

# **SEPTEMBER MIGRATION THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

**SEPTEMBER 3-11, 2008**

**LEADERS:  
BOB SUNDSTROM AND KIM ECKERT**

**COMPILED BY: BOB SUNDSTROM**

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.  
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003  
AUSTIN, TX 78746  
[WWW.VENTBIRD.COM](http://WWW.VENTBIRD.COM)**

*Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.*

## **SEPTEMBER MIGRATION**

### **The Pacific Northwest**

**September 3-11, 2008**

**Leaders: Bob Sundstrom & Kim Eckert**

*Our September Pacific Northwest tour takes advantage of nature's timing, as early September concentrates bird migrants along the Northwest's forest edges, bays, coastal shorelines, and over the ocean itself. During our 2008 tour we enjoyed superb weather and an admirable list of birds, plus great food and a memorable journey through the scenic Northwest, as we birded the region from Willapa Bay in southwest Washington to Boundary Bay in southeast British Columbia.*

*The first morning was devoted entirely to birding inland, beginning along upper Scatter Creek south of Olympia, Washington. A diminutive Northern Pygmy-Owl perched for careful scope study, as did several Red-breasted Sapsuckers and a Pileated Woodpecker. Warblers, now nearing the end of their migrant passage, included Wilson's, Townsend's, and Black-throated Gray. A resident Hutton's Vireo sang and perched right in front of the group, as Western Tanagers and Evening Grosbeaks visited nearby trees. A picnic lunch in my yard allowed time to enjoy close visits from Steller's Jays and Western Scrub-Jays, Purple Finches, Rufous Hummingbirds, and Band-tailed Pigeons, among others.*

*On our second day, a private charter boat took us out for a full day in the pelagic zone, 30+ miles into the Pacific off Westport, Washington. Highlights were frequent: a South Polar Skua flew near the boat several times, as did all three jaeger species; one Long-tailed Jaeger drifted back and forth over the group, as if to show off his lengthy, pointed tail feathers to best advantage; Black-footed Albatross sat on the water right next to the boat; flocks of lovely Sabine's Gulls flew by; a Tufted Puffin bobbed on the surface near the boat; we had great studies of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels skimming the wave tops; and we counted five species of shearwaters, including Buller's and a rare for the area Manx.*

*A couple of days later we drove up the Dosewallips River valley on the east side of the Olympic Mountains. While enjoying the lush fern and moss-covered forest along the river, we espied a pair of American Dippers atop rocks in the rushing stream. Not long after, we stopped to check out a cloud of swallows flying overhead. Among hundreds of Violet-green Swallows flew smaller numbers of both Black and Vaux's swifts, both birds we had really hoped to find.*

*One morning was perfect for a scenic walk along a subalpine trail at over 5,000 feet in Olympic National Park. Late season wildflowers added color as we found the first Golden-crowned Sparrows of the trip lurking in the low subalpine shrubs. Just as we left the trail, a mother Sooty Grouse stopped us in our tracks, as she called her nearly full-grown chicks across the roadway. While still high in the Olympics, a Northern Goshawk favored us with a series of views as it winged from one spire-like evergreen to another. The same afternoon, back at sea level, we watched Harlequin Ducks, Red-necked Grebes, Marbled Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Rhinoceros Auklets along the shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.*

*Day 7 saw us ferrying across the Strait of Juan de Fuca, from Port Angeles, Washington to Victoria, British Columbia. The tour then continued north, through the charming city, to an area where brilliant rows of gladiolus stood where spring tulips would later be planted. A bit of searching turned up a small flock of Sky Larks, a much anticipated bird on the tour at the only area in North America that boasts a resident population of Sky Larks. A Lapland Longspur turned up in the same field, along with hundreds of American Pipits. Later that afternoon we left Vancouver Island for the B.C. mainland, passing among the evergreen-covered islands, watching for seabirds and the occasional Bald Eagle in the tall firs.*

*With a full day to bird near Boundary Bay south of Vancouver, B.C., we covered some of the best shorebirding spots in the Pacific Northwest. The fair weather hadn't been conducive to producing rarities, but we still recorded more than 20 species of shorebirds, including great views of Wandering Tattler and Black Turnstone, Red-necked Phalaropes close at hand twirling on ponds in the ocean-side dunes, hundreds of Marbled Godwits and beautiful juvenile Baird's Sandpipers at very close range, and great side by side comparisons of both yellowlegs and dowitcher species. And we weren't the only ones watching shorebirds. At one stop along Boundary Bay, a Peregrine Falcon perched right along the edge of the tidflats in a bare tree. As we watched the falcon, a Cooper's Hawk flew in and perched just above the Peregrine, both in the same binocular view. Earlier that day, we watched a "Black" Merlin whiz over a flock of sandpipers. That same morning added another highlight, as we had scoped a Barn Owl on its day roost in a historic barn not far from the bay—a wonderful view and a life bird for several in our group.*

## **ITINERARY**

- Day 1** Wednesday, September 3: Get-acquainted dinner in Seattle. Night in Seattle.
- Day 2** Thursday, September 4: After breakfast in Seattle, we drove south to spend the morning birding in the Tenino/upper Scatter Creek area and at Bob and Sally's house, where we also picnicked. Drove west to Westport on the Pacific coast. After checking in and a break at the hotel, we birded the Westport Marina before dinner nearby. Dinner at Anthony's, first of three nights at Chateau Westport.
- Day 3** Friday, September 5: Full day pelagic trip (6:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.) out of Westport to beyond the edge of the Continental Shelf/Grays Canyon. Dinner at Anthony's in Westport. Second night at Chateau Westport.
- Day 4** Saturday, September 6: After breakfast at the Chateau, birded at Midway Beach, North Cove, and Tokeland, where we had lunch at the historic Tokeland Hotel. Afternoon birding south along Willapa Bay as far south as Bay Center. Dinner at Anthony's and final night at Chateau Westport.
- Day 5** Sunday, September 7: Breakfast at Chateau Westport, and brief birding there afterward. Left Westport, birding at Westport waterfront before driving north via Aberdeen and McCleary toward Hood Canal. Drove north along Hood Canal, stopped for lunch in Brinnon, then drove inland along the Dosewallips River. Later birding stops along the road up Mt. Walker and John Wayne Marina on Sequim Bay. Dinner at Fiesta Jalisco and first of two nights at Best Western Olympic Lodge in Pt. Angeles.
- Day 6** Monday, September 8: Morning birding in Olympic National Park up the road to Hurricane Ridge, then walked out Hurricane Hill Trail for about a mile. After picnicking near Hurricane Ridge, we birded along Ediz Hook in Port Angeles. After a break at the hotel, we returned to Dungeness waterfront and also birded along Jamestown Road and to the end of Port Williams Rd. on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Dinner at Three Crabs in Dungeness. Second of two nights in Pt. Angeles.
- Day 7** Tuesday, September 9: Took first morning Black Ball Ferry across the Strait of Juan de Fuca from Pt. Angeles to Victoria, B.C., birding from the deck enroute. In the Victoria area we birded in the Saanich farm fields for Sky Larks. Lunch in Central Saanich, then birded at Rithet's Bog before driving north to catch 3:00 p.m. ferry from Swartz Bay to Tsawwassen. After checking in at the Tsawwassen Inn, birded along the Boundary Bay dike in Delta. Dinner at Coast Tsawwassen. First of two nights at Coast Tsawwassen.

- Day 8** Wednesday, September 10: After breakfast at the hotel, we again birded along farm roads and dikes near Boundary Bay. Drove to the Iona Ponds at south edge of Vancouver to bird and picnic at Iona Beach Park. After an early afternoon break at the hotel, birded Reifel Sanctuary on an incoming tide and then returned to the Boundary Bay dike. Dinner at and second night at Coast Tsawwassen.
- Day 9** Thursday, September 11: Departed south from Tsawwassen after breakfast, crossed into the U.S., then made a birding stop at Blaine Harbor/Semiahmoo Bay until mid-morning. Continued south through Seattle to SeaTac Airport, arriving just after noon.

## **BIRD LIST**

[unexpected/unusual sightings in *italics*; rarities in ***bold italics***]

### **GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS:**

Canada Goose - of the non-migratory "Great Basin" form (*moffitti*)  
Wood Duck – superb views of beautiful ducks at Reifel Sanctuary  
Gadwall  
American Wigeon – flocks numbering a thousand or more near Dungeness  
Mallard  
Blue-winged Teal – one at the Iona Ponds  
Cinnamon Teal – near South Bend in the U.S. and at Reifel  
Northern Shoveler  
Northern Pintail – thousands along Willapa Bay and Boundary Bay  
Green-winged Teal  
Harlequin Duck – great views along Ediz Hook in Pt. Angeles  
Surf Scoter – seen best at Blaine, where there were many hundreds  
White-winged Scoter - ditto  
Hooded Merganser  
Common Merganser – offshore at Dungeness  
Ruddy Duck

### **GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:**

Sooty Grouse – excellent view of a hen and three nearly full-grown chicks near Hurricane Ridge. Sooty Grouse was recently split as *Dendragapus fuliginosus*, from former Blue Grouse species.  
California Quail – in Bob's yard

### **LOONS:**

Red-throated Loon – a couple flew over during the pelagic trip  
Common Loon – arriving in large numbers, with more than a hundred on the Blaine waterfront

### **GREBES:**

Horned Grebe – recently arrived migrants at Blaine  
Red-necked Grebe – first seen at Ediz Hook, still in the glow of breeding colors  
Western Grebe – distant rafts at Blaine

### **TUBENOSES**

Black-footed Albatross – 90+ were seen on the pelagic trip, some coming right to the boat  
Northern Fulmar – both light and dark morphs  
***Manx Shearwater*** – seen from the stern early in the pelagic trip, near Grays Harbor  
Pink-footed Shearwater – other than Sooty, the most numerous shearwater  
Buller's Shearwater – strikingly patterned, we saw several close to the boat  
Sooty Shearwater – 2500+ on the pelagic trip, and hundreds more on the Strait of Juan de Fuca  
Short-tailed Shearwater – one or two flew close to the boat for close inspection  
Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel – very good views as they skimmed the wave tops

**PELICANS:**

Brown Pelican – abundant along the outer coast, during their post-breeding summer stay

**CORMORANTS:**

Double-crested Cormorant

Brandt's Cormorant – good views of all three cormorant species

Pelagic Cormorant

**BITTERN & HERONS:**

American Bittern – a nice surprise, one stood in the open while we picnicked at Iona Beach

Great Blue Heron

Green Heron – the final morning, one flew out of a tree at a gas station stop near Marysville

Black-crowned Night-Heron – at the species' northernmost Pacific roost, at Reifel Sanctuary

**AMERICAN VULTURES**

Turkey Vulture

**EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:**

Osprey – a few still on hand, as most had already gone south

Bald Eagle – seen on both sides of the border

Northern Harrier

Sharp-shinned Hawk – Kim spotted one perched along Hurricane Hill Trail

Cooper's Hawk – including one perched just above a Peregrine Falcon

*Northern Goshawk* – an exceptional addition to the tour bird list, we watched one fly from fir tree to fir tree near  
Hurricane Ridge

Red-tailed Hawk

**FALCONS:**

American Kestrel

Merlin – several, including a tiny, dark, male “Black” Merlin (*suckleyi* subspecies) at Iona Ponds

Peregrine Falcon – at Westport, Dungeness, and Boundary Bay in the vicinity of shorebirds and ducks; one  
along Boundary Bay perched in the same bare tree as a Cooper's Hawk

**RAILS & COOTS:**

Virginia Rail – heard on both sides of the border

American Coot

**CRANES:**

Sandhill Crane – great close-up view of two at Reifel Sanctuary

**PLOVERS:**

Black-bellied Plover – hundreds along Boundary Bay

Semipalmated Plover

Killdeer

**SANDPIPERS & ALLIES:**

Black Oystercatcher – glimpsed from the Tsawwassen Ferry deck, then scoped the final morning at Blaine

Greater Yellowlegs – close comparison with Lessers at Reifel

Lesser Yellowlegs

Willet – at Tokeland, one of the species' northernmost regular wintering spots

Wandering Tattler – great view of this “rockpiper” along the Westport waterfront

Whimbrel – sharing a sandbar with Long-billed Curlews at Tokeland

Long-billed Curlew

Marbled Godwit – 500+ at Tokeland  
Black Turnstone – seen well on rocky beaches at several places  
Red Knot  
Sanderling  
*Semipalmated Sandpiper* – a scarce migrant along the Pacific, we scoped a juvenile at Reifel  
Western Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
Baird's Sandpiper – handsome, tawny juveniles along Boundary Bay  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Short-billed Dowitcher – juveniles with “tiger-striped” tertial feathers  
Long-billed Dowitcher  
Wilson's Snipe  
Red-necked Phalarope – wonderful, close views at Midway Beach, and scores more seen from the ferry deck on the crossing of the Strait of Juan de Fuca

### **JAEGERS, GULLS, & TERNS:**

*South Polar Skua* – terrific views of an exciting but often elusive bird, on the pelagic trip  
Pomarine Jaeger – good views of adults with full spoon-shaped tail feathers  
Parasitic Jaeger – the most prevalent jaeger of the pelagic trip  
Long-tailed Jaeger – one fully tailed bird flew back and forth close to the boat  
Heermann's Gull – abundant along the coast and marine bays  
Mew Gull – a few near Tokeland, Dungeness, and Blaine  
Ring-billed Gull  
California Gull – abundant at this season, although just a late summer visitor here  
Western Gull – the large, darkest backed gulls of the outer coast  
Glaucous-winged Gull – the common, widespread large gull of the region  
Black-legged Kittiwake – a couple in Grays Harbor near the end of the pelagic trip  
Sabine's Gull – a candidate for the prettiest of gulls, lots on the pelagic trip  
Caspian Tern  
Arctic Tern – one close fly-by on the pelagic trip

### **AUKS:**

Common Murre – common indeed on the pelagic trip and first ferry crossing  
Pigeon Guillemot – flashing red feet  
Marbled Murrelet – scoped along Ediz Hook  
Cassin's Auklet – flying away from the bow on the pelagic trip  
Rhinoceros Auklet – seen best from Ediz Hook  
*Tufted Puffin* – lucky to see this time of year, we had prolonged views of one from the boat

### **PIGEONS & DOVES:**

Rock Pigeon  
Band-tailed Pigeon – close-ups on Bob and Sally's feeders  
*Eurasian Collared-Dove* – in Grayland and Sequim in Washington  
Mourning Dove

### **OWLS:**

*Barn Owl* – after a tip from a local, we scoped one in a massive barn near Boundary Bay  
Great Horned Owl – a fantastic daytime view of a massive owl perched in bare shrub  
*Northern Pygmy-Owl* – the prize of the first morning's birding, as it sat for long scope study

### **SWIFTS:**

*Black Swift* – mixed in a large aerial flock of Violet-green Swallows in the Dosewallips Valley  
Vaux's Swift - ditto

**HUMMINGBIRDS:**

Anna's Hummingbird – at Rithet's Bog at the north end of Victoria, B.C.

Rufous Hummingbird – at least four immatures in Bob and Sally's yard

**KINGFISHERS:**

Belted Kingfisher

**WOODPECKERS & ALLIES:**

Red-breasted Sapsucker – scoped nicely the first morning along upper Scatter Creek

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker - heard

Northern Flicker – “red-shafted”

Pileated Woodpecker – good scope view the first morning along upper Scatter Creek

**FLYCATCHERS & ALLIES**

Willow Flycatcher – seen by Brian before it disappeared along upper Scatter Ck.

**VIREOS**

Hutton's Vireo – very close views the first morning

**JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS:**

Gray Jay – especially close at hand during the picnic at Hurricane Ridge

Steller's Jay – its deep blue tones were much admired

Western Scrub-Jay – in Sally and Bob's yard

American Crow

Northwestern Crow – the small, hoarse crows of the marine edge

Common Raven

**LARKS:**

*Sky Lark* – flitting up and making a distinctive gurgling call in Central Saanich, B.C.; this is the only area in North America this species resides

Horned Lark – at Midway Beach, the “Streaked” Horned Lark (*strigata*), a scarce and local subspecies of a few localities in Oregon and Washington

**SWALLOWS & MARTINS:**

Purple Martin – Kim heard and spotted a couple flying overhead at Tokeland; a scarce and local bird in Washington, recovering just in recent decades from near-extirpation

Violet-green Swallow

Bank Swallow – a few along late migrants Boundary Bay

Barn Swallow

**TITMICE through CREEPERS:**

Black-capped Chickadee

Chestnut-backed Chickadee – seen best, virtually at arm's length, at a rest area near Elma

Bushtit – filling up a bush along upper Scatter Ck.

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper - heard

**WRENS & DIPPERS:**

Bewick's Wren

Winter Wren – very close view near the Chateau Westport

Marsh Wren

American Dipper – a twosome along the Dosewallips River offered fine scope views

**KINGLETS:**

Golden-crowned Kinglet

**THRUSHES & ALLIES:**

Swainson's Thrush – heard

Hermit Thrush – seen by Jan and Lois near Hurricane Hill Trail

American Robin

Varied Thrush – a couple were seen by the lead van along the Mt. Walker road

**STARLINGS & ALLIES:**

European Starling

**WAGTAILS & PIPITS:**

American Pipit – great views along Boundary Bay

**WAXWINGS:**

Cedar Waxwing

**WOOD WARBLERS**

Orange-crowned Warbler – amazingly close views along the Boundary Bay dike hedgerows

Yellow Warbler – above the vans in the parking lot at the Coast Tsawwassen

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Black-throated Gray Warbler – along upper Scatter Creek

Townsend's Warbler – a flock of three the first morning along upper Scatter Creek

Common Yellowthroat

Wilson's Warbler

**TANAGERS:**

Western Tanager – good views the first morning along upper Scatter Creek

**SPARROWS & ALLIES:**

Spotted Towhee

Savannah Sparrow

Fox Sparrow – of the “Sooty” category, at North Cove

Song Sparrow – the dark *morphna* subspecies

Lincoln's Sparrow – wonderful views along the Boundary Bay dike hedgerows

White-crowned Sparrow

Golden-crowned Sparrow – first espied along the Hurricane Hill trail at 5000'

Dark-eyed Junco

*Lapland Longspur* – at least one in the same fields as the Sky Larks

**BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES:**

Red-winged Blackbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird

**FINCHES:**

Purple Finch

House Finch

Red Crossbill – they just wouldn't sit still long enough to be scoped

Pine Siskin  
American Goldfinch  
Evening Grosbeak – seen well the first morning

**OLD WORLD SPARROWS:**

House Sparrow

**MAMMALS & OTHER VERTEBRATES:**

Humpback Whale  
Harbor Porpoise – seen repeatedly on the ferry crossings  
Harbor Seal - ubiquitous on the marine edges  
California Sea Lion – sleeping on a buoy on one of the ferry crossings  
Black-tailed Deer - the regional form of Mule Deer  
*Olympic Marmot* – endemic to the Olympic Mts. of Washington; scarce  
Douglas's Squirrel  
Townsend's Chipmunk  
Eastern Cottontail  
Eastern Gray Squirrel – black form at Reifel  
River Otter  
Ocean Sunfish