

OBA Boiler Bay Seawatch Report  
April 29, 2023  
Shawneen Finnegan and Dave Irons, Trip Leaders

OBA's "First Annual" Boiler Bay Seawatch was held at Boiler Bay State Wayside in Lincoln County. Boiler Bay is widely regarded as the best site for coastal headland birding in all of Oregon and perhaps the entire west coast. The late April date was selected to take advantage of the peak of northbound migration for many species.

Leaders Dave Irons and Shawneen Finnegan and many eager birders arrived before 7 am to set up their scopes and begin the day of seabirding from shore. At the start of the morning, Dave and Shawneen shared tips for using shape, structure, flight styles and altitudinal clues to ID various species as they flew by. With the help of Jim Danzenbaker, eBird checklists were generated for each hour and shared with birders who signed the "guest book" throughout the day.

Turnout for the event surpassed all expectations with as many as 75 birders participating throughout the day during the 7-hour "open house" birding event. The large and enthusiastic gathering piqued the interest of passersby and gave them an opportunity to learn about OBA.



*Photo by Dave Irons*

Winds were steady out of the south, which is far from ideal for a spring seawatch. The preferred conditions and best inshore flights occur when winds are steady at 10-15 mph or higher out of the northwest. Nevertheless, we had a good flight of loons averaging between 500-1000 per hour. The flight was dominated by Pacific Loons early on, but over the last two hours numbers of Red-throated Loons really picked up and actually outnumbered Pacific loons during our last of six one-hour checklists.

Other highlights included about 20 early Brown Pelicans, and many great looks and direct comparisons of Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants adorned in their full breeding plumages. We had some distant flocks of shorebirds, mostly Western Sandpipers and Dunlin and a few nearshore Whimbrel flying by. Aside from thousands of Common Murres and many dozens of Pigeon Guillemots, the alcid numbers were modest with one small group of Marbled Murrelets and occasional pairs of Rhinoceros Auklets.



*Photo by Jill Panches*



*Photo by Virginia Rayburn*

Local and vocal Black Oystercatchers were conspicuous and often on the rocks right in front of our group. We had one male Harlequin Duck that sat just off the point all morning. We also had a few fairly close-in Gray Whales surfacing and blowing.



We think this seawatch has potential to become an annual event and hopefully in future years they will align with more ideal wind conditions. There were many species that we would have normally expected on this date that were missed. In the future we'll also endeavor to line up more experienced seawatchers to help as on-site leaders so that we can better answer all the questions and provide more help getting participants on birds. We had a blast and enjoyed bringing together a big cross-section of the OBA community.

Big thanks to all who came out for this event!



*Photo by Jim Danzenbaker*

For the full list of over 40 species and impressive loon tallies, see the eBird Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/133324>