

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: AN INTRODUCTORY TOUR

July 22–26, 2011

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TOUR REPORT
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By Bob Sundstrom

Puffins, grouse, oystercatchers, dippers, sapsuckers, crossbills, and murrelets. An eye-catching selection of birds to fit into a short tour, with the added bonus of brilliant displays of wildflowers and magnificent mountain and coastal scenery. Our Pacific Northwest Introductory Tour offers a five-day glimpse of the region—mostly on the scenic Olympic Peninsula—at a very rewarding season for nature travel.

We met at the Seattle airport in the afternoon, and headed to the south end of Puget Sound to get in some valuable birding later that day, along the upper reaches of Scatter Creek. We were quickly into some Western specialty birds. A MacGillivray's Warbler, typically a shy species, popped out in open view of the group for minutes. A Pacific-slope Flycatcher, a secretive bird of the mid-canopy, perched in the open for all to see. Soon after, two young Red-breasted Sapsuckers were spotted. During an outdoor dinner at Bob Sundstrom's home in the country, we watched Rufous Hummingbirds buzz furiously around the yard. Black-headed Grosbeaks, boldly-patterned in black and orange, visited the bird feeders, alongside cranberry-hued Purple Finches. A male California Quail crowed from the rooftop. In a visit to nearby areas the next morning, we turned up Wilson's and Orange-crowned warblers, Bushtit, Western Tanager, and Willow Flycatcher, among others.

We next headed to the scenic Olympic Peninsula just a couple of hours away, where we spent most of the tour. The Peninsula is home to the steep-sided Olympic Mountains, still showing snow at the top in mid-summer, as well as the immense saltwater bays that give western Washington ready access to marine birds. With three days to explore up into the mountains and along the shoreline, we spent three nights in a forest edge lodge in Sequim, close to great dining.

We had great views of a bounty of seabirds. As we walked the gravel beach at the mouth of one bay, we scoped Rhinoceros Auklets with beaks full of silver anchovies and Pigeon Guillemots flashing their bright red feet as they dove. At a tide rip just a bit farther down the beach we found the much anticipated Tufted Puffins. Although only a couple of dozen nest nearby, we had close views of several puffins in full breeding regalia of immense orange bills and long blonde head plumes. Another day, we rode the ferry across Admiralty Inlet, from Port Townsend to Whidbey Island, one of the best inshore seabird crossings. From the ferry we saw several pairs of endangered Marbled Murrelets, had close views of Common Murres, and watched flock after flock of Rhinoceros Auklets. Other shoreline birding gave us nice views of Black Oystercatcher and Harlequin Duck, plus Black and Ruddy turnstones side by side.

A morning drive into Olympic National Park took us from sea level up to over 5,000 feet elevation, with dramatic changes in vegetation and birds en route. Early in the drive, a hen Sooty Grouse stood at the roadside keeping watch over three small chicks. At one pullout with a scenic view north to British Columbia, a tiny Northern Pygmy-Owl perched close by for great views and photos, as a pair of Varied Thrushes filled their bills with insects to take back to nestlings. A male Golden-crowned Kinglet repeatedly flashed the fiery orange feathers usually concealed under its yellow crown. Dozens of species of wildflowers graced the roadside: orange lilies, blue larkspurs and lupines, yellow wallflowers, red columbines, and white orchids, to name a few. Along another mountain road—at one stop—we had the close company of a flock of Gray Jays, as well as Hermit Warbler, Red Crossbill, and more Varied Thrushes. Just down the road, a Townsend's Solitaire foraged at the roadside.

It was a memorable five days of fine birds and wildflowers, superb scenery, wonderful meals, and great camaraderie.

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Leaders: Bob Sundstrom and Brennan Mulrooney

(Birding itinerary and lists compiled by Bob Sundstrom)

ITINERARY SKETCH

Day 1, July 22: 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. Get-acquainted dinner at Bob and Sally's. Night at Guesthouse Suites.

Day 2, July 23: 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 (due to a highway closure) north on Kitsap Peninsula, stopping to picnic at Belfair State Park. Birded after lunch at Diamond Pt. at the mouth of Discovery Bay. Checked in at Sequim Bay Lodge. After a break, drove to dinner at Dockside Grill, with a bit of birding before dinner from John Wayne Marina on Sequim Bay. First of three nights at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 3, July 24: 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. Stopped 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 picnicked atop Hurricane Ridge. During the drive back down, stopped at the lower visitor center. Late afternoon birding at Ediz Hook in Port Angeles, before returning to Sequim for a break at the Lodge. Birding near Dungeness River Mouth before dinner at El Cazador; second night at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 4, July 25: Pre-breakfast optional birding on foot near the Lodge. After breakfast at Gwennie's in Sequim, drove south toward Quilcene, stopping to bird at Crocker Lake and

Quilcene national fish hatchery. Birded up Mt. Walker and picnicked at the south upper viewpoint. Took a 3 p.m. ferry (on foot) from Port Townsend to Whidbey Island, birding enroute, then made the same crossing back to Pt. Townsend. Late afternoon free time to explore Pt. Townsend, before dinner in Pt. Townsend at Silverwater Grill. Final night at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 5, July 26: Pre-breakfast optional birding near the lodge and at the marina on Sequim Bay. After breakfast in Sequim, birded at the mouth of the Dungeness River near the Three Crabs Restaurant, before heading for 11:15 Kingston-Edmonds ferry. Continued south from Seattle to Seatac Airport, where the tour ended.

BIRDS

(sightings in *italics* are quite uncommon or unusual/hard to see species; ***bold italics*** = rare for the region)

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS:

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

Wood Duck – at Crocker Lake

Gadwall – hen with ducklings at Diamond Pt. pond

Mallard

Northern Pintail – on Crockett Lake, visible from the Whidbey Is. ferry landing

Ring-necked Duck – a few on Crocker Lake, north of Quilcene

Harlequin Duck – scope views of Harlys around the Ediz Hook log rafts

Surf Scoter – on Hood Canal, visible during the drive across the bridge

Ruddy Duck – on the Diamond Pt. pond

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Sooty Grouse – A hen with three chicks lingered right next to the road (below the entrance station on the road up to Hurricane Ridge). 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. The Blue Grouse name was retired.

California Quail – a male atop Bob and Sally's house, others in the yard

GREBES:

Pied-billed Grebe – on Crocker Lk.

CORMORANTS:

Double-crested Cormorant

Pelagic Cormorant – the skinny necked cormorants along Ediz Hook

BITTERNES & HERONS:

Great Blue Heron

Green Heron – a shy bird at the Tenino marsh

AMERICAN VULTURES

Turkey Vulture

EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:

Osprey – low over the Quilcene River at the hatchery

Bald Eagle – best view was of an adult in a tree top right next to the road, north of Bremerton

Northern Harrier

Sharp-shinned Hawk – soaring among swallows

Cooper's Hawk – bolting down the path during the walk to Tenino's mill pond

Red-tailed Hawk

FALCONS:

American Kestrel – actually a scarce bird in the area of the tour

Peregrine Falcon – Lovely scope views of one perched on a piling, eating what was probably a vole. In the preceding moments, the falcon had chased down a Northern Harrier over the water and forced the harrier to drop its prey. The falcon caught the prey item before it could fall into the water, and brought it back to the piling.

RAILS & COOTS:

Virginia Rail – heard, loud and close, and glimpsed by some lurking in the marsh vegetation

PLOVERS:

Black-bellied Plover – the final morning, at the mouth of the Dungeness River

Semipalmated Plover – ditto

Killdeer

SANDPIPERS & ALLIES:

Black Oystercatcher – one on the log raft at Ediz Hook posed for scope views

Greater Yellowlegs – at the mouth of the Dungeness River

Ruddy Turnstone – at Ediz Hook and the Dungeness River mouth

Black Turnstone – scoped at Ediz Hook, on the log raft

Sanderling – some still in remnants of the copper color of breeding plumage

Semipalmated Sandpiper – a juvenile seen briefly at the Dungeness River mouth

Western Sandpiper – briefly at the Dungeness River mouth and Ediz Hook log raft

Least Sandpiper

Long-billed Dowitcher – briefly at the Dungeness River mouth

Red-necked Phalarope – very distant, at Diamond Pt.

JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:

Bonaparte's Gull – one in breeding plumage during the Kingston-Edmonds ferry crossing

Heermann's Gull – hundreds of these distinctively dark and red-billed gulls

Ring-billed Gull

California Gull – thousands along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, during a late summer/early fall stay

Western Gull – the large and dark backed gulls

Glaucous-winged Gull – the prevalent large gull with gray wing-tips

Caspian Tern

AUKS:

Common Murre – seen very well on the Pt. Townsend-Whidbey Is. ferry round trip

Pigeon Guillemot – on several salt water spots, flashing bright red feet when flying and landing

Marbled Murrelet – This tiny, endangered seabird was scoped at a distance on Sequim Bay; much closer views from the deck during the Pt. Townsend-Whidbey Is. ferry round trip.

Rhinoceros Auklet – Wonderful views of these large billed alcids from Diamond Pt. and elsewhere. Hundreds, if not thousands, seen from the Pt. Townsend-Whidbey Is. ferry.

Tufted Puffin – A much anticipated bird, we saw three at Diamond Pt., where we enjoyed excellent views of puffins in the scopes. Only a couple dozen breed in the vicinity, on an island 3 miles from Diamond Pt.

PIGEONS & DOVES:

Rock Pigeon

Band-tailed Pigeon – good views at several spots of these large, dark pigeons in flight

Eurasian Collared-Dove – well established around Sequim and Dungeness

Mourning Dove

OWLS:

Northern Pygmy-Owl – The miniature owl got more votes as a trip favorite than any other bird of the tour. An extremely cooperative pygmy-owl perched in trees close to the group along the road up to Hurricane Ridge, and posed for lots of photos.

SWIFTS:

Vaux's Swift – good views of low flying swifts

HUMMINGBIRDS:

Rufous Hummingbird – Bob and Sally's yard was busy with immature Rufous Hummers, and quite a few were also seen zipping among mountain wildflowers along Hurricane Hill.

KINGFISHERS:

Belted Kingfisher

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES:

Red-breasted Sapsucker – The first afternoon, close views of immatures near Tenino. An adult was seen in apple trees along West Uncas Rd.

Downy Woodpecker – nice views of dusky *gairdnerii* subspecies near Tenino

Hairy Woodpecker – the dusky *harrisi* subspecies, along the road up Mt. Walker

Northern Flicker – the red-shafted form

FLYCATCHERS & ALLIES

Olive-sided Flycatcher – heard and seen at higher elevations near Hurricane Ridge

Western Wood-Pewee – heard along West Uncas Rd.

Willow Flycatcher – good views near Tenino

Pacific-slope Flycatcher – The first bird seen at our first birding stop, we had an amazingly open view of this Pacific specialty near Tenino.

VIREOS

Hutton's Vireo – a close view the first morning behind the Sequim Bay Lodge

Warbling Vireo

Red-eyed Vireo – heard near Tenino

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS:

Gray Jay – a very confiding family group along the Mt. Walker road

Steller's Jay

Western Scrub-Jay

American Crow

Northwestern Crow – along the marine bays from Diamond Pt. to Pt. Angeles

Common Raven

SWALLOWS & MARTINS:

Purple Martin – local and uncommon in the region, a few flew out from nest boxes on pilings at the mouth of the Dungeness River

Tree Swallow

Violet-green Swallow

Barn Swallow

TITMICE through CREEPERS:

Black-capped Chickadee

Chestnut-backed Chickadee – great views – especially close along Hurricane Hill trail

Bushtit – a single Bushtit near the Tenino marsh was remarkable in being a lone bird

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

WRENS & DIPPERS:

Bewick's Wren

Pacific (formerly Winter) Wren – at the base of the Mt. Walker Rd.

Marsh Wren

American Dipper – superb scope studies along the Quilcene River

KINGLETS:

Golden-crowned Kinglet – a male that flashed an amazing fiery crown got several votes as a favorite bird

THRUSHES & ALLIES:

Townsend's Solitaire – a couple along the Mt. Walker Rd., in the fog

Swainson's Thrush – singing in the lowlands, seen briefly at several spots

Hermit Thrush – Brennan coaxed one out into the Hurricane Ridge alders

American Robin

Varied Thrush – wonderful views of a much hoped for bird, at the same spot as the pygmy-owl and West Uncas Rd.

STARLINGS & ALLIES:

European Starling

WAXWINGS:

Cedar Waxwing – quite a few seen well

WOOD WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler – decent views near Tenino

Yellow-rumped Warbler – a handsome “Audubon’s” form male

Black-throated Gray Warbler – the second morning behind the lodge, a male showed well

Hermit Warbler – a male came in low and close West Uncas Rd.

MacGillivray's Warbler – wonderful views of a true skulker, near Tenino

Common Yellowthroat – finally seen at Crocker Lake

Wilson's Warbler – seen well at several spots

SPARROWS & ALLIES:

Spotted Towhee

Savannah Sparrow – in Bob and Sally’s hayfield

Song Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow – many views of the *pugetensis* subspecies

Dark-eyed Junco – the “Oregon” form

GROSBEAKS & BUNTINGS & TANAGERS:

Western Tanager

Black-headed Grosbeak

BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES:

Red-winged Blackbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird

FINCHES:

Purple Finch – great views at Bob and Sally’s feeders

House Finch

Red Crossbill – a few finally perched in conifer tops for decent views

Pine Siskin – at feeders along the Diamond Pt. beach

American Goldfinch

Evening Grosbeak – heard flying over

OLD WORLD SPARROWS:

House Sparrow

MAMMALS & OTHERS:

American Raccoon – on the tidal edge of Sequim Bay

Harbor Seal – ubiquitous along the marine edge

Harbor Porpoise – seen repeatedly from the Keystone ferry

Olympic Marmot – endemic to the Olympic Mts.

Eastern Cottontail – non-native

Douglas’ Squirrel

Townsend’s Chipmunk

Yellow Pine Chipmunk

Townsend's Vole
"Black-tailed" Deer (form of Mule Deer)
Banana Slug

BUTTERFLIES (identified by Brennan)

Western Tiger Swallowtail
Pale Swallowtail
Anise Swallowtail
Cabbage White
Sara's Orangetip
Silvery Blue
Edith's Checkerspot
Lorquin's Admiral
Vidler's Alpine

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

EVENING PRIMROSE FAMILY

Fireweed (*Epilobium/Chamerion angustifolium*) - pink

FIGWORT FAMILY

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) – white/pink/purple

Scarlet/Common Red Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) – red (variable)

Yellow/Common Western Monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*) - yellow

Cusick's Speedwell (*Veronica cusickii*) – blue

HEATH FAMILY

Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) – white/pink

HONEYSUCKLE FAMILY

Twinflower (*Linnea borealis*) – pink

LILY FAMILY

Meadow Death Camas (*Zigadenus venenosus*) – white (a surprise, upper Mt. Walker road)

Glacier Lily (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) - yellow

Avalanche Lily (*Erythronium montanum*) - white

Columbia Lily (*Lilium columbianum*) - orange

Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*) - 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

PARSLEY FAMILY

Martindale's Lomatium (*Lomatium martindalei*) - yellow

Cow-parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*) – white

PEA FAMILY

Broad-leaf Lupine (*Lupinus latifolius*) - blue

PHLOX FAMILY

Spreading Phlox (*Phlox diffusa*) - white

PINK FAMILY

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

PRIMROSE FAMILY

American Starflower (*Trientalis borealis*) – white

Smooth Douglasia (*Douglasia laevigata*) – pink

ROSE FAMILY

Ocean-spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) – creamy white

Douglas' Spirea (*Spirea douglasii*) - pink

Large-leaved Avens (*Geum macrophyllum*)
Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*) – creamy white
Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*) - pink
Baldhip Rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*) - pink
Western Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflora*) - white
Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) – pink; salmon berries
Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus discolor*) – white to pink
Evergreen Blackberry (*Rubus laciniatus*) – white to pink
Trailing Blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) – white

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
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

Pacific Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) - pink
Blue Elderberry – (*Sambucus caerulea*) – white flower/blue berry
Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa pubens*) – white flower/red berry
Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) – pink flower/red berry
Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) – pink flower/red berry
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*)
Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*)
Sitka Alder (*Alnus viridis*)
Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)
Bigleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)
Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*)
Black Cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*)
Bitter Cherry (*Prunus emarginata*)
Oregon Ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*)