

## BEST OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: SKAGIT & PUGET SOUND

Feb 4, 2012 to Feb 8, 2012

Terry & Karen McEneaney



*Miles of coastline means plenty of ruggedly beautiful scenery to enjoy throughout the northwest. (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)*

Our inaugural Field Guides Washington: Best of the Pacific Northwest 2012 tour was a smashing success. As luck would have it, we had four out of five days of remarkable weather. It was out of this world for the Pacific Northwest in winter. After all the years coming to this area during this season, clear, warm weather was not something that I was expecting! And you could clearly see all the magnificent snow-clad peaks of the Olympic Mountains, North Cascades, Mt. Rainier, Mt. Baker of Washington, and the Coastal Range Mountains of Canada. We discovered some super seafood restaurants as well, and the seafood on this tour was some of the best we have ever had. We also visited a great diversity of coastal, open, and forested habitats.

In five days it was estimated we observed more than 100,000 individual birds--mostly in the form of waterfowl, raptors, loons, alcids, shorebirds, gulls, and cormorants. Estimates include in excess of 50,000 Snow Geese, 2700 Trumpeter Swan, 8000 Surf Scoter, 3000 White-winged Scoter, 800 Brant, 10,000 American Wigeon, 20,000 Northern Pintail, 2000 Red-throated Loon, 800 Pacific Loon, 200 Common Loon, 8000 Dunlin, 4000 Mew Gull, 20,000 Glaucous-winged Gull, 8000 Herring Gull, 700 Common Murre, 80-100 Red-tailed Hawks, 20 Rough-legged Hawks, and several hundred Bald Eagles.

During the course of these five days we documented 102 species of birds. The most notable included: Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Northern Shrike, Thayer's Gull, Ross's Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Long-tailed Duck, American Bittern, Rock Sandpiper, Surfbird, Black Turnstone, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Northwestern Crow, Purple Finch, Pacific Wren, and Golden-crowned Sparrow.

Most notable events included: fabulously red sunsets; birding by ferry; snowy peaks in the background; Snow Geese coming and going to a roost and feeding in green fields; a Pacific Wren feeding on a lone rock in the Pacific Ocean; Short-eared Owls hunting at sunset; a skulky Pacific Wren coming out of the brush; and large numbers of loons and seabirds migrating

with the changing tides.

We ended up with five species of mammals as well: Mule Deer (Columbian Blacktail race), Western Gray Squirrel, Red Squirrel, Northern Harbor Seal, and Northern Elephant Seal.

It was a great group of people and we had a lot of laughs. Simply put--a good time was had by all. We really enjoyed your company and hope to see you again on future Field Guides' tours. In the meantime, take good care!

--Terry & Karen McEneaney

For more information about this tour, including future departures, visit our website at [www.fieldguides.com](http://www.fieldguides.com). And to see this same triplist online, go to <http://www.fieldguides.com/triplists/pnw12LIST.pdf> and you will find the list in its entirety.

## KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

## BIRDS

### *Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)*

**SNOW GOOSE** (*Chen caerulescens caerulescens*) – Found approximately 50,000 individuals in three flocks on 2 out of 5 days. Magnificent sights and sounds.

**ROSS'S GOOSE** (*Chen rossii*) – Found a lone individual mixed in with Snow Geese.

**BRANT (BLACK)** (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) – Found both black and gray-bellied forms or morphs. Counted only 800 individuals. Seen four out of 5 days.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*)

**TRUMPETER SWAN** (*Cygnus buccinator*) – Over 2,700 counted. Seen 4 out of 5 days.

**TUNDRA SWAN** (*Cygnus columbianus*) – Found a lone individual mixed in with Trumpeter Swans.

**GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – Found 200-300 individuals, during course of 3 out of 5 days.

**EURASIAN WIGEON** (*Anas penelope*) – Found only 2 individuals.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – Estimated 10,000 plus individuals.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Too numerous to count.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – Less than 100.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Estimated 20,000 plus individuals.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas crecca*) – Found 200-300 individuals all of the carolinensis race.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – Found 6 individuals on day 4.

**GREATER SCAUP** (*Aythya marila*) – More than 200 total observed on days 2, 4, and 5.

**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – Several hundred individuals total on days 2, 4, and 5.

**HARLEQUIN DUCK** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – Only found 20 individuals total on days 3-5. Great looks however.

**SURF SCOTER** (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – Found in excess of 8,000 total individuals. The most numerous of the scoter species. Found 4 out of 5 days.

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER** (*Melanitta fusca*) – Found 3,000 total individuals days 2-5.

**BLACK SCOTER** (*Melanitta americana*) – Found a couple on day 2.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*) – Found several days 2 and 5.



*Magnificent snow-covered peaks provide an appropriate backdrop for the Snow Goose covered fields. We saw roughly 50,000 Snow Geese, with a lone Ross's Goose playing the part of the needle in the haystack! (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)*

**BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*)

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*)

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala islandica*) – Found a dozen or so days 2-5.

**HOODED MERGANSER** (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) – Found over a dozen on day 4.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – Hundreds-found everyday.

*Gaviidae (Loons)*

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – Found over 2,000 individuals total days 2-5.

**PACIFIC LOON** (*Gavia pacifica*) – Found over 800 total individuals-- days 2-5.

**COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – Found over 200 individuals total-- days 2-5.

*Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Only 1 individual day 4.

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*)

**RED-NECKED GREBE** (*Podiceps grisegena*) – Hundreds-days 2-5.

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**BRANDT'S CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) – Excellent looks-days 2-5. Hundreds.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Hundreds. Excellent looks--days 2-5.

**PELAGIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – Less than a hundred. Days 3-5.

*Ardeidae (Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**AMERICAN BITTERN** (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – Saw one individual near dark on day 1.

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Hundreds. Many feeding on voles.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Several hundred through the course of 5 days. Numerous bordering on abundant.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Dozens feeding on voles.

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*) – Found one individual trying to get birds at a feeder. Day 2.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Found on two occasions. One of Fidalgo and the other on Whidbey Island.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – A minimum of 80-100 individuals. A couple Harlan's Red-tails also seen. *B. j. harlani*

**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** (*Buteo lagopus*) – At least 20 individuals--all feeding on voles. Days 1-4.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) – Surprisingly few. Days 2-3.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – Found three individuals. Two were dark Peale's peregrines or *Falco peregrinus pealei*, and one more pink or rusty of the interior of *F.p. anatum* race. Great looks.

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*)

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Saw maybe 2-3 dozen total. Days 1-3, 4.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – A dozen or so.



*Among hundreds of wintering raptors were about 20 Rough-legged Hawks, feasting on the abundant voles in the region. (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)*

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

**BLACK OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus bachmani*) – Half dozen.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – One individual on Fidalgo Island.

**BLACK TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria melanocephala*) – About a dozen total in two areas of day 2.

**SURFBIRD** (*Aphriza virgata*) – About a half dozen on day 4.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – Three dozen hanging out on a dock at high tide. Day 2.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – About 8 individuals at high tide on day 4.

**ROCK SANDPIPER** (*Calidris ptilocnemis*) – 6-8 individuals on day 2.

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*)

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**MEW GULL** (*Larus canus*) – Very numerous--some fields full of hundreds. Days 2-5.

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – Saw a couple dozen days 2-4.

**CALIFORNIA GULL** (*Larus californicus*) – Only a handful on days 2 and 3.

**HERRING GULL** (*Larus argentatus*) – Very numerous. Seen all five days.

**THAYER'S GULL** (*Larus thayeri*) – One individual, an adult with bright pinkish red legs. Day 5.

**GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL** (*Larus glaucescens*) – Very common bordering on abundant. 20,000+. Seen everyday.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

**COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) – 700-1,000 seen from shore and off ferries.

**PIGEON GUILLEMOT** (*Cepphus columba*) – Dozens.

**MARbled MURRELET** (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – Two close looks at 2 different pairs. Many pairs flying. Probably 40 total.

**RHINOCEROS AUKLET** (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Couple dozen. Seen from shore and from ferries. Days 4 and 5.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto xanthocyclus*) – 2-3 dozen. [II]

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*)

Strigidae (Owls)

**SNOWY OWL** (*Bubo scandiacus*) – One individual way off. Still a great find.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** (*Asio flammeus*) – 9 individuals total. Days 1 and 2.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – A dozen or so. One real tame individual hanging out at a cafe.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

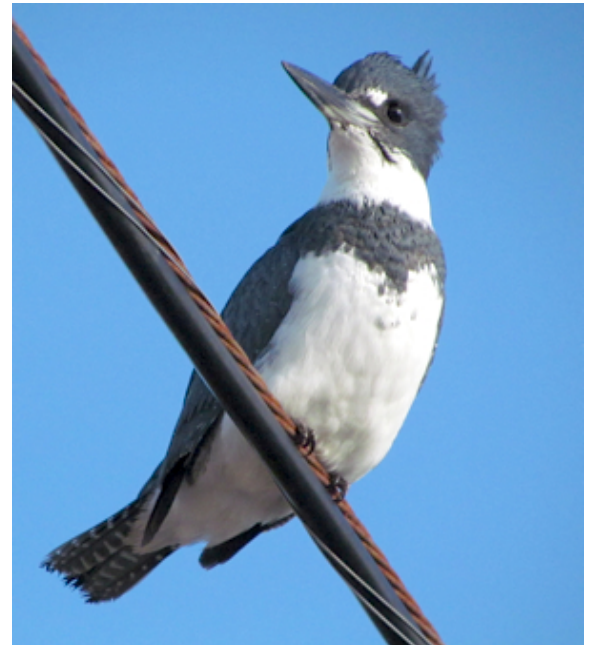
**HAIRY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides villosus*) [\*]

**NORTHERN FLICKER** (*Colaptes auratus*)

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**STELLER'S JAY** (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)

**AMERICAN CROW** (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)



*The Kuroshio Current is the Pacific equivalent to the Gulf Stream, bringing warmer water and milder temperatures to the northwest coastal regions, allowing birds like this Belted Kingfisher to winter much further north than anywhere else on the continent. (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)*



*More stunning coastal scenery- there's no shortage of it here! (Photo by guide Terry McEneaney)*

**NORTHWESTERN CROW** (*Corvus caurinus*) – Hundreds.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*) – Many seen four out of five days.

*Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)*

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile atricapillus*)

**CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile rufescens*) – Seen days 2-4.

*Sittidae (Nuthatches)*

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*)

*Troglodytidae (Wrens)*

**BEWICK'S WREN** (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – One great look at the richly rusty-plumaged dark-bellied T. b. calaphonus race

**PACIFIC WREN** (*Troglodytes pacificus*) – Two individuals--all more chocolate colored than those on the Aleutians.

**MARSH WREN** (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Several individuals calling- two we could see.

*Regulidae (Kinglets)*

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*)

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*)

**VARIED THRUSH** (*Ixoreus naevius*) – A couple dozen or so.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

*Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)*

**SPOTTED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo maculatus*) – A dozen or so of this dark form with little spots (*P. m. oregonus*).

**FOX SPARROW** (*Passerella iliaca*) – Both "Sooty" and "Slate-colored" forms

**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*) – Many of the dark northwest morphs known as *M. m. morphna*.

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** (*Melospiza lincolnii*) – Only 1 individual on day 3.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – A couple dozen.

**GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) – About 4 dozen. Days 2-5.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO** (*Junco hyemalis*) – Dozens. All of the Oregon or shufeldti race.

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Several dozen.

**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

*Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)*

**PURPLE FINCH** (*Carpodacus purpureus*) – Less than a dozen individuals. Day 2.

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

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## **MAMMALS**

**WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus griseus*)

**RED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)

**HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*)

**NORTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL** (*Mirounga angustirostris*) – For a few of us, we got lucky and saw what appeared to be three individuals on day 5 from the ferry.

**MULE DEER** (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – Actually the Columbian Blacktail morph or race of the Mule Deer. Identified by its solid black tail, dark pelage with tinges of rust or ochre.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 102 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa**