

SEPTEMBER MIGRATION: PACIFIC NORTHWEST

SEPTEMBER 6-14, 2006

LEADER: BOB SUNDSTROM

**LIST COMPILED BY:
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Leader: Bob Sundstrom

Our September Migration: Pacific Northwest tour began just after Labor Day, timed to reap the rewards of the season's great southward migrations. We paid particular attention to bird movements along the shorelines, took a full day out on the Pacific by boat, and visited forest edges and the mile-high realms of the Olympic Mountains. From Seattle to the Washington coast to Victoria, British Columbia we traveled, with fine weather throughout.

A privately-chartered pelagic trip took us 35 miles out, on a remarkably balmy day for seafaring. The Pacific Ocean off Westport offered an outstanding series of highlights and unexpected sightings on this day; we had close views of two Laysan Albatrosses, a scarce and much hoped for species here, among over 30 Black-footed Albatrosses. A regionally rare Manx Shearwater showed up early in the day and we had close, sustained views of a Flesh-footed Shearwater, among four species of shearwaters. Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels flew close to the boat and all three species of jaegers were seen nicely, including over 25 Long-tailed Jaegers, a very high number. A few Tufted Puffins bobbed on the ocean's surface, one of six alcid species for the day, and scores of flashy Sabine's Gulls fluttered by. Three species of whales turned up, athletic Dall's porpoises swam at the bow, and—an event unprecedented in the history of Westport pelagic trips—a Mourning Dove flew around the boat 14 miles offshore!

Topping the rarity rating among 23 species of shorebirds was a handsome, tawny-brown juvenile Ruff seen feeding along a gravel beach with Black and Ruddy turnstones. Our group watched as the Ruff came ever closer, flying in from a boulder jetty and then working its way along the beach until it passed just below where we stood atop a low dune, not 20 feet away. Scaly-plumaged juvenile Baird's Sandpipers shared shorefronts with Pectorals, a Wandering Tattler methodically worked seaside boulders, and over 400 Marbled Godwits massed in close view at Tokeland.

Another lovely late summer made for a memorable walk in the Olympic Mountains at over 5,000 feet. A Sooty Grouse posed at the roadside not far from the trailhead. Along the level ridge trail, migrating "Sooty" Fox Sparrows chipped in the subalpine shrubs, as Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Gray Jays, accipiters, and other birds appeared against the brilliant mountain vistas. Back at sea level the same afternoon, we birded the shoreline at Pt. Angeles and Dungeness, where Harlequin Ducks and Red-necked Grebes bobbed near shore, and thousands of American Wigeons testified to the ongoing migration. A "Black" Merlin chased off another Merlin, and briefly perched just over our heads—another regional specialty.

An easy ferry crossing of the Strait of Juan de Fuca put us in Victoria, British Columbia, where we continued north toward the farm fields where North America's only long-term population of Sky Larks resides. After a bit of searching, we had good views of a number of Sky Larks as they fluttered up close at hand. Later that afternoon we ferried on for the B.C. mainland, a scenic passage among evergreen-covered islands. We would bird along the foreshore dikes of Boundary Bay until sunset, and revisit the area the following day, an area that offers a great diversity and vast numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds. Hundreds of Black-bellied Plovers—mixed with a

few Red Knots—paced the tideflats, as thousands of Northern Pintails and other ducks massed along the water's edge. Peregrine Falcons made regular passes and flocks of American Pipits landed near the dike.

During the tour we also had fine views of Northern Pygmy-Owl, Virginia Rail, American Golden-Plover, Heermann's Gull, Mew Gull, California Quail, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hutton's Vireo, Steller's Jay, Western Scrub-Jay, Northwestern Crow, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Purple Finch, and Red Crossbill.

ITINERARY

- Day 1** Wednesday, September 6: Get-acquainted dinner in Seattle. Night in Seattle.
- Day 2** Thursday, September 7: After breakfast in Seattle, drove south to spend the morning birding in the Tenino/upper Scatter Creek area and at Bob's house. Lunch in Tenino. Drove west and then south to the Pacific coast at Westport. Late afternoon birding and dinner in Tokeland. First of three nights at Chateau Westport.
- Day 3** Friday, September 8: Full day pelagic trip (6:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.) out of Westport to approximately 35 miles offshore to Grays Canyon. Late afternoon break at hotel, then birding along Westport shoreline before dinner at Anthony's new restaurant in Westport. Second night at Chateau Westport.
- Day 4** Saturday, September 9: After breakfast birded at Westhaven State Park in Westport, at South Bay, and Hoquiam treatment ponds before lunch in Ocean Shores. After lunch, birded base of Point Brown Jetty and Damon Pt. area. Late afternoon returned to Westport for dinner. Third night at Chateau Westport.
- Day 5** Sunday, September 10: Birding before breakfast near Chateau Westport. Left Westport, birding at Bottle Beach before driving north via Aberdeen and McCleary toward Hood Canal. Lunch in Brinnon. Birded near Quilcene hatchery, then drove on to Sequim Bay and the Dungeness waterfront and roadside ponds near Sequim. Dinner at Café Garden and first of two nights at BW Olympic Lodge in Pt. Angeles.
- Day 6** Monday, September 11: Morning birding in Olympic National Park up to road to Hurricane Ridge. Walked out Hurricane Hill Trail at top of ridge. After lunch at Chestnut Cottage, birded along Ediz Hook in Port Angeles then returned to Dungeness waterfront. Birded along cliff edge trail near Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. Dinner at Thai Pepper in Pt. Angeles. Second night in Pt. Angeles.
- Day 7** Tuesday, September 12: Took first morning Black Ball Ferry across the Strait of Juan de Fuca from Pt. Angeles to Victoria, B.C., birding from the deck when we came out of the fog about halfway across the Strait. In the Victoria area we birded in the Saanich farm fields for Sky Larks. Lunch in Central Saanich, then drove north to catch 3:00 p.m. ferry from Swartz Bay to Tsawwassen. Late afternoon to sunset birding along Boundary Bay in Delta at the end of 104th St. Dinner at Alfa in Tsawwassen. First of two nights at Tsawwassen Inn.
- Day 8** Wednesday, September 13: After breakfast in Tsawwassen, birded near Boundary Bay, then drove north to bird the Iona Ponds. After lunch in Ladner, birded Reifel Sanctuary and then returned to hotel for a short break. Late afternoon to sunset birding along to Boundary Bay. Second night in Tsawwassen.
- Day 9** Thursday, September 14: Departed south from Tsawwassen after breakfast, crossing into the U.S. and continuing south through Seattle. Arrived at SeaTac Airport around 11:30 a.m.

BIRD LIST

[unexpected/unusual sightings in *italics*; rarities in ***bold italics***]

LOONS:

Common Loon – a number of birds moulting out of breeding plumage

GREBES:

Pied-billed Grebe

Horned Grebe – a few early returning migrants at the Hoquiam and Iona treatment ponds

Red-necked Grebe – striking breeding plumage grebes on the Strait of Juan de Fuca

Western Grebe

TUBENOSES:

Black-footed Albatross – 30 or more on the pelagic trip, including very close views

Laysan Albatross – We saw two very well and there was probably a third. Very lucky to see this species, as only a few are seen on Washington pelagics each year.

Northern Fulmar – common on the pelagic trip, ranging from light to dark color morphs

Pink-footed Shearwater

Flesh-footed Shearwater – one was seen very well on the pelagic in a group of Pink-footed Shearwaters

Sooty Shearwater – over 4000 estimated for the day on the boat

Manx Shearwater – rare in Washington waters, a few seen annually

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel – very good views; a dozen or so seen

PELICANS:

Brown Pelican – hundreds along the coast

CORMORANTS:

Double-crested Cormorant

Brandt's Cormorant – seen on the pelagic trip and around Westport

Pelagic Cormorant

BITTERN & HERONS:

Great Blue Heron – daily; widespread

AMERICAN VULTURES:

Turkey Vulture – migrants on both sides of the border

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS:

Canada Goose

Mute Swan – one in British Columbia, where small numbers are established

Wood Duck – a fine line-up on a log on the slough near Reifel Sanctuary

Gadwall

American Wigeon – a couple thousand along the Dungeness waterfront

Mallard

Cinnamon Teal – a single eclipse bird at Reifel

Northern Shoveler

Northern Pintail – by the thousands along Grays Harbor and Boundary Bay

Green-winged Teal

Greater Scaup

Lesser Scaup

Harlequin Duck – small numbers along Ediz Hook

Surf Scoter

White-winged Scoter

Bufflehead – a single female, very unusual for so early in the fall season

Hooded Merganser – at Sequim Bay and Reifel Sanctuary
Common Merganser
Ruddy Duck

EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:

Osprey – a single bird, the first day near Montesano
Bald Eagle – also just a single bird, on the tide flats at Tokeland
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk

FALCONS:

Merlin – several seen, including a good view of a “Black Merlin” (*suckleyi* subspecies)
Peregrine Falcon – a few on both sides of the border, mostly near shorebirds and ducks

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Sooty Grouse (formerly part of Blue Grouse species) – an excellent, close view of one along the road beyond the Hurricane Ridge visitor center; another as we descended the Hurricane Ridge road toward Pt. Angeles
California Quail – in Bob’s front yard, and on Vancouver Is.

RAILS & COOTS:

Virginia Rail – close view of this shy rail at Iona Ponds in B.C.
American Coot

CRANES:

Sandhill Crane – heard at Reifel Sanctuary in B.C., where a family group is resident

PLOVERS:

Black-bellied Plover – many hundreds along the Boundary Bay tide flats
American Golden-Plover – a neatly plumaged juvenile at Iona Ponds
Semipalmated Plover
Killdeer

SANDPIPERS & ALLIES:

Black Oystercatcher – seen from the B.C. ferry, not far out of Swartz Bay
Greater Yellowlegs – lots of both yellowlegs species at Reifel Sanctuary
Lesser Yellowlegs
Willet – a handful at Tokeland; a very scarce wintering species in Washington
Wandering Tattler – scoped along the rock groins at Westport
Whimbrel – at Tokeland, Bottle Beach, and a close view of a neatly marked juvenile at Iona
Long-billed Curlew – at Tokeland
Marbled Godwit – a group of 400+ at Tokeland
Ruddy Turnstone – a couple of juveniles with Black Turnstones at a Ruff at Westport
Black Turnstone
Surfbird – seen along the Westport jetty only from the deck of the boat
Red Knot – juveniles along Boundary Bay
Sanderling
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper – pretty juveniles at Ocean Shores and Boundary Bay
Pectoral Sandpiper – we sorted through several dozen in hopes of a rarity
Dunlin – a few early migrants
Ruff – a handsome, tawny brown juvenile male turned up along the Westport shoreline

Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe – scoped at Iona Ponds
Red-necked Phalarope – on the pelagic trip, and a much better view at Hoquiam ponds

JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:

Pomarine Jaeger – excellent views on the boat trip
Parasitic Jaeger - ditto
Long-tailed Jaeger – more than 25 seen on the boat trip, a very large number for the season
Bonaparte's Gull
Heermann's Gull
Mew Gull – a few early returning migrants
Ring-billed Gull
California Gull
Herring Gull – a single bird on the pelagic trip
Western Gull
Glaucous-winged Gull
Black-legged Kittiwake – a couple along the Westport jetty
Sabine's Gull – wonderful views of these lovely seabirds on the boat trip
Caspian Tern

AUKS:

Common Murre
Pigeon Guillemot
Marbled Murrelet – seen by Ken and Cass on the boat trip
Cassin's Auklet
Rhinoceros Auklet – on the pelagic trip and on the Strait of Juan de Fuca
Tufted Puffin – scarce at sea, we were fortunate to see four puffins on the boat trip

PIGEONS & DOVES:

Rock Pigeon (formerly Rock Dove)
Band-tailed Pigeon
Mourning Dove – perhaps the most amazing bird sighting of the tour was a Mourning Dove that flew by the bow of the boat about 14 miles offshore on the pelagic trip

OWLS:

Northern Pygmy-Owl – the first morning along upper Scatter Ck.; nice scope views

KINGFISHERS:

Belted Kingfisher

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES:

Red-breasted Sapsucker – a Pacific specialty, we saw 7 the first morning
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker – a nearly gray-bellied form of the Pacific Northwest
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker – seen by some the first morning

FLYCATCHERS & ALLIES:

Hammond's Flycatcher – one near Hurricane Ridge

VIREOS:

Hutton's Vireo – close views along upper Scatter Ck.

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS:

Gray Jay – very confiding at Hurricane Ridge, posing for photos

Steller's Jay

Western Scrub-Jay – only seen around Tenino

American Crow

Northwestern Crow

Common Raven

LARKS:

Sky Lark – good views of about eight birds as they rose from the farm fields north of Victoria

SWALLOWS & MARTINS:

Violet-green Swallow

Barn Swallow

TITMICE through CREEPERS:

Black-capped Chickadee

Chestnut-backed Chickadee – many great views of this Pacific specialty

Bushtit

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

WRENS & DIPPERS:

Bewick's Wren

Winter Wren – excellent, close views of the tiny wren near the Chateau Westport

Marsh Wren – close at hand at Bottle Beach

KINGLETS:

Golden-crowned Kinglet

THRUSHES & ALLIES:

Swainson's Thrush

Hermit Thrush

American Robin

STARLINGS & ALLIES:

European Starling

WAGTAILS & PIPITS:

American Pipit – hundreds of migrants on the Sky Lark fields and along Boundary Bay

WAXWINGS:

Cedar Waxwing

WOOD WARBLERS:

Orange-crowned Warbler – a small flock at Reifel Sanctuary

Yellow-rumped Warbler – of the “Audubon’s” form

Black-throated Gray Warbler – a fine view of a crisply marked warbler the first morning

Townsend's Warbler – seen by Clayton outside the Chateau Westport

Common Yellowthroat

SPARROWS & ALLIES:

Spotted Towhee
Chipping Sparrow – a brief view in Bob’s yard the first morning
Savannah Sparrow – surprisingly abundant in the Sky Lark fields
Fox Sparrow – of the “Sooty” type, migrants seen along Hurricane Hill Trail
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Golden-crowned Sparrow – heard singing outside the Chateau Westport
Dark-eyed Junco – of the “Oregon” form

BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES:

Red-winged Blackbird
Western Meadowlark – heard in the fields near Boundary Bay
Brewer's Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird

FINCHES:

Purple Finch – nice views near upper Scatter Ck.
House Finch
Red Crossbill – scoped in the conifers along Bottle Beach
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
Evening Grosbeak

OLD WORLD SPARROWS:

House Sparrow

MAMMALS, HERPS & OTHER CRITTERS

Gray Whale
Humpback Whale – seen fairly close to the boat
Minke Whale
Harbor Porpoise – a few on the ferry crossings
Dall's Porpoise - right next to the boat on the pelagic trip
Mink – Clayton saw one at Iona Ponds
Harbor Seal - ubiquitous on the marine edge
Black-tailed Deer - the regional form of Mule Deer
Douglas's Squirrel
Townsend's Chipmunk
Snowshoe Hare – good look at one near the old growth grove below Hurricane Ridge
unidentified bat
Blue Shark - on the pelagic trip
Ocean Sunfish/*Mola mola* - on the pelagic trip