



# 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 5 Sep-Oct 2022

*“Volunteer educators and stewards for birds and habitat conservation”*

## OPAS Programs for September and October

### Program for September 21, 2022

Due to a late notification that our planned speaker for September would be unable to present a program, we had to scramble to put together an alternate. So, with the responsive support of our OPAS team and the River Center staff, we’re going to offer a composite, 3-part program on projects that OPAS leaders and the River Center team have been working on these past several years, and will be achieving salient results this fall.

We’ll leave ample time for questions and provide opportunities for you to join one [or more?] of these volunteer projects.

#### Part 1



Jenna Ziogas

Jenna Ziogas, River Center Education Manager, will present an illustrated preview of the environmental education exhibits that are to be installed this fall in the Center’s remodeled exhibit space.

For nearly 3 years, a team of volunteers and an exhibit contractor have been designing a comprehensive combination of exhibits that will convey the natural history and human heritage of the Dungeness River watershed. Many of the bird and animal specimens from the existing

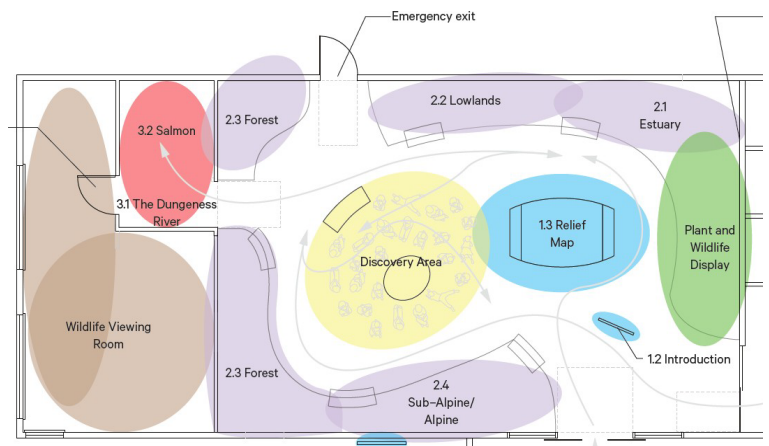


Exhibit Space Concept Plan

exhibits and cabinets will be integrated into a portrayal of the watershed from its alpine headwaters to its delta.

#### Part 2



Dee Renee Ericks  
 Photo: Dan Jacobs

For over 2 years, Dee Renee Ericks, Project Bird Safe lead, has been the OPAS project leader of our program to reduce, and hopefully eliminate, bird strikes on the large glass windows on the Peninsula College campus in Port Angeles. She has established an understanding of the need and built a strong collaborative working relationship with the College faculty, staff, and students. She applied for and received a National Audubon Collaborative Grant, (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. The *Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society* meets monthly (except July, August, and December) on the third Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Nature Center, 1943 West Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA, (360) 681-4076. The public is welcome.

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## President's Notes

by Ken Wiersema



When I took my dog, Jake, out this cool morning, a skein of honking Canada Geese swooped low over the field to greet us. Fall is on the way! Time to schedule taking down our Purple Martin boxes, and cleaning them for winter storage - and, of course, to do the planning for our forthcoming year of OPAS programs, classes, and projects. We intend, barring recurring pandemics, to offer an array of activities and field trips. We'll provide most at the remodeled and expanded Dungeness River Nature Center. The current schedule is to have the Bridge reopened by early October, and we'll be advertising our always-popular Wednesday morning bird walks, led by Bob Boekelheide and his team.

### Programs

Tom Butler, our program chair and VP, is scheduling new programs and bringing back some of your favorites. And, while we enjoy having y'all attend in person, with the new capabilities of the Center we're hoping to offer folks an opportunity to attend some meetings via online systems too. Watch for the details. However, the new parking lot with its lights and hard surfaced walkways should entice folks to join us for programs even in winter's darkest months.

### Retreat

On August 18<sup>th</sup> your OPAS leaders met for most of a day to assess our past year and plan for Fiscal Year '22-'23. I thank our Board for contributing their time and thoughtful energy to guiding and planning OPAS's future. Some salient facts and decisions resulting from the Retreat are:

1. Our financial condition is good and we increased our support for several other local environmental organizations. A budget for this year is to be approved at the September Board meeting.
2. We'll continue to offer both print and online newsletters; we'll also encourage those who have the capability to receive the newsletter via our website to do so.
3. We made some edits to our bylaws, which will be voted on at a membership meeting.
4. We'll be adopting three primary goals for our upcoming fiscal year.
5. We appointed a committee to draft a diversity statement for OPAS.

### Leaders

As with many volunteer organization we need some fresh, and hopefully younger blood. We understand that young folks who are

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still in the work force and have the responsibilities of raising a family have very limited time to make volunteer commitments. We also know there are folks who enjoy birds, our environment, and science. So especially to those younger retirees in our midst, there is no better way to get into your new community, learn about birds, and make new friends than to offer a bit of your time and energy to become part of our leadership team. Please reach out to me or any of our Board and we'll be glad to discuss the opportunities we can offer. Thanks

**ACOW**

OPAS will be one of the Chapters hosting Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) at the Dungeness River Nature Center. ACOW is an annual gathering of leaders from the 25 Audubon Chapters in WA. There will be programs, speakers, food, and panel discussions featuring national and statewide leaders. We'll need some event helpers, and welcome those of you that want to help to step forward. The meeting will start on Friday afternoon Sept 30<sup>th</sup> and conclude by noon on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Info and a registration form are online at -- <https://wa.audubon.org/chapters-centers/audubon-council-washington-2022>

**OPAS Program for September 21, 2022**

*(Continued from page one)*

which OPAS matched, to provide seed funding for the project. Her program will present the current status of the work, action to be accomplished this fall, and outline the future plans and



*Peninsula College Library windows  
Photo by Dee Renee Ericks*

resources that will be necessary for the success of this project.

**Part 3**

Since 1998, an OPAS team has been committed to establishing a sustainable and expanding Purple Martin colony on the North Olympic Peninsula. We started with 3 scrap wood boxes hung on the abandoned wood pilings in front of the 3 Crabs Restaurant. Today our 65 Martin boxes extend from Protection Island NWR to Port Angeles. Ken Wiersema will present a short program that details the results of our 2022 breeding season, and new information on the migration patterns of the western



*Ken Wiersema with Purple Martin nest box*



*Dee Renee Ericks*

*Purple Martin with dragonfly to feed nestlings  
Photo by Dee Renee Ericks*

subspecies of Purple Martins.

**OPAS Program for October**

**“Birds, Bears, and Salmon”**, Presented by Dr. Thomas Quinn, University of Washington, at the Dungeness River Nature Center, **Wednesday, October 19, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

Dr. Thomas Quinn from the University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences will speak about the ecology, behavior, and conservation of salmon and trout as indispensable inhabitants of the Salish Sea and beyond. The fortunes of these iconic fish are inextricably linked to destinies of birds and the greater ecosystems they inhabit. *(Continued next page)*



## Harlequin Happenings



*Dr. Thomas Quinn*

A renowned expert with an encyclopedic knowledge of salmon and trout, Professor Quinn is an engaging speaker and widely published author of scientific articles and texts. He will present at the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society's October meeting on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the newly constructed Dungeness River Nature Center.

print for homeowners to eliminate lawns to improve the chance that birds survive climate change induced drought.

Let's reconsider our lawns. In 2005, NASA satellite imagery determined that close to 2% of arable land in the US is turf-grass. How much gas is wasted mowing lawns? Fertilizer and glyphosate harm the environment when they enter our water system. Irrigation of lawns in the dry season when grass naturally goes dormant wastes water. Instead of a lawn could you grow a dry meadow to nurture pollinators? Or perhaps turn your lawn into a food producing garden? How about slowly replacing ornamentals with native plants?

Studies show that insect populations are in decline. Native plants have co-evolved with native insects. Native plants support the native insects that are vital for the protein young birds need to develop.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology has programs focused on turning some of the 40 million acres of lawns in the US into bird habitat by planting natives.

At our home, we have had success planting Red Flowering Current, Indian Plum, Serviceberry, Nootka Rose, and Oregon Grape in the Fall when they benefit from the coming rains. Browsing deer can damage young plants so we have placed fencing around our shrubs.

The Clallam Conservation District ([clallamcd.org](http://clallamcd.org)) is an excellent resource for learning about native plants and the wildlife usage of these trees and shrubs. Remember, bare root plants available in late winter and planted in the Spring require watering and mulching to survive our dry season. An alternative is to take advantage of our coming rainy season and start naturoscaping your yard this Fall.



*Bald Eagle enjoying its dinner*  
*Photo by Jason Ransom, North Cascades NP*

## Conservation Matters: Naturescaping the yard

*by Bob Phreaner, Conservation Co-Chair*

As the days grow shorter, we can expect the rainy season to return soon. Fall is the best time to plant native trees and shrubs to help birds on the Olympic Peninsula.

Doug Tallamy is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 97 research publications and has taught insect-related courses for 40 years. His first book, *Bringing Nature Home* (2009), alerted us to the declining numbers of native plants. His solution is for homeowners and naturalists to plant natives for wildlife. In 2014, Tallamy co-authored *The Living Landscape*. His most recent book, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*, is a blue-



## Dungeness Data: Killdeer in our midst

*by Bob Boekelheide*

*(In place of the former Bird Sightings column, Bob is exploring data from OPAS Community-Science Projects. 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 add your own sightings to eBird as well.)*

On the official Clallam County bird list, the group of birds with the highest number of species is the shorebirds, also known as "waders" in Britain. Shorebirds include plovers, sandpipers, and their myriad relatives, such as oystercatchers, turnstones,



curlews, godwits, dowitchers, and many more. An amazing total of 48 shorebird species have been recorded in Clallam County, about one-eighth of the total 396 species of birds currently on the Clallam list.

Equally interesting to me, out of all these 48 shorebird species only four regularly nest in Clallam County. Can you name the four shorebird species that nest every year in Clallam County?

The other 44 species of shorebirds recorded in Clallam County are migrants, nesting mostly in the Arctic, taiga forests, or inland prairies, then showing up here during migration. A few of these migrant species stay for the winter, like Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlin, but most do not. Some shorebird species on the Clallam list do not even nest in North America, like Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint, both of which nest in Asia and rarely show up in North America. Fully a third of all the shorebird species on the Clallam list could be considered “rare,” not seen every year.

Okay, here are the four shorebird species that nest every year in Clallam County: Black Oystercatcher, Killdeer, Wilson’s Snipe, and Spotted Sandpiper. Denny Van Horn once found Greater Yellowlegs with chicks by the Quillayute River, but that is the only breeding record we know for yellowlegs in Clallam County. Consequently, I’m sticking with only four regularly-nesting shorebird species.

Of the four nesting species, probably the best known by

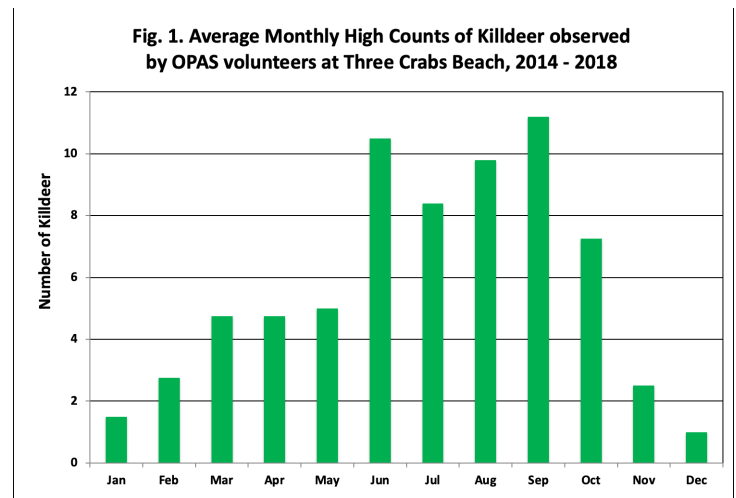


Adult Killdeer in August. Notice that its long flight feathers are darker and unworn in contrast to the frayed edges of its wing coverts, showing that this bird is carrying out its “pre-basic molt” at the end of the nesting season. Photo by Bob Boekelheide

most birders is the pugnacious Killdeer. Killdeer are vocal plovers with spunky attitudes that place their cryptic nests in gravelly areas, then defend their territories with shrill calls and broken-wing displays. They are easily recognized by two

bold stripes across their white neck and breast. Despite these striking markings, they also blend in very well with the landscape, until they start making noise. They are a common nesting bird throughout the Puget Sound region, as well as over most of North America from central Mexico to central Canada.

Even though Killdeer are present in Clallam County throughout the year, their number vary by season. This is evident from data collected by OPAS volunteers during the Three Crabs Restoration Project, where we counted birds on the shores of Dungeness Bay three times every month for five years from 2014 to 2018 (Figure 1).



Granted these data are just from Three Crabs, but Figure 1 shows the annual cycle of this local Killdeer population very well. During nesting months of March, April, and May, we recorded consistent numbers of territorial adults. The highest counts occurred between June and September, when chicks leave their nests and Killdeer form loose flocks. The lowest time of year occurred in December and January, when many local Killdeer leave their territories and move somewhere else for the winter. Where do they go? Do they migrate south? It’s not certain for our local Killdeer, but it does appear that local numbers decrease in winter.

Killdeer’s nesting season may last several months, much longer than other shorebird species that nest in more northerly climates. The earliest Killdeer pairs around here usually lay eggs in April, then little chicks start running around in May. They almost always lay four well-camouflaged eggs, all crammed inside their gravel nest. After an average incubation period of about 25 days, the eggs hatch within a day of each other. Like many shorebirds, this synchrony is because Killdeer parents don’t start incubating their eggs continuously until the last egg is laid. (Continued on next page)



## Harlequin Happenings



Adult Killdeer standing over its nest with four beautifully-camouflaged eggs. Photo by Dow Lambert.

The precocial chicks leave their nest within hours of hatching, sometimes as soon as they dry off. They grow quickly, able to find food for themselves while their protective parents watch for predators. The chicks start flying when they are only three to four weeks old, which means the period between the start of laying eggs and chicks taking flight may be as short as only seven to eight weeks.

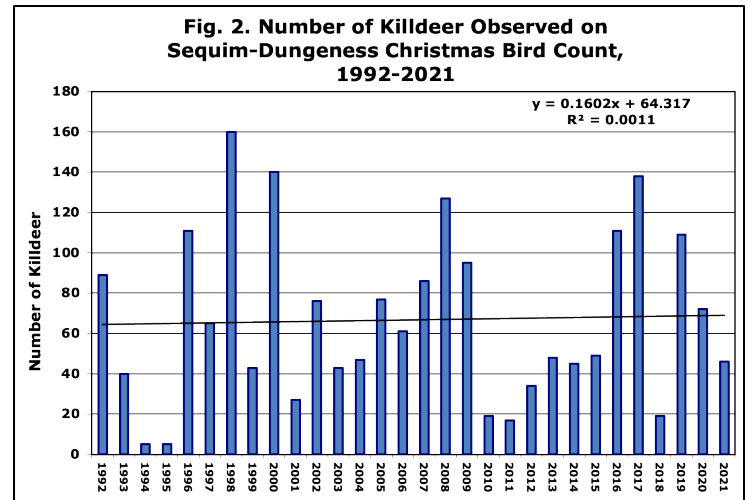


Adult Killdeer with its small chick. Photo by Dow Lambert.

If Killdeer begin their first clutch in April and their first chicks are independent by late May, it may give them time to lay second clutches, or replacement clutches if they lose their first nesting attempt. Sure enough, around here we sometimes see chicks as late as August, from eggs laid in June or July. In other, more-southerly areas of the U.S, researchers think some Killdeer may even lay three clutches in a nesting season.

Killdeer don't form huge flocks like some other shorebirds, but they often gather in small groups, particularly around migration time. The record Clallam County eBird count is 92 Killdeer counted in a Dungeness cow pasture on November 18, 2018. That pasture turns out to be a favorite place for Killdeer in the fall, where they hide out of the wind in the lee of well-spaced cow patties. Within a week after that sighting, those Killdeer were gone and the cow patties stood silent vigil.

Mid-December is also when we hold our annual Sequim-Dungeness Christmas Bird Count (SDCBC). The SDCBC averaged about 67 Killdeer per year over the last 30 years (Figure 2). In reality, Killdeer numbers on the CBC vary from year to year, from a low of only five birds in 1994 and 1995, to a high of 160 in 1998. Despite all the ups and downs, the trend line for SDCBC numbers appears fairly steady. Killdeer are very good at hiding out in fields and pastures during winter, so it is possible that we miss many of them during the CBC.



You probably recognize Killdeer by their loud vocalizations, particularly when they are threatened near their nests. Like chickadees, Killdeers' call notes get louder and more intense depending on the intruder or predator, sounding the alarm for other birds. As a predator or human approaches, they start out with single loud "DEEEE." They switch to two-note "DEE--EEE" as the predator moves closer, eventually screaming a three-note "DEE-DIT-DIT" when the predator gets really close. Their namesake "Killdeer" calls finally erupt when they take flight, repeating "KILL-DEER, KILL-DEER, KILL-DEER, KILL-DEER" over and over. They have other trills and grunts that don't sound like your typical Killdeer.

Killdeer are survivors, one of those species that seems to exist fairly well as humans change habitats in North America. Some authors suggest that there may be more Killdeer now than ever before. But their propensity to nest close to humans, such as in farmland, weed fields, and gravel roads,

may also put them at risk for exposure to pesticides and disturbance.

To finish, I'd like to relate a story that seems to illustrate the adaptability of Killdeer. On a cold winter night last January, at about 8:30 pm in the Sequim Costco parking lot, I heard Killdeer flying and calling loudly high up in the dark night sky. There were at least two, maybe more. What the heck were Killdeer doing flying around in the dark during the middle of winter? Killdeer are active day and night, so maybe that's not surprising. But why over a shopping center, all lit up on a cold winter's night? It made me appreciate even more the incredible challenges these tough birds face as they survive in our rapidly changing world.

Remember that September 6th is World Shorebirds Day, when we should all count shorebirds and share our eBird lists with WorldShorebirdsDay. Click [here](#) for more information. Instead of rushing to Clallam County to see "rare" shorebirds, it's time to stay home and appreciate the Killdeer in our midst.

Many interesting facts about Killdeer in this story came from *Birds of the World*, an on-line resource available through Cornell Lab of Ornithology. I highly recommend that all bird aficionados subscribe to *Birds of the World*, both for the information and to support the Lab of Ornithology.

### ACOW 2022 in Sequim

The Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) is back, and it's IN-PERSON! If you haven't yet registered for ACOW 2022 in Sequim, don't wait. We'll meet in the newly-renovated Dungeness River Nature Center and we have a stellar line-up of speakers and workshops. Speakers include Lyanda Haupt, author of *Rooted*, Urban Bestiary, Mozart's Starling, and more works on the intersection of humans and nature. We are also joined by Virginia Rose, founder of Birdability, a movement to make birding more accessible. ACOW is the best way to meet other chapter leaders in the state and tackle our biggest shared conservation issues together. Learn more and [register here](#).

## Backyard Birding Returns

by Ken Wiersema

We'll restart our Backyard Birding programs on **November 5th**. We're planning a lineup of programs featuring some new presenters, with updated and revised material. Please mark your calendars for the **1st Saturday each month**. We'll provide you

a fuller description of the programs in subsequent newsletters. This is a popular family-friendly set of programs, with the opportunity for you to interact with presenters and learn about the birds in your backyards: how to attract them, how to care for them, and how to understand their lifestyle. Bring your questions and your thirst for bird knowledge. Thank you to Rhonda Coats for agreeing to be our lead in organizing and advertising these programs.

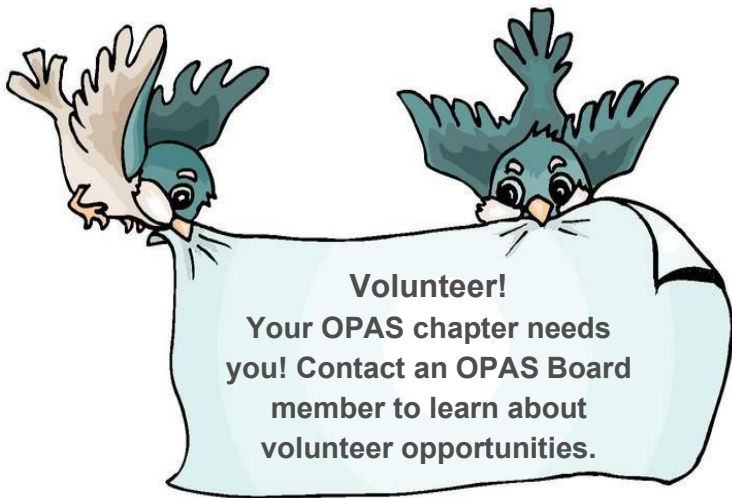
The tentative schedule follows:

### *Backyard Birding Schedule 2022-2023*

First Saturdays November 2022 through June 2023 10:00 AM to Noon		
Date	Program	Presenter
November 5 2022	Winter Bird Feeding & Watering Methods and Equipment	Christie Lassen Wild Birds Unlimited, Gardiner
December 3 2022	Birds-The Inside Story Anatomy & Biology	Shirley Anderson Ken Wiersema
January 7, 2023	"Birdscaping"- Inviting Birds to Your Yard	Carolyn Wilcox
February 4, 2023	Bird Nesting & GBBC Great Backyard Bird Count with e-Bird Primer	Bob Boekelheide Ken Wiersema
March 4, 2023	Spring Sounds Audio-video recordings of our local "Spring Singers"	Dow Lambert Ken Wiersema
April 1, 2023	Bird Migration Why? Where? How they navigate?	TBD
May 6, 2023	Gulls and Local Shorebirds [possibly include field trip]	Bob Boekelheide
June 3, 2023	Out of the Nest, Fledglings and their vulnerable new lives	Ken Wiersema
July 1, 2023	<i>Purple Martins</i> [might include field trip; date depends on minus tide]	Ken Wiersema

# Harlequin Happenings

Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society  
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## Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

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