

# THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: AN INTRODUCTORY BIRDING TOUR

**JULY 25-29, 2012**

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*July on the Olympic Peninsula – there is no more fitting season to introduce birders to this special region within the Pacific Northwest! So much variety exists within a short distance: great and diverse birding; stunning mountain scenery and wildflowers; marine waters dotted with emerald islands and teeming with birdlife; and miles and miles of accessible shoreline. Most of the tour takes place in one corner of the Olympic Peninsula, with three of the four nights in Sequim, a small town admirably situated between the saw-toothed Olympic Mountains on one side and the deep marine bays and the Strait of Juan de Fuca on the other—with great birds and great food close at hand.*

*This tour will make the most of the varied natural history that the northeast portion of the Olympic Peninsula has to offer. In addition, we will take the arrival afternoon and the following morning to explore the south Puget Sound region, where we have an especially good opportunity to see such birds as Red-breasted Sapsucker, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Purple Finch and a whole range of species that can be more readily found there.*

*The rest of the tour will be devoted to touring the Olympic Mountains and a range of lowland habitats on the Olympic Peninsula, particularly the edges of the marine bays. Such mountain specialties as Sooty Grouse, Varied Thrush, American Dipper, Northern Pygmy-Owl and Gray Jay are among a longer list of species we may encounter at higher elevation. Expect, too, an incredible show of wildflowers at their peak. Lowland habitats are also home to many nesting species - from stately pairs of Bald Eagles to miniature Rufous Hummingbirds; from western specialties like Black-headed Grosbeak to Vaux's Swifts and Western Tanagers. Red Crossbills may turn up at any elevation in this land of many conifers.*

*We will bird also along the water's edge and during ferry crossings, with excellent opportunities to view such seabirds as Tufted Puffin, Rhinoceros Auklet, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Murrelet, and Pelagic Cormorant, as well as eye-catching specialties like Harlequin Duck and Black Oystercatcher. Shorebirds are coming south after nesting season too, with birds like Black Turnstone, dowitchers, yellowlegs, and others a good bet. Lowland habitats are also home to many such nesting species, from stately Bald Eagles to miniature Rufous Hummingbirds, and from western specialties like Black-headed Grosbeak to Vaux's Swifts and Western Tanagers. Red Crossbills may turn up at any elevation in this land of many conifers.*

*VENT's "Introductory Birding Tours" are focused within a small geographic area that has a great birding and other natural history interest, and are scheduled at peak seasons. Like our other introductory tours, the Pacific Northwest tour is designed to appeal to birders of all experience levels, and makes a special effort in the field to talk about or answer questions about optics; how*

*birds are related to one-another and grouped in classification; techniques for learning to identify birds; and the importance of habitat and seasons in finding birds.*

**July 25, Day 1: SeaTac Airport to Olympia.** Please meet at 2:00 p.m. with your luggage on the **TICKETING** level (*not* the baggage claim level) in the vicinity of the Alaska Airlines ticket counters, **near the door to the outside marked with the number 27**. We will depart from this spot at 2:00 p.m. Please take time to have lunch before we depart. If you are planning to stay at a local hotel the previous night, please have them shuttle you to this location. From the Seattle area we will travel south by van to the Olympia area, about an hour away. Please have your binoculars handy among your carry-on gear.

The Puget Sound lowland habitats will be our main focus of birding later this afternoon, as we visit Scatter Creek Valley, including the home of your tour leader Bob Sundstrom in this rural setting where the feeders and gardens are alive with birds. Woods, brushy areas, and open fields host a range of birds like Red-breasted Sapsucker, Rufous Hummingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, MacGillivray's and Wilson's warblers, Willow Flycatcher, Spotted Towhee, and Western Tanager. Virginia Rails and Marsh Wrens nest at a nearby marsh. The forest edge brings us close to tiny Winter Wrens, and here too we may find Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Bushtit, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Other nesting species close by include California Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Vaux's Swift, Cassin's and Warbling vireos, Northern "Red-shafted" Flicker, Bewick's Wren, Bushtit, Swainson's Thrush, White-crowned Sparrow and Purple Finch. After dinner nearby, we will retire to our lodging for the night.

NIGHT: Guesthouse International Inn & Suites, Tumwater, WA

**July 26, Day 2: Olympia to Sequim.** The cooler hours of the morning will be an excellent time to revisit the lowlands near Scatter Creek (see birds mentioned for Day 1) and follow up on species that may have eluded us the previous afternoon.

By late morning, we will begin working our way north along Hood Canal, a long and narrow marine bay. We'll drive up along the Dosewallips River, into the shady, moss-covered forest, with a first chance to find Sooty Grouse. Today or later in the tour we'll bird along the Quilcene River where American Dipper is a good bet and Spotted Sandpipers or Harlequin Ducks may be nesting, as Northern Rough-winged Swallows and other species fly over the river. Along Discovery Bay, we'll look for Tufted Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots, and other seabirds. Another short drive takes us to Sequim (pronounced "skwim") and our motel for the next three nights. The woods surrounding these comfortable lodgings also offer a nice cross-section of lowland and mixed forest bird species.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Sequim, WA

**July 27-28, Days 3-4: Exploring the Eastern Olympic Peninsula.** Over the next two days we will cover a variety of areas with quite different birds in each. Still, there will also be enough overlap in birds that we will have a chance to review a number of the same species from day-to-day. On one morning we will bird our way from near sea level to over 5,200 feet elevation in Olympic National Park, taking time to peruse the brilliant display of mountain wildflowers that should be near their full glory. Sooty Grouse hens and their broods often loiter near the roadside at higher elevations, and nesting species along the route through the park include such specialty western thrushes as Varied Thrush, as well as brilliant singers like Hermit and Swainson's thrushes. Red Crossbills, Evening Grosbeaks, Vaux's Swifts, Gray and Steller's jays, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Band-tailed Pigeons, Pine Siskins, and Common Ravens are among the many species we hope to find as we work our way up into the mountains. On another morning we will likely head south from Sequim to bird along the road up Mt. Walker, an area that offers additional opportunities to search for Sooty Grouse, Hammond's Flycatcher, Varied Thrush, and Northern Pygmy-Owl.

The marine scenery and birding opportunities of the Olympic Peninsula make a great complement to its mountain birds and flowers. The northeast corner of the Olympic Peninsula hosts many nesting seabirds in the

summer, and we have a good chance to see these species from land or during a ferry crossing. Rhinoceros Auklets, puffin-sized alcids with nearly puffin-sized bills, are present by the thousands in summer, as are considerable numbers of sleek, black Pigeon Guillemots, which show off bright red feet as they dive for small fish. Diminutive Marbled Murrelets and unmistakable Tufted Puffins are less common, but we will make a concerted effort to get a view of them. Harbor Seals are in abundance, and we also expect to encounter such unmistakable denizens of the nearshore waters and shorelines as Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, and Pelagic Cormorants. Heermann's Gulls are the most striking of the mid-summer gulls on hand, and odds and ends of summering scoters hang out on the bays. We will work in a bit of shorebird watching, as southbound plovers and sandpipers are already coming through in good numbers, sharing the inter-tidal zone with Northwestern Crows. Rarities on the tour in past years have included Emperor Goose, White-tailed Kite, White-winged Crossbill, and Black-legged Kittiwake.

Around Sequim and the town of Dungeness we will also visit a variety of lowland habitats, from natural prairie to assorted lowland forest types which offer a wide range of bird possibilities. Bald Eagles nest in towering snags. Rufous Hummingbirds nest in the lowland woods near Dungeness, as do tasseled California Quail. Songbirds, including some of the species sought earlier near Scatter Creek and Capitol Forest, also nest in the vicinity. An early morning visit to nearby Sequim Bay offers additional possibilities.

NIGHTS: Holiday Inn Express, Sequim, WA

**July 29, Day 5: Return to Seattle; Departure for Home.** The morning offers a few hours to follow up on additional birding possibilities as we prepare to ferry back to the Seattle area after breakfast. Please book departing flights from Seatac Airport for 2:00 p.m. or later.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS:** **Bob Sundstrom** (a second leader will be added if group size warrants)

**Bob Sundstrom** has led VENT tours since 1989 to destinations including Hawaii, Mexico, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Iceland, Papua New Guinea, the Southwest Pacific islands, Antarctica, the Bering Sea, and many destinations throughout North America. Bob takes a strong interest in both the natural and cultural settings of his tours. He earned his doctorate at the University of Washington. Bob and his wife Sally live in the rural Scatter Creek Valley south of Olympia, Washington. Bob lived in Seattle for more than two decades, continues to teach birding workshops, and leads a program of short, regional tours that begin in the Seattle area. During two seasons of work in the Pribilof Islands, he helped chronicle the occurrence of North American bird rarities. A skilled birder with a special interest in bird song, Bob has served on the boards of several nature and conservation organizations, as well as the Washington State Bird Records Committee. He is a co-author of *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. When not on tour, Bob keeps busy as the lead writer for the daily public radio program *BirdNote*, which is archived at [www.birdnote.org](http://www.birdnote.org).

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$1,555** per person in double occupancy from Seattle. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground and ferry transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Seattle and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$315**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$150** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$50** per person. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$150*
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$50 per person.

**TRIP INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** We request participants limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on, if possible, as space in the vehicle will be limited. Soft-sided luggage is preferred.

**CLOTHING/WEATHER:** The weather in Washington in July is typically mild, with temperatures ranging from the mid 50s to the low 80s. Because this trip also includes some travel over water as well as birding in the mountains and some early morning outings, some cooler temperatures can be expected. At least some precipitation is likely during the course of the tour. One can be quite comfortable with the right clothing/gear. You will need to have enough different layers on hand to meet the potential range of conditions.

The following should cover all likely conditions, including the coolest: lightweight field clothing (e.g. cotton shirts and pants) and a light jacket close at hand will suffice for most days. Please bring along additional warm layers for cooler conditions (pile jacket or warm sweater), as well as a pair of gloves and warm head covering. If you get cold easily, you may wish to bring along a set of lightweight, long underwear and a pair of glove liners. For wind and moisture, a good windproof/water-resistant outer shell, such as a Gore-Tex parka, will be essential. It would be best to avoid using nylon or similar rain/wind pants during forest and trail birding. The noise they produce can make it difficult to hear and locate birds. Casual dress is the standard throughout the tour.

**FOOTWEAR AND HIKING:** Some days will involve a small amount of walking over rough ground, for which a pair of lightweight hiking boots will be essential. It is strongly recommended that you bring a small daypack and a water bottle for general use during the trip. Some walks may cover a mile or more and encompass an absence of an hour or two from the vans.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution (in the event of delayed checked baggage), it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items and travel documents in your airline carry-on bags.

For sunny conditions, sunscreen and a protective hat are recommended. Occasional mosquitoes are a possibility, so a small quantity of insect repellent may come in handy. You will need to bring an alarm clock. Your leader(s) will have a spotting scope for group use, but you may wish to bring your own. This tour lends itself to a good bit of productive scope use, so having a few additional scopes along can be a real asset. You will, of course, need binoculars. There may be some good nature photo opportunities if you have a camera ready during our travels.

**HEALTH:** If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots,

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books.

### **Birds**

Choate, Ernest A. *The Dictionary of American Bird Names*. Boston: Harvard Commons Press, 1985.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Lives of North American Birds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fifth Edition. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006.

Paulson, Dennis. *Shorebirds of the Pacific Northwest*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1998.

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York: Knopf, 2003.

Sibley, David Allen. *Sibley's Birding Basics*. . New York: Knopf, 2002.

Wahl, Terence R., Bill Tweit, & Steven G. Mlodinow. *Birds of Washington: Status and Distribution*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2005.

### **Bird Sound Recording**

*Bird Songs of the Pacific Northwest*. Geoffrey A. Keller and Gerrit Vyn. Ithaca, NY: Macaulay Library, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 2008.

*Birding by Ear: Western*. Richard K. Walton and Robert W. Lawson. Peterson Field Guide No. 41. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (3 cassettes; pamphlet)

### **Other Natural History**

Alden, Peter, Dennis Paulson, Amy Gregoret, Richard Keen, Daniel Mathews, Eric A. Oches, Robert Sundstrom and Wendy B. Zomlefer. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Eder, Tamara. *Mammals of Washington and Oregon*. Renton, WA: Lone Pine, 2002.

Kruckeberg, Arthur R. *The Natural History of Puget Sound Country*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991.

Mathews, Daniel. *Cascade-Olympic Natural History: A Trailside Reference*. Portland, OR: Raven Editions, 2000 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Pojar, Jim and Andy MacKinnon. *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast*. Redmond, WA: Lone Pine Press, 1994.

Turner, Mark and Phyllis Gustafson. *Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest*. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2006.

Whitney, Stephen. *The Pacific Northwest*. A Sierra Club Naturalist's Guide. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1989.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on October 19, 2011 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.