



# WASHINGTON: SEPTEMBER MIGRATION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

*A Special Departure for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's  
Golden-wing Society*

*September 7 – 14, 2026*



*Black-footed Albatross ©Mark Wilson/Maculay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

On this September trip, arranged exclusively for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Golden-wing Society, we'll experience the joys of fall migration in the Pacific Northwest, one of the most scenic regions in the country. Our adventure will be set against a dazzling variety of landscapes, from thick coastal forests to alpine tundra, and from the sparkling waters of Puget Sound to the nearshore Pacific Ocean.

September in this part of the world means superb birding. Wandering Tattlers, Black Turnstones, and Surfbirds forage on rocky shorelines, and this is a good season, too, to catch up with such scarce or out-of-range species as Pacific Golden-Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruff, and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Our full day in the beautiful Skagit Valley will be a real treat, with agricultural fields and tidal rivers brimming with ducks, raptors, and shorebirds.

Starting in Seattle, we will bird the Puget Sound lowlands for such Northwest specialties as Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hutton's Vireo, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and Golden-crowned and "Sooty" Fox sparrows. Among the southbound migrants, we may find Black-throated Gray Warbler and Violet-green Swallow. Out on the Olympic Peninsula, Sooty Grouse, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Varied Thrush, Canada Jay, and Red Crossbill are often seen.



*Varied Thrush © John Scharpen/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

With the breeding season behind them, Harlequin Ducks and Red-necked Grebes return to the protected bays, and Pacific and Red-throated loons are frequent sights alongside scoters and mergansers. The shorelines of the Strait of Juan de Fuca promise Black Oystercatchers, Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants, and Pigeon Guillemots. Migratory ducks are arriving in their thousands, drawing the attention of Merlins and Peregrine Falcons.

Our pelagic trip on a private charter is a very special opportunity to study thousands of seabirds in their element, in one of the most productive ocean areas in North America. We should encounter scores of Black-footed Albatrosses, South Polar Skua, beautiful Sabine's Gulls, three or four species of shearwater (including Buller's and Pink-footed), Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, Northern Fulmars,

Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers, and alcids including Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets. We see Tufted Puffin on most trips, and Laysan Albatross and Flesh-footed Shearwater make an occasional appearance, too.



*Black Oystercatcher ©Hilary Smith/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

Hosting this trip will be Erin Pierce and another member of the Lab. Guiding our outings will be Kevin Burke from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, a respected organization with a long history of collaboration with the Lab.

The exciting birding and natural history endeavors on this very special trip will be complemented with social time, opportunities to learn about recent news from the Lab, and a chance to simply enjoy a great fall getaway. Together, we'll experience great birds, excellent food, and the lovely landscapes of the Pacific Northwest.

While Cornell is pleased to facilitate travel opportunities for its alumni and friends with tour operators that specialize in high-quality educational travel, please be aware that Cornell does not conduct, manage, or operate these travel experiences or act as an agent for travelers interested in tours. Tour operators and travelers are responsible for making their own safety decisions concerning this travel, and, as a facilitator between travelers and the tour operators with whom travelers make arrangements for completing travel, Cornell's role and liability are strictly limited.

Specific tour operator and national health and safety protocols will apply to each trip, and travelers should review all protocols and trip terms and conditions, including terms and conditions regarding cancellations, refunds, health and safety, and insurance, before making a reservation. Cornell is not responsible for changes to trips or travel arrangements or for losses or additional expenses resulting from travel.

## September 7, Day 1: Arrival in SeaTac

Participants should make arrangements to arrive today at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (airport code SEA) in SeaTac, about 20 miles south of Seattle. Complimentary shuttle service from the airport is available on request for the transfer to the **Seattle Airport Marriott**, where a room has been reserved in your name.

Please plan to meet in the hotel lobby at **6:30 p.m.** for a trip welcome and orientation, followed by dinner.

In the course of our welcome dinner, your trip's hosts and leader will provide a short introduction to what our exciting week on the prairie has in store.

**NIGHT:** Seattle Airport Marriott, Seattle

## September 8, Day 2: From the Puget Sound lowlands to the coast

The day's birding begins near the south end of Puget Sound, where we have good chances at such lowland residents 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, among them 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 will still be moving through. We may encounter any

of these migrants almost anywhere along our route over the coming days. Northern Pygmy-Owl, though unpredictable, is possible here too.



*Chestnut-backed Chickadee © John Lynch/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

The afternoon route takes us west through 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 is found in the Westport area, where godwits and other large shorebirds concentrate. This is our best chance to find a Bar-tailed Godwit among the hundreds of Marbled Godwits.

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

**NIGHT:** Chateau Westport, Westport



*Black Turnstone ©Torgil Zethson/Macaulay Library - Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

## September 9, Day 3: Westport pelagic trip

It's just a short drive from the Chateau Westport to Westport Harbor, where we'll board our private charter boat for a pelagic trip early this morning, taking lunch along with us. The boat typically works its way 35 or 40 miles out to sea, to the edge of the continental shelf. This pelagic birding tour consistently rates as one of the most productive in North America, with sometimes virtually continuous birding action. Regular species in early September include Black-footed Albatross; Buller's, Sooty, Pink-footed, and perhaps Short-tailed or Flesh-footed shearwaters; 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 appear. A wide variety of marine mammals are also possible, such as Dall's Porpoise, Humpback Whale, or Northern Fur-Seal. Nearshore waters are good for loons, cormorants, and other coastal 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



*Sabine's Gull © Liam Ragan/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

## September 10, Day 4: Coastal shorebirds: Tokeland to Ocean Shores

Today we will concentrate on the most likely spots for migrant shorebirds, paying attention to recent reports from the area. Some of the best sites 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 here are a favorite stop for migrants, including small numbers of both Pacific and American golden-plovers. Rarities such as Ruff or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper are possible here, as well as a host of more typical species like Baird's, Pectoral, and Western sandpipers, alongside both species of dowitchers and yellowlegs. Lapland Longspurs are often moving through in September, and in general this 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 as we get to the best shorebird spots.

**NIGHT:** Chateau Westport, Westport

## September 11, Day 5: 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, with scenic highlights, birding stops, and a chance to experience the beautiful lowland temperate rainforest.

As we leave 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 rainforest, and Quinault Lake offers a superb view of this amazing habitat. A walk through the towering forests of ancient Western Red Cedar, Sitka Spruce, Bigleaf Maple, and Western Hemlock, with their lush undergrowth of ferns, is an unforgettable experience. Pacific Wrens abound, Steller's and Canada jays are both present, and we'll be looking carefully for Varied Thrushes, too. American Dippers are possible along the rivers and creeks. Time permitting, we may walk a short trail to see the largest known Sitka Spruce in existence.



*American Dipper ©Kennedy/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

From Quinalt, we will drive a stretch of U.S. 101 along the Pacific Coast, with views of the ocean from atop steep cliffs. A stop at one of the beaches north of Kalaloch could give us a chance to stretch our legs while observing concentrations of cormorants and gulls; alternatively, we might choose to bird one of the forest campgrounds along the Hoh and Bogachiel rivers. Any stop can produce post-breeding flocks of resident forest birds, and many of those flocks contain migrants. Cassin's and Warbling vireos; Wilson's, Black-throated Gray, and Townsend's warblers; and Western Tanager are all possible.

Continuing toward Port Angeles, the last stretch of our route will take us past Lake Crescent, a very scenic lake carved by Ice Age glaciers; we can't rule out the possibility of a final stop in the vicinity of the lake before arriving in Port Angeles late this afternoon.

**NIGHT:** Olympic Lodge, Port Angeles

## September 12, Day 6: 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.

This will be a day of discovery, featuring old-growth forests, terrific mountain scenery, and good birding. A wondrously scenic 17-mile drive takes us from Port Angeles to Hurricane Ridge, the most accessible portion of wild Olympic National Park.

The public roads surrounding Olympic are limited to the coastal zone and foothills, leaving almost all of the park's interior virtually free of human activities. As a result, wildlife is abundant, and Black Bears and Mountain Lions are occasionally seen. While we may not encounter either of those spectacular beasts, our day in the mountains is bound to be an exciting one. We will visit three of the four major forest types as we bird all the way from the coast to tree line. Departing Port Angeles, we will immediately strike out on the road to Hurricane Ridge, one of the few roads that lead into the national park's vast interior. As we pass through several distinct life zones, we will make numerous stops along the way to observe the birds and other natural history of the ever-changing habitats.



*Pacific Wren* © Jesse Pline/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Heart O' the Hills Campground is our first destination. Heart O' the Hills preserves a fantastic remnant of old-growth lowland forest. We will be in the company of giants here: ancient Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar, and Western Hemlock tower overhead, their gnarled, twisted limbs and shattered crowns evincing their age. Peering about the dark forest around us, we'll find a fern-laden understory where mosses can grow thick as carpet and rhododendrons flourish. We will walk the roads and trails through the campground in our quest for birds; we should find many species 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. We will also be on the lookout for several less frequently seen birds that call these forests home. Careful listening might alert us to the quiet tapping of a Red-breasted Sapsucker or the soft "chucking" of a Varied Thrush.



*Sooty Grouse* ©Nat Drumheller/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

As we move along the road and gain altitude, the hillside to the west will fall away before us, giving views of the coastal valleys and distant ridges. Eventually we will enter the mountain forests of the middle elevations. We will stop at scenic overlooks offering epic views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Vancouver Island, and the San Juan Islands to the north. These roadside vistas can be good spots for Band-tailed Pigeon and Canada Jay, and Northern Pygmy-Owl is possible. At this elevation, Western Red Cedars are noticeably fewer and farther between, ultimately replaced by the Alaska (Yellow) Cedar. Also on the scene now are elegant Pacific Silver Firs.

The road leads up, up, and up, all the way into the mingled Subalpine Fir and Mountain Hemlock of the Canadian Zone, then tops out amid rolling higher-altitude meadows broken by islands of trees. The scenery is magnificent, with limitless views of the interior of Olympic National Park in virtually all directions. Ragged peaks jut up from rugged ridgelines and large glaciers that will remind some of the Rockies. Here at our vista point on Hurricane Ridge, at an elevation of about 5,200', the birding is often every bit as good as the scenery. The trees and meadows harbor the shy Sooty Grouse, a sought-after species we will definitely be on the watch for. Larger forest stands may yield Red-breasted Nuthatches and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and we are also in the zone for Hermit Thrush and Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler. This elevation is similarly good for finches: Pine Siskins are always expected, but Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks are possible, too. We may turn up other migrant songbirds and birds of prey anywhere along the road.



*Harlequin Duck © Macaulay Library at the Cornell Library of Ornithology*

In the afternoon, we will descend to the Port Angeles waterfront and Ediz Hook, a reinforced peninsula of rock, sand, and pavement protecting the nearshore waters and serving as a base for the U.S. Coast Guard. The short drive out this peninsula is essential for the visiting birder. Among the species of particular interest here are such Pacific Coast specialties as Harlequin Duck, Pelagic Cormorant, Pigeon Guillemot, and Rhinoceros Auklet. Shorebirds potentially include Black-bellied Plover, Black Turnstone, Sanderling, and Black Oystercatcher. Peregrines and Merlins follow this shorebird buffet, and Harlequin Ducks paddle by at close range among logs with basking Harbor Seals. Red-necked Grebes should be returning to winter on these protected waters, along with loons and a mix of scoters and other diving birds. Gulls should include Short-billed (formerly Mew), Heermann's, California, Western, Glaucous-winged, and perhaps Iceland (Thayer's).

**NIGHT:** Olympic Lodge, Port Angeles

## September 13, Day 7: Port Angeles to SeaTac

Today's activities will revolve around our travel from the Olympic Peninsula back to SeaTac. Our day will consist of a morning of birding east of Port Angeles and an afternoon of transiting back to SeaTac.

The tip of the Olympic Peninsula holds many appealing options for a morning in the field. The region between Port Angeles and Port Townsend contains a mosaic of habitats, from mature forest to second-growth woodland, from open pasture to freshwater marsh, and from coastal bays to small lakes, rivers, and streams. Our choices this morning will depend on several factors, including the weather and any bird species we have not yet seen. Some of the sites we may visit are:

**Railroad Bridge Park:** Located a short distance west of Sequim (pronounced "Skwim"), Railroad Bridge Park preserves a lovely natural area along the Dungeness River. The site of Dungeness Audubon Center, the park is home to mixed woodlands of conifers, maples, and alders, an excellent place to see resident birds 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, this is a picturesque and productive site on the west side of Sequim Bay. The rocky basin, when exposed by the tide, can be a wonderful place to view Black Oystercatcher and Glaucous-winged Gull, while the bay beyond often hosts waterfowl, grebes, and loons. From the breakwater, we have chances at spotting the endangered Marbled Murrelet, although this species is scarcer in autumn than at other seasons.



*Red-breasted Sapsucker © Hilary Smith/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

**Anderson Lake State Park:** This quiet park south of Port Townsend preserves a 476-acre 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 Puget Sound to Seattle, at which point we will be only 20 minutes from our hotel.

**NIGHT:** Seattle Airport Marriott, Seattle

## September 14, Day 8: Departure from SeaTac

Participants can schedule their flights for any time today. The Marriott hotel offers free shuttle service to the airport, five minutes from the hotel.

## ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

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

**TOUR HOSTS AND LEADERS:** Hosting this trip will be **Erin Pierce** and another member from the Lab team. Leading this trip will be **Kevin Burke** from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.



**Erin Pierce** is an Advancement Manager at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, where she works closely with supporters in the Golden-wing Society, a close group of Cornell Lab members dedicated to positive outcomes for birds and nature. She holds degrees in geography and GIS from Penn State University and Ohio University, and has pursued her passion for environmental outreach and conservation working with land trusts and river conservation organizations. When she is not at the Lab, she stays busy exploring the Adirondacks, sculling on lakes and rivers, raising monarch butterflies, and gardening for wildlife.



**Kevin Burke** is originally from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. He grew up running around in the woods and trails of Shenandoah National Park, where his family spent many summers camping and hiking. One of Kevin's favorite activities was jumping in the river and turning over every rock to see what was underneath, a practice that 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 at his grandmother's house in Rhode Island. She would point out all the feeder birds and help him identify them. These early encounters helped foster a love for birds, which was rekindled by an ornithology class at Hocking College in Ohio. He has been birding every day since. Kevin went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Ecotourism and Conservation Ecology from the University of Idaho. Kevin has been involved in some capacity with bird trips for almost 20 years. He has led tours throughout the United States, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. His birding journeys have also taken him to such spectacular locations as

Portugal, Colombia, The Bahamas, and Canada: This is truly a lifelong obsession. He currently lives in Hendersonville, North Carolina, with his wife and two kids, who also enjoy birding, kayaking, hiking, and camping in the mountains that surround their home. One of their favorite activities is jumping on the paddleboard and kayaks and leisurely floating the French Broad River.

**BIRDING SKILLS:** It is a common misperception that participants in group tours are all highly skilled and experienced birders. In fact, our tours are designed to accommodate birders at all levels, whether they have been birding for years or are just taking up this captivating hobby. We don't race to see every bird possible, or dedicate disproportionate time to tracking down any one "target" bird, but rather seek to have the fullest, most satisfying experiences possible. We take ample time to enjoy each species we encounter, relishing the opportunity to inform participants about the lives of the birds and the demands of their environments; our goals are improving your birding skills and deepening your appreciation of birds, their behaviors, and their habitats. Our leaders meet your skills where they are, serving as resources to answer questions and enhance your birding experience with individualized attention and instruction.

**TYPICAL ROUTINE:** To minimize time spent packing and unpacking, our tour spends at least two nights in each of our hotels. Our days typically begin with breakfast in the hotel; with sunrise after 6:30, we have no painfully early departures planned, though Day 4's pelagic trip will require a somewhat earlier start. On most days, we will bird through the morning, with lunch in a local restaurant. We generally return to our hotel for a break before gathering again for dinner. Sunset is after 7:30 p.m., making for relaxing evenings.

We will be traveling in 15-passenger vans. The longest distance covered is between Port Angeles and Anacortes, on Day 6, but even that is a relatively short transfer, and like all of our birding days, it will be punctuated by regular stops in prime birding locations. Our time is our own, and we can pause more or less as we please for a break, a snack, or, especially, some extemporaneous birding along the way.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$5,995** per person in double occupancy from Seattle. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8, drinks and snacks including alcoholic beverages, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, the 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, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,400**.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

**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 120 days (May 10, 2026) before the tour departure date.

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

**FUEL SURCHARGES:** Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TIPPING:** An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

## **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS**

### **CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:**

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

#### **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.**

**TRAVEL INSURANCE: 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 **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, 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, mid-payment, 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 cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), 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.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

[https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid\\_19\\_faq/](https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/).

**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:** Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized bag and one carry-on bag. Soft-sided bags are easier to pack and handle than hard-shell suitcases. As a precaution against lost luggage, we

suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

The airlines strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant.

We recommend that you check the websites of your airline and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most up-to-date information about checked baggage and carry-on items: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

**CLOTHING:** Casual clothing is suitable for all of our activities, in the field and at meals and social hours.

We recommend packing lightweight field clothing along with outerwear that will keep you warm and dry in all conditions. Because temperatures and conditions can vary over the course of a day, it is best to have clothing items that you can wear—and shed—in layers. Among the items to bring:

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many travelers find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Shirts:** Long-sleeved shirts, in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for cool weather.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential. A wide-brimmed hat is best, but participants should bring a baseball cap at the very least. A cool breeze is always possible along the coast, so be sure to have a warm hat with you as well.
- **Thermal underwear:** Lightweight, long underwear.
- **Outerwear and cold weather gear:** A warm jacket or coat is essential in the event of a cold front or strong wind. A good windproof and waterproof outer shell and waterproof pants are recommended, especially for the pelagic trip.
- **Gloves:** Ideally warm and waterproof.

**FOOTWEAR:** A good pair of lightweight hiking boots or trail shoes is essential. 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 lighter shoes for the evenings is also a good idea.

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** Expect comfortable and moderate weather over most of this tour. Late September in coastal Washington is typically mild, with temperatures ranging from the low 50s to the mid-70s (°F). It may be sunny, though you should be prepared for variable weather. The coolest and most exposed conditions are likely to be encountered on the pelagic trip. Rain is always a possibility in the Pacific Northwest.

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Guest laundry (self-service and/or valet) is available at all hotels except the Olympic Lodge. This is a relatively short tour, and it is best to pack enough clothing that you do not need to depend on laundry services.

**CONDITIONS:** Our accommodations and cuisine will be very good to excellent. Expect to walk one or two miles most days, on level paths, sand, and intertidal vegetation. Some short hikes may take us away from the vehicle for a couple of hours at a time, Weather permitting, we will take a boat trip offshore on Day 4 in search of pelagic birds; this trip will likely present the coolest and most exposed conditions of the tour. The boat trip is an all-day event that starts early in the morning and ends in the late afternoon.

**EQUIPMENT:** One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to Washington:

- **Belt pack or day pack:** Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all excursions.
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **High-SPF sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick**
- **Folding stool** – recommended especially for those who have trouble standing for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time.
- **Tissue packs**

- **Water bottle** Please bring a wide-mouth water bottle; bottled water and other drinks will always be available, but refillable bottles cut down on plastic waste.

### **BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:**

**Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” because they are small and lightweight, but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light-gathering power.

**Spotting Scopes** – Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

**INTERNET:** Wi-Fi is available in all hotels throughout the tour.

**TIME:** Washington observes Pacific Daylight Time during our visit.

**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.

**Sun Exposure** – The sun can still be strong in September. Severe sunburn is very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Anytime you are outdoors, you should protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Bring an ample supply of high-SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We also strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

**Biting Insects** – We do not expect many mosquitos or other biting insects on this tour; if you wish to bring insect repellent, please see the helpful notes that follow, under **Insect Repellents**.

**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 Permethrin 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).

**SUGGESTED READING:** A number of traditional booksellers and online stores carry excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources. We recommend [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com), which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

**Birds:** All of the following are excellent resources for bird identification.

Floyd, Ted. *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of the United States and Canada*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2025. Eighth edition.

Floyd, Ted. *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of the United States and Canada—West*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2025. A regionally focused version of the above guide.

Sibley, David A. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. New York: Knopf, 2014. Second edition.

Sibley, David A. *The Sibley Field Guide to the Birds of Western North America*. New York: Random House, 2016. Second edition.

### **Mammals:**

Kays, Roland W., and D. E. Wilson. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

### **Plants:**

Turner, M. and E. Kuhlmann. *Trees and Shrubs of the Pacific Northwest*. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2014.

### **Other Natural History:**

Alden, P., et al. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

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

### **Cornell Lab of Ornithology Apps and Online Resources**

**eBird:** Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool for promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so you need only accept a shared list and it will be uploaded to your files. Highly recommended.

**Merlin Bird ID:** Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The **Photo ID** feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's **Sound ID** feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, you should download the pack for **U.S. West Coast**. Highly recommended.

**Birds of the World:** Discover the world of birds in the Lab's *Birds of the World*, an online resource offering comprehensive life histories for all bird species and families. Visit the [Birds of the World website](#), where you can learn about the appearance, distribution, diet, and behavior of any of the world's thousands of bird species. Free samples are available through the home page, while subscriptions are available at monthly, annual, and three-year levels. **Complimentary with GWS membership.**

**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 February 5, 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.

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