Washington: Best of the Pacific Northwest

August 5th – 13th, 2022 (9 Days)

Westport Pelagic by Luis Gonzalez

When I first put together this family trip, I gave it this over-the-top title to get them excited and I'm glad to say this state lived up to the expectations! We did a 9-day trip through the state in order to visit the 3 National Parks that call the state home along with the San Juan Islands. Overall, the trip was a success with over 1,500 miles of road covered, we recorded 155 bird species and 21 mammal species, plus a few other interesting creatures. It must be said this was a family trip planned by a birder, so while I did include a few places only a birder could love, most of the trip was made under the basis that casual nature-loving relatives and friends can enjoy it just as well.

Some of the trip highlights include just the fact we had perfect sunny weather every day of the trip, so no gloomy skies, showers or heat waves (they all seem to have come into the state the week after we left); bird wise I got 26 lifers including a menagerie of seabirds that the ship's captain was glad to say we had the ultimate experience of the season, seeing both Sooty and Dusky Grouses with chicks from the road and a cooperating Lewis's Woodpecker family one morning around Winthrop; food wise, outside of the Ashford (town that's the entrance to Mt. Rainier), the food was some of the best I've had in any trip, whether it was in a restaurant or fruits and sandwiches bought in a store for the long driving days.

Detailed Itinerary:

- August 5 (Flight and drive to Westport)

  After an early morning flight from Miami to Chicago and from there to Seattle, we arrived in the state little past 1PM and after quickly picking up the rental car, a brief stop in the grocery store for some water, we were on our way to the coast while eating some Dairy Queen in the car to make up the lost time since traffic was awful to put it mildly until we were long past Tacoma. We arrived to the Mariners Cove Inn around 7 for check-in and while putting our stuff away, I noticed some of the first birds of the trip, including a singing **Swainson's Thrush**, a pair of **Song Sparrows**, flyover flocks of **Barn Swallows** and **American Crows** and the first of many **Steller's Jays** seen on the trip.

  From there we drove to Westhaven State Park to enjoy the sunset over the Pacific and I was given a sobering reminder that gulls are a birder's enemy, especially when you're in the peak hybrid zone of the region! I was eventually able to pick out a few "pure-bred" **Western** and **Glaucous-winged Gulls** among the hundreds of hybrids, but outside of those the park provided little else of note except a few foraging **Caspian Terns** in the waters close to a **Brandt's** and **Double-crested Cormorant** colony and a lonesome **Common Nighthawk** on our way out foraging. Overall, it was time to finish to relax a bit after a long travel day, we had a Safeway sandwich dinner in the room and called it a night.

Black-footed Albatross by Luis Gonzalez

- August 6 (Westport Pelagic)

  As mentioned in the beginning, this was a birder planning a family trip, so of course I was going to make some time for myself to see a few lifers! Today was a trip to take one of the iconic boat trip with Westport Seabirds to see what we could find in the open ocean, as a general disclaimer, if you are even slightly prone to motion sickness, it is highly recommended to take the proper medication or you will experience tough times whenever the boat is still, even on a pleasant day like the one we had (sunny skies, no fog and plenty of wildlife encounters) the waves we big and constant which sadly resulted in my family members who chose to join me (to see some of the marine mammals and albatrosses) to spend most of the trip vomiting even after taking said medication alongside another participant.

  With the unpleasantness out of the way, I must say, this was pretty much everything one could hope for when they imagine a pelagic trip and more. After boarding around 5, we were off to the ocean by 5:30 and the lifers began showing soon after! Alongside the hundreds of Brown Pelicans and gulls, we picked out our first Alcids in the forms of **Pigeon Guillemot**, **Common Murre** and **Rhinoceros Auklet** and our first hundred **Sooty Shearwaters**. From there we were on a fast drive to offshore waters were the gulls and pelicans were replaced by thousands of shearwaters and we soon realized we were in peak **Red Phalarope** migration as 70% of the birds we saw were of this species as opposed to the usually more common **Red-necked Phalarope**.

North Right Whale Dolphins by Luis Gonzalez

Once we reached the offshore waters in the Pacific county we were briefly greeted by a diving Humpback while and followed soon after by a skua slam where we had all possible members of this family within view in 30 minutes, these of course included **Pomarine**, **Parasitic** and **Long-tailed Jaeger** along with two **South Polar Skuas**. Alongside the quickly fleeing **Cassin's Auklets**, we also had our first feeding frenzy as a fishing boat had just finished going through the area and the water around us was filled with our first **Black-footed Albatrosses**, **Northern Fulmars** and **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** among the thousands of shearwaters, with **Sooty** being the most common followed by **Short-tailed** and **Pink-footed Shearwater**.

From there we went a bit further out to Willapa Canyon to put some chum out to see what turned in, the arrival was slow since the birds were dispersed following the fishing boats, but while we waited we were greeted with faraway views of Dall's Porpoise and close ups for both Blue Shark and Ocean Sunfish. Eventually when the birds came in we had nearly 30 **Black-footed Albatrosses** near the boat, alongside amazing close-up views of a breeding plumage **Sabine's Gull**, a brief encounter with an **Arctic Tern** that left much to be desired and amongst the faraway moving **Leach's Storm-Petrels**, we had a brief but solid views to a very early in the season **Buller's Shearwater**. On the way out we were able to encounter our first of three Tufted Puffins for the day and after midday we were on our way back to shore but the most memorable experience was yet to come.

Normally the way back from every pelagic trip is a slow time without much to see since you already got most of your targets, but this trip we were blessed by a marine mammal bonanza, it began with a Humpback Whale swimming in the distance with Mt. Rainier in the background before one showed up much closer for better views of the tail fluke and finally a third one that did the iconic breaching before going down. Soon afterwards, a pod of 30+ Pacific White-sided Dolphins began playing in the surf being made by the front of the boat alongside 10 Northern Right Whale Dolphins! We had this amazing experience with both species for a period of roughly 20 minutes before both species dispersed, everyone in the ship, including the captain and the guides, were surprised by how cooperative these Right Whale Dolphins were as the species is usually seen briefly and far from the boat. Finally, we had a brief view of a Northern Fur Seal to finish out mammal break and continued our way back to shore.

After an hour and a half we were finally within the inshore waters and by driving slowly close to the jetty we were able to see a few Steller's Sea Lions on the buoys along with high numbers of the inshore Alcids before locating a pair of **Wandering Tattlers** in the rocks alongside an early **Spotted Sandpiper** and within the harbor we noticed a single Willet within the 600+ flock of **Marbled Godwits** in the sandbank and a lonesome **Bonaparte's Gull** with all of the hybrid and **Heermann's Gulls**. The last new animal of the trip were the Harbor Seals that spend their lives in these waters while we were counting the species totals for the day.

While the trip was over, I was still on cloud nine, but sadly my family were in the worst case possible, we drank some Gatorade to recover some of the lost electrolytes, before having a shower and enjoying a tasty clam chowder, fish and chips and some ice cream by the pier. It was an early night for all of us since tomorrow was a travel day with some stops within Olympic National Park.

Sabine's Gull & Dusky Grouse by Luis Gonzalez

- August 7 (Transfer to Port Angeles via Quinault Rainforest and Olympic National Park)

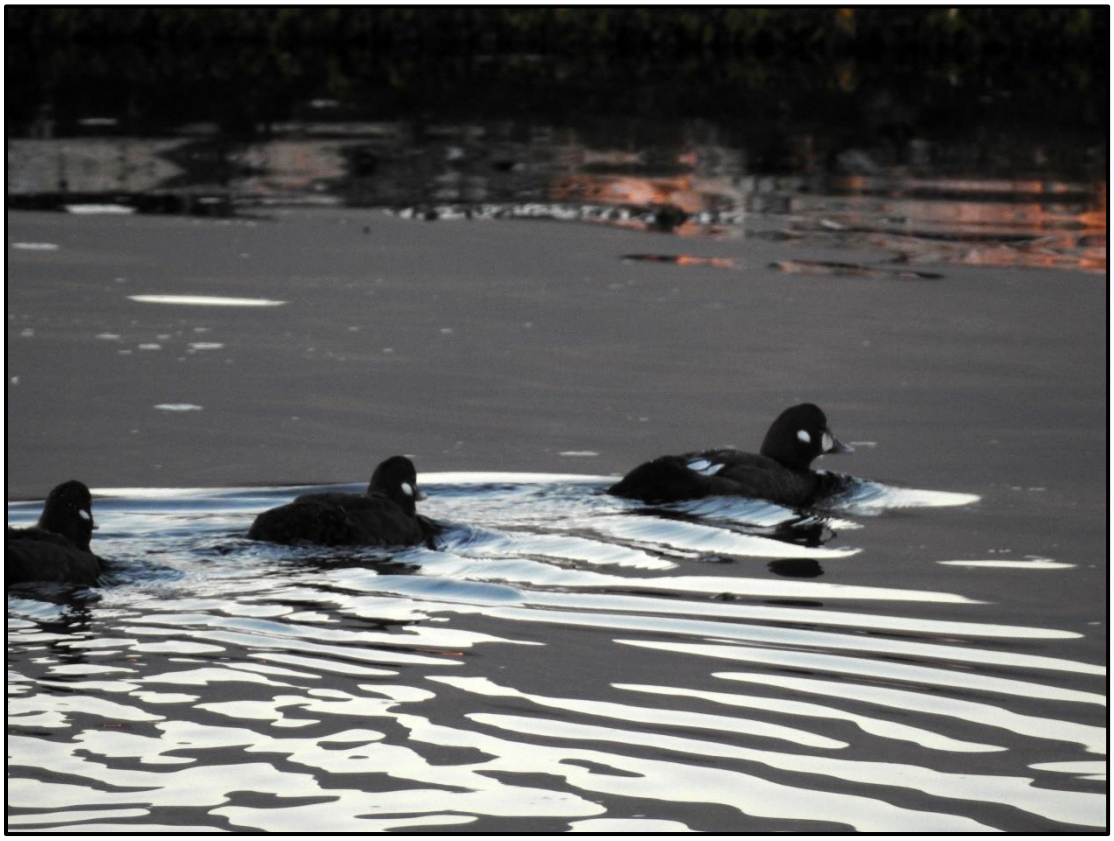
  Early morning departure gave me a chance of seeing a pair of courting Anna's Hummingbird along with the first Black-capped Chickadee of the trip. Once everything was in the car and a stop for coffee was made, we drove through the Quinault Rainforest Loop Drive, this seems to be the Southwestern edge of Olympic National Park and where it meets the National Forest of the same name. The first stop of the loop was overlooking a lake near the Rain Forest Resort Village, not much bird wise except for a few **Common Yellowthroats** in the reeds and the first of many **Cedar Waxwings**.

Snowshoe Hare by Luis Gonzalez

  As we drove further into the forest, we encountered a nice variety of mammals, first with a Douglas Squirrel, followed by a Coyote and finally a pair of Snowshoe Hares, all by the side of the road and the last one took me a while to realize what it was, but it couldn't be anything else since they are the only Lagomorphs in the peninsula. On the bird front, things were slow, a small clearing revealed the first woodpecker of the trip in the form of a **Hairy Woodpecker**, followed closely behind by a mixed flock of **Barn** and **Violet-green Swallows**. Finally when going back to the forest, thanks to a helpful comment from my father, I noticed a small, chicken-like group of birds crossing the road, I stopped the car and soon realized these were chicks of one of my main targets of the region and as I got out of the car, the mother flew up high to be perfectly outlined by the sun beaming down and there is was, my first game bird of the trip, a **Sooty Grouse**! The bird stuck around for a few minutes and I got my fill of views and even a few decent shots, once I got back to the car and the hen made sure all her chicks were in cover, she flew down and

disappeared. From there, we made a brief break to enjoy the mountains and in vain hope for a woodpecker to show up among all the burnt trees, instead I got the only **Hermit Thrush** of the trip.

Another stop was made to enjoy the many small waterfalls and creeks in the park and we also enjoyed ourselves to some fresh, spring water (that we all agreed tasted better than the water we had in our bottles but none of us thought at the time to swap the waters out). This stop also produced our only views of Roosevelt Elk as it was slowly crossing the river and the first of many Mule Deer with young for the trip. At the road bend we briefly saw the only **Common Merganser** of the trip, alongside the first of many **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**.



Harlequin Duck by Luis Gonzalez

A quick stop on a trail system of the Quinault Rainforest on our way out proved welcoming for a short walk, in the parking area **Band-tailed Pigeon** flocks moved about and within the trail, the calls of **Pileated Woodpecker**, **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** and **Pacific Wren** set the mood for the region we were on. From there we drove through the iconic Olympic Peninsula loop of Highway 101 and made a brief stop by the beach to see the Tree of Life or Root Cave Tree, beautiful stop overall, but too many tourists to enjoy it. Finally we arrived to Port Angeles around 4 for a welcoming seafood lunch, before checking in to our Vrbo for the night. The house felt like a sauna until we opened all the windows due to the lack of any cooling system outside of the windows (thankfully things got nice and cool when the sun set). Originally the plan was to drive up to Hurricane Ridge for the afternoon and try to see some alpine species like Olympic Marmot and American Pipit, however due to the time of day when we arrived and how little time we

could actually enjoy the trail once we got to the top, my family opted to stay in and I decided to go to a nearby hotspot called Ediz Hook.

Ediz Hook is an extension of the Port Angeles harbor that is normally a good stop for birders looking to connect with some shorebirds, this stop was the first among many I deeply regretted leaving my scope at home, since seawatching without a scope, or much experience, and the fact most birds were molting between breeding and non-breeding plumage meant I was in one of the toughest situations to be in as a newbie birders in the region. Besides hundreds of gulls of many species (and hybrids), I was able to connect with my first **Short-billed Gulls** of the trip along with the more widespread and ubiquitous **Heermann's**, **Glaucous-winged** and **Ring-billed Gull**. I was able to see my only **Harlequin Ducks** of the trip, all in chocolate brown plumage, and while looking out to sea among the moving groups of Alcids going north, I noticed something else in the water. First it was a fin, then two and finally I figured out what I was seeing was actually a pod of Orcas! These guys are pretty rare in the Port Angeles area but it seemed like I lucked out with them, later that day my brother would also see them from the porch of the house as they swam into the harbor (how many people can say they have Killer Whale in their yard list!?). Once I lost track of them, I went back to my car with the only shorebirds I noted that afternoon being **Least** and **Western Sandpipers**. We tried out one of the great pizzas of the area and went to sleep while we were lulled by the nice breeze from the bay.

Mt. Rainier by Luis Gonzalez

- August 8 (Morning in Port Angeles and afternoon in Mt. Rainier National Park)

  Early morning, I was woken up at 5:30 by the onslaught of gulls outside my window and a beautiful sunrise, since I had some free time until my family was up and ready to leave, I figured I'd go back to Ediz Hook and try to see some of the targets of the area. This time the tide was low, so more area for my target shorebirds to forage, on the sea side, I was amazed by the thousands of seabirds I was seeing but couldn't ID, the close up birds included the expected gulls, alongside **Rhinoceros Auklet**, **Common Murre**, **Pigeon Guillemot** and **Pelagic Cormorant**. On the harbor side, the bounty was much better than the previous evening since there was more space to forage and less people on the ground, soon after I stopped my car I found my first target in the form of **Black Turnstone**, these little guys moved about skillfully between the exposed rocks and algae, it was hard to keep track of them unless you had them in view when they moved, what first seemed to be a group of 3, ended up in a group of 10 birds all within 30ft of me and I didn't notice. Some other birds seen were a pair of **Black Oystercatchers** and many **Black-bellied Plovers** in different stages of molting. From there, I figured I'd make a quick stop on the Olympic Discovery Trail to see what would appear for my trip list, **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and **American Goldfinch** cooperated for pictures, while **Downy Woodpecker**, **Spotted Towhee** and **White-crowned Sparrow** made their presence known from the trees and the shrubbery. I was called by my family saying they were ready to leave and I went back to the Vrbo home to pack the bags in the car.

Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel by Luis Gonzalez

After having a very nice breakfast, we drove all the way to the town of Ashford, on the outsides of Mt. Rainier National Park. The town itself is a very small place, that clearly got most of its income from the tourists visiting the park, we stayed at Nisqually Lodge, which was a nice base of operations for the night, though sadly they wouldn't allow us to check-in or leave our bags just an hour before the actual check-in time. So we figured to just go to Mt. Rainier and check in later, which might have been a really good idea or a really dumb ne depending on who you ask. The wait just to enter the park was over 40 minutes due to all the other visitors (most of which were going to the same trail we were), but if we had waited later in the day or gone early the next morning like originally planned, we would have missed other things we managed to enjoy in the trip. The drive up to the main trail of Mt. Rainier, aptly named Paradise, is one that I cannot recommend if you have problems with height or not used to driving mountain roads like I am, many of the drivers within the state always seemed pretty aggressive in these mountain roads with their preferred way to communicate it being to pass you when they got the chance, briefly brake the car to get your attention and flip you off. Can't say I was a fan of the method, but overall, I didn't mind it and I tried to be mindful of the other traffic when I could.

Once we arrived to Paradise, I have to say, I expected more and less at the same time, on the landscape side, it took away all expectations as the pictures don't do this place just with the beautiful view of Mt. Rainier, the pine forest leading up to the meadow/alpine area and all the blooming wildflowers. However, this location is well-known for being some of the best places in the state for some sought-after targets like Sooty Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, I unfortunately would not connect with any of these birds, even though when I went back down, someone mentioned they had a male Sooty Grouse displaying in the road close to where I passed, simply put, I had bad luck. But that didn't mean the birding wasn't there if you didn't try, **Rufous Hummingbirds** moved through the meadows at high speeds, Pine Siskins flocked from tree to tree and **Vaux's Swifts** flew above you; adding to those, there were two mixed flocks that if you managed to skim through all the **Dark-eyed Juncos**, you would find that there were also **Lincoln's Sparrow**, **Orange-crowned**, **Townsend's** and **Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler**. Back in the parking lot, there was a family of **Canada** and a trio of **Steller's Jays** stealing food from people's tables. The trail was also good for rodents with both Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel and Yellow Pine Chipmunk showing well, but the biggest surprise was however as we were driving back down to see an Hoary Marmot at the base of a tree; I was disappointed to have missed them in the meadows, but I definitely did not expect to see one in the forest, there's no other mammals of that size and silver coat in the park, so guess I lucked out after all?

Back in town, we had dinner and went to sleep early since tomorrow would be the longest driving day of the trip. Most places closed early throughout the trip and here it was no exception, which resulted in buying an overpriced burger instead of trying out Himalayan or Ukrainian food in the nearby restaurants. Once again, you win some, you lose some, but Ashford was definitely the low-point food wise for this trip.

Steller's Jay by Luis Gonzalez

- August 9 (Ashford to Winthrop via North Cascades National Park)

  Early morning around the lodge revealed the usual suspects of any forest in the region alongside great up-close views of a male **Wilson's Warbler**, non-stop calls of **Western Wood-Pewees** and the high-pitched whine of a **Brown Creeper**. Once we had breakfast and packed up, we got ready for the longest travel day of the trip which had a total of 5 and a half hours of just driving, this included dealing with urban traffic when passing by Tacoma and Seattle in the highway, winding mountain roads and construction blocks in the North Cascades with one way traffic taking 10-20 minutes to be moved between point A and point B. Eventually around 2:40PM we reached Washington Pass and using this as the perfect place to stretch our legs, we enjoyed the view from this overlook, bird variety was very low and since the snow has mostly melted in the region, no Pine Grosbeaks for me, but I made do with a pair of **Western Tanagers** among the usual suspects of these high elevation habitats.

  Once we reached Winthrop, we checked in at the River Run Inn, which was our lodging for the next 2 nights. I must stress that this was probably the best lodging place we had all trip on multiple levels, these included great hospitality and access to a number of visitor friendly activities for those that chose to stay in, great budget (roughly $130 per night for a room of 4), the grounds had a nice variety of dry habitat along with fruiting apricot trees that made sure the birds and us were enjoying the sweet fruits. The town of Winthrop is also at close distance whether it is by bike, foot or car and the only negative to this Western-themed town is that half of the stores and restaurants are closed half of the week and vice-versa outside of the weekends

to not compete for the clientele too much, this resulted in us eating lunch in a Mexican restaurant outside of the town the next day, but that honestly might have been for the best considering the food quality, portions and cost overall.

Washington Pass by Luis Gonzalez

When we unpacked, I quickly went out and drove through the town in hopes to reach the Sun Mountain Lodge that's famous among birders for its tame and readily seen Dusky Grouse. On the way there I noted multiple **Lark Sparrows** and **Common Nighthawks** in the inn grounds, plus a **California Quail** hen with chicks on the side of the road right in the town. The first raptors of the trip were finally seen with the common trifecta of the **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Turkey Vulture** and **American Kestrel** (it's honestly amazing how I hadn't seen a single raptor so far in the trip until today). When I reached the lodge, sadly no Grouses were found, but a pair of cooperative **Red-naped Sapsuckers** made it clear which were the most prominent woodpeckers in the region. The drive back down gave much of the same birds plus some nice views at a small group of **Wild Turkeys** and an **Eastern Kingbird**. Back in the hotel I was able to add Say's Phoebe to the list along with **Tree** and **Cliff Swallows** within the flock of the more common **Violet-green** and **Barn Swallows**. After a nice dinner and some ice cream, we checked out for the night and while my family prepared for a lazy day tomorrow, I already had a plan of what to do first thing in the morning.

Dusky Grouse by Luis Gonzalez

- August 9 (Winthrop Area)

  Originally the plan was to go back to North Cascades and hike up a trail in the hopes of finding some difficult targets of the region like the aforementioned Pine Grosbeak along with Spruce Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker and Townsend's Solitaire, but I'd figure I'd stick close to town since I had a few targets nearby. My first target was by going back up the mountain to Sun Mountain Lodge and this time I was greeted as I reached the top by a total of 10 **Dusky Grouses** on the side of the road. After spending 10 minutes with these incredibly tame birds, I drove down the to the Beaver Pond Trail in hopes of Williamson's Sapsucker and while this species was a miss, the trail had the most bird variety than anywhere I've been to so far in the trip. The pond had **Gadwall**, **Wood Duck** and **Hooded Merganser** along with a family of **Osprey**, there was a small burnt area that provided views of the expected woodpeckers along with **White-breasted Nuthatch**, the more shrubbery areas were home to **House Wren**, **Lazuli Bunting** and **Calliope Hummingbird** and the fields were good for **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds**. Most of these are common species throughout most of the US, but it was nice to connect with them for the trip and the low growing tree-line was also good to get good views of Yellow-pine Chipmunk and American Red Squirrel.

Lewis's Woodpecker & Pygmy Nuthatch by Luis Gonzalez

Once back in Winthrop, I made a quick stop close to the Winthrop Rink, this place is a popular spot in winter for ice skating but it's a mostly empty nature trail/park in summer. The reason for this is that the ponderosa pines in the area have been reported to have a **Lewis's Woodpecker** over the last month, when I reached the park, I quickly found the woodpecker, but it wasn't just one bird, but a family of 3! Sadly the views of them were far up in the tree, so bad ID shots but great views for roughly 20 minutes, along with this family, the park was also home to a fledgling pair of **Western Bluebirds**, a mixed flock of **House** and **Cassin's Finch** and a very large and rowdy group of **Pygmy Nuthatches**. After grabbing a roadside breakfast for my family of "breakfast" sandwiches, fresh cinnamon rolls and coffee, I drove back to the inn and was able to connect with Black-headed Grosbeak in the apricot trees next to my room.

After breakfast I went out to a hotspot that had reported multiple Baird's Sandpipers the day before, but sadly, none were seen, the water however held a few interesting waterfowl among the dozens of **Mallards**, including **Northern Shoveler**, **Ruddy Duck** and **Redhead**. Other birds of note in the area were a small flock of migrant **Red-necked Phalaropes**, a lonesome **American White Pelican** in the water's edge and a very territorial **Rock Wren** in the nearby rock formations.

Back to the inn for lunch provided most of the same birds along with a **Spotted Sandpiper** in the rocks by the river behind the inn. The afternoon was spent doing the generic tourist stuff with the family and right before sunset I went back to the Winthrop Rink in hopes to photograph the Lewis's Woodpecker a bit better, I didn't have much better luck on that end, but was pleasantly surprised to see a low flying **Black Swift** on the way back to the car. Similar to every day so far, early night to get ready for a drive tomorrow to catch a ferry for the last leg of the trip.

- August 10 (Transfer to San Juan Islands and Whale Watching Tour)

  Early morning with us checking out and on the road before 6:30 and this worked in our favor as construction in the North Cascades highway was double the one 2 days prior, a quick stop was made in Ross Lake Overlook to enjoy the scenery before arriving to the Anacortes Ferry for San Juan by 11 for a 12 departure. With the free time on my hands, I walked around the terminal area adding a few trip birds like **Purple Martin**, **Belted Kingfisher** and **Cooper's Hawk**. Once on the ferry, the terminal proved to be an effective nesting site for a couple dozen **Pelagic Cormorants** and in an attempt to locate some shorebirds in the rock, an American River Otter turned up instead. The ferry ride was enjoyable with nothing to note outside of the expected gulls and Alcids.

  Once in San Juan, we quickly left our luggage in the hotel and the 3 of us that were doing the whale trip went back to the port for a 3PM departure. The company we used was Western Prince Whale Watching Adventures, they are a smaller company that offered relatively more budget friendly prices to competing companies and have the option of guiding tours in the morning (which most other companies tend to skip). I'm wholeheartedly recommending their services if you are in the region as their effort to ensure everyone on board got to see the target animals was great and memorable whether it was for young kids all the way older individuals with visual problems, plus they also lent binoculars to everyone onboard that didn't have their own.

Steller's Sea Lion by Luis Gonzalez

The first stop of the trip was to a small island that was home to a colony of 20+ Steller's Sea Lions, these giants of the sea lion world were very vocal and aggressive about how none of them wanted anyone else to be on the top of the rock and eventually the one who made those movements was pushed out of the colony to the sea. From there, a normal whale watching tour from San Juan would take you around the islands while communicating between ship captains to locate the Orcas and other cetaceans in the region, but things were a bit different today; the captain made a comment he was about to do something he's never done before since he's never seen the Orcas do this behavior, but it was too good to pass up, and so we went for about 45 minutes out of the San Juan archipelago moving over open waters until finally we ended up in the same bay I was in earlier this week when I saw my first Orcas, Port Angeles.

I couldn't make this up even if I wanted to and while I was a bit disappointed since I wouldn't see the landscape of the islands and the potential for Minke, Humpback or Gray Whales, the reason the captain brought us here was a good one. The Orcas in the region are usually in small pods of of 4-8 individuals led by the matriarch and the oldest son with the other members being daughters of the matriarch or newborns. However, the spectacle we came upon was one that even the naturalist on board couldn't believe, we were in a closed-off bay seeing up to 22 different Orcas from 3 different groups cooperating and communicating in the harbor. Soon after we arrived, we noticed the Orcas behavior changed and the reason was that they were beginning to hunt the Harbor Seals in the area, after 20 minutes of active hunting seen by both

us and the many onlookers from shore, the Orcas went down and a cluster of gulls got off their roosting sites and began foraging in the previously turbulent water for scraps left behind.

After a few minutes, the Orcas started to play on the surface and we were able to properly enjoy these hunters in a more playful light, sadly the background of a busy port left a bit to be wanting on the pictures, it was great to see these animals interact with each other without a care in the world. The naturalist confirmed that only 2 of the pods could be recognized and the 3rd one was likely a transient from outside of the region; this was great news since the gene flow of these species and their knowledge depends on these interactive moments between groups. Another interesting fact was that the oldest matriarch in the area was actually well known for being a tough mom to her offspring and for also being the first Orca in the region to learn and teach her young and other pods about the stranding hunting behavior normally seen in the pods in Punta Norte Argentina!

Orca by Luis Gonzalez

Once an hour passed we began the long ride back and arrived with no issues to the port, from there it was an overpriced dinner since no other decent restaurant was open and for once, we had no early plans the next morning, so we mostly relaxed in the room.

- August 10 (Morning in the San Juan Islands and transfer to Seattle)

  Today was the last full day of the trip and sadly it mostly a driving one in the afternoon half, but in the early morning I figured to make the best of it and went around hotspots in the island for a

few target lifers. On the drive to the first stop, I saw my first Red Fox and sadly I didn't consider to photograph it, even though it was of the beautiful Silver Fox variant; the first stop was the interestingly named Fourth of July Beach which didn't look like what you'd normally expect a beach to be and looked more like a Northern lake, complete with pines on the surroundings, large rocks and logs instead of dirt or sand and the still water had a few singing **Common Loons** in breeding plumage which while they weren't a target of the trip, it was definitely something I always had in the wildlife encounters bucket list. The shrubbery around the parking area had the usual songbirds of the region along with a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** and a **Willow Flycatcher**. Once seeing the sun hit the water, the bay was filled dozens of **Red-necked** and **Horned Grebes** along with **Surf** and a few **White-winged Scoters** among them; a flock of **Northern Pintail** and **Mallards** flew off the nearby wetland and it left behind a few shorebirds, of which the most important one for me was a single long-winged, black bill **Baird's Sandpiper**. Walking a bit further down didn't reveal much new in the beach outside of quickly fleeing **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and I was back in the car after some advice by a local birder of where I could try for Marbled Murrelet.

Surf & White-winged Scoters by Luis Gonzalez

The next two stops were Cattle Point and South Beach, both spots are good for seabirds but once again, due to a lack of scope, I couldn't make full use of a the experience. I was able to ID the expected Alcids of the area and a pair of juvenile Pigeon Guillemots got me excited for a moment thinking I might have had a nonbreeding plumage Murrelet, but sadly that was not the case. Outside of the scenery, some of the highlights were seeing an adult **Bald Eagle** casually

resting on a pine and some very vocal **Black Oystercatchers** moving between the mainland and the nearby rocks.

The final stop of the morning was a 2 mile walk around the Zylstra Loop Trail, which while it didn't provide any lifers, it gave great views to a few trip birds like **Ring-necked Duck**, **Greater Scaup**, **Greater Yellowlegs** and **Bewick's Wren**, along with a small chance for me to get some shots of **Bushtit**. A special note goes to **Common Raven** flock in the area that seemed invested in making sure me and everyone else thought a helicopter was flying over us due to their loud, deep wingbeats. Virginia Rail is also reported in the area and I potentially heard one, but since this would have been a lifer, it cannot go on the list as a heard-only.

Bushtit by Luis Gonzalez

By 11, we were out of the hotel and made a quick stop in The Whale Museum to learn more about the ecological and cultural impact the Orcas and other marine mammals have in the region. A great lunch in a Thai restaurant and a coffee break later, we were on the ferry back to Anacortes, which sadly had nothing new bird wise, but I was finally able to lay my eyes on a Harbor Porpoise, which was the last lifer of the trip. Once on the mainland, it was a long drive Seattle and by 7:30, I was going up the Space Needle to do at least one touristy thing in the city. Very unique experience for me, but overall not one I found that much appeal on due to my mild vertigo, didn't help that most of the adults on the top were either drunk or holding a beer while running around and screaming more than the kids. We had a celebratory dinner in the nearby 5 Point Cafe which possibly has one of the best hamburgers I've ever eaten anywhere in the US and ended it with a sweet piece of pie. Got to the room past 10 and after a shower, we had little

over 5 hours before we had to get up again and drive to the airport and say goodbye to Washington.

- August 11 (Departure)

  Simple early morning flight back to Miami, thankfully nothing to report outside of a bit of turbulence from some rain clouds as soon as we got over the Florida skies.

Space Needle by Luis Gonzalez

Bird List:

	Species	First Seen/Heard
1	Canada Goose	Quinault River South Shore Road
2	Wood Duck	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
3	Blue-winged Teal	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
4	Northern Shoveler	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
5	Gadwall	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
6	Mallard	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
7	Northern Pintail	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
8	Redhead	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
9	Ring-necked Duck	Zylstra Loop Trail
10	Greater Scaup	Zylstra Loop Trail
11	Harlequin Duck	Ediz Hook
12	Surf Scoter	Fourth of July Beach
13	White-winged Scoter	Fourth of July Beach
14	Hooded Merganser	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
15	Common Merganser	Olympic NP--Bunch Field
16	Ruddy Duck	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
17	California Quail	Winthrop
18	Wild Turkey	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
19	Dusky Grouse	Sun Mountain Lodge parking area and trails
20	Sooty Grouse	Quinault River South Shore Road
21	Pied-billed Grebe	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
22	Horned Grebe	Fourth of July Beach
23	Red-necked Grebe	Fourth of July Beach
24	Eared Grebe	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
25	Rock Pigeon	Westport (general)
26	Band-tailed Pigeon	Olympic NP--Quinault Rainforest
27	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Westport (general)
28	Mourning Dove	Westport (general)
29	Common Nighthawk	Westhaven SP
30	Black Swift	Winthrop
31	Vaux's Swift	Westport (general)
32	Anna's Hummingbird	Westport (general)
33	Calliope Hummingbird	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
34	Rufous Hummingbird	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
35	Black Oystercatcher	Ediz Hook
36	Black-bellied Plover	Ediz Hook
37	Killdeer	Westport (general)
38	Marbled Godwit	Westport pelagic--inshore
39	Black Turnstone	Ediz Hook

40	Baird's Sandpiper	Fourth of July Beach
41	Least Sandpiper	Ediz Hook
42	Western Sandpiper	Ediz Hook
43	Red-necked Phalarope	Westport pelagic--Offshore waters
44	Red Phalarope	Westport pelagic--Offshore waters
45	Spotted Sandpiper	Westport pelagic--inshore
46	Wandering Tattler	Westport pelagic--inshore
47	Greater Yellowlegs	Zylstra Loop Trail
48	Willet	Westport pelagic--inshore
49	South Polar Skua	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
50	Pomarine Jaeger	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
51	Parasitic Jaeger	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
52	Long-tailed Jaeger	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
53	Common Murre	Westport pelagic--inshore
54	Pigeon Guillemot	Westport pelagic--inshore
55	Cassin's Auklet	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
56	Rhinoceros Auklet	Westport pelagic--inshore
57	Tufted Puffin	Westport pelagic--Willapa Canyon (Pacific Co.)
58	Sabine's Gull	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
59	Bonaparte's Gull	Westport pelagic--inshore
60	Heermann's Gull	Westhaven SP
61	Short-billed Gull	Ediz Hook
62	Ring-billed Gull	Westhaven SP
63	Western Gull	Westhaven SP
64	California Gull	Westhaven SP
65	Glaucous-winged Gull	Westport (general)
66	Caspian Tern	Westhaven SP
67	Arctic Tern	Westport pelagic--Willapa Canyon (Pacific Co.)
68	Common Loon	Fourth of July Beach
69	Black-footed Albatross	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
70	Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
71	Leach's Storm-Petrel	Westport pelagic--Willapa Canyon (Pacific Co.)
72	Northern Fulmar	Westport pelagic--Offshore waters
73	Pink-footed Shearwater	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
74	Buller's Shearwater	Westport pelagic--Willapa Canyon (Pacific Co.)
75	Sooty Shearwater	Westport pelagic--inshore
76	Short-tailed Shearwater	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
77	Brandt's Cormorant	Westhaven SP
78	Pelagic Cormorant	Westport pelagic--inshore
79	Double-crested Cormorant	Westhaven SP
80	American White Pelican	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)

81	Brown Pelican	Westhaven SP
82	Great Blue Heron	Winthrop
83	Turkey Vulture	Winthrop
84	Osprey	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
85	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Fourth of July Beach
86	Cooper's Hawk	Anacortes Ferry Terminal
87	Bald Eagle	Cattle Point
88	Red-tailed Hawk	Winthrop
89	Belted Kingfisher	Anacortes Ferry Terminal
90	Red-naped Sapsucker	Sun Mountain Lodge parking area and trails
91	Lewis's Woodpecker	Winthrop
92	Downy Woodpecker	Quinault River South Shore Road
93	Hairy Woodpecker	Quinault River South Shore Road
94	Pileated Woodpecker	Olympic NP--Bunch Field
95	Northern Flicker	Quinault River South Shore Road
96	American Kestrel	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
97	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Gifford Pinchot NF--Big Creek Campground
98	Western Wood-Pewee	Gifford Pinchot NF--Big Creek Campground
99	Willow Flycatcher	Fourth of July Beach
100	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Olympic NF--Rain Forest Resort Village
101	Say's Phoebe	Winthrop
102	Eastern Kingbird	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
103	Canada Jay	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
104	Steller's Jay	Westport (general)
105	American Crow	Westport (general)
106	Common Raven	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
107	Black-capped Chickadee	Westport (general)
108	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Olympic NP--Bunch Field
109	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Cattle Point
110	Purple Martin	Anacortes Ferry Terminal
111	Tree Swallow	Ashford (town)
112	Violet-green Swallow	Quinault River South Shore Road
113	Barn Swallow	Westport (general)
114	Cliff Swallow	Winthrop
115	Bushtit	Zylstra Loop Trail
116	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
117	White-breasted Nuthatch	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
118	Pygmy Nuthatch	Winthrop
119	Brown Creeper	Ashford (town)
120	Rock Wren	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
121	House Wren	Sun Mountain Lodge parking area and trails

122	Pacific Wren	Olympic NP--Quinault Rainforest
123	Bewick's Wren	Zylstra Loop Trail
124	European Starling	Westport (general)
125	Western Bluebird	Winthrop
126	Swainson's Thrush	Westport (general)
127	Hermit Thrush	Quinault River South Shore Road
128	American Robin	Westport (general)
129	Cedar Waxwing	Olympic NF--Rain Forest Resort Village
130	House Sparrow	Westport (general)
131	House Finch	Valley Creek Estuary Park
132	Cassin's Finch	Winthrop
133	Pine Siskin	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
134	American Goldfinch	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
135	Chipping Sparrow	Zylstra Loop Trail
136	Lark Sparrow	Winthrop
137	Dark-eyed Junco	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
138	White-crowned Sparrow	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
139	Savannah Sparrow	Valley Creek Estuary Park
140	Song Sparrow	Westport (general)
141	Lincoln's Sparrow	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
142	Spotted Towhee	Olympic Discovery Trail--18th Street Trailhead
143	Red-winged Blackbird	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
144	Brown-headed Cowbird	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)
145	Brewer's Blackbird	Little Soap Lake (Okanogan County)
146	Orange-crowned Warbler	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
147	Common Yellowthroat	Olympic NF--Rain Forest Resort Village
148	Yellow Warbler	Winthrop
149	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
150	Black-throated Gray Warbler	Fourth of July Beach
151	Townsend's Warbler	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
152	Wilson's Warbler	Olympic NP--Quinault Rainforest
153	Western Tanager	Washington Pass (Okanogan Co.)
154	Black-headed Grosbeak	Winthrop
155	Lazuli Bunting	Beaver Pond Trail (Okanogan Co.)

Mammal List:

	Species	**First Seen**
1	Snowshoe Hare	Quinault River South Shore Road
2	Douglas's Squirrel	Quinault River South Shore Road
3	North American Red Squirrel	Beaver Pond Trail
4	Yellow-pine Chipmunk	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
5	Least Chipmunk	Washington Pass (Okanogan Co.)
6	Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
7	Hoary Marmot	Mt. Rainier NP--Paradise
8	Red Fox	Fourth of July Beach
9	Coyote	Quinault River South Shore Road
10	Northern Fur Seal	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
11	Steller's Sea Lion	Westport pelagic—inshore
12	Harbor Seal	Westport pelagic—inshore
13	North American Otter	Anacortes Ferry Terminal
14	(Roosevelt) Elk	Quinault River South Shore Road
15	Mule Deer	Wesport (general)
16	Humpback Whale	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
17	Pacific White-sided Dolphin	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
18	Orca	Ediz Hook
19	Northern Right Whale Dolphin	Westport pelagic--Offshore Pacific County
20	Harbor Porpoise	San Juan Islands Ferry
21	Dall's Porpoise	Westport pelagic—Willapa Canyon