



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, 2018

"Volunteer educators and stewards for birds and habitat conservation"

OPAS Programs for May and June

by Bob Boekelheide & Marie Grad

May 16, 2018 Program

Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA at 7 p.m.

"Conservation Photography: Art for Education and Advocacy", presented by Lori Moilanen



Prairie Warbler
Photo by Lori Moilanen

Photography has been used for environmental advocacy and education since the invention of the camera, leading to a specialty known as "conservation photography." Lori's presentation will highlight some milestones in the history of conservation photography and provide personal examples showing how photographers can use their art to support local environmental education and conservation. Her talk will conclude with a brief discussion

about ways in which interested OPAS photographers can support OPAS objectives.

Lori is a semi-retired, board-certified toxicologist and recent transplant from Wisconsin to the Olympic Peninsula. She is an avid nature photographer, world traveler, and birder who looks forward to becoming an active contributor to OPAS.

June 20, 2018 Program

Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA . **Potluck dinner at 6 p.m.; program at 7 p.m.**

"Seattle's Adaptable Urban Cooper's Hawks", presented by Ed Deal, Project Coordinator



Ed Deal and Friend
Cooper's Hawk

Cooper's Hawks, once threatened by DDT poisoning just like Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons, have returned in such good numbers (*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@olypen.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, (360) 681-4076. The public is welcome.

OPAS Board of Directors

Officers:

President, Bob Phreaner, 360-504-2110
Co-Vice-Pres, Bob Boekelheide, 360-681-4867; Marie Grad, 360-620-4035
Treasurer, Wendy Hirota, 360-683-7141
Secretary, Enid Phreaner 360-504-2110

Board-at-Large:

Tom Montgomery, 360-683-8230
Kendra Donelson, 360-683-7793
Bob Iddins - 360-681-2840
Ken Wiersema, 360-460-5515
Bruce Fryxell, 360-797-1564

Committees:

Bird Sightings/Counts, Bob Boekelheide, 360-808-0196
Conservation Co-chairs, Vacant — please volunteer to fill this position
Education, Ken Wiersema, 360-460-5515
Membership, Audrey Gift, 360-681-2989, agift@olympen.com
Field Trips, Denny Van Horn 360-406-1584
Hospitality, Clare Hatler, 360-582-6451
Newsletter, Bob Hutchison, 253-293-3801 rbrycehut@wavecable.com
Publicity, Sara-Ellen Peterson, 360-681-6325
Webmaster, Mary Porter-Solberg, 360-683-8072.
Website Support Team, Mary Porter-Solberg, Laura Alisanne, Bob Hutchison, and Chris Perry
Social Media Support Team, Mary Porter-Solberg, Enid Phreaner, and Laura Alisanne

President's Notes

By Bob Phreaner



This is my opportunity to thank all who participated in the 15th annual BirdFest. Through your efforts, OPAS raised over \$26,000 for the Dungeness River Audubon Center! A huge thank you to the BirdFest Committee (Chris Perry, Bob Boekelheide, Audrey Gift, Ken Wiersema, Shirley Anderson, Sara Ellen Peterson, Stacey Fradkin, Gretha Davis, Liz Bumgarner, Enid Phreaner, and co-chairman Marion Rutledge) and all the trip leaders. I would also like to thank the Dungeness River Audubon Center for allowing OPAS once again to employ Vanessa Fuller to organize Birdfest. Well done, Vanessa!

There were many highlights during the week long festivities. For the second year OPAS hosted the National Audubon Society's Award winning photographs at Sequim City Hall. We were fortunate to have Bonnie Block, the 2017 1st place photographer, speak at the opening of the exhibit and also conduct a photography workshop. The Jamestown S'Klallam Totem tour was reinvigorated through the efforts of Andy Pitts, Dale Faulstich, and Bud Turner. The Totem Tour was such a success that next year we hope to offer two tours. Thanks to Arnold, Debbie, and Thor Schouten for sharing Dry Creek Waterfowl with two sold-out tour groups.

Despite stormy conditions, Bob and Barb Boekelheide led a hearty group of birders to the San Juan Islands on the Puget Sound Express' MV Glacier Spirit. The stormy conditions didn't deter Bob from leading the Neah Bay trip that had its pelagic tour cancelled due to high seas and rain. Still, with co-leader Denny Van Horn guiding through the Neah Bay environs that Denny calls "a birders candy store", everyone had a wonderful and productive trip! Just ask anyone who attended about the 30 Greater Yellowlegs or 2900 Sandhill Cranes!

Kokopelli's Grill, That Takes the Cake, and Sofie's Floral helped Sara Ellen and her crew put on a wonderful banquet. The auction netted nearly \$1000, and I'd like to thank all the contributors including Gary Bullock, Wild Birds Unlimited, Wings Optics, Puget Sound Express, Black Ball Ferry, PA Symphony, Kokopelli, and Coyote Grill. I'd also like to thank Sue Gilleland and Lee Bowen for donating money to BirdFest in lieu of their condo this year. Banquet speaker, author, photographer, and naturalist Claudio Vidal was a "big hit" and no doubt he won the prize for coming the furthest. Space does not permit a listing of all of the birding tours and exceptional volunteer guides who made the event successful in trying conditions, but you are the backbone of the Olympic BirdFest success. The post trip comments we solicited from our visitors universally complement your knowledge and friendliness. I salute you.

As you probably know, all proceeds from the Olympic BirdFest are used to support the Dungeness River Audubon Center. OPAS' only fund raiser to provide for our operating expenses is the Birdathon on May 12, which is World Migratory Bird Day. Please consider a donation based on the total birds counted.

Attention!

Due to HH Editor absence
June 28 to July 7 on family
matters, the July HH issue will
not be ready until July 10.

OPAS Programs

(Continued from page one)

that they now nest in many urban areas, including Seattle. A dedicated group of researchers has tracked Seattle's Cooper Hawks since 2003, documenting their locations, nesting success, and food choices. In 2017 they tracked 44 nests, closely investigating how these avian predators have adapted to life in the big city.

Ed Deal is a retired physical therapist who has studied raptors for over 24 years. For the last six years he has coordinated the all-volunteer Seattle Cooper's Hawk Project, up before dawn most days during the nesting season to peer into the secret lives of these birds. Through his dedicated interest in these raptors, Ed has become a genuine expert on their nesting characteristics and behaviors.

OPAS Field Trips in May and June

by Denny AMFJ Van Horn

Spring! Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Cliff Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole, Western Tanager, and . . . They're out there, coming our way. A Snowy Plover was seen in Neah Bay; a Western Kingbird over on Schmuck road, Mountain Bluebirds in Dungeness, and that always-early-arriving Pacific slope Flycatcher is in the woods. And to celebrate, we've a few outings for you to go chasing birds with us. The cost is free, and bring binoculars, scopes, and personal items, as desired. So, see you out there!

Wednesday Bird Walks

Date: Every Wed. morning, 8:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Outside the Dungeness River Audubon Center

Features: Easy guided bird walk through Railroad Bridge Park to see birds of the Dungeness River riparian area.

Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR

Date & Time: May 17, 9 a.m.

Leaders: Gary Bullock & Bob Iddins

Meeting place: Nisqually NWR Visitor Center

Features: This is a walk through the refuge's diverse habitats for all kinds of birds. Spring migration is well underway, 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 join this outing. Drive time to Nisqually is about 2.5 hours over 115 miles.

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



Wild Currant Way

Date & Time: May 19, 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Judy Mullally

Meeting place: Wild Currant Way is a short road off Old Olympic Highway near Lazy J tree farm/compost site, where the road changes direction from mostly north to easterly. Old Olympic highway should be open all the way through by this date.

Features: This is an easy walk among typical forested lands, and is definitely a 'birding-by-ear' outing. Also, if you want, you may bring along your 'well-behaved' dog for the outing. I'm sure that Rambo will be along with Judy.

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

Diamond Point and Environs

Date & Time: May 27, 8 a.m.

Leader: John Gatchet

Meeting place: Boat ramp parking area at Gardiner Beach

Features: This is John's "Local Patch" and anything's possible. Open water towards Protection Island might yield Tufted Puffins; the woods will harbor flycatchers and vireos; open fields and meadows just might have bluebirds on territories; and, John's backyard feeders always yield up many passerines.

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

Dungeness Recreation Area

Date & Time: June 12, 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Ken Wiersema

Meeting place: Voice of America road - first parking area to left *after* passing through gates.

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.

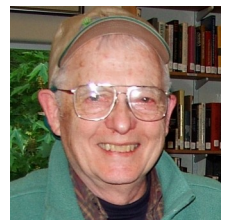
Further Information: Contact Ken Wiersema <wiersema@olympus.net> / phone 360 460-5515.

Education Notes

by Ken Wiersema

Learning and enjoying birds and the habitat of our home Olympic Peninsula continues to be a fascinating endeavor. This past year we've added to several of our popular Backyard Birding programs, and drawn in new speakers to provide you their different perspective on important birding subjects.

(Continued on next page)



Harlequin Happenings

And this year I've collaborated with Powell Jones and Jenna Ziogas to put together a new **"Focus On"** series which takes an in depth look at selected species of birds that enrich our Peninsula.

Both of these series have drawn receptive and interested participants to our Chapter and to the Audubon Center. I encourage you to watch for these programs as they are announced, and come spend a few Saturday mornings with us. After the May **"Focus On"** program on Swallows, the series will take a 2 month hiatus, and come back with a new set of programs. Watch for announcements on our newsletter, the OPAS web site, and the Audubon Center's web sites.

I'd also urge you to check out the new **"Learn by the light of the moon"** speaker series, which will be offered on the night of the full moon throughout the summer months in the newly refurbished River Stage amphitheater. Watch the Audubon Center's web site for dates and subjects.

Backyard Birder programs for May and June

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

All sessions are at the Dungeness River Audubon Center in Railroad Bridge Park from 10 am until noon. The public is invited to attend any or all of the sessions. **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. After the completion of five sessions, participants will be offered free membership in OPAS for one year.

May 5th Class -- Saturday, 10a.m. to noon "Bird Migration" by Tomás Setubal

Tomás Setubal will lead a discussion on the incredible phenomenon of migration, and the mechanisms that govern this mass movement of avian species worldwide. Tomás Setubal was born in the bountiful tidelands of Puget Sound but migrated soon after to Brazil. Years later he returned to the USA, took up birding in Virginia, and began studying birds in Wisconsin during his undergraduate years. He has been a field-biologist since, having worked in ornithology projects in Ecuador, Brazil, California, and Washington. He was a point-counter for Olympic National Park in 2014, where he now works as an aquatic ecologist.

Emphasis will be given to bird species of Clallam Co, an important component of the Pacific Flyway's migration route. He will discuss key species, when they are here, why our varied habitats are important, and why the study of migration is an



Geese in migration

inherent component toward learning about the health and sustainability of bird populations.

June 9th Class -- Saturday, 10 am to noon. "Birds out of the nest" by Ken Wiersema

Ken Wiersema and Nina Sarmiento will present a program that includes the adult bird's role in feeding and caring for young birds, how young bird's food needs change as they grow, vulnerabilities of young birds, and how to make your home and property less hazardous to young birds. Different species have differing roles in raising their young. Learn to recognize these and help them thrive.

The final session of the series will be **"Gulls"** by Bob Boekelheide on July 7th. ••••• Watch for further details!

Other Events

2018 Clallam County Birdathon/ World Migratory Bird Day

by Bob Boekelheide



Saturday, May 12th, is the 2018 OPAS Clallam County Birdathon and World Migratory Bird Day count. This is a day for everyone to have a fun time going 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 World Migratory Bird Day 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, please go birding and keep a tally of the birds you see. 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 IMPORTANT THING IS TO COUNT BIRDS!** If you need some ideas about places to go, please email for suggestions.

During the count, also keep track of where you count, plus the miles and hours you travel; then mail the tally sheet to me at the Audubon Center's address on the back. Even better, just email your list to me, at bboek@olympus.net. Or, if you wish, you can enter your data in eBird, where I will find it.

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

Before the Birdathon, please join us on Saturday, May 5, for a field trip to review common birds and bird songs. We meet at Railroad Bridge Park at 8:30 a.m. to see and hear songbirds of the local forests, then travel to Dungeness Landing Park at 11 a.m. to see birds of shorelines and bays. *[Editor's Note: Also taking place on May 5th is the Backyard Birder class at the River Center from 10 a.m. to noon. Tomás Setubal leads a discussion on bird migration. Too bad the events conflict with one another, but perhaps some people would like to participate in the field trip at 8:30 a.m., then go to Tomás's talk at 10 a.m.]*

Please email Bob Boekelheide to sign up for the Birdathon, or just do your counting and send the tally sheet back when finished. Thank you for your help!

Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring Project

by Ed Bowlby

Citizen Scientist Volunteers Needed to Monitor Seabirds

If you like to watch seabirds along beaches, please consider joining a team this summer to monitor Pigeon Guillemots as an indicator species for nearshore health. It only requires one hour of your time one day per week (to be completed before 9 a.m.), from June through August. This is an ongoing project co-



Pigeon Guillemots
Photo by Ed Bowlby

sponsored by Clallam County Marine Resources Committee and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society. 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 11, from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. If you are interested, please reserve a seat with Ed Bowlby (edbowlby2@gmail.com) with your contact info. He will relay more details for both the training as well as protocols to follow. Returning volunteers should also attend as a refresher, since there have been slight modifications in protocols, as well as a new field data card (easier to use). Also, please relay any sightings of Pigeon Guillemot concentrations near beaches for potential new monitoring sites.

Bird Sightings

by Bob Boekelheide & Denny Van Horn

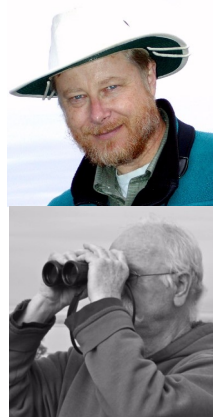
Okay, everyone -- this is it! The nesting season is happening. The next two months bring the most intense birding of the year, with forests, fields, and marshes filled with bird song and baby birds. Do it now, because it will be over in no time.

It has been a cool and wet spring, particularly April, which may score the third wettest April on record for Seattle. Passing storms not only threatened our BirdFest field trips, but occasionally slowed down newly arriving migrant birds. Some early migrants seemed late this year, from disparate species like Rufous Hummingbirds, Savannah Sparrows, to Western Sandpipers. Spring finally arrived with gusto in the last week in April, with a couple intense days of warm sunshine. Will it last? Ha!

Despite the rain, some nesting species have already fledged chicks. Lucky Gary Bullock tracked an Anna's Hummingbird nest at his home by the Dungeness River, saying the female sat tight on its two eggs starting 3/4, and the two baby hummers were ready to fly by 4/11. That is one fantastic hummer mama!

That silly first-year Snow Goose is still at the pond at Kirner and Woodcock, hanging out with Canada Geese. Time to go north? By now it probably thinks it is a Canada Goose. Annette Hanson reports on 4/25 that one pair of Canada Geese already has goslings swimming around that pond.

(Continued on next page)



Harlequin Happenings



Baby Anna's Hummingbirds
Photo by Gary Bullock

Denny Van Horn witnessed a huge flight of Cackling Geese over Dungeness on 4/20, estimating as many as 10,000 geese went over during the day. The first Cinnamon Teal appeared on 4/20 as well, seen by Joe Veverka at Salt Creek Co Park.

John Gatchet and Sarah Peden, while doing the Puget Sound Seabird Survey at Diamond Point, reported an immature Brown Booby flying by on 3/3. The bird was mostly dark

with a white belly, flying with its bill pointed down, as boobies do. This is an exceptional record for this time of year, but Brown Boobies continue to expand their range along the West Coast.

As usual, February through April is the time Golden Eagles migrate north, with several reported at Bahokus Peak. Charlie and Linnaea Wright spotted a Golden Eagle there on 3/11,



Yellow-billed Loon
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

with the most recent one seen by Mike Charest on 4/22.

Once again, the Protection Island Aquatic Reserve bird surveys turned up more Yellow-billed Loons at Dallas Bank and off the north end of Miller Peninsula, seeing five on 3/12 and

two on 4/23. The March birds were just beginning their pre-alternate molt, but by April the birds were in spectacular breeding plumage. The waters around Protection Island are one of the most reliable areas to observe this unique loon in the entire Salish Sea, suggesting that individual loons remain within a small area throughout their non-breeding season.

Denny Van Horn reported a very late sighting on 4/25 of Gale and Storm, the Black-crowned Night Herons that spent the winter in Dungeness. As Denny says, "It's nice to see them once more, before they leave for who-knows-where." Sandhill Cranes turned in a wonderful migration show at Neah Bay, first seen by Denny Van Horn on 3/31. During the Olympic BirdFest Neah Bay field trip on 4/17, Denny estimated at least 2900 cranes passing overhead throughout the day, calling loudly as they went. Soras are also calling now, at Ken Wiersema's Pond on 4/23 and the wetlands near Hogback on 4/28.



Sand-hill Cranes
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

Bruce Paige, while walking Hobuck Beach on 4/24, spotted a Snowy Plover mixed in with a flock of 6 Semipalmated Plovers. Hobuck Beach is one of the more reliable places in Clallam where Snowy Plovers have appeared over the years.

In Dec, 2017, Pete Walker discovered a Pacific Golden-Plover hanging out with Black-bellied Plovers at Schmuck Road, where it continued off and on over the next couple months. This is the second winter in a row that a Pacific Golden-Plover has wintered in that area. The plot thickened, however, when a Pacific Golden-Plover appeared on 3/5 on the mudflats at 3 Crabs with Black-bellied Plovers, then again on 4/3 and 4/19. During earlier sightings the bird was in its brownish basic plumage, but by 4/19 it had molted into its finest breeding

splendor. It will be most interesting to see if one appears again this fall. Pacific Golden-Plovers normally winter at Pacific islands like Hawaii, although a few remain in California for the winter. We may have the furthest-north wintering golden-plover in the world, right here in our own backyard.

Similarly, the lone Willet spending the winter in Dungeness Bay was last seen by a BirdFest field trip on 4/13, the third winter in a row that one Willet has wintered here. Same bird? Could be. One Red Knot first spotted by Dan Waggoner at Fort Flagler on 1/12 also remained for the winter, last reported by David Poortinga on 3/27. A Spotted Sandpiper apparently spent the winter at the north end of the Miller Peninsula, seen on the beach at Panorama Vista County Park by Sarah Peden on 3/3 and last by Bruce Paige on 3/8.

A Glaucous Gull, or perhaps a Glaucous X Glaucous-winged Gull hybrid, appeared at Ediz Hook in March, first spotted by John Gatchet on 3/7. Another Glaucous Gull appeared for Bruce Paige at Neah Bay on 4/23, roosting with other gulls at Village Creek. Judy Collins reported 3 Bonaparte's Gulls at Blyn on 4/5, a species that unfortunately is becoming scarce around here. The first local Caspian Tern appeared in Dungeness Bay on 4/6, later than the last several years.

The White-winged Dove first spotted by Alexander Patia at Neah Bay on 12/15 remained through the winter, last seen on 3/30 by Denny Van Horn. That, too, might be the furthest north wintering White-winged Dove in the world.

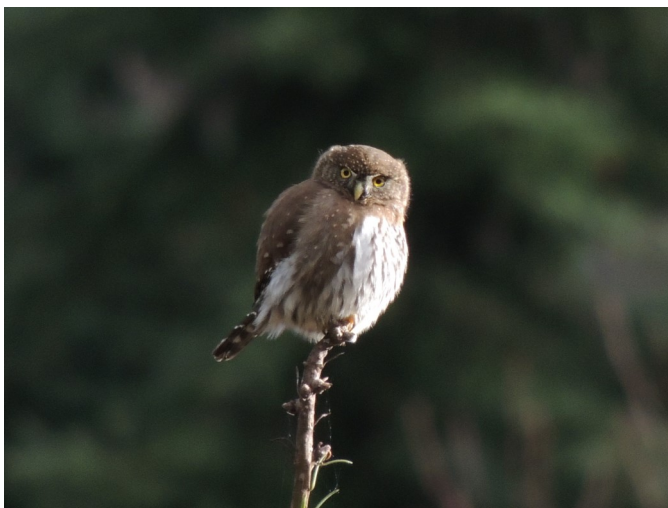
Ed Schreiner, who lives up Deer Park Road, watched a Northern Pygmy-Owl sitting on his bird feeder on 3/4. Ed aptly describes the owl as a "very cute puffball," but not if you're a small songbird trying to use the feeder. It's a good time to look for nesting Peale's Peregrine Falcons along the west coast, like at Cape Flattery and Second Beach. Graydon Hidalgo reported a Peale's Falcon at Ruby Beach on 3/24.

March is the month for Say's Phoebes to pass through; too bad they don't stick around. Linnaea and Charlie Wright found one at Hobuck Beach on 3/11, as did Brad Waggoner on 3/24. Denny Van Horn found one at Dungeness on 3/12, and Bruce Paige spotted another at Jamestown on 3/14. Bruce also found an early Western Kingbird on the power lines at Schmuck Rd on 4/24. Pacific-slope Flycatchers are back, with the first heard on the Wed am bird walk at RR Bridge Park on 4/25.

Once again the first Purple Martins appeared in early April, with one seen by Sarah Peden on 4/7 at 3 Crabs. Are the first martins from the local population, or are they Canadian birds still heading north? Quiglin Ma reported the first Barn Swallow at RR Bridge Park on 3/15, and John Gatchet reported the first Cliff Swallow at Knapp Rd on 4/3.

A California Scrub-Jay visited Marie Grad's feeder in Carlsborg on 3/15, traveling in a flock with 10 Steller's Jays. Scrub-Jays have visited Marie's feeder over the past two years, possibly nesting nearby.

(Continued on next page)



Northern Pygmy-Owl
Photo by Bob Boekelheide



Mountain Bluebird
Photo by Sally Harris

Harlequin Happenings

Two Scrub-Jays have also been seen by many observers in Port Townsend during March, near the north end of Kah Tai Lagoon.

Early spring is bluebird time, but curiously only Mountain Bluebirds have been reported so far this year. Adrienne Akmajian found the first Mountain Bluebirds at the Waatch River Valley on 3/12, peaking at 4 males and 2 females on 3/14. Another contingent of Mountain Bluebirds appeared at Point Wilson near Port Townsend, peaking at 9 seen on 4/3 by Meghin Spencer. Sally Harris photographed a lovely male Mountain Bluebird at 3 Crabs on 4/19, where Cindy Fullwiler found one with two females on 4/23. It was a good year for Townsend Solitaires in the lowlands, with the first reported by Scott Gremel in Port Angeles on 4/8.

The Hobuck Eurasian Skylark has been found again lurking in the beach grasses at Hobuck Beach, this time on 3/19 by Bruce Paige. One skylark has been observed at this location in May 2017, Nov 2017, and now Mar 2018, likely the same bird. These sightings are reminiscent of a skylark that returned to Point Reyes, California, for 5 winters in a row in the 1970s and 80s. Is the Hobuck bird a true migrant, perhaps the Asian subspecies? Did it stay at Hobuck through the entire winter?

Bruce Paige located a wayward Northern Mockingbird at Lost Mountain on 3/4, flushed from the side of the road with a flock of robins. Bruce also saw and heard the first Common Yellowthroat of the spring near Port Williams on 4/9, and the first House Wren on 4/10. Dan Waggoner reported the first local Western Tanager of the spring at Si-



Swamp Sparrow
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

lent Lake near Dabob on 4/25, saying it might be the earliest tanager ever for Jefferson County.

Following Bruce Paige's Swamp Sparrow at Holland Rd on 2/25, Brad Waggoner found another at the Waatch Valley on 3/24. Chipping Sparrows have arrived, with Artemis Celt reporting one on 4/9 in Port Townsend, John Gatchet finding one at Knapp Rd on 4/11, and Jane Stewart spotting one on Solar Lane outside Sequim on 4/28. Jane Stewart and Neil Burkhardt spotted a Townsend's Warbler in their yard on 4/9, and Adrienne Akmajian spotted the first Wilson's Warbler at the Waatch Valley on 4/18. A Snow Bunting hung out at Ediz Hook for at least 6 days in January, first reported 1/19 by Iris Winslow. Another Snow Bunting, a beautiful breeding male, appeared at Ediz Hook on 3/10, seen by Carol Turnbull.

Best news in the finch world is a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch found by Cassidy Grattan on a ridge west of the Elwha River on 4/11. Sue Nattinger spotted 4 Pine Grosbeaks along Onella Road east of Joyce on 3/14, always a treat in the lowlands. White-winged Crossbills continued at Hobuck Beach, with 13 seen by Brad Waggoner on 3/24, but also interesting is 3 White-wingeds spotted by Denny Van Horn at Bahokus Peak on 3/30.

American Robins are now everywhere, singing their hearts out. On 3/11, while at Neah Bay, Charlie and Linnaea Wright watched several huge flocks of robins fly over town and Bahokus Peak, estimating 1280 passing overhead.

Get out there and find some birds, particularly during Birdathon/World Migratory Bird Day on May 12. Please email Bob Boekelheide at bboek@olympus.net when you see something interesting or unusual. Thank you very much for your sightings.

Pre-dawn Bittern Calls

by Thomas Bancroft

The trees are just beginning to show a little shape as I inch my way along the dike at Stillwater Wildlife Area. It is 5:00 AM on a Sunday morning in early May, and sunrise will not come for another hour, even longer before the sun hits this area at the western base of the Cascades. My flashlight is off so not to disturb any wildlife. The songs of American Robins fill the air.

A different sound makes me stop, a gulping, like someone is swallowing large mouthfuls of air. It comes from the marsh across the small pond to the south. Five gulps are

quickly followed by an eerie call: “pump-er-lunk”, then another “pump-er-lunk”, and finally a “dunk-a-doo.” A male American Bittern is trying to woo a female. I’ve come to record this exact sound. Open water extends fifty yards to a thick marsh. The bittern is probably sitting at the water’s edge, hoping a female will like his display.



American Bittern
Photo by Dow Lambert

A second male begins gulping. He is roughly a hundred yards east of my seat. The closer one instantly responds with his answer. Last week, with a group of birders, we watched the male contort its neck as it lunged

forward to gulp in air, expanding its esophagus like a balloon, and then used that air to make this resonant “pump-er-lunk” sound. In five decades of birding, I had never heard their call until last week. These are low-frequency sounds that will travel much farther through thick vegetation than the high pitch songs of most birds.

American Bitterns are members of the heron family. Their streaky brown and buff plumage allows them to disappear into the reeds, blending perfectly with the vertical shoots. They often freeze in a pose with their bills pointed skyward, neck stretched, so the streaks in their plumage will run par-

allel with the reeds. If they see people, they usually sulk back into the marsh.

But today I’m alone along this dike; no other person is out this early. I am hunched low; I have headset over my ears; my stereo mic pointing right toward the marsh where the bird just called. My eyes are closed so I can concentrate on absorbing the morning chorus of birds. It is still 45 minutes until sunrise. In addition to the robins, the Red-winged Blackbirds have started their “conk-la-ree” song, and I can imagine them drooping their wings while leaning forward and puffing out their bright red shoulder patches as they bellow. The six-phrase melody of a Song Sparrow comes from right above me. He is probably sitting at the end of a branch, looking across the marsh, and raising his head, puffing out his chest when he sings his beautiful song. Individual male song sparrows have about nine different melodies, and they mix them up in their morning repertoire.

These birds will be a good background to the bittern, creating musical-filler between this heron’s calls in my recording. He’s my quest today. To think a bird could be such a breathtaking baritone. Each time the sound comes across the marsh, I am amazed by how these notes are made. Another bittern calls not far away to my left, and a third about at the limit of my hearing on the right. A long pause happens between their trumpets and then once one starts to gulp in air, the others follow. I try not to move or say anything in spite of my excitement as my recorder picks up every nuance of the morning sounds.

THE WATER LIMOUSINE

Wildlife, Photographic and
Sightseeing Cruises
Up to 6 Passengers
Starting at only \$195

Capt. Charles Martin
For Reservations 360-775-2288

Wild Birds Unlimited

Bring this add in for \$5.00 off any purchase over \$25.00!


THE FRESHEST SEED AVAILABLE
BIRD FEEDERS
NATURE GIFTS

YOUR BACKYARD BIRDFEEDING SPECIALIST!
275963 Hwy 101, Gardiner WA 98382 PH: 360-797-7100
Open: 10AM to 6PM Mon. to Fri., 9AM to 6PM Sat. & Sun.

Choose a Realtor Who Shares Your Conservation Values

I'll make a **\$300 contribution to OPAS** in your name for every commission I earn that results from OPAS members selecting me as their realtor, or referring me to friends or acquaintances who select me as their realtor. I want to share my success with OPAS! Just give me a call!

Thomas E. Montgomery
The Sequim Realtor with a Background of Distinction
BANKING – LAW – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP – OPAS BOARD MEMBER
Office Phone: (360) 683-4131 - E-mail: thomasm@johnlscott.com



John L. Scott
REAL ESTATE

Harlequin Happenings

Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society
P.O. Box 502
Sequim, WA 98382-0502



Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

P.O. Box 502
Sequim, WA 98382-0502

NAS Code Y08

Date: _____

Local OPAS Membership, includes subscription to the *Harlequin Happenings* bi-monthly newsletter and other programs and birding trips. For more information see our website at <http://www.olybird.org>. To join, complete application below and **mail to address above**.

___ Annual Membership (\$20.00) ___ 3 Year Membership (\$50.00, saves \$10.00)
___ 6 Year Membership (\$90.00, saves \$30) ___ Lifetime Membership (\$250.00)

Name _____ Home Phone (____) _____

Street _____ Cell Phone (____) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Harlequin Happenings Newsletter: You will receive an e-mail notice when posted in full color on our website. If you wish a black and white printed copy instead, check box here: Send printed copy

Payment Options:

1. **Credit Card** Master Card or Visa Payment

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date _____

Authorized Signature _____ Amount Paid \$ _____

Three digit Security Code from back of card _____

2. **For Checks:** Make payable to OPAS and mail with this form to address above

OPAS is an Internal Revenue Service Section 501(c)(3) organization (membership gifts are tax deductible)

For OFFICE USE ONLY Process Date _____ Record ID _____ Forms Note ID _____