



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 4 July-August 2021

"Volunteer educators and stewards for birds and habitat conservation"

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

OPAS Field Trips: A message from the Field Trip Chair

by Marie Grad, Field Trip Chair



I am happy to announce our first field trip since the pandemic began. Ken Wiersema and Dow Lambert will take eight people out to Three Crabs when they survey the Purple Martin nest boxes on July 22nd.

This is always a fun outing. Participants will be able to look inside an occupied nest box using an endoscope. Since some of the nest boxes are on pilings you will be walking out onto the tide flats, so bring your calf level boots (Wellies or Bogs). There is always a good chance that there will be numerous shorebirds out on the flats. So don't forget your spotting scope if you have one.

Field trip and registration details can be found on the Events Calendar of the OPAS website. On the [event details](#) page, be sure to review our current COVID-19 guidelines for this field trip. Details of the trip follow:

Purple Martin Outing -- 2021

Date & Time: Thursday, July 22, 8:30 -10:30 a.m.

Leaders: Ken Wiersema and Dow Lambert

Meeting place: 3 Crabs parking area

Cost: No charge

Features: Taking count of and monitoring the nesting of Purple Martins. This outing focuses on our OPAS community science Purple Martin colony project on 3 steel pilings in the tide flats just off shore, and on the boxes fastened to root wads next to the parking area at 3 Crabs. By mid-July, a few young Martins may have fledged, but most chicks will still be in their nests. We'll be viewing the inside of nest boxes with an endoscope camera, where you'll see the chicks at various stages of development. By mid-to-late August, they will be clustering together on the nest boxes and power lines along 3 Crabs Road, preparing for their migration to South America. Numerous other shore and water birds will also be out on the tide flats ... a good opportunity to view them, too.

Bring: Binoculars, scopes, wear calf-level boots (as we will be walking out onto wet, soft, sandy tide flats for a close look at the nest colony), and personal accoutrements, as desired. If it's windy, a light windbreaker will be a welcome garment.

COVID considerations: Please pre-register for the trip. We'll ask attendees to self-notify the trip leader on your vaccination status. We'll maintain social distances, except to view handheld screens linked to our endoscope camera. Un-vaccinated folks will be expected to wear a mask while viewing screens. Optics will not be shared with unvaccinated attendees. Trip size will be limited to 8 persons. If the trip is full when you register, a waitlist option is available on Eventbrite. If you need to cancel, please let the trip leader know so that a person on the waitlist can be contacted.

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

Liability Form: We are asking field trip participants to print, sign, and bring a liability release form the day of the field trip. You can review, download, and print the form in advance by [clicking here](#). **New!** We now have an easy way to eSign the form online and you will not have to bring it with you when participating in a field trip. [Click here to eSign the liability release form](#). Once you sign the form, it will be good for other OPAS field trips.

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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Interim President's Notes

by Ken Wiersema



Summer arrived with a vengeance this past week-end. In this heat, please consider, if you feed birds or not, a source of clean fresh water. Water brings as many birds to your yard as the best of bird seeds. Also, important -- clean and provide fresh water every day, or use a bubbler to circulate and aerate the water. If you have a closed system, be sure to replenish the water in this hot spell. Watch the different birds from hummers to raptors drink and bathe. Fun!

We expect the summer to be busy and productive. Our field trips will carefully restart, and OPAS leaders will be gathering for an in-person retreat to plan next year's programs and events. If the construction schedules hold and the COVID threat recedes, we may be able to start our program year in the new Center in September. Contemplate! In-person meetings again! We're also considering the potential for live broadcasts of our meetings and classes for our members and friends who have enjoyed the virtual meetings we've held during COVID times. Please contact a board member or me, and let us know if you would welcome this benefit?

River Center Expansion and Remodel

Work on the new parts of the River Center proceeds toward a September "soft" opening. In the old building, the inside bird viewing area will be delayed a while, and work on the exhibit space will continue after reopening. We fully expect the new entrance road, lighted parking lot, large meeting room, kitchen, class room, and offices to be near full operation by September. Lots yet to get done. Please watch for our calls for volunteers to help with interior finishing, fencing, and landscaping. We expect to be scheduling work parties by no later than August.

Arrivals and Departures:

Wendy Hirotaka, our much valued, hardworking, volunteer treasurer of 3 years, leaves office at the end of June. Many thanks Wendy for your dedication and contributions to OPAS. Very well done! -- Now!! We urgently need a treasurer! Based on Wendy's recommendation, our Board approved hiring a part time bookkeeper, to reduce our treasurer's work. We're asking one of our members to step forward and take on this important job. No bookkeeping or corporate comptroller experience required. Just need an honest person, who can write checks, deposit contributions and memberships, and pay OPAS's bills. If you'd like more information on volunteering for this office, please call, text, or email me or any board member.

I also welcome **Skip Perkins** to our board, as a member at large. Skip joins us this June after moving here from Iowa. Skip found us by becoming a regular on Bob B's Wednesday morning bird walks (soon to be re-started for our members). Thanks Skip.

And, as many of you know, this May the sudden death of **Dennis Dickson**, took a longtime friend of birds and a valued board member of OPAS and the Dungeness River Audubon Center from our midst. We've expressed our condolences on behalf of OPAS to his family and friends.

An advertisement for Wild Birds Unlimited. It features a photograph of a bird perched on a flower. The text reads: "Bring this add in for \$5.00 off any purchase over \$25.00!". To the right, it lists "THE FRESHEST SEED AVAILABLE", "BIRD FEEDERS", and "NATURE GIFTS". At the bottom, it says "YOUR BACKYARD BIRDFEEDING SPECIALIST!" and provides the address "275953 Hwy 101, Gardiner WA 98382" and phone number "PH: 360 797 7100". It also lists the hours: "Open: 10AM to 6PM Mon. to Fri., 9AM to 6PM Sat. & Sun." The logo "Wild Birds Unlimited" is on the left side.

Interim President's Notes

(Continued from page two)

Swan Safe Project Update

Today, as I was composing this note, OPAS received word that the property owner who had agreed to sign the easement to allow the project to go forward has been recovering from some personal health issues. He's prepared now to move forward and has committed to sign the easement by NLT 1st week of July. The County Roads Department has approved our permit application, and the PUD is gearing up to schedule the work toward the end of this summer. John Acklen's skillful negotiations with Wave Broadband resulted in a new, lower bid, along with their commitment to sign on as a Swan Safe partner. Good Work John! And again, a big THANK You to Shelly Ament, WDFW biologist, for her untiring commitment to making Swan Safe proceed this summer. John Acklen, our OPAS lead person for this project, will return from his extended vacation in early July and resume providing updates on the work.

An Opportunity for the Wild Olympics Campaign

by Bob Phreaner Conservation Co-chair



The OPAS Conservation Committee would like to use this column to review the history of the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and to inform you of the bill's current status.

In 2008, a coalition of conservation and recreation groups formed The Wild Olympics Campaign to protect the Olympic Peninsula watershed. The Wild Olympics Campaign developed an initial draft vision in 2009, which included 160,000 acres of wilderness additions and more than 550 miles of Wild and Scenic rivers on the Olympic Peninsula.

OPAS presented a resolution in October, 2011, to the Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee to obtain statewide support for Wild Olympics. The Audubon Council of Washington passed this resolution: [Click here to read](#). More recently, Wild Olympics legislation was introduced in the US House of Representatives in 2019 by Congressman Derek Kilmer, and passed in February, 2021. The Bill was introduced by Senator Patty Murray on February 25, 2021 as SB455 and was heard by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining on June 16, 2021.

In the last decade OPAS support of Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act has not waned, and with the reality of climate change, the urgency of passing this Act by a narrowly progressive Congress couldn't be greater. The OPAS Board recently appropriated \$200 to help fund a yard

sign publicity program for passage of the Wild Olympics Act, and supported the Wild Olympics Coalition testimonial letter to the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining.

To learn more of the background of the Wild Olympics Campaign please go to olybird.org. Select [Conservation Stewardship](#) and scroll down for the detailed OPAS chapter history of this issue. To offer your support for the Wild Olympics Campaign go to wildolympics.org, where you will see many endorsements from diverse interest groups. Please add your name to the over 12,000 who have signed this important [petition](#) to our legislators.

Clallam County Birdathon Report, 2021

by Bob Boekelheide



Last year at this time, while writing about the 2020 Birdathon, I stated that the 2020 data will always be marked with a giant asterisk because of COVID. Now I'm writing about the 2021 Birdathon, and I'm sorry to say that this year's data will once again be marked with a giant asterisk, again because of COVID.

During this year's Birdathon, held on May 8, 2021, 75 participants in 52 field parties counted 15,621 individual birds of 162 species ([see accompanying table](#)). The species count was one species more than the 161 species we recorded last year, but still well below the average count of 179 for the last 28 years. The count of 15,621 individual birds this year was also low, compared to an average of over 23,320 birds counted per year over the past 28 years, and particularly compared with the highest-ever Birdathon count of 33,537 tallied in 2010.

Like in 2020, this year both the Makah Reservation at Neah Bay and the Quileute Reservation at La Push were closed to non-residents, which greatly decreased our counts of nesting and offshore seabirds. Without offshore boats or access to coastal viewing sites like Cape Flattery, we potentially missed thousands of murrelets, shearwaters, and other seabirds. Neah Bay and La Push are also renowned for providing unique species typically not found elsewhere, so we are truly handicapped without visiting them.

One change between last year and this year was a decrease in both the number of count participants and in the number of party-hours. In 2020, 98 people contributed 322 party-hours to the count, the highest number of participants since 2007.

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Harlequin Happenings

You may recall that last year Clallam County was under COVID lockdown, keeping us all home and more than happy to count birds. This year, as restrictions eased and more people started traveling, 75 participants contributed 266 party-hours, very close to average for the last 28 years. The decrease in participants and party-hours likely decreased the total number of birds counted.

This year very few species set record or near-record numbers for the count. Species with relatively high counts included Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Belted Kingfisher, and Mountain Bluebird. Mountain Bluebird particularly stands out, with a flock of six seen by Doris Causey at Schmuck Road.

Several species scored lower-than-average numbers. Other than offshore seabirds, species with low numbers included Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Whimbrel, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Steller's Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, House Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Townsend's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler. There was a general trend for lower numbers of neotropical migrants such as flycatchers and warblers. Were they just late this spring, or are their numbers really lower this year?



Yellow-headed Blackbird
Photo by Robert Hutchison

Four unusual species appeared during Birdathon count week but not on count day. First, Heidi Pedersen found two Lesser Goldfinches visiting her home in Port Angeles on 5/5/21. Expect more Lesser Goldfinches around here as they expand their range north from California and Oregon. Second, John Calhoun spotted a Yellow-headed Blackbird at a feeder near Sappho on 5/6/21. Alex Patia, while traveling on a Puget Sound Express boat in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, found a Common Tern at Eastern Bank on 5/9/21. Lastly, other

count-week birds are two Pine Grosbeaks photographed by Ken and Mary Campbell at Obstruction Point Road on 5/5/21.

Let's hope that COVID will be gone by May, 2022, and that all of Clallam County will be accessible for next year's Birdathon. Put next year's International Migratory Bird Day/Clallam County Birdathon on your calendars right now, for May 14, 2021.

Many thanks to this year's dedicated Birdathon Counters: Bruce Paige, Marie Grad, Melissa Marshall, Dave Manson & Family, Scott Gremel, Roger Hoffman, Bob & Barb Boekelheide, Steve Koehler, John & Linda Mendoza, Karen Holtrop, Laura Davis, Alan Smith, Jim Karr, Emerson Quarton, Vincent Thrutchley, Susan Savage, Bob Blush, John Gatchet, Doris Causey, Dee Renee Ericks, Sara Blake, Bob & Enid Phreaner, Kendra Donelson, Don & Melissa Baker, Erin Fox, Katie Ward, Sandy Boren, Bob Iddins, John Acklen, Juanita Reyes, Carol & Bruce Von Borstel, Pat & Tom Backe, Jim & Audrey Gift, Lisa Bright, Dow Lambert, Ken Wiersema, John & Diana Anderson, Gary Bullock, Rob Hutchison, Margaret Levitan, Jane Nicholas, Michael Barry, Kathy & Otis Bush, Brenda Landstrom, Charlotte Watts, Robert Rankin, Heidi Pedersen, Iris Winslow, Adam Krey, Cara Borre, Asta Tobiassen, Nancy Bluestein-Johnson, Barb Blackie, Janssen Solberg & friend, Sue Nattinger, Coleman Byrnes, Stephanie McCarty, Susan Campbell, Steve Shultz, Adrienne Akmajian, Scott Horton, Alex Patia, Cade Barker, David Melin, Chris Nye, John Calhoun, Ken & Mary Campbell.

You may think that summer just started, but post-breeding migration has already begun. Migrant shorebirds are already returning from the Arctic, so it's time to focus on shores and bays. The nesting season may be slowing down, but now is the time when unusual migrants show up, so be vigilant. When you find something interesting, please email Bob Boekelheide at bboek@olympus.net with your report. Thank you very much for your sightings!

If you are interested in local bird sightings, check out eBird at <https://ebird.org/explore>, then under "Explore Regions" enter Clallam or Jefferson County. Please join eBird and add your own sightings, as well.

Western Bluebird/ Climate Change Update June 2021

by Joyce Volmut, Coordinator



The Climate Change Survey period of May 15-June 15 was in full swing this spring, thanks to the number of people vaccinated and a change in COVID 19 guidelines.

Seventy six species were reported during this period: 122 checklists through eBird; 12 reports through email. Audubon



Dan Stahler with OPAS nest boxes
Photo by Bob Phreaner

Interested in attending an OPAS virtual event?

All events can be found on the [OPAS website](#) under Events, Event Calendar. Click on the event you're interested in attending, and a Register button will appear. That's easy! A registration message will be sent to you, with information on how to log in to Zoom for the event. It's a good idea to register at least a day before the event.

If you are not sure how to use Zoom or are uncomfortable with how to get started, please contact us (president@olympicpeninsulaudubon.org). We can walk you through the steps and send you a practice invite, where we can work out the "kinks" before the meeting. This is a good opportunity to learn about Zoom in a friendly environment; we are here to help you fly into the modern communication era.

Climate Watch target birds included: Western Bluebird - 23 individuals; Red-breasted Nuthatch - 11 individuals; American Goldfinch - 85 individuals; Spotted Towhee - 41 individuals. Of the 23 Western Bluebirds reported, six confirmed nesting sites were reported, four in nest boxes and two in snags. No fledglings were reported at the time of this writing.

Climate Watch and the OPAS Western Bluebird Program, though intertwined, are somewhat separate programs. The OPAS Western Bluebird program was initiated to collect data on Western Bluebirds in the area and particularly their nesting habits. Climate Watch, however, has a greater purpose -- to learn more about how birds are affected by climate change. The Audubon report "Survival by Degrees" provides a story of birds and climate vulnerability by collecting data on where they breed and winter.

For example, the target birds in the climate watch study each face differing outcomes where the changing climate is concerned. The Red-breasted Nuthatch maintains 34% of its habitat, but the overall range is expanded northward. The Spotted Towhee maintains approximately 45% of its range. The Western Bluebird expands its range by 29% in both winter and summer. The American Goldfinch expands its range by 55%

A great number will lose significant portions of their range. Vulnerability is modeled by global temperature rise (by 1.5 degrees, 2.0, and 3.0 degrees Celsius), and looks at all portions of the range where the bird breeds and where the bird winters. In Clallam County, 36 species are listed with high vulnerability, that is, over a rise of 3.0 degrees Celsius. The Rufous Hummingbird is one of those birds with high vulnerability -- it has the potential for losing up to 70% of its range.

For more information, and what you can do, visit [Survival by Degrees 389 Species on the Brink](#); Volunteer for Climate Watch. Help collect data in 2 simple 5 minute surveys a year. Contact joyce.volmut@gmail.com Project Coordinator.

Harlequin Happenings

17th annual Puget Sound Bird Fest, September 11-12, 2021

Award-winning author Maria Mudd Ruth has been selected as the 2021 Keynote speaker. Maria will kick off the festivities on Saturday morning at 10:00am with her presentation 'The Not-so Awkward Auks'.

The Salish Sea is home to a fascinating family of diving seabirds known as auks, or alcids. Though often described as "awkward" or "clumsy" in field guides, these web-footed birds are amazingly well adapted to life in the air, on land, and especially at sea. Maria will talk about two of her favorite auks—the shy, tree-nesting Marbled Murrelet, and its extroverted, burrow-nesting cousin, the Pigeon Guillemot.

Maria is the author of more than a dozen books on natural history topics for children and adults, including *Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet*, a narrative natural history of an endearing and endangered seabird. Her most recent non-fiction book, *A Sideways Look at Clouds*, was awarded the Nautilus Silver Medal in 2017.



Rhinoceros Auklet with fish
Photo by David Gluckman

Other weekend activities include presentations throughout the day on Saturday, and traditional favorites such as the Kid's Corner and the People's Choice Photography. Guided tours of local birding hotspots will be offered throughout the weekend by the Pilchuck Audubon Society, which also plans to host a native plant sale.

We'll also have our annual bird photo contest, free and open to all, in conjunction with the festival. We had more than 50 entrants last year, with some awesome photos submitted. More information on entering the contest will be available on

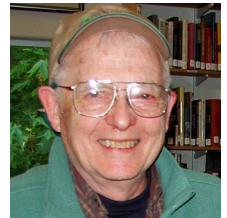
the website (<http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com/>) in the next month or so. We also have a "17 and under category" which had about 7 entrants last year, and we'd like to see more youth entrants. Please pass the word on this division of the contest.

The Bird Fest Planning Committee is hard at work planning the 2021 event, and will continue to update the Bird Fest website as the festival schedule develops. Please note that, because of uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, indoor activities such as presentations and workshops may be delivered online, while field activities will be offered in person with limited group sizes.

For the latest information, please visit <http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com/> or email Jennifer.leach@edmondswa.gov. Also, be sure to follow us on Facebook.

Purple Martin Project Report

by Ken Wiersema



The nesting season started off in fits and starts this year. Here is a summary status as of the end of June.

3 Crabs

18 nest boxes installed on steel pilings on the tide flats. Nesting in boxes checked on 22 June. We found nesting activity in 14 of the 18 boxes, and a total of 11 eggs in 3 of the boxes. It was a bit early to expect many eggs, but we have to do our checks when the tides allow us safe access. There are also Martins in 3 of the 4 nest boxes near the parking area. The 4 boxes on Dungeness Farms have become hunting perches for Bald Eagles, however there are Martins in them, too.

Protection Island NWR

We are scheduled to do a box check on our 7 boxes on the docks on 29 June. We also plan to install a new foundation post for our nest boxes near the maintenance building. This site will replace the boxes previously installed on the old flag pole, which is to be removed. We have reports from USFWS staff that there are Martins on and in the boxes on the docks.

Diamond Point

We have a report from Wallace Teal that he has nest building in progress in 8 of his 12 gourds on the beach. No eggs reported as of 25 June.

Port Angeles Yacht Basin

Dee Renee Ericks, Carolyn Wilcox, and Kaiyote Snow have



Dee Renee Ericks

*The Crew checking PUMA nest boxes for eggs at 3 Crabs.
Photo by Dee Renee Ericks*



Dee Renee Ericks

*Dow Lambert with endoscope.
Photo by Dee Renee Ericks*



*6 Purple Martin eggs in nest box,
using Dow Lambert's endoscope.*

reported that we have at least 3 Martins in the 4 boxes. Nesting activities on-going. We believe one of the birds is a 2nd year male, so we're optimistic we'll have chicks this year.

Morse Creek [note: site is on private property]

This site was damaged by high tides and waves over the winter. We lost one of the support poles and several nest boxes. We installed 3 refurbished boxes on the one remaining pole this April. Martins were on them within minutes. Dee Renee has observed as many as 7 adult birds, both males and females, on the boxes in May and June. We expect to have a successful 2021 nest year.

Thanks to Dow Lambert, Vince Thrutchely, Wallace Teal, and Dee Renee Ericks for their help on June 22d.

Harlequin Happenings

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



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Sequim, WA 98382-0502

NAS Code Y08

Date: _____

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

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