

July Wildlife Report

July 3 -7

The orcas headed back out into ocean and things were quite quiet in the waters. However there were numerous terrestrial wildlife viewing opportunities in Point Roberts, WA.

The lone offspring of the marina eagles still hasn't taken flight but was doing an "eagle dance" flapping wings and jumping.



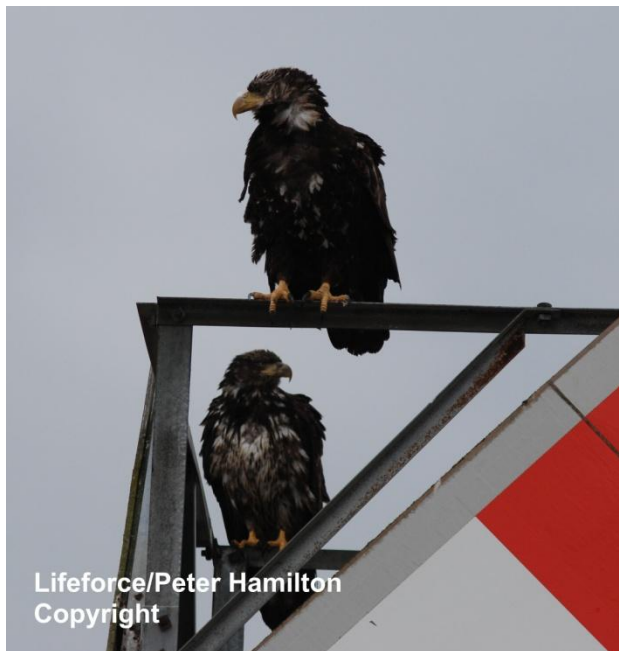
The four Barn Swallows left the nest but are still being fed by the parents. (also see Nature Moments – Barn Swallows (http://www.lifeforcefoundation.org/ecotv_play.php?id=27)



A group of mallard goslings are getting big and still under the watchful of mom in the rear.



Two young eagles on the navigation light in the park.



Eastern Cottontails

This is an Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*). Those brown "rabbits" seen hopping around the Point are Eastern Cottontails. And their young are called kits or kittens. The species was introduced to Washington State and then eventually made its way to the Fraser Valley.

The average adult weighs about 2-4 pounds; however the female tends to be heavier.¹ Mating occurs from February to September. Males will mate with more than one female. Female rabbits have 2 to 4 large litters of up to 9 young in a year. The female builds a nest in the ground lined with grass and fur.

After the female has given birth to her offspring, she can mate again immediately thereafter. The kittens are weaned after 3 weeks and leave the nest after seven weeks. The kittens then reach mating age after three months.

The Eastern Cottontail is a very territorial animal. It is nocturnal and is also active during early dawn and late dusk. When running, it can jump from 10-15 feet, which can aid in avoiding predators. When chased, it runs in a zigzag pattern so the animal chasing it will lose its scent and so the rabbit is harder to follow. It can run up to 15mph. The cottontail prefers an area where it can hide quickly but be out in the open.



Doe and Fawn

Recently, a doe and her fawn stopped traffic on Tyee Drive on their way to the field behind the Texaco. One local man was concerned that “coyotes got the baby” but was relieved to hear that mom and baby are doing well. He should also worry about about human hunters.



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Gulls – This no species called “sea gulls”.



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July 10 -13

Osprey at Point Roberts Marina.



Crows sun bathing in the campground.



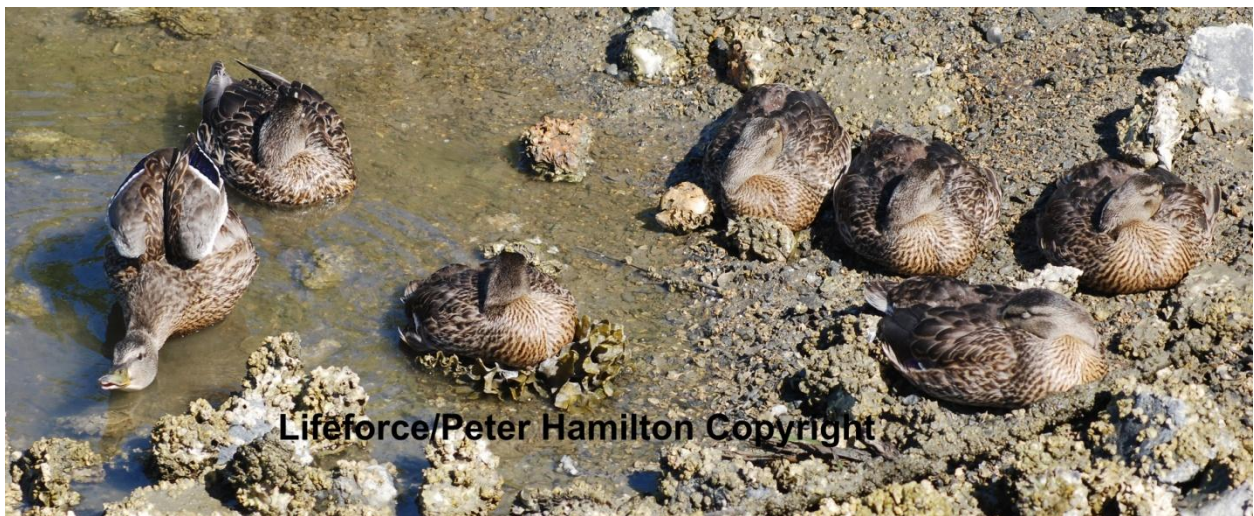
Barn Swallow nest above park washroom. The young are still returning to the nest.



Dungeness Crabs swimming in marina waters.



Mallard sleep in.



Heron



Orcas - July 13

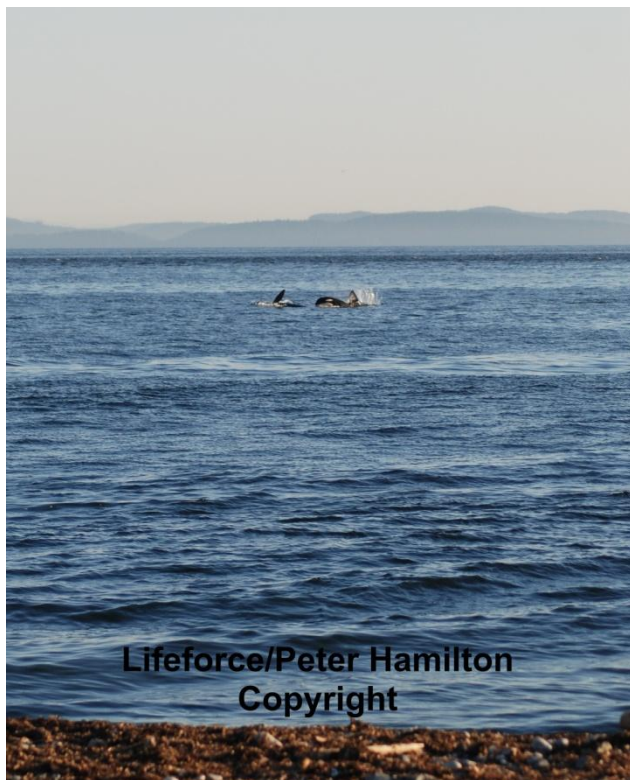
It has been a while since orcas were spotted off Lighthouse Marine Park, Point Roberts. They did pass by on July 7th at approx. 0400 but I was the only one waiting and hearing the blows. But Sunday night was spectacular with 1 hour and thirty five minutes of land based orca watching ending the orca blues for many.

At 1845 I spotted some blows from orcas approaching Pt. Roberts. These were the Js and L7s who were reported heading north earlier in the day. So I drove through the campground notifying as many as 80 visitors. At 1900 some were getting close enough for the ohhhhs and ahhhhs to start. J pod still was off the Tsawassen Coal Docks and they decided to not head north to the Fraser River but rather meet up with the ones off Pt. Bob. Most of the behaviours were travelling mode and they were spread out over several miles. However, there were moments with repeated breaches, tail fluke slaps, head views and some socializing. J1 was doing his surface swimming with only one foot of his six foot dorsal above water. He had turned back off the park to meet up with three others and then the playful socializing began. The last few orcas passed at 2035 with most of folks still watching because I had told them earlier that it would be about a one hour pass by.

Unfortunately there were two small pleasure boats that were not operating according to guidelines and legislation. I took photos to ID them and to discuss matters with them. This is yet another example for more enforcement in these waters. Lifeforce has started an online petition to get a 1/2 mile No Boat Zone similar to the San Juan Island zone and additional funding for enforcement agencies so they can police boat traffic in this area (see <http://www.lifeforcefoundation.org/newsitem.php?id=72>).



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July 18 to 19

After a long absence of regular orca activity off Lighthouse Marine Park, Point Roberts they were back and then back and then back again.

On Friday July 18th in the morning many were heading North to the Fraser River. They were spread out with the first ones passing at 0800 then I saw the last ones pass at 1000. A park visitor complained about a aluminum boat continuously following the orcas. I told her that she should call the Violations Report line (1-800-853-1964) because the more complaints the better the chances are for more WDFW

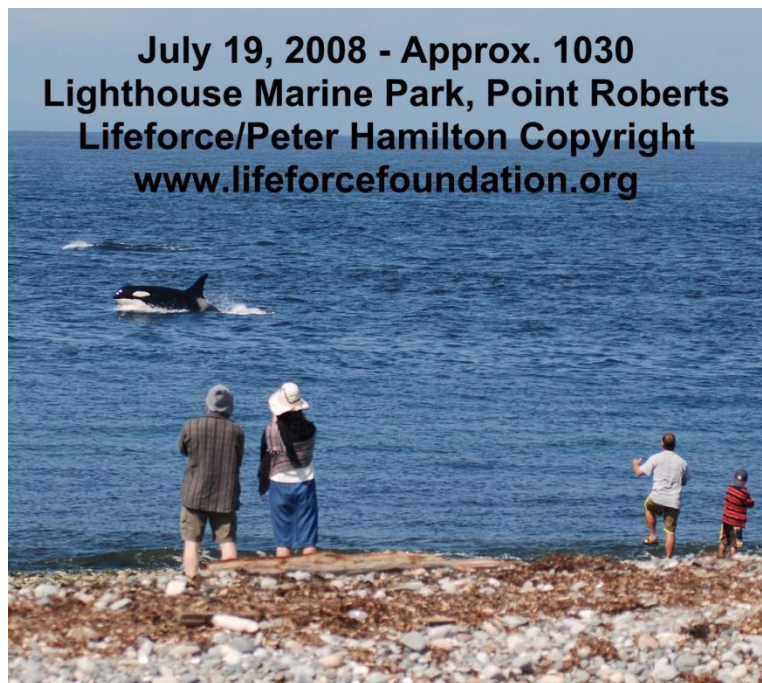
enforcement in this area. WDFW are doing a great job but need more resources to cover the large orca territory.

Some others orcas were reported off Lummi Rocks.

Js and some Ls returned in the evening with most of them travelling while some did a few breaches to excite the park visitors. And a few small boats that were powering too close and are being reported to WDFW.

On Saturday July 19th most of J, K and L orcas were heading South with some Js way down south off Oak Bay, BC. They were spread out and mainly travelling. Perhaps they would have took their time and socialized if it weren't for all the commercial and pleasure boats buzzing them. Over the years of my observing and documenting orca behaviour it is evident that they are much more relaxed when boats are not present and/or following the rules. Let's hope that the Governor will implement a No Boat Zone similar to the one off San Juan Island. The orcas need more protection in this area.

The WDFW was later present for stepping up enforcement of Governor Gregoire's new legislation protecting orcas from boats. Orcas must be given a 300 foot clearance. WDFW talked to one whale watch operator from Vancouver. Also, one Canadian Whale Watch company was ticketed last weekend.



For Freedom,

Peter Hamilton

Lifewatch Boater Awareness Program

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