



# HARLEQUIN HAPPENINGS

Newsletter of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS)

[www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org](http://www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org) ([www.olybird.org](http://www.olybird.org))

Clallam County, Washington

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Issue 4 Jul-Aug, 2020

*"Volunteer educators and stewards for birds and habitat conservation"*

*[Editor's Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person OPAS activities have been postponed or canceled until further notice.]*

## Election of Officers

By Allyson Simons

Chair, Nominating Committee

Each year OPAS general membership elects a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Ordinarily, the Nominating Committee, appointed by the Board of Directors, nominates candidates for officers and presents them at the May membership meeting. OPAS members also may nominate candidates from the floor at that time.

Although these are not ordinary times, OPAS business must go on. Because the May membership meeting has been cancelled, I am pleased to present the candidates to you here as follows:

- President - Judith White
- Co-Vice Presidents - John Gatchet and Tom Butler
- Secretary - Kelly Lenihan
- Treasurer - Wendy Hirotaka

Judi, John, Tom, and Wendy are well known to most members for their dedicated and impressive service to OPAS. Judi White is the incumbent OPAS President, John Gatchet is the former Co-Chairperson of the Field Trip Committee, Tom Butler served as an at-large member of the Board of Directors, and Wendy Hirotaka is the incumbent OPAS Treasurer.

I would like to introduce Kelly Lenihan who has agreed to serve as Secretary. Kelly is an artist and writer with 10 published children's picture books and more in the works. She describes herself as an avid birder and a hobbyist photographer. She holds a B. A. in General Arts from the University of Washington and an Associates Degree in Business.

Now that the June membership meeting has been cancelled in accordance with National Audubon Society guidance (see below), the Board of Directors voted to have the candidates begin serving as Interim Officers on July 1, 2020, with the election at the first OPAS meeting after that.

Many thanks and sincere gratitude to Bob Boekelheide, outgoing Vice President, and Enid Phreaner, outgoing Secretary, for their outstanding service in these positions. I would like to thank Ken Wiersema for his excellent contributions as a member of the Nominating Committee.

## New! Join an OPAS Virtual Field Trip using the Zoom video conferencing platform

### Eastern Bays and Shores

*Date and Time:* 1-2 p.m., Friday, July 17

*Leader:* Judi White

*Cost:* Free.

*Meeting Place:* Zoom. Click on OlympicPeninsulaAudubon.org events calendar [here](#) to sign up.

*Features:* From the comfort of your home, take a trip to Sequim's Eastern Bays. Find out why The Great Washington State Birding Trail recognition was given, with almost 200 bird species recorded for these eBird hotspots.

*(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@olyopen.com](mailto: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.

### OPAS Board of Directors

#### Officers:

*President*, Judi White  
*Co-Vice-Pres*, Tom Butler and John Gatchet  
*Treasurer*, Wendy Hirota  
*Secretary*, Kelly Lenihan

#### Board-at-Large:

Kendra Donelson  
Dee Renee Ericks  
Bruce Fryxell,  
Susan Paulsen  
Allyson Simons

#### Committees:

*Bird Sightings/Counts*, Bob Boekelheide  
*Conservation Chair*, Bob Phreaner;  
*Vice-Chair*, Pete Walker  
*Education*, Ken Wiersema  
*Membership*, Audrey Gift  
*Field Trips Co-chairs*, Marie Grad and Jean Siesener  
*Hospitality*, Clare Hatler  
*Newsletter*, Rob Hutchison  
*Publicity*, Sandy Boren  
*Webmaster*, Mary Porter-Solberg  
*Social Media Support Team*: Mary Porter-Solberg and Enid Phreaner

Contact E-mail:  
[<opaspresident@gmail.com>](mailto:opaspresident@gmail.com)

## President's Notes

by Judith White



As we all adjust to the changes brought on by COVID-19, this moment in time gives us a chance to consider what we want our "new" normal to be like. The National Audubon Society has offered several priorities as we move into this uncharted territory.

1) Audubon Climate Action Teams are forming to let our concerns about the risk of climate change to 2/3 of our local bird species be heard by our legislators, shared with other climate action groups, and strategized at the local level. Clallam County plays an important role, since our elected 24<sup>th</sup> District officials hold key legislative positions like Senator Kevin Van De Wege (Chair of the Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks Committee; member of the Ways and Means, Health and Long-term Care Committees), Representative Steve Tharinger (Chair of the Capital Budget Committee; member of Appropriations and Health Care and Wellness Committees), and Representative Mike Chapman (Deputy Majority Whip, Vice-Chair Labor and Workplace Standards Committee; member Rural Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Finance, Transportation and Rules Committees). If you'd like to join our Olympic Peninsula Audubon Climate Action Team, we'd be happy to have your help (<https://olympicpeninsulaudubon.org/take-action>).

2) Equity, diversity, and inclusion are important features of human society, just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems. Protecting and conserving nature and the environment transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries; so must our organization in order to expand our reach and engage more people in protecting birds and habitat.

OPAS members have stepped up this month - New Board-at-Large members include Susan Paulsen (currently a field organizer for Audubon Washington), and Dee Renee Ericks (previously with Olympic National Park), and our new Secretary Kelly Lenihan, an accomplished author. Jean Siesener is enthusiastic about field trips, as she joins Marie Grad as the new Field Trip Co-Chair. Thank you to our longstanding OPAS Board members who have chosen to continue dedicating their time and talents to our organization. And a special Thank-You to Enid Phreaner, who is stepping off the Board after 4 years of service as Secretary.

Lastly, please share your thoughts and ideas on how OPAS can better meet your needs and expectations. We will be trying OPAS Book Discussion Group online. Would online General Membership meetings or Virtual Field Trips be of interest? Do you have skills to share in these areas? Send me any ideas at [opaspresident@gmail.com](mailto:opaspresident@gmail.com).

### Donate to OPAS on-line!!

Click on our website at:

[https://  
olympicpeninsulaudubon.org/  
donate](https://olympicpeninsulaudubon.org/donate).

## New!! Check it out!! New!!

Join or renew your OPAS membership on-line!! Go to OPAS website at:

<https://olympicpeninsulaaudubon.org/membership>

### OPAS Virtual Field Trips

*(Continued from page one)*

Features maps, directions, and photos of birds regularly seen across the seasons. A great planning tool for future birding, or just sit back and enjoy John Wayne Marina, Pitship Pocket Estuary, Washington Harbor, Schmuck Rd. and Marlyn Nelson County Park.

#### Dungeness Landing and Three Crabs

**Date and Time:** 1-2 p.m., Friday, August 21

**Leader:** Judi White

**Cost:** Free

**Meeting Place:** Zoom. Click on OlympicPeninsulaAudubon.org events calendar [here](#) to sign up.

**Features:** From the comfort of your home, take a trip to Dungeness Landing and Three Crabs. Find out why this Audubon Washington Important Bird Area received recognition, with almost 250 bird species recorded for these eBird hotspots. Features maps, directions and photos of birds regularly seen across the seasons. A great planning tool for future birding, or just sit back and enjoy Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge waters, Dungeness Landing County Park and Dungeness River estuary, and the Three Crabs Nearshore and Estuarine Restoration Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Viewing Area along Dungeness Bay and Meadowbrook Creek.

### Join the Audubon Climate Action Team – Olympic Peninsula Region, Washington

*By Susan Paulsen*

Climate change has become our greatest conservation challenge. The National Audubon Society's Survival by Degrees report found that two-thirds of North American birds are at risk of extinction if we don't take action. The good news is that by taking action to move

quickly to net-zero carbon emissions, we can protect up to 76% of these species.

Now, more than ever, we have a responsibility to be the voice of the birds and aggressively combat this urgent threat head-on by rapidly reducing climate polluting emissions. That's why Audubon Washington remains focused on:

Advocating for 100% clean energy in the state of Washington, including a broad suite of policies - from energy standards to pricing mechanisms - that will reduce emissions fairly and equitably.

Ensuring resilient coastal estuaries that will continue to support marine and shorebird populations along Pacific Flyway migration routes.

Building a stronger, more diverse force for advocacy on climate change, to monitor birds and advance solutions that are commensurate with this threat.

We need a powerful foundation of climate advocates in legislative districts like ours to ensure that we meet our climate goals.

**Join** the Audubon Climate Action Team - Olympic Peninsula Region, Washington, and play an active role in climate advocacy. Sign up on the [OPAS website](#) or email Susan Paulsen, Audubon Field Organizer at [susan.paulsen@audubon.org](mailto:susan.paulsen@audubon.org).

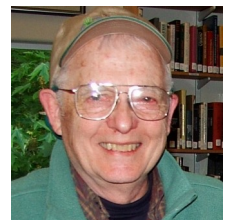
**Come stand up for birds and the places they need through advocacy!**

### Education Notes

*By Ken Wiersema*

Well folks, with the Center closed due to the COVID-19 mandates, our class schedules for the array of bird programs we had scheduled for this year have been set

back. Together with the instructor team at the Center we will be starting to offer an array of one-hour programs adapted from parts of the *Focus-On* series, *Light of the Moon* talks, *(Continued on next page)*





## Harlequin Happenings

and parts of OPAS bird programs we've offered over the years. These will be virtual classes offered via *Zoom* software. Instructions for registering for these classes will be posted in the Dungeness River Audubon Center's email notices and on both our OPAS and the Center's websites.

The first class will be on **Slugs and Snails** on July 1<sup>st</sup> (see details below), followed by **Nudibranchs** on July 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. by Cassidy Grattan, and **Crows, Ravens, and Jays** on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Follow-on programs will be offered in August. Please look for them; try them out, and give us your feedback. Suggest how we could improve, and what other subjects you'd want us to offer. The classes will be offered without tuition; however, you may make voluntary donations to support the Center's education programs on the River Center's website.

### Virtual Learning: Slugs and Snails

Garden villains or unsung heroes of the forest? Come learn about the secret world of these fascinating creatures. This program (adapted from our Focus-On Series) will look into the evolution of slugs and snails, which species are found on the Olympic Peninsula, and the roles they play in the natural world.

Presented by Jenna Ziogas. Education Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator @ Dungeness River Audubon Center. This event is free and open to anyone!

Date and time: Wednesday, July 1, 2:30 p.m. Please email <jenna@dungenessrivercenter.org> to register. We will respond with a link to the Zoom call.



Dow Lambert on ladder; Wallace Teal holding  
Photo by Laura Davis

Since the Center will be closed for construction of the new addition and new parking areas until at least summer of 2021, virtual classes and classes and meetings at other venues (when we can meet in groups again) will be the means we'll use to offer OPAS and River Center programs until the center re-opens.

Watch OPAS's and the Center's websites for a schedule of construction and how the use of Railroad Bridge

Park will be adjusted during construction. A schedule should be posted in July. Please be understanding and flexible through these changing times, and we'll get back to offering high quality programs in the new Center as soon as we can. Hope to see y'all soon. Thanks...

### Purple Martin Up-date – June, 2020

As we go to press this July, we have active Purple Martin nesting at each of our OPAS nest box sites: 3 Crabs, Protection Island NWR, Morse Creek, and Port Angeles Harbor.

We went out for our 1<sup>st</sup> egg count of 2020 to the 3 Crabs boxes on June 26<sup>th</sup>. We found nests in 16 of the 18 boxes on the tidal flats. In 10 of the boxes we found 43 eggs. High winds prevented us from checking the on-shore boxes. We've been unable to get out to our boxes on Protection Island due to COVID-19 restrictions, but the USFWS staff report nesting activity in our 7 boxes there. Three of the boxes at Morse Creek are in use by Martins, and may be observed from the adjacent Olympic Discovery Trail. Please do not leave the Trail to approach these boxes as they are on private property. In addition, on June 25<sup>th</sup>, two female Martins were observed carrying nesting material into our new for 2020, boxes on the pilings in the Port Angeles Yacht Basin. We'll be going out to check each of these sites as the nesting season progresses. Very promising start; more later. Thanks to our team members who have dedicated the time and skills toward our success.



Five PUMA eggs  
in nest box #4B  
Photo by Dow Lambert

## Conservation Matters

By Bob Phreaner

THUD! An American Goldfinch strikes our window. The bird is stunned, it lays twitching several feet from the house. We place it in a paper bag to revive it. Exhaling its own CO<sub>2</sub> stimulates deep breathing, and within ten minutes it was back on its feet and ready to take off. That was a close call for our state bird. We have extensive windows to appreciate our view of the Dungeness Bay but we need to address these collisions.

I have served on the OPAS Conservation Committee since 2012 and frequently receive emails from concerned members and the public who are upset about birds colliding with windows. I have found that the American Bird Conservancy



(abcbirds.org) is providing valuable information to decrease this human-created problem. Search at "Stop birds hitting windows" to find solutions for homeowners and architects. Birds see a reflection of vegetation in the glass and fly toward it at full speed. Thud! Some male birds attack their own reflections. Possibly this is territorial behavior. The only an-



American Goldfinch  
confronting its own reflection  
Photo by Bob Phreaner

thropogenic threat to birds that is more deadly than window strikes is domestic cats.

A February, 2020, article on the American Bird Conservancy website states that collisions with glass kill over 500 million birds annually in the US. By placing patterns in glass many of these bird strikes are preventable. Several examples are provided that demonstrate effective measures that are in use today in buildings at Northwestern University, Cleveland State University, The Javits Convention Center and the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. (Visit [birdsmartglass.org](http://birdsmartglass.org))

As stewards for birds, Audubon members can advocate for measures to reduce the threat of window strikes. We can lobby developers and architects to use bird-friendly glass in the design of structures. Public buildings and Nature Centers can set an example of possible schemes to avoid bird casualties from collisions with glass.

In the next Harlequin Happenings we will congratulate the 2020 Selectee of the OPAS Conservation Award which we hope to present at an OPAS meeting when COVID-19 precautions permit.

## Other Events

### Book Discussion Group—Upcoming Titles

By Susan Paulsen

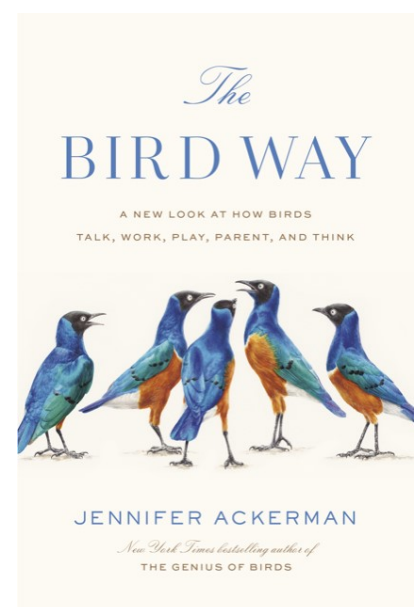
Ordinarily, the OPAS Book Discussion Group meets monthly to discuss a bird- or nature-related title in a friendly and congenial atmosphere. However, in accordance with the recommendations of the National Audubon Society on in-person gatherings during the COVID-19 outbreak, we will meet via Zoom at least through August 2020, with a reassessment of the COVID-19 situation for the September meeting as we progress along. I am helping to organize the zoom meetings with Judith White during this Zoom transition.

I believe one thing that has changed due to COVID-19 will be the inclusion of internet formats into our society as a common use of communication. If you are not sure how to use Zoom, or are uncomfortable on how to get started, please call on me. I can walk you through the steps and send you a practice invitation, where we can work out the "kinks" before the book club meeting. This is a good time to venture into new waters in a friendly environment, and I am here to help.

With the change to Zoom, there has been a change in book order. Our first Zoom book discussion on June 23 was a great success! Joyce Volmut did an amazing job of leading us through her powerful and impactful book, *Rising, Dispatches from the New American Shore* by Elizabeth Rush. If you haven't read the book yet, we would highly recommend it to anyone.

On **July 28**, the meeting will be from 4-5:30 p.m. **Bob Phreaner** will be our leader for a discussion of the Amazon Best Seller *The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent, and Think*, by Jennifer Ackerman. Click the OPAS website events calendar [here](#) to sign up.

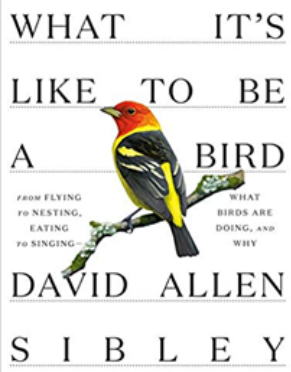
Drawing on personal observations, the latest science, and her bird-related travel around the world, from the tropical rainforests of eastern Australia and the remote woodlands of northern Japan, to the rolling hills of lower Austria and the islands of Alaska's Kachemak Bay, Jennifer Ackerman shows there is clearly no single bird way of being. (Continued on next page)





## Harlequin Happenings

In every respect, in plumage, form, song, flight, lifestyle, niche, and behavior, birds vary. It is what we love about them. As E.O Wilson once said, “when you have seen one bird, you have not seen them all.”



On **August 25**, from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m., Judith White will lead us in a discussion of the book *What It's Like To Be A Bird, From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing, What Birds Are Doing and Why*, by David Allen Sibley (2020). Click the OPAS website events calendar [here](#) to sign up.

This book is a collection of Sibley's lively short essays, for example, “Gulls” and “Diving Ducks”, which are beautifully illustrated. From Bookmarks Reviews: “[The book] is trying to draw readers not into the identification of species in the field but into the world of birds, the why and how of what they do all day long. And its larger size and beautiful artwork make it the perfect bird book to share with kids.”

The OPAS book club brings us together through the love of birds, continuing education, and social connection. I'm excited to be connecting with like-minded people to discuss works again! Any questions please call on me or Judith White.

## Birding by Ear

By Judith White & Connie Unsicker

The Savannah Sparrow was only a few feet away, busy declaring his territory with his beak opening wide and his throat visibly vibrating. I was lucky to chance upon him. But I thought he must have a voice problem, since I could not hear the Savvy's song, like buzzy summer insects. Then another, and another Savannah Sparrow defied my wish to hear them.

Kinglets were assumed to be perceptible to only the best human ears in our bird group, so we trusted the reporters who heard them and didn't think much more about it. But a Savannah Sparrow is another matter. As a retired ear doctor, I tried a few self-diagnostics. I could still hear a finger-rub next to each ear. I tried on-line hearing screening, and disregarded the findings as the company wished to sell me an expensive hearing aid. Eventually, I ordered an inexpensive device as a short-term option – which some of my patients had recommended, a “Pocket Talker” – aim the microphone at a sound, adjust the device's volume and the frequency it amplifies, and listen through head-

phones. (Also handy for late night TV so as not to disturb the spouse.) It was a relief to hear those Savannah Sparrows again, and even the kinglets.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Photo by Robert Hutchison

I, like 38 million American adults aged 20-69, have trouble hearing. For many it is mainly the high tones that are lost first. The Savannah Sparrow, with his high buzzy song, had given me a clue that I was losing my upper frequencies, since I was not aware of trouble hearing human conversation. The majority of human speech is made of low to mid-frequency sounds but certain sibilant consonants (e.g. f, s, th) are high frequency. Folks with high frequency hearing loss will often only hear part of a word and so misunderstand a message. For example, I may not hear an “s” that pluralizes a noun. Or, I don't hear “f” and “fruit” becomes “root”. Other people can have low-frequency hearing loss which impacts different speech sounds. Hearing loss has many causes – aging, noise exposure, medications, heredity, or structural ear disease. Ear wax, surprisingly, rarely impedes hearing.

But hearing loss can cause more than mere misunderstanding or inconvenience while birding. This is the motivation for our writing this article. Increasingly, research has associated hearing loss with social isolation, depression, and increased risk of falls. Now research shows a clear association between untreated hearing loss, even when mild, and declines in cognitive function. Hearing loss is the largest modifiable risk factor for developing dementia, exceeding smoking, high blood pressure, lack of exercise, and social isolation, according to an entire volume dedicated to dementia prevention in the respected journal Lancet (Livingston, G. et al. July 20, 2017). Treating hearing loss in mid-life potentially decreases the risk of developing dementia by 9%.

Hearing loss appears to contribute to social isolation, even when people are with others. The extra work of processing unclear words and sounds in conversations seems to affect memory and other cognitive tasks. The affect is cumulative, since an unused memory tends to atrophy. Surprisingly, a measurable drop in cognitive ability occurs with even mild hearing loss (Golub, J. et al. JAMA Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery: November 14, 2019).



For birders, we are already tuned-in to listening closely. If you notice a problem with hearing, talk with your doctor, and consider seeing a certified audiologist, who may suggest a wide range of aids that can now be personalized to meet an individual's specific needs. It will not only improve your "birding-by-ear" ability, it can significantly improve your long-term quality of life.

## Introducing Kids to the Magic of Birding

by Kelly Lenihan



Birding is like a treasure hunt with beautiful prizes. Every time you go outside, you can discover a winged wonder. Of all the animals in nature, birds are the easiest to find and enjoy, perfect for getting kids interested in nature. When kids see an unusual bird or observe its entertaining behavior firsthand, they'll be thrilled.

### Birding as a Family

Backyard bird feeders are a wonderful place to start. Neighborhood parks provide endless potential for observing birds, as well as butterflies, dragonflies, frogs, toads, rocks, seed pods, and more. Many parks also have wetland areas, and since water birds are often large and conspicuous, ponds are enjoyable for beginning birders.

Birds tend to be most active at the beginning or end of the day, when they are searching for food. When birdwatching with kids, explain the importance of standing very still while looking carefully for movement and listening for calls. Encourage listening for tapping, rustling, scratching, tweets, chirps, or other sounds, while slowly looking around for the slightest movement or activity. Carefully peer into shrubs and trees — any foliage that might provide cover for a bird — while keeping a safe distance to avoid distressing them or scaring them away.

### Keep It Fun

The younger your budding naturalist, the more important it is to be flexible. Rather than focusing solely on birds, encourage exploration and opportunities to discover something in the natural world. Perhaps the glimpse of a small animal—or something as simple as a caterpillar or pretty stone—become a lifelong memory.

For younger children, binoculars may be a bit tricky to master and can be frustrating. To start, skip identification

and start off with a bird behavior scavenger hunt without the pressure of pinning down an exact species. Ask kids to watch for specific behaviors, from preening and perching to walking and hopping.

### Bird Walks & Nature Trails

Nothing is more inspiring than exploring nature with children. When you're ready to move beyond your yard, consider visiting local parks and wildlife refuges. The Olympic Peninsula is home to endless opportunities for birdwatching. Nature trails, woodlands, and/or wetlands also provide exciting opportunities for exploring nature and wildlife.

### Local Resources

- > <https://olympicpeninsula.org/drive-the-loop/birding/>
- > [https://wa.audubon.org/sites/default/files/olympic\\_booklet\\_8\\_7\\_2012.pdf](https://wa.audubon.org/sites/default/files/olympic_booklet_8_7_2012.pdf)
- > <https://olympicpeninsulaaudubon.org>
- > <https://www.dungenessrivercenter.org/>

### Fun Bird Facts

- > Birds have feathers, wings, lay eggs and are warm blooded.
- > There are around 10,000 different species of birds worldwide.
- > The ostrich is the largest bird in the world. It also lays the largest eggs and has the fastest maximum running speed.
- > Scientists believe that birds evolved from theropod dinosaurs.
- > Birds have hollow bones which help them fly.
- > Some bird species are intelligent enough to create and use tools.
- > The chicken is the most common species of bird found in the world.
- > Hummingbirds can fly backwards.
- > The Bee Hummingbird is the smallest living bird in the world, with a length of just 2 inches.
- > Around 20% of bird species migrate long distances every year.
- > Homing pigeons are bred to find their way home from long distances away and have been used for thousands of years to carry messages.

## HOUSE ARREST-- New Dimensions in Birding

By John Gatchet



I was under “**House Arrest**,” but not placed there by any civil authority. Instead it was my doctor. To be more specific, my orthopedic surgeon instructed me after my surgery for a hip fracture to stay in the house. In very clear and emphatic terms, I was told to stay home and to not go into my yard. This seemed like cruel and unusual punishment for a birder, but I promised him I would abide by his instructions.

And that was the beginning of new dimensions in birding. I thought I knew everything about careful birding in my yard, as I had tallied 200 species. I was so wrong, especially about the number of species that could be seen each month and the frequency of visits. In the past I had missed careful observation of bird behavior and interaction. This all began in earnest in April and is continuing through June.



*Orange-crowned Warbler*  
Photo by John Gatchet

I was not able to stand for long and so most of my observations took place while sitting. I could use my scope with crutches for observations on Discovery Bay here in Gardiner. Now to some of

the things learned in this new journey. There were greater numbers and frequency of passerines than previously recorded. This was abundantly true for warblers and flycatchers. The high conservative count for warblers was 29 Orange-crowned Warblers as they were dripping from the trees as they passed through the yard in one direction. Five Wilson’s Warblers at one time was another high count. Just a few sightings of Townsend’s, Black-throated Gray and Yellow Warblers in the past were replaced by dozens.

Other high numbers for species at one time were 21 Purple Finch, 15 Golden-crowned Sparrow, 32 Violet-green Swallow, 48 Band-tailed Pigeon, and 46 Vaux Swift. Monthly totals for species were 126 for April, while May had an increase of one for a total of 128. So far, the total is 80 species for June.

There were many interesting things learned about bird behavior. For instance, when an American Robin gathers worms it uses the sticky surface to attach ants, beetles, and various insects before delivering food to the nest. Band-tailed Pigeons are a dominant species that will land on Douglas Squirrel to get to cracked corn on the ground. At a feeder tray an aggressive pigeon will land on the back of other pigeons to clear the way. (“It is my turn and you are out of here.”). The birds all seem to peacefully co-exist with an occasional deer mouse on the ground under the feeders. Do the birds think they are cute?

A House Wren built a nest in a swallow box. Those little birds can carry large sticks for their nests. I enjoyed the singing. Two birds were seen and my hope was for a successful nest. This was short lived, as the nest was one of those false or dummy nests that this species often builds.



*House Wren*  
Photo by John Gatchet

Only one new bird was added to my yard life list. A Wood Duck flew through the yard which was a surprise. A single Evening Grosbeak and five Red Crossbills were yard species not seen in three to four years. A Black Swift on April 26<sup>th</sup> was incredible early for this species. Merlin and Peregrine Falcon flew fairly low through the yard. I have a new respect for what can be learned and seen by birding in one place.

Some things I learned. Starling can cling to suet feeders and trees almost as successfully as woodpeckers. Our local bird shop has cages where you can hang suet and peanut feeders. They are the only way to starling proof these feeders in my neck of the woods. It took me weeks to figure this out. You can have too many Band-tailed Pigeons! Given time, patience, and perseverance, the birds will come to you.



## Nest Box Tips for Bird-friendly Housing

By Carolyn Wilcox

Earlier this year, the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS), Port of Port Angeles, and Port Angeles Yacht Club collaborated on a project to install four Purple Martin nest boxes in the Port Angeles harbor. Between the Morse Creek Purple Martin colony and the multiple colonies on Vancouver Island, experts hypothesized that a future Purple Martin colony could use Port Angeles for summer nesting. They thought it would take a couple years for Purple Martins to find the boxes.



*Female Purple Martins in PVC nest boxes in PA harbor  
Photo by Ed Mensing*

But then on Thursday, June 18th, Port Angeles Yacht Club members Kaiyote Snow and Ed Mensing, reported at least six Purple Martins in and around the nest boxes. Ken Wiersema and Dow Lambert led OPAS volunteers in the designing, building, maintaining, and monitoring of Purple Martin nest boxes. Ken stated, "It's really great that we have Purple Martins on and in our new boxes in the Port Angeles harbor in just the first

year of installing them." Although this is only the first step of a multi-step process of successfully rearing young, Scott Gremel, a wildlife biologist who first connected Purple Martin bird observations in the Port Angeles harbor in 2019 with the idea to place nest boxes there in 2020 stated, "I'm delighted!"

Purple Martin nest boxes are placed over water in order to dissuade European Starlings and House Sparrows from nesting there. Unlike Purple Martins, a native species that travel between North and South America during their yearly long-distance migration, European Starlings and House Sparrows are resident invasive bird species that nest earlier than migratory native cavity-nesting birds and deprive migrants of limited nesting sites.

If you have European Starlings or House Sparrows nesting on your property, the ecologically responsible action is to

discourage their nesting and only provide nest boxes or cavities for native species like Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Violet-green and Tree Swallows. Nest boxes designed for native bird species usually exclude invasive bird species by design and can be found at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. As a general rule, never place nest boxes on your property with a hole diameter that is larger than 1.25 inches or that include a perch on the outside of the box. If a nest box has these features, remove the perch and place a properly-sized hole extender over the entrance hole.

Purple Martins, like other cavity-nesting birds, would have historically used dead standing trees or snags (sometimes called habitat trees) for nesting. With the widespread clear-cutting of old-growth trees including old-growth snags across most of North America, as well as competition from invasive non-native cavity-nesting birds, native cavity nesting birds need our help.



*Downy Woodpecker on a dead standing tree or snag  
Photo by Carolyn Wilcox*



*Violet-green Swallow nestling  
Photo by Carolyn Wilcox*

When you plan to cut down a tree, especially one of a larger diameter, consider converting that tree into a safely-sized dead-standing tree or snag instead of removing it. Snags will attract all species of wood-

pecker, a keystone species, meaning that the presence or absence of different woodpecker species acts like a barometer to track the health of an ecosystem. Dead-standing trees do not block the sun and can also act as a natural arbor for decorative plant species like Scarlet Runner Beans.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings

If you are interested in providing nest boxes rather than snags, consider purchasing one from Dungeness River Audubon Center and create your own native bird sanctuary in your backyard.

### Bird Sightings

by Bob Boekelheide

Like many other things this year, the OPAS Birdathon/Clallam County Migratory Bird Count, held on May 9, 2020, will always be marked with a giant asterisk. Coronavirus caused several major changes for Birdathon, mostly bad but a few good. First, Olympic National Park was closed, so we missed mountain birds at Hurricane Ridge and Blue Mountain. Second, both the Makah and Quileute Indian Reservations were closed to non-residents, decreasing our count particularly of seabirds. Good thing Adrienne Akmajian lives at the Waatch Valley and works for the Makah Tribe, becoming our one valiant Neah Bay bird counter this year. Another good thing was that no one was vacationing this year, giving us the highest number of feeder-watcher hours since 2006 and the highest number of participants and total party hours since 2007. Perhaps the governor's directive actually said: "Stay Home, Count Birds."

In total, 98 participants in 45 field parties counted 19,598 individual birds of 161 species (see accompanying table). The 161 species tied for the lowest species count for the 27 years that we have data for this count. The total number of individual birds was below average for the 27 years, but still higher than the last three years.

Despite the low total species count, we ironically set record or near-record numbers for many individual species, even when corrected for our higher number of party-hours and duplicate sightings. Species with high counts this year include Canada Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Anna's Hummingbird, Sora, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Merlin, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper, House Wren, Purple Finch, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak.

Were there really more of these birds this year, or is it just because we had more observers? Likely some of both. But it definitely seemed to be an early year with higher number

of neotropical migrants such as flycatchers, vireos, and tanagers early in the season. Coincidentally, California and the Southwest experienced an early-season heat wave during the same week as our Birdathon, which may have encouraged migrants to move north.

Species showing lower than average numbers this year were relatively few. One glaring miss is our lack of seabirds found off the west coast, such as shearwaters and Common Murres. We usually count hundreds if not thousands of murres and shearwaters either by boat or from Cape Flattery, but neither of these was accessible this year. We also typically count some murres in the Strait of Juan de Fuca or in local bays, but no one saw a single murre this year. We also totally missed Peregrine Falcon and saw much lower than average numbers of Northern Shovelers, Dunlin, California Gulls, and Hermit Thrushes. Curiously, some the areas in the upper Dungeness River drainage where Hermit Thrushes used to be heard singing at dawn now have numerous Swainson's Thrushes instead. Are the Hermits and Swainson's moving upslope, as foretold by climate change models?

One other milestone is worth noting. For the first time in Birdathon history, this year Anna's Hummingbirds outnumbered Rufous Hummingbirds. As you may know, Anna's Hummingbirds are a "recent arrival" among the avifauna of the north Olympic Peninsula. Their phenomenal increase is one of the amazing stories of Pacific Northwest birds. Anna's first appeared on our Birdathon in 1996, with only 2 birds. That same year, we tallied 106 Rufous. For the next 13 years, until 2009, we never saw more than six Anna's on our Birdathon, and still considered Anna's an unusual sighting. This year we counted an amazing 304 Anna's vs. 183 Rufous. Are the Rufous suffering from the increase in Anna's? It turns out the count of Rufous this year (183) almost exactly equals the average number of Rufous for the last 27 years (180.8), so their numbers seem fairly steady. Rufous definitely seem scarcer than Anna's at places like RR Bridge Park and at some feeders in town, but they continue to be abundant in places like in the Olympic foothills. How long will that last?

We did not find as many unusual species this year, undoubtedly because people stayed close to home and did not visit hotspots. Gary Bullock found the immature Glaucous Gull at Ediz Hook, first found by Rick Klawitter on 2/24/20. Jean Siesener spotted a Yellow-headed Blackbird at 3 Crabs that was missed by other observers, showing that Jean knows how to be at the right place at the right time.





Next year's Birdathon once again coincides with the World Migratory Bird Day, which always occurs on the second Saturday in May. Put next year's count on your calendar right now, for May 10, 2014.

And many, many thanks to this year's exceptional Birdathon Counters:

Carolyn Wilcox, Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin, Kari Williamson, Marie Grad, Michael Barry, Bob & Eric Boekelheide, Sandra Boren, Jane Nicholas, Ally & John Simons, Stacey Fradkin, Marion Rutledge, Alex Patia+3 others, Ken Wiersema, Dow Lambert, Susan Savage, Bob Blush, Ida Domazlicky, Bob & Enid Phreaner, Karen Holtrop, Katie Ward, Joan Busby, Bruce Paige, Dee Renee Ericks, Sara Blake, Dan Jacobs, Wayne & Marjorie Sladek, Jean Siesener, David Durham, Walt Livingston+1 other, Elizabeth McDonald+1 other, Laura Davis, Alan Smith, John Acklen, Juanice Reyes, Rick Rodlend, Kathy Cooper, Gary Bullock, Dow Lambert, Mark Kady, Eileen Cummings, Gayleen Hays, Nora Fleming, Doris Causey, Bob Iddins, Ann & Ron Wight, Carol & Bruce Von Borstel, Lisa Bright, John & Diana Anderson, Steve Koehler, John Gatchet, Susan Smullen, Charlotte Watts, Jean Spargo, Sharon Shenar, Robert Rankin, Sharman & Glen Richardson, Kathy & Otis Bush, Brenda Landstrom, Heidi Pedersen, Barb Blackie, Judi White, John Maxwell, Deborah Reed, Adam Krey, Don & Melissa Baker, Iris Winslow, Nathan Eby, Colleen Ostrye, Cathy Lear, Kenneth Gilbertson, Grace Goschen, Kate Goschen, Glen Goschen, Claire Goschen, Janet Lamont, Sue Nattinger, Coleman Byrnes, Bob & Leslie Bagwell, Adrienne Akmajian, Scott Horton, Doris Villarreal, and Kristen Johansen.



Least Flycatcher  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

In other bird news, some unusual birds visited us, rather than us visiting them. Most exciting, on 6/19 Scott Atkinson discovered a Least Flycatcher hanging out at Carrie Blake Park. Least Flycatchers are common nest-

ing birds in northeastern North America and across Canada, even nesting along the northeastern edge of Washington State, but this was a first for Clallam County. The best part of Least Flycatchers is their ridiculously repetitive call note, an unmistakable "che-bek, che-bek, che-bek" repeated over and over. As I write this several days later the Least Flycatcher is still here, still che-bek-ing.

Scott also believes he spotted a female-type Costa's Hummingbird the same day at Carrie Blake Park, but Costa's are very difficult to separate from several other types of similar female hummingbirds. Without a great photo or having the bird in

hand, this one is likely to remain hypothetical. Another unusual hummingbird is a Calliope Hummingbird reported by Jackie Humes on 6/10 up OBrien Rd, but more details, please. During the Least Flycatcher madness at Carrie Blake Park, Michael Barry also turned up a California Scrub-Jay and a male Western Bluebird on 6/24.

It was a very good spring for both Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, with multiple sightings of each. Sue Nattinger discovered a female Wood Duck with 3 chicks at Onella Road pond on 5/17, so it's good to know that some are nesting hereabouts. Sue Nattinger is also keeping tabs on Northern Bobwhites that escaped from captivity in Joyce last winter, seeing them multiple times in May and June.

Mark Salvadalena and Scott Gremel scored the first Black Swifts of the year, watching them fly over 3 Crabs on 5/16. Speaking of swifts, Kathe Smith provides our quote of the month. After watching swarms of Vaux's Swifts descend *en masse* into the chimney at Queen of Angels church in Port Angeles, Kathe said, "It's a cross between birdwatching and spectator basketball. All those deprived TV sports fans ought to try it."



Northern Bobwhite  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide



Bar-tailed godwit  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

Some unusual shorebirds dropped in this spring. On 5/23, Bob Boekelheide discovered a breeding-plumage male Bar-tailed Godwit foraging on the mudflats south of the New Dungeness lighthouse, where it remained until at least 5/25. Bar-tailed Godwits are renowned for the

longest-distance non-stop migration flights, miraculously covering over 7000 mi in 8 days between Alaska and New Zealand. While observing the Bar-tailed Godwit on 5/25, Alexander Patia found a lovely Surfbird also near the Dungeness Lighthouse. Bob picked out a beautiful male breeding-plumage American Golden-Plover from among the abundant Black-bellieds at Dungeness Landing Park on 5/31. (Continued on next page)



Adrienne Akmajian spotted a Snowy Plover at Tsoo-Yess Beach on 5/10, up the coast from their nearest nesting areas at Grays Harbor. Bob Boekelheide found another Snowy Plover at Dungeness Landing on 6/15, hanging with some Semipalmated Plovers. A nice assortment of shorebirds frequented Dungeness Bay in May and June, such as the high count of 15 Red Knots on 5/20.

Roger Risley found a Sabine's Gull at Pt Hudson near Port Townsend on 6/3, quite a ways inland from its usual offshore migration route. As described in the Birdathon report above, an immature Glaucous Gull remained at Ediz Hook from 2/24 until at least 5/9, but another immature Glaucous Gull showed up in Dungeness Bay on 5/3, seen by Bob Boekelheide. Maybe the same bird, out for a joy-ride?

It's always cool to see owls, but how about if two fledgling Great-horned Owls show up in your backyard? That magically happened to Jean Siesener at her home northwest of Sequim on 6/22. They must be nesting somewhere nearby.

This is the time to go to the mountains. Michael Barry did just that, finding a Northern Goshawk in the upper Dungeness on 6/17. Karen Holtrop may have seen the same goshawk in the same area on 6/19. Marje Pederson reported a Golden Eagle soaring over Hurricane Ridge on 6/26, a summertime ritual. This is a good time to hear Northern Pygmy Owls tooting at dawn, as did Rick Klawitter on 5/8 at Striped Peak. No reports of American Three-toed Woodpeckers in Clallam yet this year, but Scott Walters found one not far away in Jefferson County's Tunnel Creek drainage on 5/24. In other woodpecker news, Bruce Paige discovered a Red-naped Sapsucker at the Miller Peninsula on 6/27, the second for Clallam in 2020.

On 6/11, Wallace Teal discovered a striking Eastern Kingbird at his home in Diamond Point, but it was gone the next day. Maybe not coincidentally, that next day Jean Siesener found a striking Eastern Kingbird perching around 3 Crabs. Maybe the same kingbird? We'll never know. Also at 3 Crabs, Judi White found a female Mountain Bluebird on 6/4, where it stayed for a couple days. Be sure to tell Joyce Volmut if you see Western Bluebird fledglings out for their first flights, so she can track their local nesting areas.



*Eastern Kingbird*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

One of the last spring migrants to arrive in Clallam County each year is Red-eyed Vireo. Cassidy Grattan found the first Red-eyed Vireo on 6/17 at Peabody Creek in Port Angeles. Michael

Barry found another on 6/18 along lower Jimmycomelately Creek in Blyn. On 6/24, a Red-eyed Vireo sang at RR Bridge Park, the first recorded there since 2015.



*Red-eyed Vireo*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

Besides shorebirds and seabirds, Dungeness

Spit sometimes turns up interesting land birds as well. For example, Bob Boekelheide found a Rock Wren on the Spit just past the 4-mile marker on 6/16.

On 5/3, Roger Hoffman found a most interesting Vesper Sparrow on the west side of Port Angeles, near the 18th St access to the Olympic Discovery Trail. Vesper Sparrows were presumably more abundant in eastern Clallam County more than 30 years ago, but they sure are scarce now. In other sparrow



*Vesper Sparrow*  
Photo by Roger Hoffman

news, two different Golden-crowned Sparrows were still here in late May, one seen 5/25 by Lindsey Schromin-Wawrin and Carolyn Wilcox in Port Angeles and one seen 5/26 by Joyce Volmut and Steve Koehler northwest of Sequim.

Lastly, migrant Yellow-headed Blackbirds show up in May. Other than one at 3 Crabs for Birdathon, Bob Bagwell and David Durham reported one on 5/5 at Dungeness Rec Area and Adrienne Akmajian found another on 5/16 at the Waatch Valley near Neah Bay.

Migrant shorebirds return from the Arctic over the next two months, so it's time to search nearby shorelines. And even though the nesting season is winding down, many oddball birds keep showing up during summer. When you find something interesting, email Bob Boekelheide at [bboek@olympus](mailto:bboek@olympus) with your report. Thank you very much for your sightings!

# Harlequin Happenings

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



## Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

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