

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

AN INTRODUCTORY TOUR

AUGUST 2-6, 2008

**LEADERS:
BOB SUNDSTROM & BRENNAN MULROONEY**

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Leaders: Bob Sundstrom and Brennan Mulrooney

Mid-summer is a fine season to enjoy the wildlife and scenic beauty of the Pacific Northwest region. Participants on our 2008 Pacific Northwest Introductory tour, a five-day tour, met mid-afternoon at the Seattle airport, and then we drove directly to the rural South Puget Sound region. Here we birded the upper reaches of Scatter Creek, where a few Vaux's Swifts flew with flocks of Violet-green Swallows, and Willow Flycatchers and a Red-breasted Sapsucker drew our interest. Nearby, we enjoyed an excellent dinner at my home in the country, while watching lots of bird activity in the yard. Purple Finches and Black-headed Grosbeaks competed for space at the feeders, as did Western Scrub-Jays and Band-tailed Pigeons, while ten or more Rufous Hummingbirds sped back and forth among the flowers. California Quail pairs cautiously escorted broods of chicks through the yard.

We birded early the following morning in the same area, adding such birds as Western Tanager, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, and Wilson's Warblers to our sightings. A few miles down the road, we had great views of a silvery White-tailed Kite, as well as a singing Lazuli Bunting, both new and unusual additions to the tour's historical list. Along the oak-shaded edge of lower Scatter Creek, we found Warbling Vireos, Western Wood-Pewees, a Pacific-slope Flycatcher, and a busy pair of Brown Creepers. By late morning we were driving the scenic west shore of Hood Canal, heading north toward the Olympic Peninsula. After a lunch with the option of homemade pie or cobbler in Brinnon, we took a turn along the Dosewallips River. The shady forest along the river, lush with ferns and mosses, was beautiful enough. But just as we turned to leave, a hen Sooty Grouse escorting her brood stopped right in the middle of the gravel road—an exceptional view of this Northwest specialty and a new bird for many in the group. Our next stop was for an American Dipper along the Quilcene River. And within an hour we stood on the beach at the mouth of Discovery Bay, scoping iconic Tufted Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklets with bills full of silvery fish, and black Pigeon Guillemots flashing their scarlet feet in flight.

The following day, after a wonderful breakfast in Port Angeles, we drove into Olympic National Park and up the scenic, winding road to Hurricane Ridge, a mile above the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Road work along the way made birding a bit awkward, but we managed good views of Olive-sided Flycatcher and Townsend's Warbler, and enjoyed roadside meadows loaded with summer wildflowers. At one point a flock of crossbills flew over—which turned out to be White-winged Crossbills, very rare here, but likely part of the widespread irruption of this finch species going on this summer. By late morning we were strolling along Hurricane Hill Trail, where Chestnut-backed Chickadees chattered at eye level, and a blonde, endemic Olympic marmot sunned atop a boulder in an alpine meadow. We picnicked among the mountaintops, with a grand view of the Olympic Mountains, and with the assistance of a family of Gray Jays.

That afternoon we birded the shoreline of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, near Port Angeles. Scores of Harlequin Ducks shared a log boom with a pair of Black Oystercatchers, thousands of California and Heermann's gulls, Northwestern Crows, and basking harbor seals. Near the tiny town of Dungeness, the namesake of the famous—and delectable—Dungeness crab, we found our first concentrations of southbound sandpipers.

On the final full day of our tour, we began with an early morning jaunt to Sequim Bay, where tiny Marbled Murrelets bobbed on the bay, two Whimbrels probed the rocky beach, and the first southbound Mew Gulls of the season showed up. We birded south in the morning to thickly forested Mt. Walker and beyond, scoped an Osprey nest with three near-fledglings, and had another fine lunch in Brinnon. After a break at the lodge, we returned to the Sequim-Dungeness waterfront.

The final morning of the tour, after one last sumptuous breakfast in Sequim, we visited the Dungeness River mouth. The soft morning light glowed on an adult pair of Bald Eagles, perched side by side on a driftwood log. Flocks of Black-bellied Plovers whistled mournfully and then landed on a sand spit, joined by Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones. All too soon it was time to ferry back across Puget Sound—through a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls—and drive to the airport.

ITINERARY

Day 1, August 2: The group met at 2:30 at Seatac Airport, and then drove directly south to Tumwater and checked in at the Guesthouse Suites. Shortly after, we were in Tenino, birding at Bob and Sally's house and along the upper reaches of Scatter Creek nearby followed by a get-acquainted dinner at Bob and Sally's; Night at Guesthouse Suites.

Day 2, August 3: After breakfast at the Guesthouse, we returned to Tenino and upper Scatter Creek, adding to the previous day's sightings in the area. By mid-morning we left Tenino, to make birding stops at Violet Prairie (Melville Rd.) and Scatter Creek Wildlife Area near Rochester. Drove north along Hood Canal, stopping for lunch in Brinnon. Birded after lunch in the forest along Dosewallips River Road, and later at Diamond Pt. near the mouth of Discovery Bay. Dinner at Dockside Grill in Sequim; first of three nights at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 3, August 4: Pre-breakfast birding behind lodge. 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. A major re-paving effort on the road made birding along the road less profitable than usual. A hike out Hurricane Hill Trail turned up birds, flowers, and a good view of the endemic Olympic Marmot. Picnicked atop Hurricane Ridge, with help from Gray Jays. Afternoon birding at Ediz Hook in Port Angeles, before returning to bird roadside ponds in Sequim, and the mouth of the Dungeness River. Dinner at Los Camperos; second night at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 4, August 5: Pre-breakfast birding at John Wayne Marina on Sequim Bay. After breakfast in Sequim, birded briefly at John Wayne Marine, then drove south past Quilcene Mt. Walker in Olympic National Forest, birding along the road and taking in the view from two high elevation viewpoints. Driving south past Brinnon, birded a roadside area just south of Pleasant Cove Marina, near an active Osprey nest. After lunch in Brinnon, began driving north, with a birding stop at Crocker Lake and then an afternoon break at the lodge. Late afternoon birded back roads from Sequim to Dungeness River mouth. Dinner at Sawadee Thai in Sequim; final night at Sequim Bay Lodge.

Day 5, August 6: After breakfast in Sequim, we visited the Dungeness River mouth near for a last bit of shoreline birding. Drove south to cross Hood Canal, caught the Kingston-Edmonds ferry, and birded from the bow. After a quick pass through downtown Seattle and a drive by the Pike Place Market, we arrived at Seatac Airport before noon, 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” (*moffitti*) subspecies

Wood Duck – just a few, an uncommon bird in the area

Gadwall

Mallard

Northern Pintail – one or two early returning eclipse drakes at the Dungeness River mouth

Greater Scaup – an odd sighting for August, probably a first-year male that summered here

Harlequin Duck – 50 or so along Ediz Hook, all in female/immature plumage

Surf Scoter – a few “skunk-heads” at John Wayne Marina

White-winged Scoter – one flew by the bow of the ferry between Kingston and Edmonds

Common Merganser – a large raft in the Strait near from Dungeness River mouth

Ruddy Duck – on roadside ponds

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:

Sooty Grouse – We were fortunate to find a very confiding hen with one or more large chicks in tow along the Dosewallips River Rd. Recently 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.

California Quail – adults and chicks at Sally and Bob’s house; others near Sequim-Dungeness

LOONS:

Common Loon – two distant, frequently diving basic plumage loons at Ediz Hook

GREBES:

Pied-billed Grebe – among the distant lily pads of Crocker Lake

CORMORANTS:

Double-crested Cormorant – also at Crocker Lake, showing its yellow-orange gular skin

Pelagic Cormorant – dark, slender, dark-billed cormorants with white flank patches

BITTERN & HERONS:

Great Blue Heron – the widespread heron of the trip

AMERICAN VULTURES

Turkey Vulture – odds and ends of vultures, a few each day

EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:

Osprey – Elizabeth spotted a nest, which turned out to have three chicks, just testing their wings

White-tailed Kite – a first-time sighting for this tour, we saw a beautiful adult near Violet Prairie

Bald Eagle – not numerous at this season, but we had wonderful views, especially of the adult pair in morning light at the Dungeness River mouth, perched on a driftwood log

Northern Harrier – flying low over Jamestown Spit area

Sharp-shinned Hawk – soaring over Hurricane Hill Trail

Cooper's Hawk – a large (therefore likely female) immature turned up near Dungeness
Red-tailed Hawk – adults and immatures; great scope view of immature the first afternoon along Scatter Creek

FALCONS:

American Kestrel – uncommon in the region, we saw an adult male in the Sequim uplands
Peregrine Falcon – blasting by Jamestown Spit in a flash

RAILS & COOTS:

American Coot

PLOVERS, SANDPIPERS & ALLIES:

Black-bellied Plover – a couple dozen the final morning at the Dungeness River Mouth
Killdeer
Black Oystercatcher – a very good find: a striking pair on the log rafts at Ediz Hook
Greater Yellowlegs – a few immatures, southbound migrants
Lesser Yellowlegs – ditto
Whimbrel – two at John Wayne Marina of differing size and feather wear
Ruddy Turnstone – scoped from the Dungeness River Mouth
Black Turnstone – one along Ediz Hook
Sanderling – with the Black-bellied Plovers the final morning
Western Sandpiper – beautiful juveniles scoped at Ediz Hook, and elsewhere
Least Sandpiper – juveniles southbound
Long-billed Dowitcher – with rusty-toned breasts and “keek!” calls

JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:

Bonaparte's Gull – quite a few near Kingston on the ferry crossing
Heermann's Gull – eminently identifiable, with its reddish bill and dark body
Mew Gull – a couple early in the morning at John Wayne Marina; early migrants
Ring-billed Gull
California Gull – by the thousands!
Western Gull
Glaucous-winged Gull – the typical large gull of the area
Caspian Tern – huge terns sporting huge red bills

AUKS:

Pigeon Guillemot – rotund alcids with bright red feet
Marbled Murrelet – a few early mornings at John Wayne Marina; endangered
Rhinoceros Auklet – with hefty bills full of silvery fish
Tufted Puffin – a popular sighting, at least four of the colorful icons at Diamond Pt.

PIGEONS & DOVES:

Rock Pigeon
Band-tailed Pigeon – great views when perched at Sally and Bob's feeders
Eurasian Collared-Dove – a few near Dungeness, now ever-more established in the PNW
Mourning Dove

NIGHTJARS:

Common Nighthawk – the one seen in flight south of Brinnon was quite a surprise, uncommon on the Olympic Peninsula

SWIFTS:

Vaux's Swift – twinkling through the air at several sites, including Scatter Creek

HUMMINGBIRDS:

Rufous Hummingbird – a dozen or more zipping immatures at Sally and Bob's

KINGFISHERS:

Belted Kingfisher

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES:

Red-breasted Sapsucker – one “frozen” in a tree top along upper Scatter Creek

Northern Flicker – of the “red-shafted” variety

Pileated Woodpecker – heard

FLYCATCHERS & ALLIES

Olive-sided Flycatcher – nice views along the Hurricane Ridge Rd.

Western Wood-Pewee – at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area; very local in western Washington

Willow Flycatcher – great views at several sites, including a family group near the Osprey nest

Hammond's Flycatcher – near Tenino and atop Mt. Walker

Pacific-slope Flycatcher – perched low in a tree at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

VIREOS

Hutton's Vireo – good views of this pudgy vireo near Jamestown Spit

Warbling Vireo – seen well at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

Red-eyed Vireo – mostly heard, also at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS:

Gray Jay – very close views at the picnic tables atop Hurricane Ridge

Steller's Jay – the dark blue forest jay of the area

Western Scrub-Jay – around Tenino only

American Crow

Northwestern Crow – the smaller, hoarser crows of the inter-tidal areas

Common Raven

SWALLOWS & MARTINS:

Purple Martin – an uncommon breeder in the area, seen near the Three Crabs Restaurant and at the Osprey nest site south of Brinnon

Tree Swallow

Violet-green Swallow

Cliff Swallow

Barn Swallow

TITMICE through CREEPERS:

Black-capped Chickadee

Chestnut-backed Chickadee – seen several places, amazingly close on the Hurricane Hill Trail

Bushtit – a very confiding, big flock along Jamestown Rd. near Dungeness

Red-breasted Nuthatch – not very red at this season, but still in good voice

Brown Creeper – creeping along the Garry oak trunks at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area

WRENS & DIPPERS:

Bewick's Wren – heard often, seen along upper Scatter Creek afternoon

Winter Wren – near the Tenino area mill pond

Marsh Wren – peeking out of big *Spirea* bush in upper Scatter Creek

American Dipper – after some searching, scoped below the Quilcene fish hatchery

KINGLETS:

Golden-crowned Kinglet – flashing its crown near the Tenino mill pond

THRUSHES & ALLIES:

Swainson's Thrush – heard, glimpsed flitting across the road

American Robin

Varied Thrush – heard atop Mt. Walker, but just too shy to show itself

STARLINGS & ALLIES:

European Starling

WAGTAILS & PIPITS:

American Pipit – perched in a low bush in a Hurricane Ridge meadow

WAXWINGS:

Cedar Waxwing – daily views; flycatching nonstop over Crocker Lake

WOOD WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Black-throated Gray Warbler

Townsend's Warbler – along the Hurricane Ridge Rd. and atop Mt. Walker

Hermit X Townsend's Warbler hybrid – a couple of the Mt. Walker hybrid-zone Hermits

MacGillivray's Warbler – along upper Scatter Creek, seen by some the first afternoon

Common Yellowthroat

Wilson's Warbler – showing nicely along the trail to the Tenino mill pond

TANAGERS:

Western Tanager – excellent views of red-faced males

SPARROWS & ALLIES:

Spotted Towhee – adults and immatures

Chipping Sparrow – a couple at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area on lower Scatter Creek

Savannah Sparrow – in the hayfields between Sequim and Dungeness

Song Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco – the “Oregon” form

GROSBEAKS & BUNTINGS:

Black-headed Grosbeak – boldly marked orange and black males, lots of immatures at Bob and Sally's feeders

Lazuli Bunting – a new bird for the tour, seen in the Violet Prairie broom fields

BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES:

Red-winged Blackbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird

FINCHES:

Purple Finch – around Tenino, especially at Sally and Bob's feeders

House Finch

White-winged Crossbill – a flock flew over at high elevation on the road up Hurricane Ridge Rd., a rare sighting here but it appears to be a big irruption year for this boreal finch

Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch

OLD WORLD SPARROWS:

House Sparrow

MAMMALS & OTHER VERTEBRATES

Raccoon – near John Wayne Marina in the early morning

Long-tailed Weasel – seen by Jerry as it crossed the road near the Dosewallips River

Olympic Marmot – it took a bit of hiking along the Hurricane Hill Trail, but we had nice scope views of this endemic as it sunned atop a boulder in a mountain meadow

Eastern Cottontail

Townsend's Chipmunk

“Black-tailed” Deer (form of Mule Deer)

Harbor Seal – ubiquitous along the marine edge

Harbor Porpoise – seen briefly on Strait

SELECTED WILDFLOWERS AND OTHER PLANTS

(seen along Hurricane Ridge road, Mt. Walker Rd., and other sites)

FLOWERS

LILY FAMILY

Avalanche Lily (*Erythronium montanum*) - white

Columbia Lily (*Lilium columbianum*) - orange

Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*) - pink

ORCHID FAMILY

White Bog Orchid (*Platanthera dilatata*) - white

BUTTERCUP FAMILY

Sitka Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*) - red

Pale Larkspur (*Delphinium glaucum*) – purple/blue

BLADDERWORT FAMILY

Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) – purple/blue

BELLFLOWER FAMILY

Scouler's Bluebell (*Campanula scouleri*) – pale blue

ROSE FAMILY

Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*) - pink

Fan-leaf Cinquefoil (*Potentilla flabelligolia*) - yellow

Western Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflora*) - white

Dwarf Bramble (*Rubus lasiococcus*) - white

Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) – pink; salmon berries

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

Douglas' Spirea (*Spirea douglasii*) - pink

PEA FAMILY

Large-leaved Lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus burkei*) - blue

Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) – yellow

EVENING PRIMROSE FAMILY

Fireweed (*Epilobium/Chamerion angustifolium*) - pink

PARSLEY FAMILY

Cow-parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*) – white

Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) – white

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

PHLOX FAMILY

Spreading Phlox (*Phlox diffusa*) - white

Showy Jacob's-ladder (*Polemonium pulcherrimum*) – blue

WATERLEAF FAMILY

Narrow-sepaled Phacelia (*Phacelia leptosepala*) - white

MINT FAMILY

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

MUSTARD FAMILY

Western Wallflower (*Erysimum capitatum*) – yellow

PINK FAMILY

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

FIGWORT FAMILY

Elephant's Head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*) – pink

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

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

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

Sicketop Lousewort/Parrot's Beak (*Pedicularis racemosa*) – white/pink

Magenta Paintbrush (*Castilleja parviflora olympica*) – pinkish purple (Olympic Mts.)

Broad-leaved Penstemon (*Penstemon ovatus*) - blue

Mountain Owl-clover (*Orthocarpus imbricatus*) – pink/purple

PINK FAMILY

Bladder Campion/Catchfly (*Silene vulgaris*) – white

STONECROP FAMILY

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

HEATH FAMILY

Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) – white/pink

Red Mountain Heather (*Phyllodoce empetriformis*) - red

WINTERGREEN FAMILY

Pipsissewa/Prince's Pine (*Chimaphila umbellata*) – pink

SUNFLOWER FAMILY

Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) - white

Pearly-everlasting (*Alaphalis margaritacea*) - white

Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) - yellow

Alpine Aster (*Aster alpigenus*) - purple

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

Rayless/Nodding Arnica (*Arnica parryi*) - yellow

ST. JOHN'S WORT FAMILY

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

BUCKWHEAT FAMILY

American Bistort (*Polygonum bistortoides*) - white

VALERIAN FAMILY

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

HONEYSUCKLE FAMILY

Twinflower (*Linnea borealis*) - pink

Orange Honeysuckle (*Lonicera ciliosa*) - orange

NETTLE FAMILY

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) – green

SHRUBS

Sitka Mountain Ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) – white/cream
Pacific Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) - pink
White-flowered Rhododendron (*Rhododendron albiflorum*) - white
Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa pubens*) – white flower/red berry
Blue Elderberry – (*Sambucus caerulea*) – white flower/blue berry
Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) – pink flower/red berry
Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*) – white flower
Hairy Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*) – pinkish flower/blackish berry
Scot's Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) - yellow
Cascade Oregon Grape (*Mahonia/Berberis nervosa*) – yellow
Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia/Berberis aquifolium*) – yellow
Black Hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*)
Western Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)
Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) – pink flower/red berry

TREES

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