



BIRDING TOUR USA: WASHINGTON – PACIFIC NORTHWEST

29 JULY – 07 AUGUST 2024



*We will scan the rocky waterfronts for **Wandering Tattler** and other shorebirds.*

This exciting tour of the Pacific Coast and Puget Sound region includes an incredible diversity of birds, wildlife, habitats, experiences, and scenic wonders. We'll spend three nights at each of our three major locations. On Mount Rainier, the highest point in Washington, we will look for **White-tailed Ptarmigan**, **Sooty Grouse**, **Clark's Nutcracker**, and **American Dipper**. Lower habitats are good for **MacGillivray's Warbler**, **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, and **Varied Thrush**.

On our day at sea with Westport Pelagics we should see literally thousands of pelagic birds including **Black-footed Albatross**, **Fork-tailed Storm Petrel**, **Rhinoceros Auklet**, **Long-tailed Jaeger**, and **Pink-footed Shearwater**. One of our past tours yielded point-blank looks at a **Red-legged Kittiwake**, an incredible rarity anywhere outside of Alaska. Tokeland is a good spot to look for **Bar-tailed Godwit**, while Ocean Shores may yield **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, and several species of loon.

We'll look for **Mountain Quail** near Belfair State Park, then spend time at Hurricane Ridge for **Townsend's Solitaire** and a nice variety of raptors. Dungeness Spit is great for aquatic species: in past years we've found **Yellow-billed Loon** and **Horned Puffin** among scores of more common species. We are likely to find dozens of **Harlequin Ducks** at Ediz Hook, plus **Black Oystercatchers**, **Marbled Murrelets**, and a **Peregrine Falcon** or two.



Harlequin Ducks are arguably the most striking waterfowl in the USA.

Itinerary (11 days/10 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Seattle

Arrival is at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) in Sea-Tac Washington. We ask you to transfer to your hotel, where a room will be reserved in your name. We will gather in the hotel lobby, tentatively at 6:30 p.m., although we'll confirm this time at a later date. From there we will go out for an orientation dinner and discuss tomorrow's exciting events.

Overnight: Sea-Tac

Day 2. Mount Rainier National Park

After breakfast we will begin the 100-mile (160-kilometer) drive to Packwood, birding along the way. The wet lowland forest may yield species such as **American Dipper**, **Golden Eagle**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, and **Townsend's Warbler** before we check into our accommodations for the evening, our home for the next three nights. One year we saw four **Black Bears** on our first afternoon, all from a safe distance!

Overnight: Packwood



*The subtle beauty of the **Grey-crowned Rosy Finch** makes it a favorite on the trip.*

Days 3-4. Paradise and Sunrise on Mount Rainier

We'll spend two full days on Mount Rainier with its volcanic peaks, expansive glaciers, and unending beauty. An early climb into the highlands at Paradise and at a location called Sunrise

will be our best chance for **Grey-crowned Rosy-Finch**, **American Pipit**, and **Horned Lark**. Views of four **White-tailed Ptarmigan** on a previous tour were tremendous!

The alpine meadows where we often find **Mountain Goats** will be in full fantastic bloom. We'll search for **Northern Pygmy Owl** at Fryingpan Creek, along with **American Dipper**, **Harlequin Duck**, and **Vaux's Swift**. Additional species that we may find include **Violet-green Swallow**, **Mountain Chickadee**, **Hermit Warbler**, **Varied Thrush**, and **American Black Swift**. **Townsend's Chipmunk**, **Hoary Marmot**, **Pika**, and **Mule Deer** are frequently seen mammal targets.

Our lodge borders on the Cowlitz River, where a herd of **Elk** often grazes in the front yard, and **Vaux's Swifts** roost in the lodge chimney. A previous tour group spotted **American Black Swifts** every evening in the Cowlitz area. This is a very difficult species to find away from their nesting areas. Be certain to take your binoculars on the short walk to dinner!

Overnight: Mount Rainier



Black-throated Grey Warbler is one of several warbler targets.

Day 5. To the coast and the Tokeland Peninsula

Today we'll head for the coast, looking for a few new birds such as **California Scrub Jay** and **Red-breasted Sapsucker** along the way. We'll get our first look at the Pacific Ocean and the many birds it has to offer: **Wandering Tattler**, **Black Turnstone**, **Brandt's Cormorant**, and **Pigeon Guillemot** are just a few.

The Tokeland Peninsula may have hundreds of **Marbled Godwits** and has produced a **Bar-tailed Godwit** on some previous tours. After studying **Heermann's**, **Glaucous-winged**, **Western**, and **California Gulls** in the harbor, we'll have a nice dinner, then settle down for a

good night's sleep at the Silver Sands Motel, in preparation for tomorrow's exciting pelagic boat trip.

Overnight: Westport

Day 6. Pacific Ocean pelagic

Today's agenda is highlighted by a full-day pelagic trip with Westport Seabirds. Our boat will take us offshore to see literally thousands of seabirds, which may include **Black-footed Albatross**, **Fork-tailed Storm Petrel**, **Common Murre**, **Cassin's** and **Rhinoceros Auklets**, **Tufted Puffin**, **Pink-footed Shearwater**, **Long-tailed Jaeger**, **South Polar Skua**, and **Sabine's Gull**.

On a previous tour a **South Polar Skua** had just appeared when we found a **Red-legged Kittiwake**, one of very few Washington state records. Mammals that we may see include **Humpback Whale**, **Dall's Porpoise**, **Pacific White-sided Dolphin**, and **Northern Elephant Seal**. **Leatherback Turtle**, **Ocean Sunfish**, and **Grey Whale** also occur. This is the pelagic trip of a lifetime. We often have time for some late day shorebirding upon returning to the dock.

Overnight: Westport



*The charismatic **American Dipper** is one of the most popular targets for this trip.*

Day 7. Midway Beach, Aberdeen and Ocean Shores, and Tokeland

Midway Beach is a reliable spot for the diminutive **Snowy Plover**. We'll spend most of the day at Aberdeen and Ocean Shores observing large numbers of shorebirds, loons, grebes, cormorants, sea ducks, gulls, and alcids. This is our best chance for **Pacific Golden Plover**. Past visits have

yielded **American White Pelican**, **Great Egret**, **Lapland Longspur**, **Baird's Sandpiper**, and around 200 **Harbor Seals**, basking in the sun.

A return visit to Tokeland and other nearby coastal areas will give us plenty of time to find more shorebird species and search for any rarities that may have been reported. After a nice dinner at the Tokeland Hotel, we'll return to our hotel for the night.

Overnight: Westport

Day 8. Belfair State Park and John Wayne Marina

Another stop at Aberdeen and several small beach areas will be in order. We can usually find a few new species of gulls, shorebirds, and waterfowl, with a good chance for **Virginia Rail**. As we drive north we'll look for **Mountain Quail** at Belfair State Park where we have found them previously. We'll try again on our final morning if necessary.



Mountain Quail, one of a couple spectacular quail species we hope to encounter on this tour.

The John Wayne Marina may have **Black Oystercatcher**, **Bald Eagle**, and many alcids. From there we'll look for **California Quail** in Sequim (pronounced 'squim'), our home for the next three nights.

Overnight: Sequim

Days 9-10. Dungeness NWR, Olympic National Park, and Ediz Hook

One full day will be well spent at Dungeness NWR on the Strait of Juan de Fuca, named for a 16th-century Greek mariner. At Dungeness we'll expect good numbers of seabirds including **Pigeon Guillemot**, **Marbled Murrelet**, and **Rhinoceros Auklet**, plus upland species such as **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, **Black-throated Grey Warbler**, **MacGillivray's Warbler**, and **Bewick's Wren**. Rarities that we've found there include **Tufted Puffin**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, and **Yellow-billed Loon**.

The view will include the snow-covered peaks of the Olympic Mountains and 10,000-foot (3,050-meter) high Mount Baker, an active volcano. Some nearby ponds are filled with waterfowl and may have **Virginia Rail** and **American Bittern**. The next day we'll be on Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park. Target birds here include **Canada Jay**, **Red Crossbill**, **Townsend's Solitaire**, **Grey-crowned Rosy Finch**, **Northern Goshawk**, and **Sooty Grouse**.

Black Bear and **Olympic Marmot** may be seen amidst the spectacular wildflower display. Ediz Hook is a good place to look for lots of **Harlequin Ducks** and an interesting assortment of gulls, alcids, and shorebirds.

Overnight: Sequim

Day 11. Departure

We'll depart the Dungeness/Sequim area, then drive to Sea-Tac International Airport for your flights home. This will be the end of a wonderful birding and nature experience in the Pacific Northwest region of Washington State.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration: 11 days
Group Size: 4 – 8
Dates: 29 July – 07 August 2024
Start: Seattle
End: Seattle
Prices: US\$5,250 per person sharing, assuming 4-8 participants (2024)

In the event of only 3 participants, there will be a 15% surcharge to guarantee departure if all participants agree.

Single supplements: US\$1,125 (2024)

Price Includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Transport
Guiding fees

Price excludes:

Flights
Personal insurance
Alcoholic beverages
Gratuities – (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))
Laundry service
Personal expenses such as gifts