

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

AN INTRODUCTORY BIRDING TOUR

JULY 23 – 27, 2010

LEADER: BOB SUNDSTROM

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Leader: Bob Sundstrom

Mid-July is a great time to take in the natural beauty of Washington's tremendously scenic Olympic Peninsula. The high meadows of the snow-capped Olympic Mountains are carpeted in wildflowers, and are set off by deep-blue saltwater bays and dark-green conifer forests. It's also an excellent time to search out the region's diverse birdlife: from puffins and oystercatchers to grouse, dippers, warblers, and endangered murrelets—definitely an eye-catching array of birds to brighten a five-day tour.

Our group met mid-afternoon at the Seattle airport, then headed to the rural south Puget Sound region. Here we birded the upper reaches of Scatter Creek, before enjoying a wonderful first dinner at leader Bob Sundstrom's home in the country, while taking in lots of bird activity in Bob and Sally's extensive gardens. Purple Finches and Black-headed Grosbeaks competed for space at the feeders, as Rufous Hummingbirds sped back and forth among the flowers. Wilson's and MacGillivray's warblers popped up near the bird baths, as Western Scrub-Jays and Cedar Waxwings glided back and forth among the serviceberry shrubs.

On Day 2, after another morning of birding in the same vicinity, we left for the Olympic Peninsula with more excellent birds already under our belts: close views of Red-breasted Sapsucker and Western Tanager, wonderful looks at Virginia Rail and Wilson's Snipe, both Pacific-slope and Willow flycatchers, Cassin's and Hutton's vireos, and handsome Black-throated Gray Warblers. We drove north along the lengthy fjord known as Hood Canal, and before long turned up a couple of American Dippers as they splashed in and out of the rushing Dosewallips River. Near the mouth of Discovery Bay, we hit a bonanza of seabirds. A walk down a pebble beach brought us views of rotund Pigeon Guillemots and heavy-billed Rhinoceros Auklets, and one much anticipated and fully plumed Tufted Puffin. On the way to dinner that evening we made a quick stop along Sequim Bay, and came upon a spectacular breeding plumaged Pacific Loon idling close to shore. The elegant loon, which stayed close by for incredible spotting scope views, is a species that winters in the area, but was a first for this summer tour.

On the morning of Day 3, after a gourmet breakfast in Port Angeles, we drove into Olympic National Park and up the winding road toward the heights of Hurricane Ridge, a mile above the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Dozens of species of wildflowers graced the roadside meadows: white avalanche lilies blooming just after snowmelt; slender white bog orchids; bright yellow monkeyflowers and wallflowers; blue larkspurs, lupines, and penstemons; red and magenta paintbrushes; and the endemic Piper's Harebell which grows out of cracks in the mountains' steep rock faces—an amazing concentration of form and color that reaches its peak here in mid-July. Varied Thrushes called from a thicket of subalpine firs, American Pipits flitted over alpine meadows, and an endemic Olympic marmot munched on the verdant ground cover. We watched a huge black bear at a safe distance through the spotting scope, just after a scaly-breasted young

Townsend's Solitaire perched nearby. The mountain vistas and views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca in the distance were magnificent. A family of Gray Jays flew in to attend our picnic, overlooking a mountain meadow at over 5,000 feet. Later that same day and back at sea level, we birded the shoreline near Port Angeles, where a couple of dozen Harlequin Ducks swam and dove nearby, and Black Oystercatchers shared a floating perch with harbor seals and red-billed Heermann's Gulls. After a fine dinner on the waterfront in Sequim, we enjoyed close views of endangered Marbled Murrelets.

On the final full day of the tour, we returned to the Dosewallips River valley, where we came upon a hen Sooty Grouse with three chicks as they nibbled the roadside vegetation just a few meters from the van. A mountain drive nearby gave us our first Hermit Warbler of the tour. We picnicked along the saltwater shore at Fort Flagler, to the sound of whistling Pigeon Guillemots and rasping Caspian Terns. Then, as much for the fun of it as the potential birds, we rode the ferry back and forth from Port Townsend to Whidbey Island, enjoying the salt air and thousands of Rhinoceros Auklets—sprinkled with a handful of Common Murres. Back in Port Townsend, there was time to explore the city on foot and enjoy another wonderful restaurant.

The next morning, after breakfast and a visit to the tideflats to watch shorebirds, we ferried back across Puget Sound toward Seattle, for flights home from a fondly remembered trip.

ITINERARY

Day 1, July 23: After meeting up in the afternoon at 2:30 at Seatac Airport, we drove south to Tumwater and checked in at the Guesthouse Suites. Shortly after, we were birding in the Tenino area, along the upper reaches of Scatter Creek and at Bob and Sally's house. We had a get-acquainted dinner at Bob and Sally's. Night at Guesthouse Suites.

Day 2, July 24: After breakfast at the Guesthouse, we returned to Tenino and upper Scatter Creek, adding to the previous day's sightings in the area. By late morning we left Tenino, and drove north along Hood Canal, stopping for lunch in Brinnon. We birded after lunch in the forest along Dosewallips River Rd., and later at Diamond Pt. at the mouth of Discovery Bay before we checked in at Sequim Bay Lodge. After a break, drove to dinner at Alder Wood Bistro in Sequim, with a stop enroute along Sequim Bay. First of three nights at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 3, July 25: After an early breakfast at Chestnut Cottage in Pt. Angeles, we made a morning trip up from Pt. Angeles to Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park stopping to bird and look at wildflowers along the 17 mile route to the 5200'+ summit, took a short hike out Hurricane Hill Rd., and then drove out Obstruction Pt. We picnicked atop Hurricane Ridge, with help from Gray Jays. During the drive back down, we stopped at the lower visitor center. In the late afternoon was birding at Ediz Hook in Port Angeles before returning to Sequim. Dinner at Dockside Grill; second night at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 4, July 26: After breakfast in Sequim, drove south toward Brinnon where we birded a roadside area near an active Osprey nest, then out the Dosewallips River Road where we found a family of Sooty Grouse. We then birded up Mt. Walker to the upper viewpoint, taking in the geographic panorama from high elevation viewpoints. We picnicked at Fort Flagler State Park, overlooking the water. A mid-afternoon ferry (on foot) took us from Port Townsend to Whidbey Island, birding enroute, then made the same crossing back to Pt. Townsend. After a bit of birding along the Pt. Townsend waterfront, there was some free time to explore Pt. Townsend. Dinner was in Pt. Townsend at Silverwater Grill. Final night at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 5, July 27: Pre-breakfast optional birding behind the lodge and a brief birding stop at the marina on Sequim Bay. After breakfast in Sequim, birded at the mouth of the Dungeness River near the Three Crabs Restaurant, then drove back roads toward the east end of Sequim. We then began the drive toward the ferry crossing, stopping briefly at Salsbury County Pk., then on to the Bainbridge Island-Seattle ferry. Continued south from Seattle to Seatac Airport, where the tour ended.

BIRDS

(sightings in *italics* are uncommon or of special note, in ***bold italics*** are very unusual)

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS:

Canada Goose – the non-migratory “Great Basin” (*moffiti*) subspecies

Gadwall – at the Diamond Pt. pond, several females with ducklings

Mallard

Northern Shoveler – also at the Diamond Pt. pond

Harlequin Duck

White-winged Scoter – three males on the Diamond Pt. brackish pond

Hooded Merganser – immature/female plumage birds at two locations

Ruddy Duck – a male with bright blue bill on the Diamond Pt. pond

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Sooty Grouse – It took extensive searching this year, but we finally found a hen with three chicks along the Dosewallips River road, where we watched them for quite a while as they foraged along the roadside. A few years ago, the former Blue Grouse species was split into Sooty Grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosa*), the darker Pacific form, and Dusky Grouse (*D. obscurus*) of the interior West. There is no longer a species named Blue Grouse.

California Quail – skulking at Sally and Bob’s yard; a family group of 15 or so at Diamond Pt.

LOONS:

Pacific Loon – During a quick stop near Sequim Bay at John Wayne Marina, we found a spectacular looking, breeding plumaged adult idling close to shore, which stayed close by for fine scope studies. This species, which winters commonly in this area, was a first for this summer tour. Presumably a bird just back from breeding in the arctic.

CORMORANTS:

Double-crested Cormorant

Pelagic Cormorant – the most numerous cormorant at the salt water edge

BITTERN & HERONS:

Great Blue Heron

Green Heron – one at the Tenino marsh, seen on two occasions

AMERICAN VULTURES

Turkey Vulture

EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:

Osprey – scoped at a traditional nest site near Pleasant Harbor

Bald Eagle – some superb views of adults and immatures

Red-tailed Hawk

FALCONS:

American Kestrel

Merlin – one flew by across a wide hayfield near Sequim

Peregrine Falcon – an adult perched near Hood Canal for lengthy scope views

RAILS & COOTS:

Virginia Rail – After about ten minutes of encouragement at the Tenino marsh, one rail stepped out right under our noses and another sat and preened in the open a safe distance, just right for scope viewing.

PLOVERS:

Black-bellied Plover – on the tideflats in the mist near Dungeness

Semipalmated Plover – ditto

Killdeer

SANDPIPERS & ALLIES:

Black Oystercatcher – Buffie spotted a pair on the back of the log raft at Ediz Hook

Greater Yellowlegs – close view of fresh plumaged juvenile at Dungeness

Black Turnstone – great looks at a flock roosting on an old dock at Pt. Townsend

Western Sandpiper

Least Sandpiper

Short-billed Dowitcher – in rosy brown breeding plumage

Wilson's Snipe – scoped at the Tenino marsh

JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:

Heermann's Gull – hundreds of these dark, white-headed and red-billed gulls

Mew Gull – a number of recent returned migrants at Sequim Bay

Ring-billed Gull

California Gull – a numerous gull in late summer in the along the Strait of Juan de Fuca

Western Gull

Glaucous-winged Gull – the common large gull, with no black in its wingtips

Caspian Tern

AUKS:

Common Murre – a few seen from the Pt. Townsend-Keystone ferry

Pigeon Guillemot – often close to shore, showing off their red feet and white wing patches

Marbled Murrelet – a fine scope study of an adult with a juvenile, on Sequim Bay

Rhinoceros Auklet – by the thousands, off Diamond Pt. and from the Keystone ferry

Tufted Puffin – one fancy plumaged adult, at Diamond Pt.

PIGEONS & DOVES:

Rock Pigeon

Band-tailed Pigeon – great views at Sally and Bob's feeders

Eurasian Collared-Dove – a few in Pt. Angeles and in Sequim-Dungeness

Mourning Dove

SWIFTS:

Vaux's Swift – seen best in downtown Pt. Angeles

HUMMINGBIRDS:

Rufous Hummingbird – immature buzzing the monarda flowers at Sally and Bob's

KINGFISHERS:

Belted Kingfisher – very active young birds, especially at John Wayne Marina during dinner

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES:

Red-breasted Sapsucker – an adult at sapwells, near Tenino
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker – close views of a pair below Hurricane Ridge
Northern Flicker – of the “red-shafted” geographic form

FLYCATCHERS & ALLIES

Olive-sided Flycatcher – heard from the Hurricane Hill trail
Willow Flycatcher – seen best the first afternoon in a mobbing group with other small birds
Hammond's Flycatcher – heard
Pacific-slope Flycatcher – at the end of the side road near Tenino

VIREOS

Cassin's Vireo – this and the next vireo seen well near Tenino
Hutton's Vireo
Warbling Vireo – behind the Sequim motel, scolding from the willows

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS:

Gray Jay – visited the picnic site along Hurricane Ridge
Steller's Jay – seen well along the Tenino bike trail
Western Scrub-Jay – visiting Bob and Sally's yard and bird baths
American Crow
Northwestern Crow
Common Raven

SWALLOWS & MARTINS:

Purple Martin – several near a nest site at Dungeness
Tree Swallow
Violet-green Swallow – perched on a utility wire, showing velvet green back and purple tail
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow

TITMICE through CREEPERS:

Black-capped Chickadee
Chestnut-backed Chickadee – many of these Pacific specialty chickadees were seen
Bushtit – a curious flock of these tiny birds, right at the roadside
Red-breasted Nuthatch – “first responders” to owl tooting

WRENS & DIPPERS:

Bewick's Wren
Marsh Wren
American Dipper – excellent views of an adult and young bird along the Dosewallips River

KINGLETS:

Golden-crowned Kinglet

THRUSHES & ALLIES:

Townsend's Solitaire – along the Hurricane Hill Trail, a scaly-breasted juvenile
Swainson's Thrush – popping out to owl tooting
Hermit Thrush – heard
American Robin
Varied Thrush – in the subalpine firs along Obstruction Pt. Rd.

STARLINGS & ALLIES:

European Starling

WAGTAILS & PIPITS:

American Pipit – at the edge of snow fields along Obstruction Pt. Rd.

WAXWINGS:

Cedar Waxwing – many fine views of elegant waxwings

WOOD WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler – seen best the last morning, behind the motel

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Black-throated Gray Warbler – came in twice to owl tooting

Townsend's Warbler

Hermit Warbler – on Mt. Walker

MacGillivray's Warbler – a very good view of a notorious skulker

Common Yellowthroat

Wilson's Warbler – seen well around Tenino

TANAGERS:

Western Tanager – Beginning the first afternoon with a two pairs perched close up, in the open, we had several great views of colorful males during the tour.

SPARROWS & ALLIES:

Spotted Towhee

Savannah Sparrow

Song Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

GROSBEAKS & BUNTINGS:

Black-headed Grosbeak – seen mostly in Bob and Sally's yard

BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES:

Red-winged Blackbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird

FINCHES:

Purple Finch – at Bob and Sally's feeders and in the woods near Tenino

House Finch

Pine Siskin – mostly heard

American Goldfinch

Evening Grosbeak – a pair perched momentarily along the bike trail near Tenino

OLD WORLD SPARROWS:

House Sparrow

MAMMALS & OTHER VERTEBRATES

Black Bear – we scoped from a very safe distance a large bear in an alpine meadow
River Otter – a family group of four at John Wayne Marina
American Raccoon – a couple of cubs at the Tenino marsh
Harbor Seal – ubiquitous along the marine edge
Harbor Porpoise – seen repeatedly from the Keystone ferry
Olympic Marmot – endemic to the Olympic Mts.
Snowshoe Hare – right at the roadside near the Olympic NP entrance booth
Eastern Cottontail – non-native
Townsend’s Chipmunk
Yellow Pine Chipmunk
Elk – a herd of 40 or so at the Hamma Hamma River mouth
“Black-tailed” Deer (form of Mule Deer)

INVERTEBRATES

Banana Slug
Longhorn Beetle species

WILDFLOWERS and OTHER PLANTS, SHRUBS AND TREES (seen along Hurricane Ridge road, Mt. Walker Rd., and lowland sites)

BLUEBELL FAMILY

Piper’s Bellflower (*Campanula piperi*) – pale blue
American Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) – pale blue

BUCKWHEAT FAMILY

American Bistort (*Polygonum bistortoides*) – white

BUTTERCUP FAMILY

Western or Sitka Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*) - red
Western Buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*) - yellow
Rockslide Larkspur (*Delphinium glareosum*) - purple
Western Pasque Flower (*Anemone/Pulsatilla occidentalis*) – pale yellow
Red/Western Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*) – white flowers; red berries

EVENING PRIMROSE FAMILY

Fireweed (*Epilobium/Chamerion angustifolium*) - pink
Smooth Willow-herb (*Epilobium glaberrimum*) – pink/red

FIGWORT FAMILY

Elephant’s Head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*) – pink
Bracted Lousewort (*Pedicularis bracteosa*) – reddish purple
Sickletop Lousewort/Parrot’s Beak (*Pedicularis racemosa*) – white/pink
Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) – white/pink/purple
Scarlet/Common Red Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) – red (variable)
Magenta Paintbrush (*Castilleja parviflora olympica*) – pinkish purple (Olympic Mts.)
Yellow/Common Western Monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*) - yellow
Broad-leaved Penstemon (*Penstemon ovatus*) - blue
Cascades Penstemon (*Penstemon serrulatus*) - blue
Cusick’s Speedwell (*Veronica cusickii*) – blue

HEATH FAMILY

Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) – white/pink
Red Mountain Heather (*Phyllodoce empetriformis*) - red

HONEYSUCKLE FAMILY

Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*) – pink

LILY FAMILY

- Glacier Lily (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) - yellow
- Avalanche Lily (*Erythronium montanum*) - white
- Columbia Lily (*Lilium columbianum*) - orange
- Scalloped Onion (*Allium crenulatum*) – white/pink/purple
- Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*) - pink
- Green False Hellebore (*Veratrum viride*) - greenish
- Sticky False Asphodel (*Tofieldia glutinosa*) - white

MADDER FAMILY

- Fragrant Bedstraw (*Galium triflorum*)

MALLOW FAMILY

- Cheeseweed/buttonweed (*Malva neglecta*) – pink

MINT FAMILY

- Cooley's/Great Hedge-Nettle (*Stachys chamisonis cooleyae*) – red/purple

MUSTARD FAMILY

- Western Wallflower (*Erysimum capitatum*) - yellow

ORCHID FAMILY

- White Bog Orchid (*Platanthera dilatata*) - white
- Slender Bog/Rein Orchid (*Platanthera stricta*) – greenish white
- Western Coral-root (*Corallorhiza mertensiana*) – red/pink

PARSLEY FAMILY

- Martindale's Lomatium (*Lomatium martindalei*) - yellow
- Cow-parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*) – white
- Sharptooth Angelica (*Angelica arguta*) – white

PEA FAMILY

- Broad-leaf Lupine (*Lupinus latifolius*) - blue
- Lyall's Lupine or Dwarf Lupine (*Lupinus lyallii* or *L. lipidus* var. *lobbii*) - blue

PHLOX FAMILY

- Spreading Phlox (*Phlox diffusa*) - white
- Showy Jacob's-ladder (*Polemonium pulcherrimum*) – blue

PINK FAMILY

- Thread-leaf Sandwort (*Arenaria capillaris*) - white

PRIMROSE FAMILY

- American Starflower (*Trientalis borealis*) - white

ROSE FAMILY

- Western Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflora*) - white
- Fan-leaf Cinquefoil (*Potentilla flabelligolia*) - yellow
- Ocean-spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) – creamy white
- Mountain Spirea (*Spirea densiflora*) - pink
- Woods Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) - white
- Blackcap Raspberry (*Rubus leucodermis*) – white

SAXIFRAGE FAMILY

- Trefoil Foamflower (*Tiarella trifoliata*) – white

ST. JOHN'S WORT FAMILY

- St.-John's-Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

STONECROP FAMILY

- Broad-leaved Sedum (*Sedum spathulifolium*) - yellow

SUNFLOWER FAMILY

- Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) - white
- Pearly-everlasting (*Alaphalis margaritacea*) - white
- Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) - yellow
- Northern Wormwood (*Artemisia campestris*) – white/green
- Ox-eye-daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) - white

Cat's Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) - yellow
Indian (or Edible) Thistle (*Cirsium edule*) - red
Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) – pink/purple
Puget Sound or Pacific Gumplant (*Grindelia integrifolia*) – yellow

VALERIAN FAMILY

Sitka Valerian (*Valeriana sitchensis*) – white/pink

WATERLEAF FAMILY

Fendler's Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum fendleri*) - white
Narrow-sepaled Phacelia (*Phacelia leptosepala*) - white
Silky Phacelia (*Phacelia sericea*) - purple

SHRUBS

Sitka Mountain Ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) – white/cream
Pacific Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) - pink
White-flowered Rhododendron (*Rhododendron albiflorum*) - white
Blue Elderberry – (*Sambucus caerulea*) – white flower/blue berry
Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) – pink flower/red berry
Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) – pink flower/red berry
Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia/Berberis aquifolium*) – yellow
Beaked Hazel (*Corylus cornuta*)
Black Hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*)
Western Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)

TREES

Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*)
Mountain Hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*)
Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)
Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)
Subalpine Fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)
Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)
Western White Pine (*Pinus monticola*)
Garry/Oregon White Oak (*Quercus garryana*)
Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*)
Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)
Oregon Ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*)
Bigleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)
Black Cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*)
Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*)
Bitter Cherry (*Prunus emarginata*)