluebirds at Salt Creek on 3/6, and Michael Barry spotted 3 Westerns near Cat Lake on 4/2. Please report any bluebirds you find nesting in Clallam County.



Wilson's Warbler
Photo by John Gatchet

Along with bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaires also appeared in good numbers in the lowlands this spring. Three first appeared at 3 Crabs on 4/4, seen by Michael Barry and Gary Bullock, along with 4 there on 4/8. Peak numbers appeared during the BirdFest field trip at Neah Bay, with at least 16 solitaires counted on 4/10. There was an excellent passage of Hermit Thrushes as well, with big numbers in Neah Bay during BirdFest week.

As part of the same migrant wave in early April, a first-of-year male Black-headed Grosbeak appeared at Adrienne Akmajian's feeder in the Waatch Valley on 4/10. Also at Adrienne's feeder was a flashy male Yellow-headed Blackbird on 4/21. Judy Mullally spotted a flock of 25+ Evening Grosbeaks in east Port Angeles on 3/10, commenting she has seen almost none this winter. Scott Gremel reports 2 Pine Grosbeaks at Three Forks camp at the Greywolf River on 4/21. There was a big wave of Golden-crowned Sparrows throughout Clallam County around the same time, but particularly at Neah Bay where Charlie Wright estimated 250 at Butler Motel's feeders and another 100 around town on 4/21.

Migrant Lapland Longspurs appeared at 3 Crabs, first seen on 4/1 by Sarah Peden, and peaking at 2, possibly 3, on 4/3, seen by Liam Hutchenson and others. It's been an excellent year for migrant Chipping Sparrows as well. One appeared in Dungeness on 4/3, seen by Bruce Paige and Denny Van Horn. John Gatchet discovered 3 Chippers at Sequim View Cemetery on 4/17. Three more took up residence in the Boekelheide front yard in Dungeness on 4/28.

Spring has seriously sprung. Spring migration and nesting are peaking right now, so you must get out now to see spectacular birds. If you see or hear anything unusual, please call Bob Boekelheide at 360-808-0196 (email at bboek@olympus.net). Thank you for your sightings!

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