Director’s Message:
Powell Jones

Thank You For Your Incredible Support!

Due to the amazing response to our Fall Fundraiser annual appeal, the Dungeness River Audubon Center begins 2020 on track with our financial goals. Your support allows us to concentrate on our education priorities including providing essential nature based programming to school age children, connecting them to the world in which they live and which they will be soon be responsible for. Additionally, your gift provides us with the necessary resources to present affordable community programs that cover a huge range of subjects, including wildflowers, bats, birds, salmon, river ecology, and how our changing climate will interact with all of them.

As many of you are aware, 2020 will be a time of transition as we break ground around April 13th for a new facility. Thank you to all of you who helped start this year off successfully. We look forward to growing with you this year and beyond!
Holiday Nature Mart, 2019 was a Great Success

The November 2019 Nature Mart event proved to be a huge success! Due to anticipated construction at the River Center, the event was relocated to the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe’s Community Center in Blyn, but thanks to an active advertising campaign, supporters and shoppers found their way to the new venue. We raised just shy of $12,000. Among the many gift items offered were unique ornaments, knitted items, needlepoint, fresh wreaths and centerpieces, scarves, photo opportunities with some of the Center’s animals, baked goods, and too many more wonderful things to mention. One major reason for the success and amount raised was that all of the items for sale were made and donated by the Nature Mart Committee members and craft volunteers. Think how many items it took to equal sales of $12,000! Because of this and our wonderful volunteers, including several Sequim High School students who stepped up to work at the event, we had great success with minimal expense. All of these individuals deserve a HUGE thank you for their generosity and efforts.

Mark your calendars! Next fall, Fri. and Sat., Nov. 20 and 21, Nature Mart will again be held at the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe’s Community Center. Come and enjoy a complimentary cup of hot chocolate, cider or coffee and join the fun! If you would like to help with next year’s Nature Mart, please contact Chair, Tuttie Peetz at 360-683-6860 or trpeetz@gmail.com.

Tuttie Peetz, Chair, Nature Mart, DRAC Board Member

Young People Flock to RiverFest, 2019

The Festival was well attended by young people who learned a lot about the Dungeness River and about the work of the River Center.

Inspiring understanding, enjoyment, and stewardship of the Olympic Peninsula’s unique natural and cultural resources is a pillar of the work we do at, and for, the River Center. This goal is what made the River Festival on September 27th, 2019, such a special event for our community. This event provided a free platform for organizations and agencies to share their work and inspire all generations to understand what an amazing story the Dungeness River can tell. The River Festival gave attendees the chance to hear from...
the people that are both exploring and creating the story of the Dungeness. The US Forest Service, NOAA, National Park Service, Peninsula Trails Coalition, Back Country Horsemen, Clallam County, BEACH, and North Olympic Land Trust are just a few of the many agencies that were on hand to share, demonstrate and answer questions about our watershed and the Olympic Peninsula’s natural resources.

If you have questions about the RiverFest this coming September 2020, are interested in helping out, or if you know of a group that would be a good fit at the festival, please contact the River Center at 360-681-4076 or email: RiverCenter@olympus.net

PHOTOS BY RON PARKER

SAVE THE DATE!

**Groundbreaking for the Center's Expansion**

**Monday, April 13th, 2020, 2 - 3:30 p.m.**

Dungeness River Audubon Center
2151 West Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA

*INSPIRE WONDER*

We Celebrate Groundbreaking for River Center Expansion, Save the Date!

You are invited to the groundbreaking celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center Monday, April 13, 2020, at 2:00 pm. This event celebrates the official beginning of the construction of the River Center expansion, new access road, and new parking lot. We will recognize and thank the many individuals, foundations, businesses, organizations, and government entities who have so generously contributed to the successful “Inspire Wonder Capital Campaign.”

The event will feature speakers from the partners who co-manage the Dungeness River Audubon Center at Railroad Bridge Park, including representatives from the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Dungeness River Audubon Center, and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society. After the formal presentations, guests are invited to participate in a ‘virtual tour’ of the new River Center. The Center expansion and parking lot features will be delineated on the ground and labeled. Volunteers will be stationed throughout the area and will share specific details about these exciting projects.

The expansion of the River Center includes adding a 150-seat community multipurpose room, a meeting room, commercial kitchen, restrooms, office space, gift shop, and concession stand. The existing building will be remodeled to provide a larger exhibit space, children’s discovery corner, library, and wildlife viewing area.

The Inspire Wonder Capital Campaign work continues toward completion of the expansion, then the focus shifts to raising funds for the design and fabrication of new exhibits, commercial kitchen equipment, and other furnishings. Read more about the Inspire Wonder Capital Campaign at

[www.dungenessrivercenter.org](http://www.dungenessrivercenter.org).
Olympic BirdFest 2020 - Come Bird with Us


The stage is set...quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready...Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, Barred and Pygmy owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips to Sequim Bay, Dungeness Spit, wooded areas to view songbirds, and a boat trip to Protection Island.

New BirdFest trips this year include:

Birds & Beauty - Elwha to Salt Creek: Leader, Jenna Ziogas; Fri & Sat, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 pm
Birding Elwha Beach Lake & Estuary: Leader, Carolyn Wilcox; Fri, 8:30 -11:30 am and 1-4 pm
Birding Ediz Hook & Port Angeles Harbor: Leader, Judy Mullally; Sat, 1-4 pm

Five seminar-style presentations will be given at the River Center, covering: Hummingbirds, Owls, Stories from the Evolutionary World of Birds, Raptors of Washington's Olympic Peninsula, and Corvids of Washington's Olympic Peninsula

A photography workshop will be taught by Tim Boyer, professional nature photographer and author.

At our Saturday Night Gala Banquet, the featured speaker this year is Scott Pearson, researcher in Ecology, Marine Biology and Zoology at the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. He will present “A Tale of Two Puffins,” and will draw comparisons between Tufted Puffins and Rhinoceros Auklets based on his research.

Precede your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two night birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 15-17. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort. Get cruise information and register online at: www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon.

Extend your Birdfest weekend with the Neah Bay post-trip, April 19-21. We will spend two and one-half days exploring northwest coastal Washington, a region rarely seen by birders. Come bird with us and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula; you just might go home with a new bird for your life list! Check out all the offerings by going online at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

By Marion Rutledge.

For further information, and to register, contact us at 360-681-4076, or email at info@olympicbirdfest.org.
The Tufted Puffin, the charismatic and iconic seabird of the Pacific Northwest, has the best of both worlds. It can fly above AND below water. These seabirds have strong, short wings that can propel them at speeds up to 50 mph under water, while diving to depths of up to 600 feet, and most seem more comfortable and graceful under water than above it.

Protection Island also supports one of the largest breeding colonies of Rhinoceros Auklets in the world, as well as significant breeding populations of Pigeon Guillemots, and is one of the last two breeding sites for Tufted Puffins in the Salish Sea. In late summer, Common Murre chicks jump from their nesting cliffs when they are only about one-fifth the mass of their parents, and unable to fly. After jumping, the little chicks swim away to sea with their fathers, calling and begging to be fed. They are one of the main participants in local feeding flocks.

Marbled Murrelet’s nesting sites were more of a mystery, only discovered in 1974. These diving seabirds nest along the Pacific Coast, high in broad moss-covered branches of large trees greater than 200 years old. Both parents fly inland up to 50 miles each way to these rare nest-trees, carrying one small fish for their young chick, several times a day.

Diving seabirds are especially dependent of small fishes, often termed “forage fish”. One of the most important Salish Sea forage fish is the Pacific herring, which spawn in eelgrass beds. Native eelgrass (Zostera marina) is a flowering shallow water plant that needs soft-sediment habitat like that found in the Dungeness Bay. As the Dungeness River travels down from the mountains bringing soil and nutrients to the Bay, it mixes with salt water to create one of the premier Pacific Northwest estuaries, the Dungeness Bay. Here, one of the largest eelgrass beds in the Greater Puget Sound is found. In addition to the spawning Pacific herring, Dungeness Bay eelgrass stabilizes shorelines and supports young salmon and steelhead, crab, shrimp, shellfish, and thousands of Brant geese and other over-wintering waterfowl.

The nutrient-rich Dungeness River, our premier Dungeness Bay estuary and eelgrass beds, and the Washington Maritime National Refuge Complex together support the iconic Greater Puget Sound ecosystem from Puffins to marine mammals. Protect and enjoy this magnificent resource. By Judi White, OPAS President

The River Center offers an Exciting Array of Courses and Programs

Introduction to Bird Photography, with Robert Steelquist
Learn the basics of bird photography. This four-session class will teach the basics of backyard and birding photography—aimed at the birder who wants to take the next step in experiencing and sharing their passion for birds. The course’s four sessions will focus on each of the following themes: Subject, Light, Composition and Moment. Each three-hour class will include a lecture/presentation, hands-on photography at Railroad Bridge Park, and seminar/sharing of work. While advanced camera equipment isn’t required, students should at
least have a DSLR or Point and Shoot with the capability of 200-300mm focal range and a tripod. Robert is a longtime resident of Sequim and author and photographer of *The Northwest Coastal Explorer*, published by Timber Press. His recent exhibition, *Square Birds*, benefitted the construction fund for the Dungeness River Audubon Center.

**Where:** Dungeness River Audubon Center  
**Date:** March 3, 10, 17, & 24  
**Time:** Noon-3:00 pm  
**Cost:** $160.00 members, $200 non-members  
**Must pre-register. To sign up call 360-681-4076, or email rceducation@olympus.net**

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**Focus On Bats! March 21, presented by Powell Jones**

Each living species here today is the result of millions of years of evolution. The *Focus On* series dives deep into the lives of different animals and plants to explore the special adaptations that make them suitable and able to thrive in our modern world. We will look at distributions, roles in ecosystems, behaviors and more! If you are curious about the creatures that we share our home with, then this series is for you!

Often interpreted more by the myths surrounding them, bats are increasingly threatened despite being essential components of ecosystems around the world. Learn about the adaptations allowing them to thrive in the darkness of night and why we should be inviting them into our yards.

**Where:** Dungeness River Audubon Center  
**Date:** March 21  
**Time:** 10am-noon  
**Cost:** $5 for members, $10 non-members.  
**For more information, contact 360-681-4076; or email rceducation@olympus.net**

**Cost:** $25 per class or $80 for all four

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**Flowers of the Olympic Peninsula**

Again this year we are fortunate to have John Bridge offer his four session class on flowers from the low elevation riparian forests up to the alpine. You may sign up for the Tuesday or Wednesday class of each month.

**April 14 and 15:** Dungeness Forks and Greywolf River Outlook  
**May 19 and 20:** Fish Hatchery and Greywolf River Outlook  
**June 9 and 10:** Deer Park  
**July 7 and 8:** Eagle Point

**Cost:** $25 per class or $80 for all four.  
Plan on a full day, 9am-3pm. Bring your lunch, snacks, and water. For all classes, meet at 9 a.m. at the Dungeness River Audubon Center.

**Preregistration is required:** call 360-681 407 or email rceducation@olympus.net
Prairies and People of the Olympic Peninsula: Speakers’ Series

The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe has cultivated ecosystems on the North Olympic Peninsula since time immemorial. In honor of Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe and their efforts to start up a traditional prairie behind the River Center, we are hosting a speaker series that will look deeply at the ecology of prairies, the tribe’s historic connection with prairies, and their plans for working prairies in the future.

Where: Dungeness River Audubon Center, Time: 6 pm, Cost: free

March – “nəxʷsƛ̕áy̓əm̕’ Prairies: Cultural Ecosystems”
ƛ̕əw’cən Mackenzie Grinnell & Lisa Barrel
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe: Traditional Foods and Culture Program Managers

March 12: “Ecology of the Peninsula’s Prairies”
Dave Peters
US Forest Service Prairie Ecologist

March 19: “Archaeology of Sequim Prairie”
David Brownell
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe: Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

Nature Journaling

Keeping a nature journal of our observations and reflections can help deepen our experience and connection to the natural world. In this six part series we will learn how to deeply observe the wonder and beauty of nature and express it through our journaling. Each session will begin with a nature & observation discussion, an art technique demonstration and then out into the field for exploration. There will be one-on-one art time and nature discussions throughout the day. At the end of each class there will be reviews/discussions of our observations and an art critique. Walking will be involved; bring water, lunch and weather appropriate clothing. A supply list will be sent upon registration.

Where: Railroad Bridge Park
Dates: April 16, May 21, June 18, July 23, August 27, September 17
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Cost: $300
SPRING IS ALMOST HERE: THINK ABOUT THE RIVER CENTER RALLY!

What: Some have asked what the rally is. It’s the use of your skills and interests to help raise money for River Center operations, and have fun while doing it!
Where: Just about anywhere.
How: Form a team or participate on your own. Then, ask folks you know to sponsor you for a set amount or per the activity you choose, such as per mile of walking. Examples from past years include pulling scotch broom, walking, riding a horse or bike, sanding driftwood, playing pickleball, and birding.

If you can’t form or join a team, consider supporting a team or individual of your choice by making a pledge for their “a-thon activity.” More information will soon be available on the River Center website...watch for it in March! By Annette Nesse

Tuttie Peetz, busily sanding driftwood. Her sponsorships (per hours of sanding) raised $6500 for the River Center in the 2019 Rally!

AND......REGISTER FOR SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMS!

It’s never too early to start thinking about summer plans! Dungeness River Audubon Center summer camps help kids gain confidence in the outdoors, while investigating the secrets and mysteries of our natural world, and learning to look at nature in a whole new way. Mark your calendars or give us a call to reserve a spot now. Scholarships are available!!

Wild Explorers Summer Camp 1: June 22-26. $200
Bike Camp 1: June 29-July 2(half days). $120
Bike Camp 2: July 2-June 30. $120* (by invitation only, please call for details)

-Girls in the Outdoors: August 3-August 7. $200

Wild Explorers Summer Camp 2: August 17-21. $200

To register or for more information, call 360-681-4076, or email rceducation@olympus.net

Editor’s Note: The deadline for articles for the next River Current is May 26th. The issue will report on events which took place from March through May, and highlight events to come. Articles of a more general nature are always welcome! Send to ann.perkins@csun.edu