

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: WESTERN WASHINGTON STATE CUSTOM TRIP REPORT

8 - 15 AUGUST 2019

By Christian Hagenlocher



Band-tailed Pigeon was one of the many species we found on this trip.

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Overview

This custom trip combined some of the classic destinations in western Washington, covering a variety of habitats from pelagic birding to the alpine slopes of Mount Rainier. We drove over 1,000 miles of roads, ranging from highways to logging roads, in search of a wide variety of species. Our total list contained 147 species (and one additional species heard only).

The itinerary was adapted from our sister company Bird Treks' <u>Washington Tour</u>. With only one client signed up we tailored the itinerary to meet her needs and requests for target birds. This itinerary centered around a pelagic day trip with Westport Seabirds, followed by visiting some key birding locations for owls and grouse in addition to secondary western target birds which would be lifers for the client.

Detailed Report

Day 1, August 8th 2029. Seattle to Westport via Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

We began with a mid-morning pickup from the client's hotel near SeaTac, from where we jumped into Thursday morning traffic, heading toward downtown Seattle.

We chose to begin the trip with a ferry boat ride from Seattle to Bremerton. After boarding the boat we walked to the observation deck with our binoculars and had great looks at the classic "Olympic Gull"— a Western Gull x Glaucous-winged Gull hybrid complex that inhabits Puget Sound. Caspian Tern and Pigeon Guillemot were plentiful as we made the crossing, along with our first looks at Rhinoceros Auklet. Scanning the pilings we picked out all three cormorant species, Pelagic, Double-crested, and Brandt's Cormorants, and had good comparison views both perched and in flight.

After the ferry crossing we drove south to the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, where we picked through our first shorebird flocks of the trip, finding a mix of mostly Least Sandpipers, with some Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers mixed in. Recently fledged Bald Eagles were quite vocal as we sorted through swarms of swallows, finding Barn, Tree, Violet-green, American Cliff, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows and a handful of Purple Martins and Sand Martins (Bank Swallows). Then we continued our drive to Westport, picking up a fly-over Band-tailed Pigeon on the way in addition to the "western" subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk.

After checking into our Airbnb lodgings in Westport, a beautiful multi-bedroom apartment over a local laundromat, we scoped from the Westport jetty wall, where **Brown Pelicans** were plunge-diving just feet from shore in beautiful evening light. Following each dive scores of **Heermann's Gulls** appeared to pick fish from the pelicans' wake. Here we also picked up our first **Common Murres**.

We checked Westhaven State Park at sunset for the evening flock of **American Crows**. Although many reports count Northwestern Crow here, we used this as a chance to study the lower vocalizations and smaller size of American Crow and hold off until later in the trip to add the northwest specialty Northwestern Crow to the list.





Immature Brown Pelicans put on a great show near the Westport jetty.

Day 2, August 9th 2019. Birding around Westport

We started the day birding near downtown Westport, scanning the waters of Grays Harbor for alcids. We observed hundreds of **Common Murres** feeding offshore, several with young chicks in tow. We also spotted a distant **Marbled Murrelet** and had great looks at **Pacific Loon**. Searching the rock jetty turned up **Wandering Tattler** and a few **Black Turnstones**, which sought refuge farther out on the rock jetty than we were willing to go.

Our next stop was Bottle Beach State Park, where we picked up **Whimbrel** and **Semipalmated Plover** and looked through nearly 200 **Grey Plovers** (Black-bellied Plovers) to try and find a Pacific Golden Plover, but the best candidate had to be left unidentified as a Golden Plover sp.

Then we birded our way down the peninsula to Tokeland, where we added **Willet** and **Marbled Godwit** to our growing list of shorebirds. The footpath to Midway Beach was flooded, but we didn't have the footwear to wade out to the beach to scan through the shorebird flocks, which most likely contained a rarity.

With the possibility of getting some lifers we drove a few side roads and located **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** and **Purple Finch**—two lifers!

Our foray into the mountains along logging roads in search of Sooty Grouse was cut short by a logging truck driver who told us we would be locked into the logging property if we didn't turn around immediately, which we did. The grouse would have to wait!

Day 3, August 10th 2019. Pelagic trip out of Westport

The morning began early at the dock, where we boarded Westport Seabirds' *Monte Carlo* and departed the harbor at 6 a.m. The light rain didn't dampen our spirits, and the calm seas were indicative of great conditions all day. Several **Humpback Whales** and **Dall's Porpoise** were a



fun start to our trip as we headed offshore for the deeper water of Grays Canyon. Cassin's Auklets were plentiful, and we picked out several Pink-footed Shearwaters in the hundreds of Sooty Shearwaters. As we closed in on a few shrimp boats we found Black-footed Albatross, Buller's Shearwater, and a single Short-tailed Shearwater in the flock.



For many passengers the close-up views of **Black-footed Albatross** were a highlight of the trip.

In deeper water we encountered our first **South Polar Skua** of the day as well as **Long-tailed Jaeger** – the first of 14 for the day! Another highlight was finding a **Scripps's Murrelet**, which sat calmly on the water for many to get great looks at.

The lack of wind was to blame for the absence of storm-petrel diversity, but we did find several **Fork-tailed Storm Petrels** zooming around, as well as several **Arctic Terns** and **Sabine's Gulls**.

The return trip afforded great looks at both **Red** and **Red-necked Phalaropes** as well as large groups of alcids. Approaching the harbor we enjoyed hundreds of **Marbled Godwits** roosting on the docks as well as better views of **Heermann's Gulls**, **Brandt's Cormorants**, **Black Turnstones**, and several **Wandering Tattlers** on the Westport jetty.





This Scripps's Murrelet, soon followed by another pair, was an unexpected treat!

Day 4, August 11th 2019. Gifford Pinchot National Park and Mount Rainier National Park The morning began with our drive to Packwood, a town in the shadow of Mt. Rainier. We began birding at Big Creek Campground in Gifford Pinchot National Park, scanning through a dozen Vaux's Swifts looking for Black Swift, which, however, eluded us. Both a juvenile Northern Goshawk and Red-tailed Hawk were calling nearby as we hiked into the forest. Then we were lucky to find a mixed feeding flock of birds including Evening Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, Black-throated Grey Warbler, and Townsend's and Wilson's Warblers.

In the afternoon we birded Mount Rainier National Park, climbing into the foothills along national forest roads and hearing **Northern Pygmy Owl**, **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, and **Grey Jay** (Canada Jay). While driving we had an incredible sighting of a female **Sooty Grouse** in the forest overlooking the road. We made a safe U-turn and doubled back to see the grouse, which was keeping a watchful eye on several well-hidden chicks nearby in the vegetation. Later in the afternoon we also found **Ruffed Grouse** with a chick and also had some brief sightings of other birds, including **Varied Thrush**, **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, and **Red- breasted Nuthatch**.





A female Sooty Grouse stands watch over her chicks.

Day 5, August 12th 2019. Mount Rainier National Park

We started the day in search of Spotted Owls, which didn't respond to the vocal imitations we offered to the empty forest. Standing amidst giant trees that towered hundreds of feet into the air was a magical experience, knowing that Spotted Owls haunted the woods around us like invisible ghosts.

We drove some national forest roads, getting better views of both grouse species we found the day before. We also found some recently fledged **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, which were quite vocal in their begging for food from the adults. We were treated to a surprise **Northern Goshawk**, which crossed the road in front of us before disappearing into the spruces. We also enjoyed great views of **Red Crossbill**, **Nashville Warbler**, and multiple kinglets and **Brown Creepers**. Our search for Spruce Grouse was unsuccessful, but it took us through some amazing habitat.

The afternoon was spent searching for Black-backed Woodpecker across the mountains in an old burn, but to no avail, and the lack of birds overall was surprising to everyone. Later in the evening we went owling, and had a great encounter with a family of **Barred Owls** performing a variety of vocalizations.

Day 6, August 13th 2019. Mount Rainier National Park to Sequim

Hoping to find American Black Swift we started the morning birding at Narada Falls in Mount Rainier National Park. Despite no swifts being seen we did watch an **American Dipper** scale the 188-foot falls in an impressive vertical flight interrupted by several feeding stops. Back at the parking lot a couple of vocal **American Three-toed Woodpeckers** were seen, the first of the trip.

The remainder of the day was spent in transit to Sequim with some birding stops along the way. We visited a local residence where we enjoyed **Anna's** and **Rufous Hummingbirds** at a feeder

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as well as close-up looks at both **Black-capped** and **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, **American Bushtit** (Bushtit), **Bewick's Wren**, and **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**. Sadly, despite being in Mountain Quail habitat, we couldn't connect with one.

To help break up the drive we stopped at a second private residence with nesting **Western Osprey** (Osprey) and **Bald Eagle**. We scanned the beach for shorebirds, picking up a single **Greater Yellowlegs**. Subsequent stops on the way to Sequim produced a lifer **Harlequin Duck**, the client's 600th ABA bird! Along with the "Harlies" we found some additional waterfowl species, namely **Northern Pintail**, **American Widgeon**, and **Eurasian Teal** (Green-winged Teal).

Day 7, August 14th 2019. Birding Sequim, Ediz Hook, and Dungeness Spit

We joined the local Wednesday birding group at Railroad Bridge Park, where American Black Swifts have turned up on overcast days with low clouds. Unfortunately the weather was sunny and warm—unfavorable weather for swift-spotting.

We continued to Ediz Hook, where we found over 50 **Harlequin Ducks** in various stages of non-breeding plumage and were treated for a low flyover of **Bald Eagle**. The Port Angeles City Pier afforded a great chance to study the smaller **Northwestern Crow**, which is less likely to succumb to hybridization than the coastal crows farther east and south in Puget Sound.

The afternoon was spent exploring the Dungeness Spit, scanning for alcids and combing through shorebirds at Three Crabs, Diamond Point, and John Wayne Marina. We found **Black Oystercatcher**, which was a welcome addition to our growing list of rocky-shore birds.

After dinner we set up a swift watch at Railroad Bridge Park, where we didn't spot any swifts but did see **California Quail** with chicks—a neat treat!

Day 8, August 15th 2019. Birding around Seattle, departure

Returning to the private residence early in the morning we continued our search for the elusive Mountain Quail. Staked out at a feeder we waited and watched dozens of **Rock Doves** (Rock Pigeons) come in, along with **Steller's Jays** and **Band-tailed Pigeons**. As if on cue a family of **Mountain Quail** snuck out of the bushes and appeared in the yard as if by magic, bringing a smile to everyone's face (especially the homeowner's). We enjoyed this bird—a lifer for the client—before continuing east toward the airport. We stopped at several more birding locations, getting a great look at an adult **Peregrine Falcon** before heading to the airport.

Overall this trip was a great success with fantastic views of multiple grouse species with chicks, great raptor encounters, a fantastic pelagic trip, and some nice owls! We added 30 lifers to the client's life list, eclipsing the 600 mark! We enjoyed fantastic weather, good food, and classic birds of the Pacific Northwest, as well as some hard-to-find specialties. As for Black Swift? Well, it leaves a great reason to come back on another tour next year!





The elusive Mountain Quail! We enjoyed great views of adults and juveniles of both sexes.

Bird List - Following IOC (9.2)

Alternative Clements common names are added in parentheses. Birds 'heard only' are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen. The following notation after the common names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near-threatened.

Common name	Scientific name
New World Quail (Odontophorida	ne)
Mountain Quail	Oreortyx pictus
California Quail	Callipepla californica
Pheasants & Allies (Phasianidae)	
Ruffed Grouse	Bonasa umbellus
Sooty Grouse	Dendragapus fuliginosus
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)	
Canada Goose	Branta canadensis
American Wigeon	Mareca americana



Common name	Scientific name
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos
Northern Pintail	Anas acuta
Eurasian Teal (Green-winged Teal)	Anas carolinensis
Harlequin Duck	Histrionicus histrionicus
Surf Scoter	Melanitta perspicillata
Hooded Merganser	Lophodytes cucullatus
Common Merganser	Mergus merganser
Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)	
Common Nighthawk	Chordeiles minor
Common rughtnawk	Chordenes minor
Swifts (Apodidae)	
Vaux's Swift	Chaetura vauxi
Hummingbirds (Trochilidae)	
Anna's Hummingbird	Calypte anna
Rufous Hummingbird - NT	Selasphorus rufus
Kulous Hummingonu - N1	Seiusphorus rujus
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove (Rock Pigeon)	Columba livia
Band-tailed Pigeon	Patagioenas fasciata
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto
Mourning Dove	Zenaida macroura
Grebes (Podicipedidae)	
Horned Grebe - VU	Podiceps auritus
Red-necked Grebe	Podiceps grisegena
Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)	
Black Oystercatcher	Haematopus bachmani
Plovers (Charadriidae)	1
Grey Plover (Black-bellied Plover)	Pluvialis squatarola
Semipalmated Plover	Charadrius semipalmatus
Killdeer	Charadrius vociferus
Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)	
Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus



Common name	Scientific name
Marbled Godwit	Limosa fedoa
Black Turnstone	Arenaria melanocephala
Sanderling	Calidris alba
Least Sandpiper	Calidris minutilla
Semipalmated Sandpiper - NT	Calidris pusilla
Western Sandpiper	Calidris mauri
Short-billed Dowitcher	Limnodromus griseus
Red-necked Phalarope	Phalaropus lobatus
Red Phalarope	Phalaropus fulicarius
Wandering Tattler	Tringa incana
Greater Yellowlegs	Tringa melanoleuca
Willet	Tringa semipalmata
Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)	
Sabine's Gull	Xema sabini
Heermann's Gull - NT	Larus heermanni
Mew Gull	Larus canus
Ring-billed Gull	Larus delawarensis
Western Gull	Larus occidentalis
California Gull	Larus californicus
Glaucous-winged Gull	, v
	Larus glaucescens
Caspian Tern Arctic Tern	Hydroprogne caspia
Alctic Telli	Sterna paradisaea
Skuas (Stercorariidae)	
South Polar Skua	Stercorarius maccormicki
Pomarine Jaeger	Stercorarius pomarinus
Long-tailed Jaeger	Stercorarius longicaudus
Auks (Alcidae)	
Common Murre	Uria aalge
Pigeon Guillemot	Cepphus columba
-	Brachyramphus
Marbled Murrelet - EN	marmoratus
Scripps's Murrelet - VU	Synthliboramphus scrippsi
Cassin's Auklet - NT	Ptychoramphus aleuticus
Rhinoceros Auklet	Cerorhinca monocerata
Tufted Puffin	Fratercula cirrhata



Common name	Scientific name
Loons (Gaviidae)	
Pacific Loon	Gavia pacifica
Common Loon	Gavia immer
Albatrosses (Diomedeidae)	
Black-footed Albatross - NT	Phoebastria nigripes
Northern Storm Petrels (Hydrobatidae)	
Fork-tailed Storm Petrel	Oceanodroma furcata
Petrels, Shearwater, Diving Petrels (Procell	ariidae)
Northern Fulmar	Fulmarus glacialis
Pink-footed Shearwater - VU	Ardenna creatopus
Buller's Shearwater - VU	Ardenna bulleri
Sooty Shearwater - NT	Ardenna grisea
Short-tailed Shearwater	Ardenna tenuirostris
Cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae)	
Brandt's Cormorant	Phalacrocorax penicillatus
Pelagic Cormorant	Phalacrocorax pelagicus
Double-crested Cormorant	Phalacrocorax auritus
Herons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)	
Great Blue Heron	Ardea herodias
Great Egret	Ardea alba
Pelicans (Pelecanidae)	
Brown Pelican	Pelecanus occidentalis
New World Vultures (Cathartidae)	
Turkey Vulture	Cathartes aura
Ospreys (Pandionidae)	
Western Osprey (Osprey)	Pandion haliaetus
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
Northern Harrier	Circus hudsonius
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Accipiter striatus



Common name	Scientific name
Cooper's Hawk	Accipiter cooperii
Northern Goshawk	Accipiter gentilis
Bald Eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus
Red-tailed Hawk	Buteo jamaicensis
Barn Owls (Tytonidae)	
American Barn Owl (Barn Owl)	Tyto furcata
Owls (Strigidae)	
Northern Pygmy Owl (H)	Glaucidium californicum
Barred Owl	Strix varia
Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)	
Belted Kingfisher	Megaceryle alcyon
Woodpeckers (Picidae)	
American Three-toed Woodpecker	Picoides dorsalis
Downy Woodpecker	Dryobates pubescens
Hairy Woodpecker	Leuconotopicus villosus
Pileated Woodpecker	Dryocopus pileatus
Northern Flicker	Colaptes auratus
Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)	
Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus
Tyrant Flycatchers, Calyptura	
Olive-sided Flycatcher - NT	Contopus cooperi
Western Wood Pewee	Contopus sordidulus
Willow Flycatcher	Empidonax traillii
Hammond's Flycatcher	Empidonax hammondii
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Empidonax difficilis
Crows, Jays (Corvidae)	
Grey Jay (Canada Jay)	Perisoreus canadensis
Steller's Jay	Cyanocitta stelleri
California Scrub Jay	Aphelocoma californica
American Crow	Corvus brachyrhynchos
Northwestern Crow	Corvus caurinus



Common name	Scientific name
Northern Raven (Common Raven)	Corvus corax
Waxwings (Bombycillidae)	
Cedar Waxwing	Bombycilla cedrorum
Tits, Chickadees (Paridae)	
Black-capped Chickadee	Poecile atricapillus
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Poecile rufescens
Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Stelgidopteryx serripennis
Purple Martin	Progne subis
Tree Swallow	Tachycineta bicolor
Violet-green Swallow	Tachycineta thalassina
Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)	Riparia riparia
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
American Cliff Swallow (Cliff Swallow)	Petrochelidon pyrrhonota
Bushtits (Aegithalidae)	
American Bushtit (Bushtit)	Psaltriparus minimus
Goldcrests, Kinglets (Regulidae)	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Regulus satrapa
Wrens (Troglodytidae)	
Pacific Wren	Troglodytes pacificus
Bewick's Wren	Thryomanes bewickii
Nuthatches (Sittidae)	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Sitta canadensis
Treecreepers (Certhiidae)	
Brown Creeper	Certhia americana
biown citepei	
Starlings, Rhabdornis (Sturnidae)	
Common Starling (European Starling)	Sturnus vulgaris
Thrushes (Tundidee)	
Thrushes (Turdidae)	



Common name	Scientific name
Varied Thrush	Ixoreus naevius
Swainson's Thrush	Catharus ustulatus
American Robin	Turdus migratorius
Dippers (Cinclidae)	
American Dipper	Cinclus mexicanus
Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passerida	e)
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae)	
Evening Grosbeak - VU	Hesperiphona vespertina
House Finch	Haemorhous mexicanus
Purple Finch	Haemorhous purpureus
Red Crossbill	Loxia curvirostra
Pine Siskin	Spinus pinus
American Goldfinch	Spinus tristis
New World Sparrows (Passerellidae)	
Dark-eyed Junco	Junco hyemalis
White-crowned Sparrow	Zonotrichia leucophrys
Savannah Sparrow	Passerculus sandwichensis
Song Sparrow	Melospiza melodia
Spotted Towhee	Pipilo maculatus
Oropendolas, Orioles, Blackbirds (Icteridae)	
Red-winged Blackbird	Agelaius phoeniceus
Brown-headed Cowbird	Molothrus ater
Brewer's Blackbird	Euphagus cyanocephalus
New World Warblers (Parulidae)	
Nashville Warbler	Leiothlypis ruficapilla
Common Yellowthroat	Geothlypis trichas
American Yellow Warbler (Yellow Warbler)	Setophaga aestiva
Audubon's Warbler (Yellow-rumped Warbler)	Setophaga auduboni
Black-throated Grey Warbler	Setophaga nigrescens
Townsend's Warbler	Setophaga townsendi
Wilson's Warbler	Cardellina pusilla



Common name	Scientific name
Cardinals & Allies (Cardinalidae)	
Western Tanager	Piranga ludoviciana
Black-headed Grosbeak	Pheucticus melanocephalus

Total seen	147
Total heard only	1
Total recorded	148

Mammal List

Common name	Scientific name
Bears (Ursidae)	
American Black Bear	Ursus americanus
Deer (Cervidae)	
Mule Deer	Odocoileus hemionus
Wapiti (Elk)	Cervus canadensis
Pikas (Ochotonidae)	
American Pika	Ochotona princeps
Rabbits and Hares (Leporidae	2)
Snowshoe Hare	Lepus americanus
Squirrels (Sciuridae)	
Least Chipmunk	Neotamias minimus
Hoary Marmot	Marmota caligata
Western Gray Squirrel	Sciurus griseus
Douglas's Squirrel	Tamiasciurus douglasii
Mustalida (Mustalidaa)	
Mustelids (Mustelidae)	
American Marten	Martes americana
True Seals (Phocidae)	
Harbor Seal	Phoca vitulina



Common name	Scientific name
Porpoises (Phocoenidae)	
Harbour Porpoise	Phocoena phocoena
Dall's Porpoise	Phocoenoides dalli
Eared Seals (Otariidae)	
Californian Sea Lion	Zalophus californianus
Rorquals (Balaenopteridae)	
Humpback Whale	Megaptera novaeangliae
Oceanic Dolphins (Delphinidae)	
Pacific White-sided Dolphin	Lagenorhynchus obliquidens
Total seen	16

