

December 2024, Number 15

# TIDEINGS

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF COASTAL RAPTORS



The Chase is on: Bald Eagle's attempt to steal a shorebird meal from a peregrine.

Nick Dunlop photo



Nick Dunlop photo (used for our logo).

December 4, 2024

Dear Friends of Coastal Raptors,

Greetings from the Washington coast! I hope you enjoy this 15th edition of Coastal Raptors TIDEings. As always, TIDEings gives me an opportunity to share with you some of the highlights of the year gone by.

This was our 29<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of raptor surveys on coastal beaches in western Washington. Colleagues and I have drawn on data collected from this survey effort to model Peregrine Falcon abundance across nearly three decades. For the story on this effort, see the facing page.

On another note, I've had to pleasure to get to know Argentinian Fer López over the last couple of years while we both have attended Raptor Research Foundation conferences. In 2023 Fer joined us for a week-end of surveying raptors on the coast. For this year's TIDEings Fer has generously provided me with information on his research tracking Merlins in the Great Lakes Region (see page 4).

In 2024 Anita Plagge joined the Coastal Raptors Board of Directors. A Grays Harbor College Professor of Biology, Anita shares the story of her career and connection to Coastal Raptors on page 5.

Among the goals of Coastal Raptors, one is providing people with an understanding of coastal raptors. To this end, in 2024 I made four presentations and wrote eight blogs for the Coastal Raptors website (see page 6).

On page 7 I extend my sincere thanks to people who volunteered for Coastal Raptors in 2024. Thanks to Rich Van Buskirk and Pam McCauley, both of whom in 2024 concluded 10 years of service as Coastal Raptors Board members.

All the best to you and yours in the year ahead!



Thanks also to Nick Dunlop, shown here, for sharing his awesome photos with Coastal Raptors over the years!



## CURRENT RESEARCH ON PEREGRINE FALCON ABUNDANCE

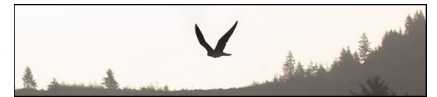


Since 1995, we've documented the occurrence of Peregrine Falcons and other raptors on three coastal beaches in Washington: Ocean Shores, Grayland and Long Beach. We cover the ground by four-wheel-drive vehicle and have completed more than 1,000 surveys over the years.

In May writer Clayton Franke joined us for a survey at Long Beach, which coincidentally was the final survey to be included in an analysis to estimate the abundance of Peregrine Falcons on our study area beaches for a science-based research paper. Clayton wanted to learn about survey protocol first-hand for a story on our research for *The Daily World*, the local paper where he was a journalist.

That day we recorded 23 Bald Eagles and 11 Turkey Vultures along the survey route. We did not see a single peregrine, which wasn't a surprise. Since January we'd only detected four peregrines during 22 surveys, far fewer than typical.

Our research on peregrine abundance has shown that peregrine encounter rates have decreased while Bald Eagle encounter rates have increased. Bald Eagles see peregrines as competitors for food. Bald Eagles may steal a hard-earned meal from a peregrine or, worse yet, may prey on an unsuspecting peregrine as it feeds. Nick Dunlop's photo on the front cover of this year's newsletter illustrates the threat Bald Eagles pose for coastal peregrines.



Our peregrine abundance estimates are derived from 250 banded peregrines, our re-sightings of banded peregrines and our sightings of unbanded peregrines from 1,279 surveys. Co-author Guthrie Zimmerman applied our survey rate data and our encounter rate data for peregrines and Bald Eagles to a sophisticated computer model to derive peregrine abundance estimates. Other co-authors in this longitudinal study include Joe Buchanan, Javan Bauder, Tracy Fleming and Brian Millsap.

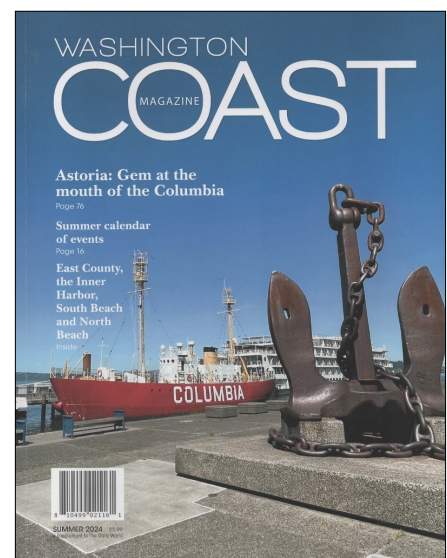
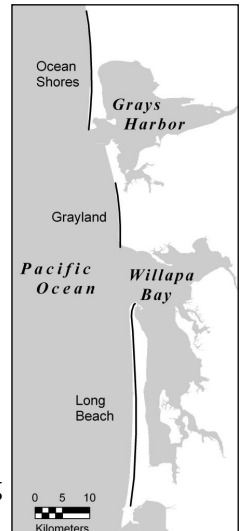
Getting the word out on our efforts, Clayton's story appeared in the summer issue of *Washington Coast Magazine*, published by *The Daily World*. A total of 2,000 copies were printed for regional distribution. In late November, *The Daily World* reprinted the story with a few updates for the more than 6,500 newspaper subscribers.

In November, co-authors and I submitted a paper on our findings to *The Journal of Raptor Research* for review. Pending positive reviews, our paper will be published there in 2025, 30 years after the research was initiated.



Daily World reporter Clayton Franke.

Dan Varland photo



Summer, 2024 issue of Washington Coast Magazine



## TRACKING MERLINS FOR PIPING PLOVER CONSERVATION



*Fernando (Fer) López and me.*



*Wearing Coastal Raptors stocking caps, Fer and his wife Emi in the field a Merlin named "Dan," my namesake.*

In October 2023 Fer López joined us for raptor surveys on the coast. Among the highlights was banding a Peregrine Falcon. Coastal Raptors had sponsored Fer's travel cost from his Washington to ours. Fer is a post-doctoral researcher studying Merlins in connection with the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute in Washington, DC. Afterward we both flew to Albuquerque, New Mexico to attend the 2023 Raptor Research Foundation conference.

In June 2024 I received an email from Fer which included the photo at left and where he wrote, "Hi Dan, How are you? This Merlin was named Dan in your honor... We hope to collect lot of data with Dan."

"Dan" the Merlin was captured near the shores of Lake Michigan in North Port, Michigan. He was transported 100 miles to the village of De Tour on Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Beach habitat in North Port is important for the Piping Plover, a shorebird on the Endangered Species List. After a few days, "Dan" returned to Northport and, as of this writing, has flown to the Caribbean for the winter.

The study goals are to determine the effectiveness of the Merlin translocations and to learn about Merlin space use. These goals are only possible through satellite telemetry, and only in recent years has this type of transmitter been made small enough to fit on the jay-sized Merlin. Over two field seasons, Fer deployed 28 transmitters in total.



*Merlin*



*Merlin ready for transport by vehicle.*



*Emi López releases a translocated Merlin far from Piping Plover nesting habitat.*



*Piping Plover on the beach in Michigan. These shorebirds may be preyed upon by Merlins during the nesting season.*



## ANITA PLAGGE JOINS THE COASTAL RAPTORS BOARD

By Anita G. Plagge, Professor of Biology, Grays Harbor College, Aberdeen

Where does the time go? I've been teaching biology for over 25 years. For nearly a decade, my husband Tim and I ran an outreach science education company in San Diego, California. Since then, I've been teaching a variety of biology courses to college-level students, currently at Grays Harbor College in Aberdeen, Washington. One class I regularly teach is a survey of biology course where fully one-quarter of the course focuses on the process of science. We also discuss the value and importance of citizen science.



Anita at the head of the table at the George Johnson House B&B for a retreat along with: Clayton Franke (front left), Tom Kuester (back left), yours truly (front right) and Tim Plagge.

Enter Coastal Raptors! Not only does Coastal Raptors rigorously collect scientific data on fascinating creatures but they welcome and encourage "regular" citizens to actively participate in that data collection and "do science!" The direct educational reach of Coastal Raptors extends to publications, presentations, and the teaching of volunteers while on surveys. This educational research is further extended when participants like me share my experiences with my students! I met Dan and got involved with Coastal Raptors field work several years ago through Tom Kuester, friend and fellow teacher at Grays Harbor College. Being involved in Coastal Raptors' work has been a privilege.

## BIRDS OF THE WORLD DONATED TO GRAYS HARBOR COLLEGE

In September, I donated my set of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* to the John Spellman Library at Grays Harbor College. The 17-volumes provide expert natural history information on the more than 11,000 plus bird species worldwide in text, stunningly beautiful photographs, range maps and more. In recent year's I'd been taking advantage of these references through the electronic editions available online through a membership fee. It's my hope that these volumes will draw student attention to the wonderful world of birds, prominently perched as they are in library reference section.



College librarian Adrienne Rouse receiving *Birds of the World*.



## EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS IN 2024

Date	Title	Audience/Location
March 2	<i>Using Plumage Characteristics to Age Bald Eagles</i>	Coastal Raptors Retreat, George Johnson House, Ocean Park, WA
July 28	<i>Days with Washington's Coastal Raptors</i> (see below)	Young people looking into careers in wildlife biology/youtube
September 29	<i>Care of Creation</i>	Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hoquiam, WA
October 24	<i>Estimated Annual Abundance of Migratory Peale's Peregrine Falcons in Coastal Washington, USA</i>	Raptor Research Foundation 2024 Conference, Charlottesville, NC

For *Days with Washington's Coastal Raptors* I was interviewed by John Beaumont for his youtube channel, *The Practical Animal*. Based in the United Kingdom, the primary goal of the channel is to provide young people with insight into the types of careers available in wildlife biology. Quoting John, "We interview industry professionals, asking questions the answers to which cannot easily be found from an internet search."



John Beaumont

*The Practical Animal* currently hosts 544 videos and has 248 subscribers. It's available at [www.youtube.com/@thepracticalanimal](http://www.youtube.com/@thepracticalanimal). For anyone interested in watching my 22-minute interview, click [here](#) or use the link below.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rle-PHFwBao](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rle-PHFwBao)

## BLOGS POSTED IN 2024



Available at the link [coastalraptors.com/blog](http://coastalraptors.com/blog)

- *The Peale's Peregrine Falcon: A Quintessential Coastal Raptor*
- *The Aleutian Peregrine Falcon*
- *Friendly Falcons*
- *Perhaps the Most Unique Looking Peregrine Falcon I Have Seen Here*
- *Where'd That Carcass Go?*
- *Artist Hans Peeters*
- *Steller's Sea-Eagle: My Lucky Encounter with Stella!*
- *Remembering Bald Eagle B/O*





Tom Rowley photo

#### Board of Directors

- Dan Varland, Executive Director
- Dale Larson, President
- Javan Bauder, Vice President
- Anita Plagge



#### Coastal Raptors goals

- Conduct scientific research
- Provide education programs
- Train wildlife biologists
- Collaborate with experts in wildlife research and management

## Contributing Time

### Many thanks to:

**Rich Van Buskirk** and **Pamela McCauley**-concluding 10 years of service as Coastal Raptors Board members

**Dale Larson**-repairing brake lights and adding rear reflectors to the Coastal Raptors utility trailer

**Charlotte Killien**-hosting overnight stays for Coastal Raptors guests at the George Johnson House B & B

**Kelly Rupp, Tom Phipps** and **Glenn Marquardt**-driving their personal vehicles when a second vehicle was needed for raptor surveys at Long Beach

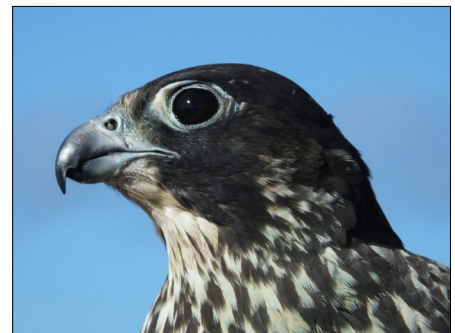
**Dave Murnen**-adding a rain roof to the pigeon coop

**And dozens of you**-participating in raptor surveys in 2024

## Contributing Financial Support

Financial support from individuals the essential to the success of Coastal Raptors. Please consider helping us move forward by making a tax-deductible contribution toward operating expenses. Donors so far in 2024 and all 2023 donors are recognized on page 8.

Annual operating expenses for Coastal Raptors: \$10,000—\$12,000



Suzy Whittey photo.

Your contribution is Tax Deductible. You can donate by check (payable to Coastal Raptors; send to 90 Westview Drive, Hoquiam, WA 98550) or online at [www.coastalraptors.com](http://www.coastalraptors.com). THANKS!

## Many Thanks to **Coastal Raptors** Supporters

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**Donations Made in Memory of:** Betty Grad, Paul Hayes, Wayne McCleskey, David Warren and Mark Wilhyde.

**Coastal Raptors**  
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Piping Plover (see page 4)