



# HARLEQUIN HAPPENINGS

Newsletter of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS)  
[www.olympicpeninsulaaudubon.org](http://www.olympicpeninsulaaudubon.org) ([www.olybird.org](http://www.olybird.org))  
 Clallam County, Washington  
 A Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
 Issue 1 January-February 2022

*“Volunteer educators and stewards for birds and habitat conservation”*

## OPAS Program for January

by Tom Butler, Vice President

### “Snorkeling the Dungeness: A Riverscape Survey of Dungeness River Bull Trout”,

Presented by Kathryn Sutton, WDFW,  
 January 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Meeting held by Zoom. Register on [Events Calendar](#) to receive Zoom information. OPAS will address a few updates, with the presentation to follow.

Bull trout were once widespread throughout the Pacific Northwest, but are now limited to small fragmented populations. Dungeness River bull trout are genetically different from other populations and not much is known about their population size or distribution. In an attempt to improve knowledge of



*Kathryn Sutton  
 snorkeling the Dungeness*

bull trout in the Dungeness, over 20 biologists completed a riverscape survey by snorkeling the Dungeness River from the anadromous barrier at river mile 19 (Gold Creek falls) to the river mouth, as well as the lower 4 miles of the Gray Wolf River.

Fish biologist Kathryn Sutton will discuss the findings from this and other surveys at the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society’s monthly membership meeting on January 19, 2022 at 7:00pm. Because of the combined effects of continuing construction on the Dungeness River Nature Center and

COVID-19 concerns, this will be a Zoom meeting, hopefully our last.

Kathryn Sutton, M.S., is a fish biologist for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in Port Angeles, WA. She has worked on multiple salmon and steelhead monitoring projects for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Red Bluff, California, and the National Park Service in Lake Clark National Park, Alaska. In 2015, she moved to Port Angeles to work for Olympic National Park, monitoring recolonization of bull trout and other salmonids after removal of two dams in the Elwha River. In her current position with WDFW, she manages fisheries in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and North Coast of the Olympic Peninsula, and works to increase our knowledge of Olympic Peninsula bull trout. On land, she can usually be found on trails, rocky cliffs or snow.



*Kathryn Sutton*

Please register on [Events Calendar](#). Note: Scroll down in your confirmation email message from Eventbrite for the Zoom information.

## OPAS Program for February

[Editor’s Note: As of 1 Jan 2022, there is no information on an OPAS program for February. Watch our [website](#) for updates.]

*Harlequin Happenings* is published six times a year. Consider “going green”. Receive your newsletter electronically, in living color, by contacting the OPAS Membership Chair, Audrey Gift, at 360-681-2989, or email [agift@olyopen.com](mailto:agift@olyopen.com). The *Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society* meets monthly (except July, August, and December) on the third Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, 2151 Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA, (360) 681-4076. The public is welcome.

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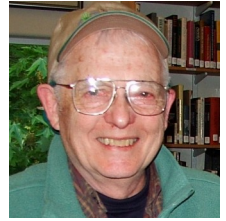
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## President's Notes

by Ken Wiersema



### Enjoying our winter

Just back from a brisk walk in my pasture with my dog, and chatting with neighbors trekking by on their cross country skis. Watched a Northern Harrier glide along looking for a morning snack in bright sun on a crisp winter day. Hope y'all had a comfortable and cozy holiday season. I know many of our members spent hours digging themselves out of the snow, reading by flashlight waiting for power to be restored, and relaxing without internet. Wishing each of you folks a Happy and Better New Year.

### Membership meetings

We had a successful virtual membership meeting in November, and regretably we'll have to stay on Zoom for our January meeting. The Center's expansion project is moving toward completion. The new parking lot is paved and its lights are installed and working. Staff will occupy their new office space in January. We expect that we'll, at last, be able hold our February meeting in person in the new main meeting room of the Center. As I've noted before, we'll be following Clallam County and JST/River Center COVID requirements. We'll ask our attendees to every OPAS event to be vaccinated and wear masks while indoors. We'll also be setting up the room to enforce social distancing standards. That will likely be the rule well into 2022, so please plan for it. As we put together this newsletter, COVID Omicron cases are rapidly increasing in Clallam County, and we've yet to see the predicted holiday surge of new cases. As of 29 Dec 2021, the county rate is 658 cases per 100K folks. We want to return to live events, but may not be able to do so. Placing our largely senior members at risk is not wise. Please watch our website and other "E" media, as we may have to change plans before our next HH comes out.

### Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs)

BIG thanks to Bob Boekelheide for organizing and leading our Sequim-Dungeness CBC this year. And by the time you read this, Barb Blackie will have put together the 16<sup>th</sup> CBC for Port Angeles.

Well done to both!

### BirdFest 2022

OPAS folks with the Center's staff continue to plan for BirdFest 2022 on 22-24 April. We plan to have new events, schedule, and registration info posted on the BirdFest website on or about Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. Watch for it. Here again, the specter of COVID becomes a large factor. Our crystal ball becomes murkier as the Omicron mutation and holiday surge statistics develop. We want to make BirdFest go but not at the risk of our attendees, Center staff, and OPAS volunteers. Watch the OPAS website and newsletter, as well as those of the Dungeness River Nature Center for updates.

### Passing of Les Jones.

On November 29th, I read with a heavy heart of Les Jones' death. I met Les in the fall of 1994 when attending my 1<sup>st</sup> OPAS meeting. Les was our President then; he immediately cajoled me to become the field trip chair.



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He was a soft spoken, courteous leader with a strong vision for where OPAS belonged in our community. He encouraged me to become a supporter of the "River Bridge" Park, and introduced me to another visionary, Annette Hanson. For over 27 years he was our mentor, leader, friend, and stalwart supporter of both OPAS and the River Center. He generously gave of his time, talent, counsel, and resources. It's a bit hollow to say he will be missed, as his contributions and accomplishments will live on and continue to inspire us who remain. Organizations are people and spirit, and Les will continue to be an exemplary testament of what one good man can achieve. Well done, Les.

## OPAS Field Trips

by Marie Grad

### A Message from the Field Trip Chair for January - February 2022



I regret that I haven't any Field Trips scheduled for the New Year. One of the reasons is the continued high number of COVID-19 cases in Clallam County. The two people that were willing to lead trips are not comfortable leading trips in the current COVID-19 environment.

This brings me to the next issue I have been facing: the lack of people interested in leading field trips. If as a member of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, the opportunity to participate in organized field trips is important to you, consider becoming a field trip leader. The organization has many volunteer opportunities available to members and this is one where we need help.

If you are interested or know someone who is, I can be reached through the OPAS website. I will be traveling

### Interested in attending an OPAS virtual event?

All events can be found on the [OPAS website](https://www.opas.org) under Events, Event Calendar. Click on the event you're interested in attending, and a Register button will appear. That's easy! A registration message will be sent to you, with information on how to log in to Zoom for the event. It's a good idea to register at least a day before the event.

If you are not sure how to use Zoom or are uncomfortable with how to get started, please contact us ([president@olympicpeninsulaudubon.org](mailto:president@olympicpeninsulaudubon.org)). We can walk you through the steps and send you a practice invite, where we can work out the "kinks" before the meeting. This is a good opportunity to learn about Zoom in a friendly environment; we are here to help you fly into the modern communication era.

January through early April, but I will still be available to answer any questions. It may take me a few days to get back to you due to limited internet in some of the areas where we will be staying.

I'm hoping that we can return to more normal activities in the new year. Remember the birds are still out there; you just have to get out there and look for them! Contact Marie through the [Contact Us page](#).

## Olympic Peninsula Birdfest 2022

by Marion Rutledge

SAVE THE DATE: Olympic Birdfest, April 22-24, 2022. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction, raffle, gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker: Deborah Jensen PhD, Director of Audubon Washington and former director of Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. Join our festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 19-21, 2022. To learn more and register, visit [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

Olympic Peninsula April 22-24, 2022  
**BirdFest**  
Come bird with us!

- San Juan Island Cruise
- Guided Birding Trips
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- Photography Workshop
- Auction & Raffle
- Gala Banquet with Speaker: Deborah Jensen, PhD

Located in Sequim, WA  
For more information:  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org)  
[info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org)  
or 360-681-4076

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## Western Bluebird/Climate Watch: Join the Winter Survey

by Joyce Volmut  
Coordinator, Western Bluebird/Climate Watch  
Co-Chair, OPAS Conservation Committee



Western and Mountain Bluebird, Spotted Towhee, American and Lesser Goldfinch, nuthatches, and buntings are the targeted birds for National Audubon Climate Watch Winter Survey. The survey begins on January 15 and ends on February 15, 2022. Participants are free to conduct the five-minute survey in their own backyard or in another location (assigned, or one of your choice) any day during the survey period.

All birds seen or heard during the five-minute survey are counted and reported to me either through a shared ebird checklist or via email to [joyce.volmut@gmail.com](mailto:joyce.volmut@gmail.com). Each survey location requires a separate checklist.  
(Continued on next page)



## Harlequin Happenings



*Male Mountain Bluebird*  
Photo by Joyce Volmut

Please contact me for specific instructions if you are new to the program.

The Audubon Climate Watch Program was developed following a study in which scientists described the range of 604 North American Birds. This resulted in the report “Survival by Degrees”, in which 389 bird species were designated at risk as a result of climate change and habitat loss. To test the model, Audubon focuses on the current range of target species, bluebirds, towhees, goldfinches, nuthatches, and buntings. Listed below is the risk for target birds most commonly seen in Clallam County. Of these, the Western Bluebird is the most at risk. The risk listed here is only for the range of wintering birds.

### Read the New Blog Page on the OPAS Website

The OPAS website has a new Blog page that replaced the News page.

Each Blog post tells a story in more detail and with photos to enhance your enjoyment. Be sure to visit the [Blog](#) page today so that you don't miss out on the latest OPAS updates and news.

You can also view a preview of each Blog post on the [Home](#) page of the website. Once you read the selected story, be sure to “like” it at the bottom of the story.

The Western Bluebird is projected to maintain only 36% of current wintering range. It will lose 64% of its southern range in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico; however, the range is expected to expand northward into Western Washington State and British Columbia. The Mountain Bluebird is expected to maintain 81% of its current range and therefore is of lower risk. It will expand by 15% beyond its eastern border.

The Spotted Towhee has moderate vulnerability. It will gain range by 55% in Wyoming and Idaho, and maintain range in Oregon and Washington.

The American Goldfinch has moderate vulnerability. It will gain range throughout Canada but lose some of its range in the Midwest and eastern United States. The Goldfinch has the privilege of being the state bird in quite a number of states. Will this status need to be altered at some point in a portion of states?

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is considered stable.

The Snow Bunting is considered low risk with a northward expansion for winter months into Canada.

The survey takes only 5 minutes to complete at any one site. It's my hope and National Audubon's that more volunteers will join in the count. Volunteers are still needed in the areas between Sequim and Port Angeles, within the Port Angeles area itself, Mt Pleasant Rd, Lake Farm Rd, and in the Sequim Area around the Fish Hatchery.

## The Evans Road Trumpeter Swans

*By John Acklen, OPAS Project Swan Safe Manager, with input from Shelly Ament, WDFW*

Just as we relax and enjoy watching the swans taking off and landing safely at Kirner Pond due to last summer's power line burial project, we became aware of a new threat to recently returned Trumpeter Swans which overwinter here. The following account was posted Nov. 24 on “NextDoor”, a neighborhood chat application.

*“Driving along Evans Road yesterday I was treated to a field of trumpeter swans ... As sundown came, they began to take wing. Disaster! One bird ran into the power lines stretching across the field; this caused a huge bang and power interruption. The magnificent bird plummeted to the field and within a few, very long moments, died.”*

On 11/29, I and Shelly Ament, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologist, met with a local landowner who farms along Evans Road. We met where we could ob-

serve swans gleaning corn from his harvested field. As we talked, we became painfully aware that light was fading, and fog was beginning to blanket the field, as approximately 45 swans began to fly toward their evening roost. Some swans barely cleared the lines. Could the swans see the power lines in these conditions? Swans frequently move in low light and even after dark. They often fly off in flocks and we know from Kirner Pond observations that, while the lead bird may clear the lines, following swans, flying slightly lower, may not see the power lines and collide with them.



*Foraging swans begin to leave the field.  
Photo by Shelly Ament*

The landowner told us that, altogether, seven swans and four Canada Geese had died since the swans returned in mid-November. He did not report the dead birds nor collect carcasses initially. But he became concerned as mortalities increased. On 11/24 Shelly was informed of the swan deaths. She quickly called the landowner to confirm information about the bird mortalities and promptly reported the power line collisions to the PUD. Shelly was able to confirm a total of three swan mortalities: one feather pile on 11/24 (report from *NextDoor*), one swan collected 11/24, and one swan collected 11/26. The two adult swan carcasses were taken to Greywolf Veterinary Hospital for evaluation, and samples were taken for lead testing.

According to Mel Walters, Puget Sound Energy's, Avian Protection Plan Manager, a spate of fall powerline collision occurs among swans. When swans first arrive back from their northern breeding grounds, they are not well oriented to their surroundings. They have to learn locations of the power lines. As they learn, mortalities become less common.

Shelly and I contacted PUD's Engineering Manager, Mike Hill, to determine what could be done to mitigate the situation. Mike was well aware of the situation as PUD had responded to a number of outages along Evans Road. PUD acted quickly to mitigate risk. They shut off power to two of the three power lines along Evans Rd. Although this doesn't eliminate the collision risk, it does prevent electrocution when birds hit wires. Within a couple of days, PUD also took down and removed the power line across the field which will not be needed until next spring. This eliminated the single biggest threat to the swans.

Marking the remaining lines, however, posed engineering challenges for PUD. This is an old power line. The power poles and lines are scheduled for replacement next summer. The existing power lines are thin gauge copper and are very loose and brittle. The type of markers PUD used at Kirner Ponds were not workable here. They would add weight to lines and dangling line markers could result in line slap and entanglement which is a threat to electrical service reliability. This is inconvenient to customers but not necessarily harmful. But when electrical power comes back after an outage, it produces a surge that can damage appliances, computers, and equipment of PUD customers.

The Evans Rd threat calls for a different marking solution. After researching and obtaining product samples, we and PUD hit upon a marker solution using a *Power Line Sentry* line marker that is shaped like a pup tent. The photoluminescent white strip glows in the dark for a full 24 hours and the fluorescent yellow strip serves as a mirror to reflect light. The shape lacks movement but is visible from all angles. The PUD crew were scheduled to begin marking the lines the last week of December, but an intense winter storm and the need to respond to massive power outages delayed their plans.



*Proposed temporary line markers to be installed in winter of 2021-22  
Photo credit <https://powerlinesentry.com/products/distribution/>*

Line marking is an interim solution for this season. The landowner asked the PUD to prepare a cost estimate for line burial. The estimate appears to be prohibitive for the landowner. PUD is scheduled to construct a new overhead line in summer of 2022. *(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings

They also plan to mark the new line, using markers in a pattern developed and refined by Puget Sound Energy for swans over a 30-year period. They'll use a combination of spinning and flapping markers, which also glow in the dark. The marking pattern has proven to be effective and has been adopted by various northwest power companies dealing with swan issues in our region.

OPAS appreciates the responsive actions of WDFW and Clallam County PUD to improve swan safety. We'll continue to collaborate with them and will keep our members informed.

## Conservation Matters: OPAS Swan Study

by Laura Davis and Liam Antrim

With such robust swan numbers in our Sequim-Dungeness area last winter, we watched the skies this fall and had to simply hold onto our hats. Predictions of colder and wetter-than-average weather due to La Niña were verified with rain and strong winds across the Salish Sea, which may have hindered or diverted the swans' migration across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Salish Sea. We counted over 20 swans by early November. The tally increased in mid-November and held steady at +/-80 swans through mid-December. Then, after several nights of a clear skies and bright moonlight, our team counted on 132 swans on December 20. The temperatures, snow and hazardous



travel conditions of late December risked safe survey by volunteers and delayed our counts until the New Year 2022.

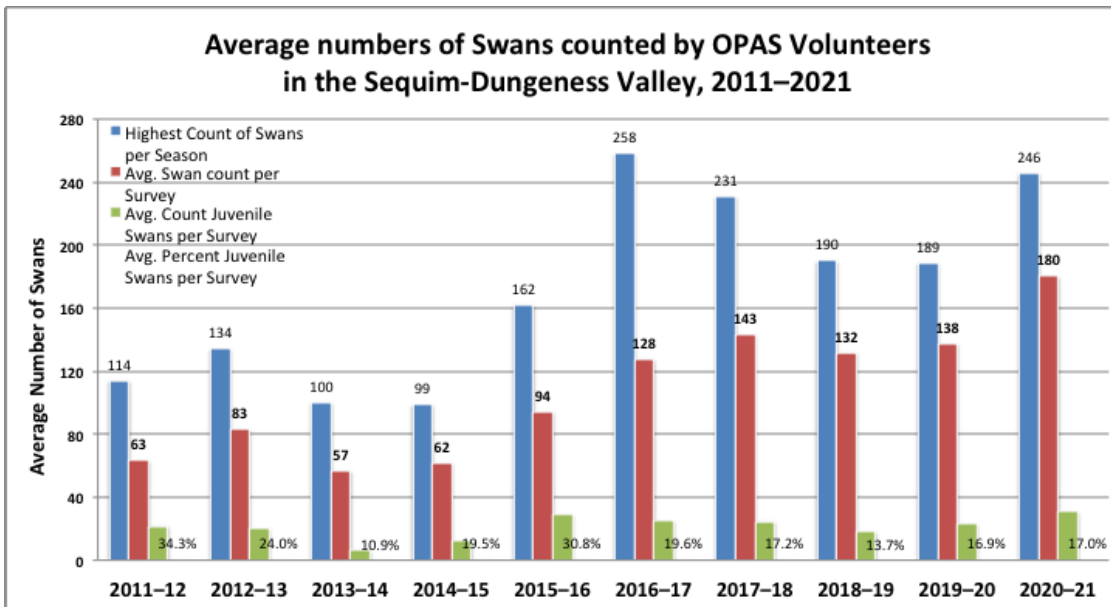
Our over-wintering Trumpeter Swan population has increased during the past ten years of OPAS surveys. The winter of 2020–2021 may prove to be exceptional, with average-count data reflecting a strong autumn arrival and swan numbers that remained high throughout the season. We counted 183 swans on December 1, 2020, versus 75 this year on November 30, 2021. We are now a third of the way into this winter, and it's still too early to know how this year will compare with previous years. While annual differences in timing, numbers, and usage may involve a complex interplay of many variables, we can expect to see longer-term change over time due to factors such as climate instability, wintertime habitat availability, and habitat quality.

### Habitat and Forage

The Pacific Coast population of Trumpeter Swans that we see in western Washington spends summers along Alaska's southern coastal plain, and the interior boreal forest and taiga habitats of Alaska, western Yukon and northwestern British Columbia. Studies show that the positive effects of breeding-season habitats expanding northwards due to extended ice-free periods have outweighed the negative effects of wetland shrinkage in those habitats due to climate change. Researchers suggest the availability of sufficient wintering habitat may ultimately control and limit swan-population growth. We can certainly see the changes in land use in our local area, with agricultural land converted to home lots and development en-

croaching on wetlands and small lakes. The swans are more sensitive to human disturbance at their roosting sites where there is also a negative association with nighttime lights; whereas, they are surprisingly tolerant during their daytime foraging activities adjacent to roadways.

As we write, freezing temperatures and snow cover are limiting access to both day and nighttime forage, as well as open freshwater for roosting. Nocturnal foraging helps generate body heat during the coldest time of the day. While we are seeing some swans on roosting sites that are totally



Our winter surveys document local numbers, distribution, habitat use, and changes in agriculture. For further information, download the OPAS Swan Team's 2020–2021 data-analysis graphics from our OPAS Community Science [webpage](#).



frozen-over, others are seeking out locations that do not pose additional threats of predation, such as our saltwater bays.

Daytime forage for swans in winter includes pasture grasses, small grains, and tubers. This year, as is typical during our Sequim-Dungeness autumns, the swans have foraged largely on harvested corn fields, where they can find broken corn cobs and kernels. Fields over-seeded with cover crops in the fall become more attractive as plants grow and are available to diversify the menu. We also find the swans foraging on pasture grasses. Although our area has many fields managed for hay, we see the swans primarily on pastures and hay fields adjacent to previously harvested crops.



*Trumpeter Swans forage in harvested corn field.  
Photo: Dee Renee Ericks*

Following our late-December snowfall, the swans discovered the carrot fields and shifted foraging usage in that direction. We are in touch with WDFW and the farmer to assist as requested in dissuading the swans from foraging on unharvested crop.

Through our regular counts and observations, we discover patterns that – fueled by our volunteers' interest and curiosity – spark further questions and commitment to the surveys. Researchers and ornithologists contributing to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birds of the World have identified gaps in understanding and research on swans' winter forage needs, information necessary to adequately protect and manage critical habitats into the future. These include:

- **Foraging ecology and nutritional needs:** differences between migratory versus sedentary swans, and between foraging on agricultural crops versus aquatic vegetation.
- **Migration behavior and ecology:** specific data on pre-migratory and migratory behavior and on the exact routes and sites used during migration.

Although the impacts of climate change on individual avian species are unknown, long-term and wide-spread monitoring programs, like the Five-Year Trumpeter Swan survey planned for mid-January, provide the best opportunity to identify population-level effects. We provide data and our team's analysis to WDFW, the Northwest Swan Conservation Society, and to the online audience via the OPAS website. We are grateful for our strong and reliable volunteer team dedicated to this long-term study. In addition to broad weekly surveys, volunteers also watch sites near their homes, participate in our monthly roosting surveys, and provide their observations when swans hit power lines or are otherwise injured.

### Safe Flights and Power Lines

Even with successful mitigation efforts, power lines continue to pose a primary hazard to swans in our Sequim-Dungeness region. At Kirner Pond, the donation-funded powerline removal project this past summer has prevented any further injury and casualty as swans fly from this important roosting site each dawn. This season, swans lifting off the pond to the west pass closely above the large willow shrubs at the Kirner Road edge – heights at which swans would have previously struck the power lines. Recent ice on the pond has meant some interesting take offs in a short amount of space. Volunteers continue to regularly monitor the pond this year, post-mitigation. Thus far, atypical prevailing winds, takeoffs to the east, and lower swan population are factors that may support continued observation beyond the current season.



*Trumpeter Swans fly west across Kirner Road at dawn after powerline removal. Photo: by John Gussman*

This season's hotspot for hazards has been Evans Road, as John Acklen and Shelly Ament describe in this newsletter. Alerted by social media, swan-team members helped WDFW watch, assess the swan flights and locate the areas of potential hazard. This was the first year this field was planted with corn since OPAS swan surveys began in 2011. Shelly was able to attribute three early-season swan mortalities to a power line leading to an irrigation pump. *(Continued on next page)*

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PUD quickly and temporarily removed the short span. Markers on power lines adjacent to the Evans Road fields will make the lines more visible in low to no-light conditions – very important at this location between two of our main roosting sites. Because it can often be difficult to identify the cause of swan injury and mortality, it is so useful when neighbors contact PUD, WDFW or OPAS with descriptions of suspected problems.

We extend our Sequim-Dungeness surveys to the Miller Peninsula and Port Angeles to monitor usage at roosting sites, some of which are on private or restricted access land. We primarily view swans from public-road edges and are especially grateful for our local landowners tolerance of our swan-monitoring and count activities. We also serve the community by informing WDFW if swans seem to be causing crop damage. Intensive use of the road edges by other bird watchers makes landowners more reactive to our weekly survey presence. Please be mindful of private property, but if you are aware of swans using un-surveyed sites, please be in touch.

We all gain sustenance from our community and by working on projects larger than ourselves. Our OPAS teams share camaraderie, service to the community, and time spent in nature. If you have interest in joining our group of surveyors or site stewards, please contact the OPAS Conservation chairs.

## 2021 Christmas Bird Count Results

by Bob Boekelheide

Despite threats of lowland snow, the 2021 Sequim-Dungeness Christmas Bird Count (SDCBC) came off without too many hitches. Held on Dec 20, 2021, the day dawned with overcast skies and light winds, excellent conditions for counting birds. Overnight temperatures dipped into the mid-20s, cold enough to partly freeze some lowland ponds and marshes, then daytime temperatures moderated into the high 30s. Other than flooding rains in November, weather leading up to the count was fairly mild and pleasant, possibly encouraging some species to stick around for the count, but maybe encouraging others to stay further north.

The best part of our count? The people. Ninety-seven stalwart field observers and 25 eager feeder watchers participated this year. Imagine an army of 122 birders deployed into prime habitats from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the cold foothills of the Olympic Mountains. The birders along the

Strait get all the glory and high bird counts, but we need to particularly thank the birders who climb cold forest roads and icy hilltops south of Hwy 101, where birds are few and far between. Thank you all for your dedication.

Our count this year tallied 141 species, slightly below our average of 143 for the past 25 years (see accompanying table). This species total is 13 below our record set in 2015 and eight below our species count last year. Total number of individual birds was 53,707, well below the 25-year average of 62,365 and the lowest number of individuals on our CBC since 2012.



*Hermit Thrush*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

Why fewer individual birds? Usually lower numbers on this CBC happen when we tally fewer dabbling ducks, such as wigeons, mallards, and pintails. That seems to be the case this year, as all three of these species were at the low end of their long-term averages. The warm conditions and all the flood waters from November storms may have kept them further north, as there was no shortage of flooded fields in the Pacific NW to entice ducks this year. Other abundant flocking species such as robins and siskins were near or below their average numbers.

In decreasing order, the top ten most abundant species this year were Am. Wigeon (8221 counted), Mallard (4781), Dark-eyed Junco (2647), Am. Robin (2596), Pine Siskin (2581), Glaucous-winged and Olympic Gulls (2260), Red-winged Blackbird (2017), Green-winged Teal (1656), Eur. Starling (1596), and N. Pintail (1277). These 10 species made up over 55 percent of all birds on our count.



Ten species set or tied record high-counts this year -- Greater White-fronted Goose, Common Merganser, Anna's Hummingbird, Sora, Barred Owl, Am Kestrel, Hermit Thrush, Spotted Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco, and Red-winged Blackbird. Anna's Hummingbirds particularly continue to increase in abundance, topping 400 birds for the first time on our CBC. Other species that scored close to record counts included Pied-billed Grebe, Am Coot, and Golden-crowned Sparrow. Our sharp-eyed volunteers were very good at spotting lots of birds, but it also makes me wonder whether some of these species may have stuck around due to warmer, milder conditions this fall. One year does not make a trend, of course, so we'll have to see whether these patterns continue in future years.

Species with far lower than average counts this year included Harlequin Duck, Sanderling, and Dunlin. Fewer Harlequin Ducks is particularly disconcerting -- they are the symbol of the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, you know. The 41 Harlequin Ducks this year was the lowest tally since 1979. Their numbers fluctuate quite a bit from year to year, with 214 counted as recently as the 2017 CBC, but we need to keep an eye on the Harlequins. Sanderlings and Dunlins may have been hiding somewhere we didn't look, because high tides on count day kept them from their usual intertidal haunts.

We also mourn the loss of two shorebirds we had grown to expect on our CBC. For the last six years, starting in 2015, we have tallied one Willet in Dungeness Bay on every CBC. Sadly, we never spotted a Willet in Dungeness Bay this fall. Fondly known as "Willy," it first appeared as a juvenile in 2015, then we recorded one adult every year thereafter. We assumed it was the same bird, although we couldn't possibly know for sure. Willy hung around Dungeness Landing and Three Crabs, reliable as clockwork. Let's hope that Willy "grew up" and is now a successful breeding bird.

The other missing shorebird this year was one Pacific Golden-Plover that graced our presence for the last five winters, starting in 2016. This bird was possibly the furthest-north-wintering Pacific Golden-Plover in the world. It was more elusive than Willy, though, only recorded on CBCs in 2016 and 2020. It sometimes hung out with Black-bellied Plovers in harvested corn fields along Schmuck Rd, sometimes it appeared on mudflats in Dungeness Bay, but sometimes we had no idea where it went. Some winters we'd spot it for several weeks at a time; then it would disappear for several weeks. Some years we didn't find it until January or February, when lower daytime tides finally lured shorebirds to Dungeness Bay mudflats. We haven't spotted it yet this winter, but don't give up hope yet.

Several unusual species showed up for our count, along with several species that used to be considered unusual but are now almost expected, such as Sora, Yellow-billed Loon, Scrub-Jay, and Swamp Sparrow. Most unusual by far was a Dickcissel found by the Waggoner brothers at Jamestown, still here several days after the CBC. What the heck is a Dickcissel doing

here in December? What the heck is a Dickcissel doing here anytime? Dickcissels nest in the prairies of the Midwest and winter in similar grasslands in northern South America, mostly Venezuela. They occasionally stray to the West Coast, last seen in Clallam County in 2017. We should keep looking for the Dickcissel and see how long it sticks around.



*Dickcissel*  
Photo by Brad Waggoner

Other unusual species include three Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels spotted by Denny Van Horn off the Dungeness Recreation Area. A Lesser Black-backed Gull first seen by Gary Bullock and Bob Boekelheide at Maple View Farms on 12/13 stuck around for the count, still here in late December. In addition to the Dickcissel, the Waggoner brothers also spotted a lone Bohemian Waxwing at Jamestown traveling with a flock of Cedar Waxwings. After counting birds as part of our offshore boat party, Bruce LaBar and Will Brooks found and photographed a lone Common Redpoll traveling in a flock of Pine Siskins at John Wayne Marina.

What did we miss? The only count week bird (seen within three days before or after the count but not on count day) was Canvasback. Two female Canvasbacks hung out at the Kirner Pond both before and after the CBC, but we totally missed them on CBC day.

Other obvious misses were Black Oystercatcher and Townsend's Warbler. A Tundra Swan here in early December unfortunately did not show during count week.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Harlequin Happenings



*Lesser Black-backed Gull*  
Photo by Bob Boekelheide

man, Tom Backe, Serene Forsman, Doris Causey, Rick Rodlend, Kathy Cooper, Nora & Tim Fleming, Liam Antrim, Pam Maurides.

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Looking ahead, the 2022 SDCBC will likely occur on Monday, 12/19/22. Mark your calendars!

Many, many thanks to everyone who participated, particularly to land-owners and agencies that gave access to their properties, including Dungeness NWR, Olympic Game Farm, Dungeness Farms and Habitat, Seashore Lane, Graysmarsh, the Willits family, Kevin Froese, and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.

Counters and feeder watchers included:

Jamie Acker, Ken Wiersema, Dow Lambert, Richard Wiersema, Denny Van Horn, Michael Barry, Ed & Myra Koszykowski, Laura Davis & Alan Smith, Barb & Bob Boekelheide, Scott Gremel, Mandy Holmgren, Eric Guzman, Sara Cendejas-Zarelli, Tom Butler, Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin, Lee Bowen, Shelly Ament - WDFW, Brad, Dan, & Kevin Waggoner, Steve Hampton, Alex & Sarah Scagliotti - Graysmarsh, Bruce & Sharon Paige, Roger Hoffman, Dana Scott, Ron Miller, Steven Ware & Nancy Smith, Susan Savage, Bob Blush, Jim & Audrey Gift, Bob Hutchison, Jeff Lightfoot, Bruce & Carol Von Borstel, Dan MacDougall-Treacy, Powell Jones, Greg Voyles, Katherine & Otis Bush, John Gatchet, Bob Bagwell, David Durham, Bruce Labar, Will Brooks, Mike Crim, Durkee Richards - skipper, Sue Thomas - USFWS, Janis Burger, Seth Connor, Pat Schoen, Sue Nattinger, Coleman Byrnes, Valerie Wolcott, John Bridge, Kendra Donelson, John Acklen, Juanita Reyes, Nancy Kohn, Norrie & Barb Johnson, Quenn Charrier, Gillian Kenagy, Ida Domazlicky, Penny Soares, Mary Morgan, Tim McNulty, Pat and Michael DeMarco, Heidi Pedersen, Kathe Smith, Tom Guobis, Joan McDermott, Sheila Kee, Bill & Donna Hayden, Mike Barnes, Barbara Vanderwerf, Sarah Bird, Miguel Reabold, Marie Grad, Diane Luoma, Jolene Sanborn, Steve Koehler, Sharle Osborne, Forest Koehler, Skip & Caroline Perkins, Bob Iddins, Ed Stege, Ally Simons, Wayne & Margie Sladek, Gary Bullock, Vince Thrutchley, Kevin Froese, Ron Wight, David Biek, Stacey Fradkin, Marion Rutledge, Grace, Kate, & Glen Goschen, Mary Robson, Susan McDougall, Naomi Himley, Joy Bert-



RESULTS OF 2021 SEQUIM-DUNGENESS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Gr White-fronted Goose	<u>62</u>	Western Grebe	26	Barn Owl	8	Spotted Towhee	<u>645</u>
Snow Goose	17	<u>Fork-tld Storm-Petrel</u>	3	Great-horned Owl	8	Savannah Sparrow	55
Brant	885	Brandt's Cormorant	52	Northern Pygmy-Owl	4	Fox Sparrow	253
Cackling Goose	42	Double-crstd Cormorant	472	Barred Owl	<u>10</u>	Song Sparrow	1011
Canada Goose	768	Pelagic Cormorant	93	Short-eared Owl	2	Lincoln's Sparrow	45
Trumpeter Swan	132	cormorant sp.	7	Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	Swamp Sparrow	1
Wood Duck	2	Great Blue Heron	93	Anna's Hummingbird	<u>404</u>	White-throated Sparrow	6
Gadwall	89	Bald Eagle	173	Belted Kingfisher	37	White-crowned Sparrow	245
Eurasian Wigeon	35	Northern Harrier	42	Red-breastd Sapsucker	13	Golden-crowned Spar.	<u>1220</u>
American Wigeon	8221	Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	Downy Woodpecker	51	sparrow sp.	20
Mallard	4781	Cooper's Hawk	28	Hairy Woodpecker	33	Dark-eyed Junco (Or)	<u>2646</u>
Northern Shoveler	137	accipiter sp.	1	No. Flicker (unk type)	119	Dark-eyed Junco (SI-col)	1
Northern Pintail	1277	Red-tailed Hawk	80	Red-shafted Flicker	116	Red-winged Blackbird	<u>2017</u>
Green-winged Teal	1656	hawk sp.	3	Intergr RS X YS Flicker	2	Western Meadowlark	29
Canvasback	cw	Virginia Rail	14	Pileated Woodpecker	9	Brewer's Blackbird	1064
Redhead	2	Sora	<u>2</u>	American Kestrel	<u>20</u>	Brown-headed Cowbird	5
Ring-necked Duck	68	American Coot	<u>185</u>	Merlin	17	blackbird sp.	2
Greater Scaup	313	Black-bellied Plover	237	Peregrine Falcon	12	Purple Finch	85
Lesser Scaup	17	Killdeer	46	Northern Shrike	7	House Finch	748
scaup sp.	13	Marbled Godwit	3	Hutton's Vireo	6	Red Crossbill	32
Harlequin Duck	41 L	Black Turnstone	12	California Scrub-Jay	1	Pine Siskin	2581
Surf Scoter	985	Sanderling	67 L	Steller's Jay	275	<u>Common Redpoll</u>	1
White-winged Scoter	141	Dunlin	658 L	American Crow	893	American Goldfinch	16
Black Scoter	22	Wilson's Snipe	21	Common Raven	247	House Sparrow	122
scoter sp.	12	sandpiper sp.	80	Black-capped Chickadee	344		
Long-tailed Duck	534	Common Murre	327	Chestnut-bckd Chickadee	377		
Bufflehead	1273	Pigeon Guillemot	388	Bushtit	288		
Common Goldeneye	353	Marbled Murrelet	26	Red-breasted Nuthatch	144	<u>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</u>	<u>53707</u>
Barrow's Goldeneye	12	Ancient Murrelet	694	Brown Creeper	29	<u>NO. OF SPECIES</u>	<u>141</u>
goldeneye sp.	1	Rhinoceros Auklet	6	Bewick's Wren	23		
Hooded Merganser	50	alcid sp.	3	Pacific Wren	118	Number of Observers	97
Common Merganser	<u>151</u>	Mew Gull	295	Marsh Wren	57	No. Feeder Watchers	25
Red-breastd Merganser	1086	Ring-billed Gull	1	American Dipper	9	Number of Parties	46 to 51
Ruddy Duck	9	California Gull	4	Golden-crownd Kinglet	589	Miles on foot	145.6
duck sp.	76	Herring Gull	6	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	205	Hours on foot	173.2
Ruffed Grouse	1	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	8	Hermit Thrush	<u>10</u>	Miles by car	405.4
California Quail	161	<u>Lesser Blk-backed Gull</u>	1	American Robin	2596	Hours by car	71.9
Red-throated Loon	14	Western Gull	8	Varied Thrush	117	Miles by boat	24.4
Pacific Loon	99	Glaucous-winged Gull	615	European Starling	1596	Hrs by boat	4.8
Common Loon	32	W. X Glauc-wing Gull	1645	American Pipit	7	Miles bicycle	31.0
Yellow-billed Loon	3	Herring X Glauc-wg Gull	1	<u>Bohemian Waxwing</u>	1	Hours bicycle	11.0
loon sp.	4	gull sp.	653	Cedar Waxwing	28	Hours owling	12.7
Pied-Billed Grebe	<u>19</u>	Rock Pigeon	625	Orange-crowned Warbler	4	Miles owling	70.3
Horned Grebe	105	Eurasian Collar-Dove	111	Yellow-rumped Warbler	26	Feeder Hours	53.7
Red-necked Grebe	201	Mourning Dove	242	Yel-rumped (Myr) Warbler	5	Total Field Party-Hours	260.8
Eared Grebe	2	pigeon/dove sp.	18	<u>Dickcissel</u>	1		

cw = Count Week (seen within three days before or after the count, but not on count day)

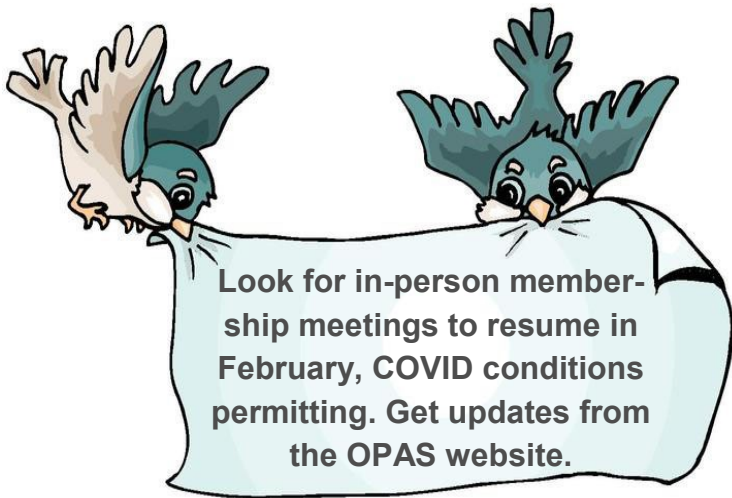
Underlined species = unusual species, rarely recorded on SDCBCs

Underlined numbers = extraordinary number of individuals for Sequim-Dungeness CBC, since 1975

L = Low count for the SDCBC

# Harlequin Happenings

Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 502  
Sequim, WA 98382-0502



## Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

P.O. Box 502  
Sequim, WA 98382-0502

NAS Code Y08

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