

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.

www.birdingecotours.com



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

www.birdingecotours.com



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 |

