



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

WASHINGTON: SEPTEMBER MIGRATION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

SEPTEMBER 7-16, 2025

© 2024



Black-footed Albatross © Barry Zimmer

September means exciting birding in western Washington, with migration underway in nearly all habitats. Seabirds, shorebirds, and songbirds are all on the move, often in impressive numbers. Birding is especially good near the outer coast and along the inshore marine waters near Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca as movements of seabirds offshore and shorebirds along the tidal edge bring a rich mix of species into birding range. It is also an ideal point in the season to look for Asian birds rare in North America, such as Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Bar-tailed Godwit which have been seen multiple times on the tour. While the presence of such rarities in any given year cannot be guaranteed, the tour devotes ample time in the most likely spots to encounter them along Pacific Northwest shorelines from Willapa Bay to Padilla and Samish bays farther north. We will also take time to follow up on any recent rarity reports if nearby. Foraging over rocky habitats along the marine edge are

arriving winter visitors such as Surfbirds and Black Turnstones, plus migrant Wandering Tattlers. Elegant Pacific Golden-Plovers (as well as American Golden-Plovers) may be encountered as migrants.

This tour is timed to coincide with this major pulse of migration, offering an excellent opportunity to take in a diversity of seabirds and shorebirds in particular. With a full-day pelagic trip out of Westport on the Pacific Coast, we should encounter scores of Black-footed Albatross, South Polar Skua, beautiful Sabine's Gulls, several species of shearwaters (including lots of Pink-footed and a few Buller's and Short-tailed), Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, Northern Fulmars, often Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers, Red and Red-necked phalaropes, and alcids including Tufted Puffin (scarce), Cassin's Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Common Murre. Flesh-footed Shearwater and Laysan Albatross are seen on some trips. Rare pelagic sightings (for the region) on previous tours have included Murphy's Petrel, Manx Shearwater, Scripps's Murrelet, Horned Puffin, and Wilson's Storm-Petrel. Lots of cormorants and gulls will be on hand, and often a few porpoises or whales.

The September Migration tour typically yields close to 25 species of shorebirds, including a remarkable diversity of sandpipers and roughly 35–40 seabirds, from loons and grebes to albatrosses, shearwaters, jaegers, gulls, and alcids. All but a few of these species are undertaking migration at the time of the tour.

Excellent birding is not the only reason to head to the Pacific Northwest in September. The tour traverses some of the most scenic spots in the region, from the forested Puget Sound area to the mountain heights of Olympic National Park. The countryside is stunningly green and the weather typically moderate. In addition to a fine array of birds and a prime season for rarities, the region boasts excellent food.

Beginning in Seattle, we will bird the Puget Sound lowlands before making our way out toward the coast, searching for a fine cast of migrants and Northwest specialties. Red-breasted Sapsuckers are resident, as are Northern Pygmy-Owls, Band-tailed Pigeons, Hutton's Vireos, Pacific and Bewick's wrens, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Purple Finches, California Scrub-Jays, and Spotted Towhees among others. Departing migrants in mid-September include such possibilities as Black-throated Gray and Wilson's warblers and Violet-green Swallow, while other migrants are arriving from the north, including Golden-crowned, "Sooty" Fox, and Lincoln's sparrows. We will likely turn up a sample of these songbird migrants on a number of the tour days, as we explore assorted habitats in a variety of geographic locales.

Next are two full days on the Pacific Coast, where we will devote one day to a pelagic trip out to the edge of the continental shelf and another day to the best shorebird spots. On Day 5 the tour moves north along the outer side of the Olympic Peninsula, with forays into forested zones, before arriving at Port Angeles. We will devote most of Day 6 to birding at different elevations in Olympic National Park, with emphasis on the high, subalpine country at Hurricane Ridge (near 5,000 feet) before sampling the marine edge of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, from Port Angeles to Port Townsend.



American Dipper © Brian Gibbons

In forested areas on the Olympic Peninsula, we will be searching in particular for Sooty Grouse, Varied Thrush, American Dipper, Canada Jay and other species such as Red Crossbill and Townsend's Solitaire. With clear weather at Hurricane Ridge, one has an epic overlook onto Vancouver Island and the San Juan islands to the north.

The shoreline along the Strait of Juan de Fuca promises Red-necked Grebes in breeding plumage, Harlequin Ducks returning from nesting sites, often Black Oystercatcher, a few scoters, and Short-billed Gulls (formerly Mew Gulls). Early fall arrivals of Thayer's Gulls are possible. Pigeon Guillemots frequent the same bays, and Marbled Murrelets are scarce at this season, but possible. Loons typically include Common and Red-throated. Raptors such as Peregrine Falcon are likely, as are Merlin (including "Black Merlin"), accipiters, and harriers.

After a drive up the length of scenic Whidbey Island, our birding concludes on the edges of Padilla and Samish bays, where we will spend time seeking waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and other migrants amid the locally famous Skagit Flats and Skagit Wildlife Area. This area is famous locally for its concentrations of birds and rarities, which have included Buff-breasted and Sharp-tailed sandpipers among others.

September 7, Day 1: Arrival in SeaTac. Participants should make arrangements to arrive today at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (airport code SEA) in SeaTac (located about 20 miles south of Seattle), and transfer to the **Seattle Airport Marriott**, where a room has been reserved in your name. Complimentary shuttle service is available on request from the airport. Please plan to meet in the hotel lobby at **6:00 p.m.** for orientation prior to a get-acquainted dinner.

NIGHT: Seattle Airport Marriott, Seattle

September 8, Day 2: Seattle area birding Today we will check several local parks in the greater Seattle area. Lincoln Park, Alki Beach, and Seward Park all have very accessible shorelines, not to mention beautiful views of the Puget Sound area. We will be looking in the coastal forests in these parks for species such as Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Hutton's Vireo, Barred Owl, and the coastal race of Steller's Jay. Scanning the water of the Puget Sound should yield us looks at Western Grebe, Short-billed Gull, Rhinoceros Auklet, and lots more. The Kent Ponds area is a great place to look for California Scrub Jay, American Bittern, and various species of ducks. Today should be a great introduction to Northwest birding with many possibilities. Of course, we will be flexible today to chase any rarity that may be in the area.

NIGHT: Seattle Airport Marriott, Seattle

September 9, Day 3: The Puget Sound lowlands to the coast.

The day's birding begins near the south end of Puget Sound, where nearby habitats offer a good chance for such resident lowland species as Band-tailed Pigeon, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Hutton's Vireo, Pacific and Bewick's wrens, California Scrub-Jay, Spotted Towhee, and Bushtit. A few Neotropical migrants are still possible in mid-September, such as Wilson's, Orange-crowned, and Black-throated Gray warblers, as well as Violet-green Swallow and Vaux's Swift. Other migrants arriving from the north include Golden-crowned, "Sooty" Fox, and Lincoln's sparrows. Flocks of Evening Grosbeaks and Cedar Waxwings are still moving through. We may also encounter a sample of these migrants almost anywhere along the tour route in ensuing days. Northern Pygmy-Owl, though unpredictable, is possible here too.



Chestnut-backed Chickadee © Michael O'Brien

The afternoon route takes us west along the Chehalis Valley toward the Pacific coast and ultimately to Westport on the south rim of the huge estuary of Grays Harbor. Some of the best autumn shorebirding can often be found in the Westport vicinity, where large shorebirds (such as godwits) concentrate. This is our best chance for seeing a Bar-tailed Godwit among hundreds of Marbled Godwits.

At Westport, small flocks of rock-loving, migratory shorebirds forage over the rocky jetties, giving us a chance to find Black Turnstones, Surfbirds, and Wandering Tattlers, while cormorants (including Brandt's and Pelagic) work close to the shoreline. At this time of year the south side of Grays Harbor may feature a mobile cast of alcids, loons, gulls, sea ducks, and terns. If a special rarity has been seen nearby along the coast in recent days, we may make that our afternoon focus.

NIGHT: Chateau Westport, Westport

September 10, Day 4: Westport pelagic trip.

From the Chateau Westport, it's just a short drive to Westport Harbor, where we'll board the boat for our pelagic trip early this morning, taking lunch along with us. The boat typically works its way about 35–40 miles out to sea and to the edge of the continental shelf. This pelagic birding tour consistently rates as one of the most productive in North America. At times the birding action is almost continuous. Regular early September species include Black-footed Albatross; Buller's, Sooty, Pink-footed, and perhaps Short-tailed or Flesh-footed shearwaters;



Parasitic Jaeger © Kevin J. Zimmer

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels; Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Red and Red-necked phalaropes; Northern Fulmar; Cassin's Auklet; Arctic Tern; and the strikingly patterned Sabine's Gull. South Polar Skua is seen on nearly all trips at this season, and Laysan Albatross occasionally. A wide variety of marine mammals is also possible, such as Dall's porpoise, Humpback Whale, or Northern Fur-Seal. The waters close in are good for loons, cormorants, and other near-shore divers. After docking late in the afternoon, we may have time to track down some other species in the Westport/Tokeland area.

NIGHT: Chateau Westport, Westport

September 11, Day 5: Coastal birding with a focus on shorebirds; Tokeland to Ocean Shores. Today we will concentrate on the most likely spots and recent reports in search of migrant shorebirds. Some of the best spots for these birds are at Tokeland, on the north side of Willapa Bay, and on the Ocean Shores peninsula, on the north side of Grays Harbor. Shorelines and mudflats are a favorite migrant stop for many shorebirds, including small numbers of both Pacific and American golden-plovers. Rarities like Ruff or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper are possible here, as well as a host of more typical species like Baird's, Pectoral, Western and other sandpipers, plus both species of dowitchers and yellowlegs. Lapland Longspurs are often moving through in September, and in general it is a prime season for wandering species and avian surprises. Jetties and rocky edges are likely places to look for Black Turnstones, Surfbirds, and Wandering Tattlers. Expect a good bit of walking today to get into the best shorebird spots.

NIGHT: Chateau Westport, Westport

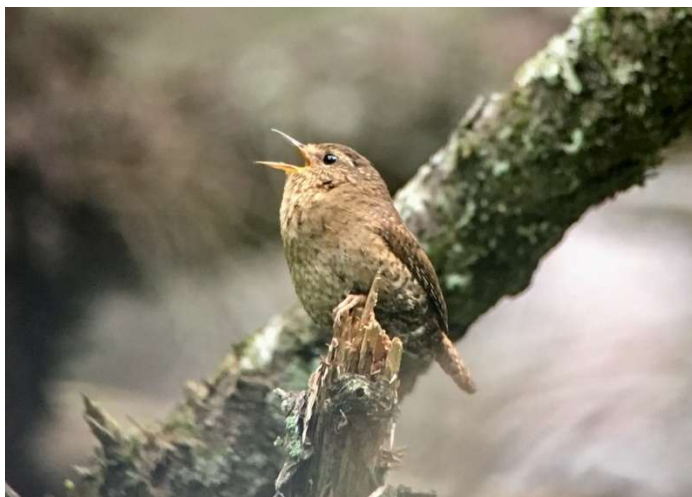


Black Turnstones © Greg Lasley

September 12, Day 6: Westport to Port Angeles via the outer Olympic Peninsula. Today is a travel day as we make our way from the Grays Harbor region north to Port Angeles on the edge of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The journey will be an enjoyable one that promises scenic highlights, stops for birding, and a chance to experience the beautiful lowland temperate rainforest.

Leaving Westport, a final shorebird stop or two is likely before we head toward the southern flank of the Olympic Mountains. Approximately an hour north of Hoquiam, we'll reach Quinault Lake at the southwestern corner of Olympic National Park.

It would be unthinkable to pass through this region without a stop in the rain forest, and the rain forest at Quinault Lake offers a superb view of this amazing temperate habitat. A walk through the towering, ancient forest of Western Red Cedar, Sitka Spruce, Bigleaf Maple, and Western Hemlock, with its lush undergrowth of ferns, is an unforgettable experience. Pacific Wrens abound, Steller's and Canada jays overlap in the habitat, and we'll be looking carefully for Varied Thrushes too. American Dippers are possible along the river and creek edges. Time permitting, we may take a short forest trail to view the largest known Sitka Spruce in existence.



Pacific Wren © Barry Zimmer

From Quinault, we will travel a stretch of U.S. 101 along the Pacific Coast, with views of the ocean from atop steep coastal cliffs. A stop at one of the beach access points north of Kalaloch would give us a chance to stretch our legs while observing concentrations of cormorants and gulls. Alternatively, we may choose to check for birds in one of the forest campgrounds along the Hoh or Bogachiel rivers. Any stop could produce post-breeding flocks of resident forest birds, and many of these flocks contain migrant species. Cassin's and Warbling vireos; Wilson's, Black-throated Gray, and Townsend's warblers; and Western Tanager are all possible.

Continuing on toward Port Angeles, the last stretch of the route will take us by Lake Crescent, a highly scenic, glacially carved lake. We won't rule out the possibility of a final stop in the vicinity of the lake. We should arrive in Port Angeles late this afternoon.

NIGHT: Olympic Lodge, Port Angeles

September 13, Day 7: Olympic National Park (Hurricane Ridge) and Port Angeles waterfront. Today will be divided between the mountains and forests of Olympic National Park and the marine environment around Port Angeles.

Most of the day will be one of discovery, featuring ancient old growth forests, terrific mountain scenery, and good birding. Our destination is wondrous Olympic National Park and the 17-mile scenic drive leading from Port Angeles to Hurricane Ridge.

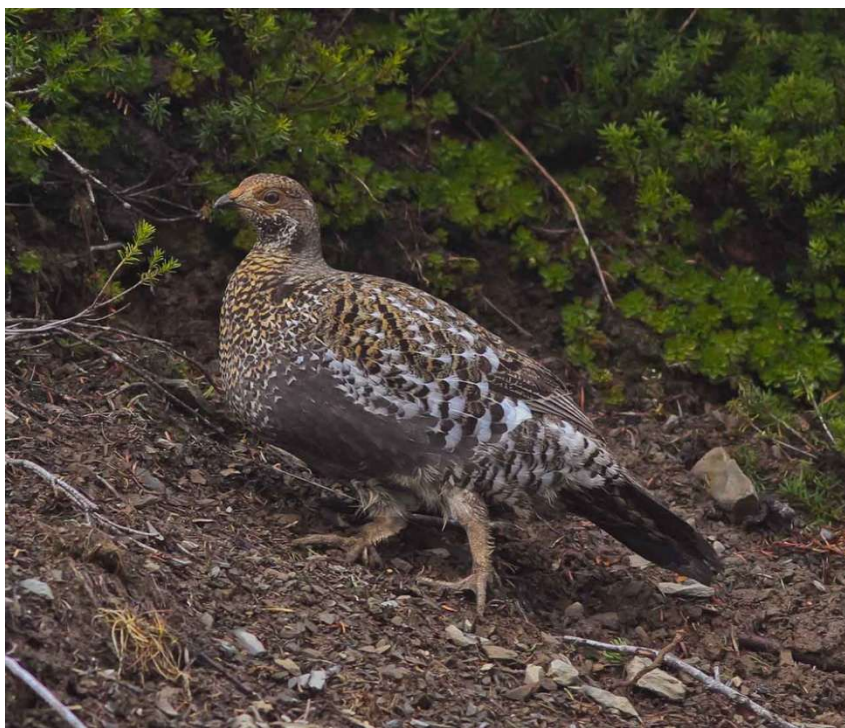
Olympic is a wild place. The public roads surrounding the park are limited to the coastal zone and foothills, meaning that almost all the interior is virtually free of human activities. Wildlife, consequently, is abundant, and black bears and mountain lions are occasionally seen. While we may not encounter either of these spectacular beasts, our day in the mountains is bound to be an exciting one. We will visit three of the four major forest types and bird all the way from the coast to the tree line. Departing Port Angeles, we will immediately strike out on the road to Hurricane Ridge. This corridor is one of the few park roads that offer penetration into the national park's vast interior, providing an interesting opportunity to sample several distinct life zones. We will observe the birds and other natural history of the varied and ever-changing habitats, and will do so with numerous stops along the way.

The Heart O' the Hills campground is our first destination. With its ancient woods, Heart O' the Hills preserves a fantastic vestige of old growth, lowland forest. Emerging from our touring van, we will be in the

company of giants. Timeless Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar, and Western Hemlock tower overhead, their gnarled, twisted limbs and shattered crowns belying their ages. Peering about the dark forest around us, we'll notice the fern-laden understory, where the moss often grows thick as carpet and rhododendrons flourish. We will take time to walk the various roads and trails of the campground in our quest for birds and to simply enjoy this lovely setting. We should find many of the birds considered typical of the wet forests of the Pacific Northwest including Pileated Woodpecker, Common Raven, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pacific Wren, Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Song Sparrow, and Purple Finch. Aside from these more common species, we will be on the lookout for several infrequently seen birds that also call these forests home. Careful listening might alert us to the soft tapping of the Red-breasted Sapsucker, a quieter denizen of the woods, or the soft "chucking" of the Varied Thrush.

Moving up the road, we will begin to gain altitude. To our west the hillside will fall away before us, providing distant views of the coastal valleys and even the contours of some of the distant ridges. Eventually we will enter the next forest zone, the mountain forests of the middle elevations. We will stop at scenic overlooks offering epic vistas onto the Strait of Juan de Fuca and, to the north, Vancouver Island and the San Juan islands. Perhaps most interesting is that these roadside overlooks may give us good chances for finding Band-tailed Pigeon and Canada Jay. Northern Pygmy-Owl is possible. At this elevation the Western Red Cedars will be noticeably fewer and farther between, and are ultimately replaced by the Alaska (yellow) cedar. Also on the scene now are the elegant Pacific Silver Firs.

The road continues up, up, and up, all the way into the Canadian zone, where stands of Subalpine Fir and Mountain Hemlock intermingle in the final zone before tree line. The road tops out at this elevation amid rolling higher altitude meadows broken by islands of trees. The scenery is magnificent. In practically all directions are limitless views of the interior of Olympic National Park. Ragged peaks highlight rugged ridgelines that will remind some of the Rockies. Large mountain glaciers accentuate the distant ridges. From our vista point at Hurricane Ridge (about 5,200'), we can gaze out at the distant mountains and valleys. The birding is often on a par with the scenery. The surrounding trees and meadows harbor the shy Sooty



Sooty Grouse © Michael O'Brien

Grouse and we will definitely be on the watch for this sought-after species. Larger stands of forest may yield more Red-breasted Nuthatches and Golden-crowned Kinglets but, additionally, we are now in the zone for Hermit Thrush and Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler. This elevation is also good for seeing a number of the finches. Pine Siskins are always expected, but even Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks are possible. We may turn up migrant songbirds and birds of prey anywhere along the road up, or at the top.

In the afternoon, we will descend to the Port Angeles waterfront along Ediz Hook.

Essentially a man-made barrier against the open ocean, Ediz Hook is a reinforced peninsula of rock, sand, and pavement that protects the nearshore waters off Port Angeles and serves as a base for the U.S. Coast Guard. The short drive along the peninsula is essential for the visiting birder, as a wide variety of birds are usually present here at any time of year. Some of the species of particular interest are specialists of the Pacific Coast such as Harlequin Duck, Pelagic Cormorant, Pigeon Guillemot, and Rhinoceros Auklet. Potential shorebirds include Black-bellied Plover, Black Turnstone, Sanderling, and sometimes Black Oystercatcher among other shorebirds. Peregrines and Merlins follow this shorebird buffet, and Harlequin Ducks paddle by at close range among log rafts that provide basking spots for harbor seals. Red-necked grebes are beginning to return to winter on these protected waters as are loons and a varied mix of scoters and other diving birds. Gulls should include Short-billed (formerly Mew), Heermann's, California, Western, Glaucous-winged and perhaps Thayer's.

NIGHT: Olympic Lodge, Port Angeles



Black Oystercatcher © Michael O'Brien

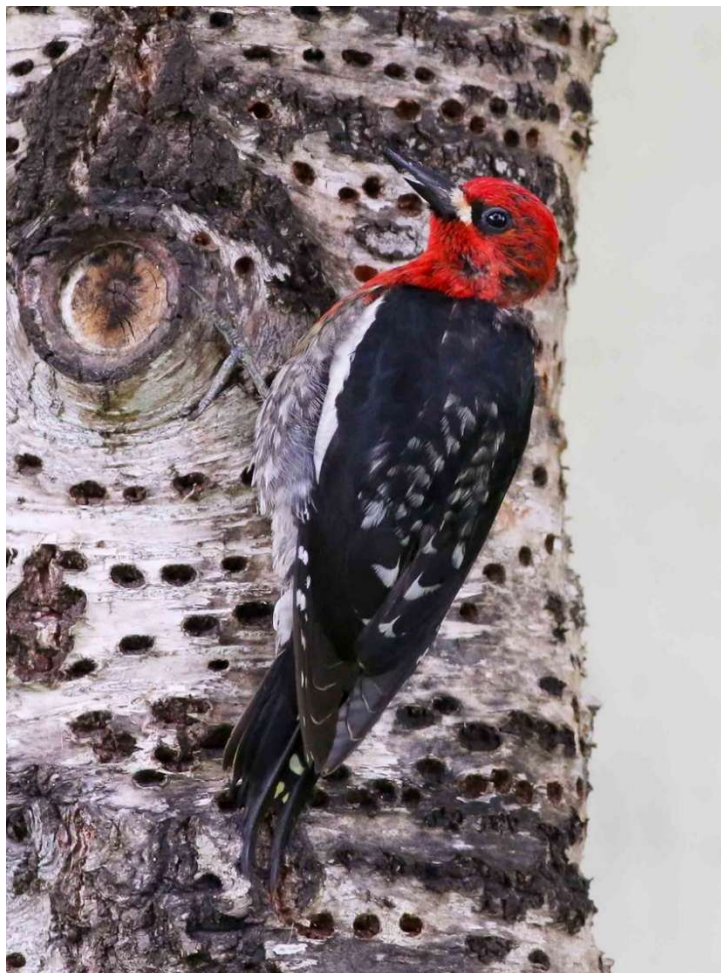
September 14, Day 8: Port Angeles to Anacortes. The slate of activities today will revolve around relocating from the Olympic Peninsula to Anacortes at the top of Fidalgo Island, just to the north of Puget Sound. Our route will take us east to Port Townsend, where we'll board a ferry for Whidbey Island. Once across, we'll travel up the length of Whidbey, cross Deception Pass to Fidalgo Island, and arrive at our hotel in the late afternoon. We will have a full day to make this relatively short transfer, which allows for relaxed birding through the morning hours.

The tip of the Olympic Peninsula holds many appealing options for spending a morning in the field. The diversity of habitats in the region between Port Angeles and Port Townsend contains a mosaic of habitats from mature forest to second growth woodland, from open pastures to freshwater marsh, and from coastal bays to small lakes, rivers, and streams. The sites we choose to visit this morning will depend on several factors. Weather is always a variable in the Pacific Northwest (although mid-September is generally a drier

time of the year) and will play a role in our decision-making. Of course, we will also take into consideration bird species we have not yet seen. Following are some of the sites we may choose to visit:

Railroad Bridge Park: Located a short distance west of Sequim (pronounced “Skwim”), Railroad Bridge Park protects a lovely natural area along the Dungeness River. Also the site of the Dungeness Audubon Center, the park is home to mixed woodlands of conifers, maples and alders. This is an excellent place to see characteristic resident species at any time of the year as well as fall migrants. California Quail, Anna’s Hummingbird, Bald Eagle, Hairy and Downy woodpeckers, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hutton’s Vireo, Steller’s Jay, Chestnut-backed and Black-capped chickadees, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak are all seen here.

John Wayne Marina: Named for the legendary screen actor who kept a boat here for a time, John Wayne Marina is a picturesque and productive site on the west side of Sequim Bay. Depending on tidal activity, the rocky tidal basin, when exposed, can be a wonderful place to view Black Oystercatcher and Glaucous-winged Gull, while the bay beyond often hosts waterfowl, grebes, and loons. From atop the breakwater, we have chances to spot the endangered Marbled Murrelet, although this species becomes scarcer in the autumn.



Red-breasted Sapsucker © Michael O'Brien

Anderson Lake State Park: Located south of Port Townsend, this quiet state park offers a 476-acre tract of woodland surrounding pretty Anderson Lake. Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir, and Red Alder mix with clumps of willows to form habitats rich in birdlife. This lightly visited area can be good for Band-tailed Pigeon, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Vaux’s Swift, Violet-green Swallow, Cedar Waxwing, and migrant warblers.

Kah Tai Lagoon: Located right in Port Townsend, this natural estuary contains a large brackish lake spottily surrounded with marshes. Virginia Rails are often present, along with an assortment of ducks and other waterbirds.

In the afternoon we’ll catch a ferry across Admiralty Inlet to Whidby Island. The 35-minute crossing is always birdy, with Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Pelagic Cormorants frequently crossing in front of the bow.

Whidbey Island is a scenic place, and as we head north, we’ll view a transect of habitats ranging from forest and mixed woodland to open fields, and coastal bays and inlets. North of Oak Harbor, we will likely stop at the lofty bridge over Deception Pass.

Deception Pass, separating Whidbey Island from Fidalgo Island, is a place of remarkable scenery. Situated hundreds of feet over the roiling ocean, the 976-foot bridge spanning the pass offers stunning views of rugged, forest-clad hills, small islands, and panoramic seascapes. The pass takes its name from the mistake made by early navigators who assumed that the waterway leading further inland from northern Puget Sound merely led to a bay with no outlet, as opposed to the pass actually being a straight between two islands with an outlet. During low tides, the current in the pass beneath the twin bridges is extremely fast and rough. We may walk out on the bridge's pedestrian walkway where we can look straight down on the turbulent waters. This is also an inspiring place for photography, where postcard-perfect settings are often enhanced by the sight of a Bald Eagle perched imperiously atop a towering conifer.

From Deception Pass, the ride to the hotel is another 15 minutes.

NIGHT: Majestic Inn and Spa, Anacortes

September 15, Day 9: Skagit Wildlife Area and Padilla Bay. Fidalgo Island sits immediately adjacent to the mainland. We will spend a full day today birding at nearby sites within the greater area known as the Skagit Flats, focusing on several units within the Skagit Wildlife Area.

The large floodplain associated with the Skagit River, near its terminus at Skagit Bay, is one of the most important lands for both agriculture and wildlife in the state of Washington. Within this area exists the Skagit Wildlife Area, a state managed complex of lands, or units, totaling 12,600 acres, used for agricultural production and wildlife habitat. The varied habitats of the Skagit Wildlife Area includes open water, island shoreline, tidal mudflats and marshes, forested uplands, and agricultural land. The area offers good birding year-round, and September is often an outstanding time to be here. The abundance of shoreline and mudflats may host many species of shorebirds while the season's first waterfowl are also arriving. Landbirds are typically in evidence, with stands of trees and brush tangles holding an array of resident species, migrant sparrows, and other birds. All of these attract Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, which could be seen anywhere.

We will spend the entire day in fairly close to the hotel, which will allow for an easy and relaxed pace. Our travels will likely take us along the shores of Padilla and Skagit bays, visiting sites where we anticipate the birding to be most productive. In its final stretch before entering Skagit Bay, the Skagit River forms two branches. The area of land in between the branches is called Fir Island. We will almost certainly spend time on Fir Island.

A varied list of species is possible today representing an impressive suite of bird families. Among the possibilities are an array of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, landbirds, blackbirds and more. Some of the birds we'll seek include California Quail; Caspian Tern; Osprey; Northern Harrier; American Pipit; Spotted Towhee; Fox, White-crowned, and Golden-crowned sparrows; Dark-eyed Junco;



Pacific Golden-Plover © Barry Zimmer

Orange-crowned Warbler; and Brewer's Blackbird. We'll watch especially for some of the more uncommon and rarer shorebirds, birds that occur annually in small numbers, or perhaps only every few others. Among these are American and Pacific golden-plovers, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and Ruff. September also is the best time to watch for the very rare Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, an Asiatic species that turns up occasionally in the fall.

NIGHT: Majestic Inn and Spa, Anacortes

September 16, Day 10: Return to SeaTac. The morning offers an hour or two to follow up on additional birding possibilities enroute to Sea-Tac airport. Please book departing flights for **1:30 p.m.** or later.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Kevin Burke and Erik Bruhnke.



Kevin Burke is originally from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. He grew up running around in the woods and trails of Shenandoah National Park. His family spent many summers camping and hiking in the park. One of Kevin's favorite activities was jumping in the river and turning over every rock to see what was underneath. This eventually earned him the nickname "Hellgrammite Kid." This early exposure to the natural world has vaulted into a lifelong obsession with the outdoors. Kevin was introduced to birding while spending summers in Rhode Island at his grandmother's house. She would point out all the feeder birds and help him identify them. These early encounters helped foster a love for birds. An early Ornithology class at Hocking College in Ohio rekindled his love

for birds. He has been birding every day since. He went on to get a Bachelor of Science in Ecotourism and Conservation Ecology from the University of Idaho.

Kevin has been involved with leading bird trips in some capacity for almost 20 years. He has led birding trips all throughout the United States, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. His birding journeys have also taken him to some spectacular locations such as Portugal, Colombia, The Bahamas, and Canada. This is truly a lifelong obsession. He currently resides with his family in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Kevin's wife and two kids also enjoy birding. They have fun kayaking, hiking, and camping in the mountains that surround their home. One of their favorite activities is jumping on the paddle board and kayaks and leisurely floating the French Broad River near their house.



Erik Bruhnke has loved birds since he was a child looking at chickadees. In 2008 he graduated from Northland College in Wisconsin with a Natural Resources degree. Erik taught field ornithology at Northland College for three semesters. Between 2009 and 2014, he spent his summers conducting field research focused on breeding bird transects in Upper Michigan, point counts for a breeding bird atlas in Minnesota and Wisconsin's Northwoods, vegetation and breeding bird surveys throughout wind farms in North Dakota's prairie potholes, and cavity-nesting surveys in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. A devoted raptor nerd, he is drawn to hawkwatches. He worked as an interpreter for six seasons at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota; counted migrating raptors at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch in Texas in 2015; and was the 2016 and 2017 hawk counter at the Cape May Hawkwatch in New Jersey. Erik's wildlife photography has won national awards, and he's written for the American Birding Association's Birder's Guide, BirdWatching magazine, and Bird Watcher's Digest.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$6,195** per person in double occupancy from Seattle. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, pelagic trip on Day 3 (weather permitting), gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Seattle and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,250**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate, and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa. If you choose not to register online, you may pay your deposit by credit card, check, money order, or bank transfer. If not paying online, or by card, your tour space will be held for 10 days pending receipt of your deposit.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due April 30, 2025.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant's deposit minus \$250*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive **Ripcord** plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical

transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Ripcord

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit:

<https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About MedjetAssist

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company's primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per-person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: To prevent crowding in the vehicles, we ask participants to limit their luggage to one medium sized bag per person, plus one carry-on bag. As a precaution, if you are flying to meet the tour and checking luggage, we urge you to pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, any medication, toiletries, and other essentials in your airline carry-on bag.

CLOTHING & CLIMATE: For most of the tour expect very comfortable weather. The coastal weather in Washington in late September is typically mild, with temperatures ranging from the low 50s to the mid-70s. The potentially coolest and most exposed conditions are likely to be encountered on the pelagic trip, and you will want to be well prepared. Although it may be sunny, don't count on it! You will be best prepared if you have on hand a good layering system: light-weight long underwear, a warm turtleneck, a pile jacket or warm sweater, warm (and ideally waterproof) gloves, a warm hat, and, most importantly, a good windproof and waterproof outer shell, plus waterproof pants. Depending on the weather, you may find these clothes handy for the morning in the Olympic Mountains as well as for birding on the long ferry crossings too. Light-weight field clothing combined with a sweater or pile jacket and a rain/windbreaker for layering would generally be sufficient. However, a good breeze along the coast is possible, so be sure you also have a warm hat and gloves handy even when birding on land. Sunscreen and sunglasses are recommended, too.

FOOTWEAR & HIKING: Waterproof footwear is very helpful. A good pair of waterproof hiking boots or shoes is recommended. Some outings may involve a mile or two of walking, mostly over level ground. During the course of the tour you will likely be walking on forest trails and along sandy beaches, as well as across expanses of intertidal vegetation and dunes. A pair of lightweight hiking shoes/boots will be essential.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good condition, along with a day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, etc.). If you are trying to decide which pair of binoculars to use, you would probably do well to bring a versatile pair like 7 or 8 x 42. Your leaders will have a spotting scope, but you may wish to bring your own. The shore birding part of the tour lends itself to a good bit of scope use, so having a few additional scopes can be a real asset. You will, of course, need binoculars. There may be some good photo opportunities, especially on the pelagic trip where albatrosses and other birds may be attracted very close to the boat, and expect some fine scenery and nature shots.

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-

called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19.

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

OTHER ITEMS TO CONSIDER:

- An alarm clock is useful, as hotel wake-up calls can sometimes be undependable.
- A water bottle which holds at least one pint.
- There will be few mosquitoes or other such invertebrate pests to worry about.
- A small daypack for your general use during the tour. On some short hikes you may be away from the van for two to three hours, and the boat trip is a full-day affair.

LAUNDRY: Guest laundry (self-service and/or valet) is available at all hotels except the Olympic Lodge on Days 5 & 6.

INTERNET & PHONE SERVICE: Wi-Fi is available in all hotels throughout the tour.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds: Each of the following guides is as an excellent option for bird identification.

Dunn, Jon L. & Jonathan Alderfer (Editors). **National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America**. National Geographic. 2017 (seventh edition).

Sibley, David Allen. **The Sibley Guide to Birds**. National Audubon Society. Alfred E. Knopf Publishing, 2014 (second edition).

Sibley, David Allen. **The Sibley Field Guide to the Birds of Western North America**. National Audubon Society. Random House, Inc., 2016 (second edition). This is the slimmed down version of the larger *Sibley* guide and features only the birds of Western North America rather than the whole continent.

Onley, Derek and Paul Scofield. **Albatrosses, Petrels & Shearwaters of the World**. Princeton, 2007.

Paulson, Dennis. **Shorebirds of North America: The Photographic Guide**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Mammals:

Kays, Roland W. and Don E. Wilson. **Mammals of North America**. Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2009 (second edition).

Plants:

Pojar, Jim and Andy MacKinnon. **Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast**. Redmond, WA: Lone Pine Press, 1994.

Turner, Mark and Ellen Kuhlmann. **Trees & Shrubs of the Pacific Northwest**. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2014.

Other Natural History:

Alden, Peter, Dennis Paulson, Amy Gregoret, Richard Keen, Daniel Mathews, Eric A. Oches, Robert Sundstrom, and Wendy B. Zomlefer. **National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest**. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Kruckeberg, Arthur R. **The Natural History of Puget Sound Country**. Seattle: U. of Washington Press, 1995.

Bird Sound Recording: A general search on the internet using the title of the recording will produce the name(s) of companies selling these products.

Bird Songs of the Pacific Northwest. Geoffrey A. Keller and Gerrit Vyn. Ithaca, NY: Macaulay Library, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 2008. [far and away the best single source for this region]

Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs: Western Region. Kevin J. Colver with Donald and Lillian Stokes. Time Warner Audio Books, 1999.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on April 1, 2025, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant’s Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in

its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

WF:20240908
10/06/16-BS
Rev 4/15/2025 – PS/DE