



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 Jan-Feb, 2020

"Volunteer educators and stewards for birds and habitat conservation"

OPAS Programs for January and February

by Bob Boekelheide & Marie Grad

January 15, 2020 Program

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

Pigeon Guillemot Breeding Survey and "OPAS Members Photo Night"

At the members' meeting on January 15, we have a two-for-one. First, we will brief our membership on the Pigeon Guillemot breeding survey presented by Ed Bowlby of the Clallam Marine Resources Committee. Ed has been observing Pigeon Guillemot (PIGU) activity for five years at Port Williams,



Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Photo by Robert Hutchison

and in 2016 OPAS joined the project. The PIGU project that started on Whidbey Island is spreading throughout the Salish Sea and OPAS members are encouraged to participate.

"OPAS Members Photo Night" Organized by Christina Heliker

It's time to choose your best bird photos to show our appreciative audience. This year, please submit your photos to Christina Heliker, who will be our technical advisor and assist us projecting the images. Christina will email guidelines to those who have submitted images in the last couple years. If



you haven't shown your images in the past, please, contact Christina so you can get the information you'll need, at cheliher@olyopen.com.

This is NOT a contest. Photos will not be judged or critiqued. We ask that you submit no more than 8 photos each, to allow as many members as possible to participate. This year we're also allowing bird photos from anywhere in the world. Be prepared to say a few words about your photos, identifying the bird, location, and time of year. Even if you don't wish to submit photos, be sure to come and enjoy the show!

February 19, 2020 Program

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

Swans of the Sequim-Dungeness Valley, and "From Source to Sea: Dungeness Watershed"

At the February OPAS meeting we have a special twin-bill. First, Laura Davis and Liam Antrim will provide an update about one of OPAS's most important citizen-science projects -- the monitoring of swans using the Sequim-Dungeness Valley. Started in 2011, the swan project tracks habitats used by swans and keeps tabs on the numbers and mortality of swans that visit our area.

Following the swan update, we present a showing of the newly-released "From Source to Sea: Dungeness Watershed" a locally-produced video about the Dungeness River. The video is a collaborative project of the Clallam League of Women Voters along with many community partners, including OPAS and the Dungeness River Audubon Center. A local expert will be available to discuss the film at its conclusion. Everyone residing in the Sequim-Dungeness Valley needs to be aware of critical water issues, not only affecting humans, but particularly fish and wildlife.

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@olyopen.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.

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President's Notes

by Judith White



Another year has gone by, and the many volunteers who have contributed their time and talents in 2019 to help OPAS fulfill its mission deserve special appreciation. Bob Boekelheide organized his 24th annual Christmas Bird Count on December 16th, followed by compilation with a chili dinner at the Grange Hall in Sequim (many thanks to Vanessa Fuller and our chefs). Field trips have been well attended, with thanks to John Gatchet and Marie Grad as new co-chairs this year. Bob Phreaner and Pete Walker have led the OPAS conservation committee on complex and important issues, advocating for birds and the places they need. The Pigeon Guillemot Survey, Puget Sound Seabird Survey, Purple Martin Nest Box Project, Trumpeter/Tundra Swan Survey, Western Bluebird/Climate Watch Study, and Towne Road Dike Project Bird Count continue with enthusiastic Community Science volunteers. Many of these projects are in partnership with neighboring conservation organizations. Ken Wiersema leads the popular Backyard Birder classes at Dungeness River Audubon Center. Enid Phreaner, Audrey Gift, Wendy Hirota and Sandy Boren keep our records, membership, finances and publicity in order. Rob Hutchison keeps Harlequin Happenings a great read. Mary Porter-Solberg has undertaken our website make-over; check out the new look at olybird.org in the next few weeks. Our other Board members contribute their time and talents to lead our organization. If any of these OPAS activities are of interest, our website has the contact information of leaders; drop them an e-mail. New volunteers are always welcome!

On a personal note, best wishes for a healthy New Year – to you, our birds and our world. New Year's resolutions I'm making to live a more bird-friendly life from www.3billionbirds.org/7-simple-actions, a website in partnership with the National Audubon Society: 1) Make Windows Safer by installing screens, films, paint or string to avoid collisions which kill 1 billion birds a year in the US and Canada; 2) Keep Cats Indoors to save 2.4 billion birds in the US and Canada, mostly fledglings, from the top human-caused reason for the loss of birds after habitat destruction. Keep cats healthy too; indoor cats may live 15 years, outdoor cats live an average of 2-5 years; 3) Reduce Lawn; Plant Natives; 4) Avoid Pesticides; 5) Drink Shade-Grown Coffee (more than 40 species of North American migratory songbirds winter in the forest canopy of coffee plantations; 6) Avoid Single-use Plastics; 7) Watch Birds and share what you see on eBird or Project FeederWatch.

Hear Ye!

December 31st, 2019, was the deadline for renewing your annual OPAS membership

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OPAS Field Trips in January and February

by John Gatchet & Marie Grad

Wednesday Bird Walks

Date and Time: 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.



Carrie Blake Park and Marlyn Nelson County Park

Date and Time: Thursday, January 16, 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Leader: John Gatchet

Meeting Place: Carrie Blake South Parking Lot in the Dog Park Area

Features: A walk around and through Carrie Blake Park will include winter resident birds. There are usually Eurasian Wigeon among other duck species in the park. This is a good location for wintering warblers. After our tour we will drive to Marlyn Nelson County Park and view seabirds from Port Williams. Marbled Murrelet and Long-tailed Duck can be seen from this location.

Bring: Binoculars, spotting scope, water and snacks as well as appropriate footwear and clothing for the weather.

Further Information: Contact John Gatchet, jfgatchet@gmail.com, (503) 781-5043

Skagit and North Snohomish Counties

Date: Tuesday & Wednesday, February 4 & 5, 2020

Cost: Free. Participants make their own lodging arrangements (Mt. Vernon, Burlington, Anacortes), and are responsible for



Snow Goose in Flight
Photo by Judith White

their own meals both days.

Leader: Bob Iddins

Features: A very popular trip to the Samish Valley & Skagit Flats, starring a plethora of swans, snow geese, wintering raptors, and occasional surprises.

Meeting place: Take the 8:00 a.m. ferry at Port Townsend for Coupeville (reservations are strongly recommended). Upon exiting we'll meet at the parking area for the boat ramp, adjacent to the ferry terminal. Turn right after exiting ferry. For those going early or coming from other areas, we'll meet at the parking lot for the Farmhouse Restaurant, at the intersection of HWY 20 and LaConnor Whitney Road (between Mount Vernon and Anacortes) at about 10 a.m.

Bring: Optics (scopes are helpful) and lunch for both days.

Dress warmly and be prepared for inclement weather. We may do some car-pooling on site. **Participating cars will require a Discover Pass for access to state lands.**

Further information: **Preregistration required! (Please provide contact information in the event of late-breaking developments or severe weather conditions requiring a late cancellation.) Appropriate for participants with limited mobility. Contact** Bob Iddins, home phone 360-681-2840, cell phone 360-775-5945, rriddins@olympen.com

John Wayne Marina and Pitship Pocket Estuary

Date and Time: Sunday, February 9, 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Cost: Free

Leader: John Gatchet

Meeting Place: John Wayne Marina South Parking Lot Area

Features: Salt water, shoreline and adjacent forest bird species will be the focus of this field trip. This is a good spot to see Marbled Murrelet and Long-tailed Duck. There will be walking in the area to locate woodland birds. This is a good location for Varied Thrush and wintering warblers.

Bring: Binoculars, spotting scope, water and snacks as well as appropriate footwear and clothing for the weather.

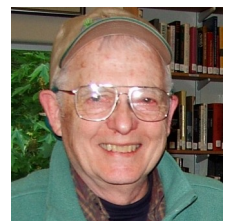
Further Information: Contact John Gatchet, jfgatchet@gmail.com, (503) 781-5043

Education Notes

by Ken Wiersema

Happy New Year 2020 – We start off the New Year with a series of your favorite programs and classes. Take some time from your winter chores and plan to attend one or more of these offerings:

(Continued on next page)



Harlequin Happenings

Backyard Birding Programs - hosted at Dungeness River Audubon Center

Saturday Jan 4th at 10 a.m.—Birdscaping

Backyard Birding welcomes the new year by revisiting a program we introduced last year – *Birdscaping*. It will again be presented by Carolyn Wilcox, who operates Experience Olympic LLC and lives in Port Angeles. She will share her well-tested projects and recommendations on designing and adjusting modest urban habitats to attract birds and provide them safe and attractive feeding and nesting spaces. She will discuss an array of topics including feeder types and locations, nest boxes, invasive plants and bird species, rodent control, window strikes, and the value of snags.

Saturday February 1st at 10 a.m.—Potpourri

Bob Boekelheide and Ken Wiersema will present a 3-part program on bird nests, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), and a tutorial on *eBird* as a tool for recording and distributing bird sightings. We encourage attendees to bring their phones or other mobile electronics (iPads, tablets, and laptops) and we'll provide hands-on instruction on how to use and enter bird sightings on *eBird*. It's easy and fun!

Focus on Series

Saturday Jan 18th at 10 a.m. --- Alcids (Puffins, Murres, Auklets, Guillemots, and Murrelets)

Presented by Ken Wiersema, they live off our coasts and nest on our shores; deep divers, fish eaters (mostly), agile swimmers. Learn their lifestyles, their threats, and what makes them unique in our ecosystem.

Saturday Feb 15th at 10 a.m. --- Wild Flowers

Jenna Ziogas, Education Coordinator at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, will offer a new program on wildflowers native to our Olympic Peninsula. She will share with you this richly illustrated program on native flowering plants and the locations at which they can be found.

Nest Boxes '20

Saturday Feb 29th from 10 a.m. to noon

Learn why we build nest boxes. Watch a box being assembled, and then build one yourself! Take your new box home and install it! *Materials, tools, and "expert" assistance provided!* This year we'll offer the opportunity to build a "roost box" or an experimental combination nest and roost box.

This class requires pre-registration so that we have adequate materials on hand. Call the Dungeness River Audubon Center at (360) 681-4076, or sign up at our January or February membership meetings. If you would like to assist with our class this

year please contact Ken Wiersema at wiersema@olympus.com for information.

Conservation Matters

by Robert Phreaner

Conservation Matters for January/February 2020 Harlequin Happenings



Since the Nov/Dec. issue of Harlequin Happenings there have been several developments that deserve your attention.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Mary Porter-Solberg, my former Conservation Committee Co-chair, you can stay informed of Conservation News and opportunities to take action by visiting our olybird.org website.

- On November 8 we submitted comments to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding the Cooke Aquaculture proposal to use marine net pens for growing triploid Steelhead in the Salish Sea. We focused our five concerns on the Port Angeles site.
- On December 3 the Board of Natural Resources passed the Marbled Murrelet Long Term Conservation Strategy Alternative H by a 4 – 2 vote. Twenty-two years have passed since the "interim" conservation strategy was put into place for the Marbled Murrelet (MAMU).
- On December 5 the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (H.R. 2642) passed out of the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee. The legislation was introduced by Senator Patty Murray and Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA-06) in May, and would permanently protect more than 126,500 acres of Olympic National Forest as wilderness and 19 rivers and their major tributaries – a total of 464 river miles – as Wild and Scenic Rivers. I urge you to use the olybird.org Conservation Action Alert tab to thank our representatives for their initiative.
- On December 17 OPAS wrote Olympic National Park to reiterate our March 19 comment that the preferred alternative for the relocation of the Olympic Hot Springs Road will result in the removal of up to fifty old growth trees that could provide nesting platforms for Marbled Murrelet. We have asked for a MAMU nesting season survey which has not been conducted since 1990.
- On December 23 the Clallam County Department of Community Development examiner postponed his decision on the Dungeness Bay oyster farm until January 10, 2020.

The OPAS Conservation Committee advocates for Climate Change solutions. For the February 3, 2020 meeting we have

invited Adam Maxwell from the Audubon WA Climate Campaign to discuss how to take action to support healthy birds and healthy communities, and how to rally our community in support of natural climate solutions. All OPAS members are invited to attend this 1 PM session at DRAC.

Other Events

SAVE THE DATE: Olympic Birdfest, April 17-19, 2020.



Scott Pearson
Birdfest Banquet Keynote Speaker

Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction, raffle, gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker: Scott Pearson, researcher in Ecology, Marine Biology and Zoology at the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. Join our festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 14-16, 2020 or extend your festival with our Neah Bay post

trip on April 19-21, 2020: three days exploring northwest coastal Washington. To learn more and register, visit www.olympicbirdfest.org.

OPAS Book Discussion Group

Do you enjoy reading and discussing books about the natural history, conservation, and appreciation of birds? If so, we've got great news. Our monthly book discussions will resume on January 22. We hope you'll join us as we explore a variety of popular new books, literary prize winners, and influential classics.

The group meets from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center (DRAC). Links to the currently scheduled titles, book summaries, and discussion questions will be posted at olympicaudubonsociety.org, under Events, OPAS Book Discussion Club. The 2020 sessions feature some great discussions among participants.

We are currently recruiting discussion leaders for monthly meetings in July through November 2020. Please contact Lori Moilanen (lori_moilanen@wavecable.com) to suggest a title and/or volunteer to facilitate a discussion. If you're inter-

ested in being a discussion facilitator but need title suggestions, don't worry, we've compiled a list of highly rated recent and classic titles to help you out.

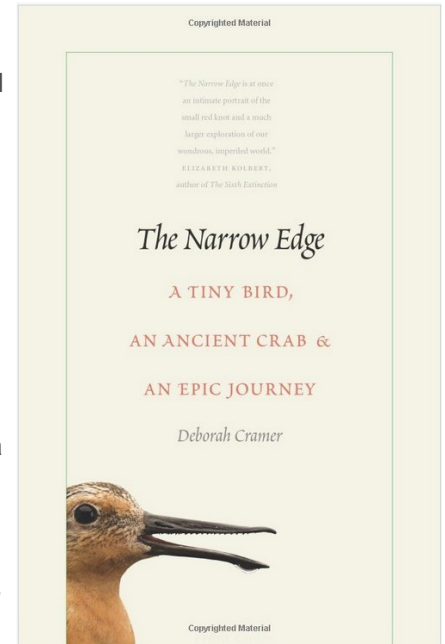
The upcoming book selections are:

January 28, 2020 from 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

The Narrow Edge: A Tiny Bird, an Ancient Crab, and an Epic Journey, by Deborah Cramer.

Join discussion leader Bob Phreaner at the Dungeness River Audubon Center

"*The Narrow Edge* is at once an intimate portrait of the small red knot and a much larger exploration of our wondrous, imperiled world." (Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*, that we reviewed in 2019). The Red Knot migrates 19,000 miles annually from the tip of Patagonia to breed in the Arctic. This "Robin" of shorebirds is fueled in part by the eggs of the primordial horseshoe crab, whose blue blood is in demand for revealing the presence of gram negative bacteria in the biomedical industry. The current census of horseshoe crabs indicates that there is not enough of them to support an increase in shorebird populations. The Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) is the first U.S. bird listed because global warming threatens its existence. It will not be the last. The Red Knot is the twenty-first century's "canary in the coal mine".

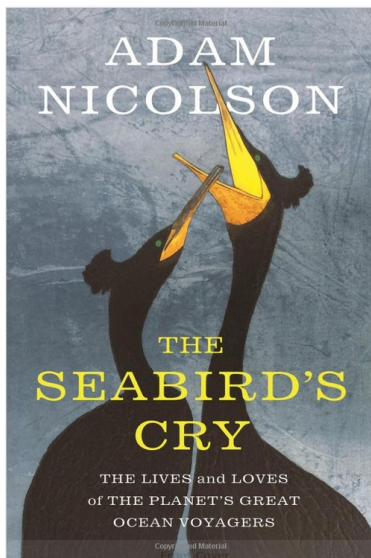


February 25, 2020, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

The Seabird's Cry: The Lives and Loves of the Planet's Great Ocean Voyagers (2018 Edition) by Adam Nicholson. Join discussion leader Judi White at the Dungeness River Audubon Center.

A global tragedy is unfolding. Even as we are coming to understand them, the number of seabirds on our planet is in freefall, dropping by nearly 70% in the last sixty years, a billion fewer now than there were in 1950. Of the ten birds in this book, seven are in decline, at least in part of their range. (Continued on next page)

Harlequin Happenings



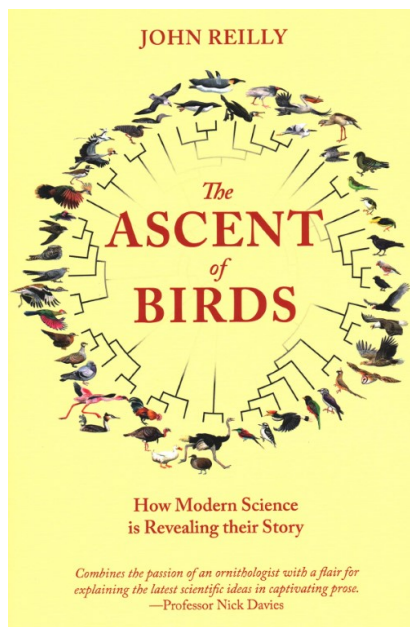
Extinction stalks the ocean and there is a danger that the grand cry of the seabird colony, rolling around the bays and headlands of high latitudes, will in this century become little but a memory.

Over the last couple of decades, modern science has begun to understand their epic voyages, their astonishing abilities to navigate for tens of thousands of miles on featureless seas, their ability to smell their way towards fish and home. Only the poets in

the past would have thought of seabirds as creatures riding the ripples and currents of the entire planet, but that is what the scientists are seeing today.

The Ascent of Birds : An Invitation to the Spectacular Diversity of Birds.

Join Jim Karr, University of Washington Professor Emeritus, for a lecture and discussion series stimulated by a pioneering new book by John Reilly – *The Ascent of Birds: How Modern Science Is Revealing Their Story* (2018). Each session will explore key concepts in the evolution of a bird species or group. All discussions are richly illustrated with photos, maps, and other visual material. Read one or two average ten-page chapters for each session. All sessions will be held on the second Tuesday of the month from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.



Where: Dungeness River Audubon Center

Date: January 14, 2020 - The Storm Petrel's Story: *Sympatry vs Allopatry* (A bird missing for 150 years found nearby.); and The Albatross's Story: *The Species Problem* (Dynamic soaring and a keen sense of smell.)

Date: February 11, 2020 - The Godwit's Story: *Quantum Compasses* (Getting from Alaska to New Zealand and back.);

and The Hawk's Story: *Accidental Speciation* (Falcons are not a sister group of hawks.).

Cost: Free

For more information: Contact Jim Karr (jrkarr@olympen.com), (360)-681-316

21st Annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway

January 22-26, 2020, Chico CA

Registration is now open!

See the beauty and experience the excitement of avian migration at the action-packed five-day festival that celebrates the remarkable journey of millions of waterfowl and thousands of raptors that migrate along the Pacific Flyway and call Northern Sacramento Valley their home during the winter months. Highlights for our 21st year include:

- The Snow Goose Festival Art Exhibit & Reception at the Museum of Northern California Art (monca)

- Gray Lodge Film: "Refuge" at Snow Goose Festival's Art Exhibit at monca.

Three screens for this sunrise to sunset film

- Live Raptors & Bats:

The Center for Reconnecting with Nature, West Coast Falconry, NorCal Bats

- Over 70 Guided Field Trips & Workshops:

Boat & Kayak Tours, Raptor & Owl Banding, Painting & Photography Classes, Wildlife Refuge Trips, Bird Carving, Optics Demo

- Free Activities for Youth & Armchair Adventures:

Bird Olympics, Jr. Naturalist Activities, Owl Pellets, Build a LEGO Bird

- "Gathering of Wings" Banquet & Silent Auction with Featured Keynote Speaker **Karen Amstutz**, Professional

Naturalist and Environmental Educator, *The gift of Watching Birds*.

Website: <http://www.snowgoosefestival.org/> .



Keynote Speaker Karen Amstutz
Professional Naturalist and
Environmental Educator

White Winter Wings

by Judith White

Wintering Trumpeter Swans and occasional Snow Geese arrive around Thanksgiving to a warm welcome on the North Olympic Peninsula. Their graceful white wings are unique, as well as their characteristic noisy flight calls! They can often be seen in family groups and larger flocks foraging in agricultural fields, pasture, and wetlands around Sequim.



Trumpeter Swans
Photo by Judith White

Trumpeter Swans are the largest native North American waterfowl, and their conservation story is inspiring. Historically abundant, they were hunted for feathers and skins, and by 1935 the known

United States population numbered only 69 individuals. According to the Trumpeter Swan Society, dedicated conservation, including protected status, habitat conservation and management, discovery of some remaining birds in Alaska, and reintroduction programs have slowly increased the total population to 63,000 individuals. The Pacific Coast population of 24,200 birds breeds in Alaska and winters on the pacific coast; 11,700 are found in the Rocky Mountain population, and the Interior population of 27,055 is growing by virtue of reintroduction programs.

Trumpeter Swans live about 25-30 years, have single broods, and sexual maturity takes several years, so population growth takes time. The first Trumpeter Swan sighting on the Sequim Dungeness Christmas Bird Count (SDCBC) wasn't until 1982, with 4 swans, although the count started in 1975. The swans were only recorded on 5 of the first 15 SDCBCs ... very intermittent visitors. They have been recorded every year since 1989, slowly increasing. The count didn't pass 50 swans until 2008, and didn't pass 100 swans until 2016.

Adult swans have few predators and suffer mainly from collisions with power lines and lead poisoning from ingestion of lead birdshot. They are most vulnerable as cyg-

nets. The young remain with their parents in family groups until forming monogamous pair bonds of their own, usually at age 3 or 4. Males may not re-mate after losing their partner. Some populations remain at risk from poor quality breeding habitat, and continued loss of wintering habitat, making it necessary to manage individual flocks and collect ongoing data.

In Sequim today, as many as 200 Trumpeter Swans are monitored closely each winter by Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society Swan Study volunteers in a Community Science project led by Laura Davis and Liam Antrim. Data are collected on weekly surveys of the swans' daytime foraging areas, as well as obvious injuries and mortalities. These data are shared with regional and national monitoring programs. This OPAS study led to identification of power lines that pose collision hazards to the swans due to their proximity to fields and wetlands used by the swans. Those power lines have been marked with reflective tags the swans can easily see, and collisions seem to have decreased. Liam and Laura will be presenting an update on the OPAS Trumpeter and Tundra Swan Study at the February 19th OPAS membership meeting.

Snow Geese are only occasional visitors to our area, preferring to socialize and forage in large flocks in the nearby Skagit agricultural area. An OPAS field trip led by



Snow Goose
Photo by Judith White

Bob Iddins to the Skagit area February 4-5, 2020, will enjoy the astounding experience of seeing and hearing thousands of Snow Geese flying in enormous flocks. The white geese are medium-sized, with black wing tips, and a distinctive dark "grin patch" on their bills, giving them the appearance of a smile. Many of our regional Northwest Washington wintering geese breed on Wrangel Island, an Arctic Ocean island protected as a Russian nature reserve. Snow Geese are also monogamous, and family groups remain together until the young choose their mates in their second or third year. Life span is about 25 years, and females return to the same nesting site and breeding colony every year.

(Continued on next page)

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Enjoy the White Wings of Winter in the North Olympic Peninsula, rejoice at the successful recovery of the North American Trumpeter Swan populations, and come hear the update on the OPAS Community Science Swan study February 19th.

Sequim-Dungeness Christmas Bird Count Results & Bird Sightings

by Bob Boekelheide



It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood for the 44th Sequim-Dungeness Christmas Bird Count (SDCBC), held December 16, 2019. Overcast skies, occasional sun-breaks, and very light winds prevailed throughout the day. Temperatures ranged from a pre-dawn low of 28 degrees F. at the top of Palo Alto Rd, to an afternoon high of 48 degrees on the Sequim prairies. Early December weather prior to the count was about as benign as it can get, with moderate temperatures and no major storms.

Despite the benign weather, our species total this year was "only" 139 species, the lowest species count since 2010 and below the 25-year average of 143 species. In fact, it was only the fourth time in the last 25 years that our species count dropped below 140. Total number of individual birds was 59,783, fairly close to the 25-year average of 61,131 birds. We had excellent human participation, with 110 field counters and 21 feeder watchers. (See accompanying table)

It's always interesting to see how species rank during our CBC. As is typical, American Wigeon topped the list, with a count of 10,789 individuals. The other top-ten most abundant species were Mallard (4,413 individuals), Dunlin (3,791), Pine Siskin (3,701), American Robin (2,944), large pink-legged gulls (pure Glaucous-winged and hybrid Olympic Gulls combined) (2,368), Dark-eyed Junco (2,291), Northern Pintail (2,215), Bufflehead (1,757), and Brant (1,545). These 10 species made up about 60% of all birds on our count. Or another way to think about it: More than one out of every six birds on the SDCBC is a wigeon.

Species setting record-high counts this year included Northern Saw-whet Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, Red-breasted Sapsucker, California Scrub-Jay, and Spotted Towhee. Word is that saw-whet owls had an excellent nesting year, with many young birds migrating south this

fall. Anna's Hummingbirds continue their amazing northward range expansion, as anyone with a hummingbird feeder knows well. Scrub-jays also continue their northward movement, so prepare yourself for shrieking scrub-jays in your neighborhood sometime soon. Why so many sapsuckers and towhees? Hard to say, but these species have been remarkably visible throughout our area this fall.



Spotted Towhee
Photo by Robert Hutchison

Even though some species did not set record counts, they still showed higher than average numbers, including Red-breasted Merganser (highest since 1997), White-winged Scoter (highest since 2012), Common Goldeneye (highest since 2000), Wilson's Snipe (highest since 1997), and Canada Jay (highest since 2003). These high counts may be largely due to our excellent counters who took time to carefully tally their numbers.

Some species scored far below average, some with the lowest counts in many years, including Mallard (lowest since 2012), Western Gull (lowest since 1988), Savannah Sparrow (lowest since 2012), and Brewer's Blackbird (lowest since 1991).

Of particular interest, a number of introduced "invasive" species also scored surprisingly low counts this year, including Rock Pigeon (lowest since 1992), Eurasian Collared-Dove (lowest since 2014), and Eurasian Starling (lowest since 1981). Have you noticed fewer Rock Pigeons, collared-doves, and starlings this year? Is this just an artifact of our counting methods, or are these species really declining?

There were a few unusual species tallied this year, but none of these are new species for the SDCBC: Redhead - 2 spotted in Jamestown; Yellow-billed Loon - 3 found offshore; Sora - 1 whinnying at dawn in Graysmarsh among

the abundant Virginia Rails; Caspian Tern - 1 lingering here since November; California Scrub-Jay - 3 in Dungeness; Western Bluebird - 2 near Cat Lake; and Swamp Sparrow - 1 lurking at Jamestown and 1 at 3 Crabs. The only "count week" (CW) species this year was one female Canvasback found by Judi White at Jamestown on 12/18.



Northern Flicker
Photo by John Gatchet

It's amazing how consistent some species can be from year to year. There are numerous examples from a variety of species, but some of the diurnal raptors really pop out when comparing this year with last, like Sharp-shinned Hawk (15 in 2018, 16 in 2019), American Kestrel (15 in 2018, 14 in 2019), Merlin (12 in 2018, 12 in 2019), and Peregrine Falcon (11 in 2018, 11 in 2019). Northern Harrier counts have been particularly consistent over several years (32 harriers in 2014, 33 in 2015, 35 in 2016, 32 in 2017, 32 in 2018, and 33 in 2019). Are we really so consistent with our sampling methods that the SDCBC successfully censuses these raptor populations using the area? Ah, if it



Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Photo by John Gatchet

were only so. Or to put it another way, are these raptor populations so close to carrying capacity that their numbers change little from year to year?

Another question: Why was our species count below average this year? In essence, a few unusual species here or there really makes a big difference. This year there were 1) no irruptions of northern species like Snowy Owls, Common Redpolls, or Bohemian Waxwings; 2) no wayward shorebirds other than one persistent Willet here for possibly its sixth winter; 3) no wandering marine species like shearwaters, storm-petrels, or phalaropes; and 4) unfortunately, no vagrant warblers, sparrows, finches, or blackbirds.

Are there any expected species we missed entirely? Yes - Greater White-fronted Goose, Red Crossbill, White-throated Sparrow, and Orange-crowned Warbler. The SDCBC has only missed white-fronted geese twice in the last 13 years. The last time we missed Orange-crowned Warbler was in 2009, the last time we missed Red Crossbill was 1998, and the last time we missed White-throated Sparrow was 1997. All seem genuinely scarce this winter.

Looking ahead, the 2020 SDCBC will occur on Monday, 12/14/20, so mark your calendars now. No vacations allowed!

Special thanks to property owners who allowed access for the count, including USFWS, Olympic Game Farm, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Dungeness Farms and Habitat, Willits family, Kevin Froese, Graysmarsh, Maple View Farm, WA State Parks, WDNR, Clallam County Parks, and more. Great thanks particularly to Durkee Richards for providing the offshore boat, and to Gary Poor and Rod and Kathy Schock for ferrying counters to Dungeness Spit.

To our esteemed observers who traveled long distances to help with the count, we particularly thank you. And of course huge thanks to all the great cooks who provided food for the compilation dinner. If I forgot anyone, sorry about that, and thank you very much!

Dungeness Spit-Jamie Acker, Andrew Westphal; Dungeness Rec. Area-Ken Wiersema, Coleman Byrnes, Sue Nattinger, Ed Chadd, Scott Horton; West Dungeness-Denny Van Horn, Dow Lambert, Laura Davis, Alan Smith, Barb Boekelheide, Shirley Anderson, Ed & Myra Koszykowski; Three Crabs-Scott Gremel, Mandy Holmgren, Eric Guzman, Dave Manson, Tom Butler, Lee Bowen; Jamestown-Brad & Dan Waggoner, Vic Nelson; Graysmarsh-Bob Boekelheide, Ted Stadtmueller, Katie Adolphsen; Port Williams/WA Harbor-Bruce & Sharon Paige, Roger Hoffman, Dana Scott, Ron Miller, Steve & Nancy Smith; Battelle-Kate Buenau, Nancy Kohn, Heida Diefenderfer; (Continued on next page)

W. Sequim Bay-Susan Savage, Bob Blush, Jim & Audrey Gift, Bob Hutchison, Margaret Levitan, Bruce & Carol Von Borstel; E. Sequim Bay-Judy Mullally, Dan McDougall-Treacy; Miller Peninsula-Powell Jones, Greg Voyles, Katherine & Otis Bush; Diamond Point/Gardiner-John Gatchet, Bob Bagwell, David Durham; Off-shore Boat-Charlie Wright, Linnaea Wright, Bruce LaBar, Mike Crim; Durkee Richards; Protection Island-Sue Thomas, Julie Merluccio, Lorenz Sollmann, MarySue Brancato, Ed Bowlby, Janis Burger, Pat Willits; Chicken Coop-Bob Steelquist, Charlotte Watts; Palo Alto/Woods Rds-Steve Grace, Beverly McNeil, Varn Brooks, Ken Wilson, Valerie Wolcott; South Sequim-Kendra Donelson, Joyce Volmut, Pat MacRobbie, Joyce Ryba; Happy Valley-Peter Walker, Judi White, John Acklen, Juanice Reyes; W of Dungeness Riv./S of Hwy 101-Quenn Charrier, Norrie & Barb Johnson, Pat McGuire, Ida Domazlicky, Jane Nicholas, Mary Morgan, Tim McNulty, Randy Larson, Walt McGahan; Robin Hill Park/Solmar-Heidi Pedersen; Olympic Discovery Trail W.-Kathe Smith; McDonnell Creek-Barbara Vanderwerf, Sarah Bird; Carlsborg/W. Dungeness-Marie Grad, Ally Simons, Dan & Valerie Stahler, David Wescott, Diane Luoma, Jim Karr, Steve Koehler, Sharle Osborne; Sequim neighborhoods-Bob Iddins, Jan Stewart; North Sequim to Dungeness-Enid & Bob Phreaner, Gary Bullock, Kevin Froese, Marion Rutledge, Grace & Kate Goschen, Liam Antrim, Pam Maurides; Railroad Bridge Park-Mary Robson, Jenna Ziogas, Penny Soares, Sandy & Steve Bengtson; Sequim feeders-Stacey Fradkin, Joy Bertman, Sara Blake, Bev Swearingen, Doris Causey, Jo Fjellman, Sandy Boren, Syrene Forsman, Alexis Megahan; Swans-Bob & Ann Sextro.

Bird Sightings

In other bird news, many observers (MObs) flocked to Neah Bay over the last couple months to search for the birding holy grail, aka "rare birds." MObs reported numerous Swamp Sparrows, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Tropical Kingbirds, Pine Grosbeaks, and late Barn Swallows, along with Palm, Yellow and Wilson's Warblers. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow first spotted by Chris Warlow on 10/27 remained until at least 11/21; could it still be hanging with House Sparrows near the harbor? A Kumlien's-type Iceland Gull was at Hobuck Beach on 11/17, seen by Alex Sowers and Will Brooks. One immature Glaucous Gull appeared for the Neah Bay CBC on 12/15 -- could it have been the same one seen on 11/30 by Jeffrey Bryant at Ediz Hook, or the same one seen by Judi White at the Elwha River mouth on 12/5? Isaiah Nugent spotted a Common Redpoll at Butler's Motel on 11/10 and a late Swainson's Hawk over the Waatch River on 11/11. Most interesting might be at least one Orchard Oriole and two Bullock's Oriole wintering over at feeders near the Neah Bay waterfront.

Among waterfowl, a juvenile Emperor Goose appeared on Dungeness Spit on 11/1, first seen by Barb Boekelheide. It hung around Dungeness Bay until at least 12/9, but didn't stay for CBC count week. Gary Bullock watched 12 Snow Geese fly over 3 Crabs on 11/10. Jan Stewart found a Northern Shoveler and Eurasian Wigeon at Carrie Blake Park on 12/1, among the other ducks. Other than the CBC Redheads mentioned above, Ryan Merrill spotted one male Redhead flying with 14 Canvasbacks in

Dungeness on 11/11. Bob and Leslie Bagwell reported 4 Blue-winged Teals at Ediz Hook on 12/24, a very strange time and place for these teal.



Yellow-billed Loon
Photo by John Gatchet

Unfortunately, nearly all wayward shorebirds seen this fall in Dungeness Bay departed before the Christmas Bird Count. The Bar-tailed Godwit first seen by Rick Klawitter on 10/9 was last seen on 11/12. The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper first seen by Bob Boekelheide on 10/26 was last seen on 11/10. The Pacific Golden Plover here through summer and fall was last seen on 10/26 (but could it still be hiding out among the Black-bellied Plovers?). The last Short-billed Dowitcher was seen on 11/5 and the last Long-billed Dowitcher on 11/23.

Fall birding trips into the Olympic Mountains can be very productive. Scott Gremel found a Mountain Bluebird at Hurricane Hill on 10/31, then Mandy Holmgren spotted 3 Clarks's Nutcrackers and 20 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches at Marmot Pass on 11/1. Max Epstein photographed 2 Bohemian Waxwings at Hurricane Ridge on 11/4. Other than Neah Bay, Pine Grosbeaks popped up at Hurricane Ridge Rd on 11/2, seen by Christian Hagenlocher and Haley Thoresen, and at Blue Mountain on 12/11, seen by Bruce Paige.

We wish you all a birdy New Year, and thank you for your bird sightings. When you find something interesting, please contact Bob Boekelheide at bboek@olympus.net, or 360-808-0196.

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