

Olympic Peninsula Spring Explorer

May 5 – 12, 2025 | Species List

With Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by Naturalist Journeys guide Stephen Grace with Jessie Hallstrom. Our clients included Sandy, Bob, Besty, John, Peter, Mary, Lynne, Howard and Rick.

Over eight days of immersive birding, our Naturalist Journeys group explored the varied ecosystems of Washington's Olympic Peninsula—recording over 130 species across coastal waters, seashores, estuaries, rivers, rainshadow forest, temperate rainforest, and alpine tundra. From high-elevation specialists and pelagic alcid to charismatic breeders and shorebird spectacles, the region offered a dazzling array of spring migrants and regional specialties.

We began at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, where the skies teemed with swallows—Barn, Tree, Violet-green, Cliff, and Northern Rough-winged. Two Rufous Hummingbird nests, each with visible nestlings, offered intimate views of nesting behavior. In the wetlands, we observed Cackling and Canada Geese side by side and picked out Northern Shovelers, Hooded Mergansers, a Blue-winged Teal, Greater White-fronted Geese, and a lone Snow Goose. Common Yellowthroats and Marsh Wrens sang from cattails, and the clear voice of a Sora called from emergent vegetation. A brilliantly plumaged Yellow-headed Blackbird, highly unusual west of the Cascades, was a thrilling surprise.

At Point Wilson in Fort Worden State Park, we scoped Pacific Loons, along with Rhinoceros Auklets, Common Murres, and Pelagic Cormorants. Young Killdeer scurried across the ground, pausing and darting with the halting rhythm characteristic of plovers. Nearby at Point Hudson, Purple Martins chattered overhead as they hunted insects in the fading light, and a Bald Eagle perched motionless above the marina. White-crowned Sparrows sang from low shrubs, and a lingering Golden-crowned Sparrow in Port Townsend was likely among the last of the season.

At Ediz Hook, we enjoyed excellent views of Black Oystercatchers and Harlequin Ducks. Black Turnstones rested on a driftwood log within scope range, and slender-necked Western Grebes drifted across distant waters. A Common Goldeneye lounged among Buffleheads, while Surf Scoters and Red-breasted Mergansers added to our list of well-seen seaducks. Glaucous-winged Gulls were ubiquitous aloft and afloat, and several Common Loons in breeding plumage were admired by our group.

Under clear skies, we ascended to Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park. On the tundra, American Pipits performed aerial displays and foraged on snowfields for cold-stunned insects. Chipping Sparrows, a localized breeder here, sang from subalpine slopes. A Horned Lark gave a brief but diagnostic view, and a Canada Jay—a

life bird for many—posed obligingly. On our descent, several members of the group spotted Sooty Grouse clambering up a forested hillside.

Still waters around Port Angeles City Pier provided close views of a Red-necked Grebe, as well as Pigeon Guillemots flashing red legs and mouth linings.

At the Dungeness River Nature Center, we watched Chestnut-backed Chickadees near their nest cavity, scoped Red Crossbills feeding on cones in the canopy, and observed Bushtits entering and exiting their pendulous, sock-like nest. Male Rufous and Anna's Hummingbirds flared their iridescent gorgets from exposed perches. A Red-breasted Sapsucker, first glimpsed across the river, reappeared for close-up views—its vivid plumage drawing universal admiration.

In nearby fields, raptors were on the move: Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, and Cooper's Hawk all appeared. At Dungeness Landing, we scoped Brant and breeding-plumaged Dunlin with their distinctive black belly patches. At Three Crabs, we picked out a single Eurasian Wigeon among dozens of American Wigeon, alongside handsome Green-winged Teal. Black-bellied Plovers, striking in bold black-and-white plumage, worked the shoreline under gusty skies.

Traveling westward, we birded Clallam Bay, where Surf Scoters and White-winged Scoters floated in kelp beds near shore. At Neah Bay, Western Sandpipers and Greater Yellowlegs worked the tideline, and a Greater Scaup provided close views. Dozens of Bald Eagles crowded shoreline trees, waiting for fish scraps near the harbor.

Cape Flattery offered a dramatic overlook of the Pacific. There we scoped Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, and Pelagic Cormorants displaying white flank patches. Offshore, hundreds of Common Murres rafted in a dense flotilla. Then came what we hoped for: Marbled Murrelets on the water—small, low-sitting alcids with dark bodies and short bills. At least six individuals remained long enough for careful scope study. Minutes later, Tufted Puffins flew past—stocky and fast, with big orange bills and blurred wingbeats.

At Ruby Beach, we watched squadrons of Brown Pelicans skimming the surf, Surf Scoters riding the waves, and a Spotted Sandpiper bobbing on a barnacle-covered rock. Wilson's and Orange-crowned Warblers were active in trailside brush. In the Hoh Rainforest, two determined birders were rewarded with excellent views of Black-throated Gray Warblers. Nearby, the cascading music of the Pacific Wren rang through the moss-draped understory before the singer revealed himself.

On World Migratory Bird Day, we visited Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. A rising tide pushed thousands of Western Sandpipers into close-packed, murmuring flocks. Among them were Semipalmated Plovers, Long-billed Dowitchers, and more Dunlins and Black-bellied Plovers. Caspian Terns hovered and dove in the distance, and an American White Pelican—a rare visitor here—glided over the marsh.

At the Hoquiam Sewage Treatment Ponds, we found Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaups, and Red-necked Phalaropes. In the surrounding fields, dozens of Whimbrels moved through grass, heads down, probing for prey.

On our final full day, we turned inland to explore the Sol Duc area. A highlight for many was an American Dipper feeding in a fast-flowing stream near Sol Duc Falls—bobbing, blinking its white eyelids, and plunging beneath the current in its timeless, aquatic rhythm. Varied Thrushes filled the ancient forest with their eerie voices, their haunting songs hanging in the stillness like mist.

The next morning, we crossed Puget Sound by ferry from Bainbridge Island. Our last looks included Pelagic Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Glaucous-winged Gulls wheeling above the water. As the Olympic Mountains faded behind us and the Seattle skyline came into view, we reflected on all we had seen and shared.

We experienced the Olympic Peninsula in all its avian richness—from alcids riding Pacific swells to statuesque raptors on windswept perches, from the choreography of migrating shorebirds to the forest songs that drifted through moss and cedar. It was a week of discovery, connection, and birds we won't soon forget.

BIRDS

131 species were recorded, of which 6 were heard only, none were endemic, and 4 were introduced.

The eBird link below details the 131 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Washington Olympic Peninsula | May 5-12, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the mammals and other species we were fortunate to observe during our tour of Washington's Olympic Peninsula.

MAMMALS (12):

Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) — These curious, confiding pinnipeds were seen many times throughout our journey, their shiny heads poking above the sea like periscopes, their big liquid eyes watching us. We discussed how this same species in European waters has inspired selkie myths and folklore through the ages.

Steller's Sea Lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) — These enormous creatures with boxy, bearlike heads were seen swimming close to shore in Clallam Bay and hauled out on Tatoosh Island near Cape Flattery.

California Sea Lion (*Zalophus californianus*) — At Point Wilson, a few of these smaller, darker cousins of Steller's Sea Lion swam past, and three emerged from a sea cave on Tatoosh Island, walking on their front flippers. Viewed through a scope, the distinctive sagittal crest of the males was clearly visible. Mostly males occur this far north.

North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) — A few of these slim, serpentine otters (compared to their more robust and rotund Sea Otter cousins) were seen swimming on their bellies near shore in Clallam Bay. One hauled what appeared to be a Wolf Eel or Giant Kelpfish as long as its body onto the beach.

Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) — Observed at Clallam Bay at the edge of a bull kelp forest. One of the most endearing mammals on Earth, this charismatic species groomed its whiskers while floating on its back.

Columbian Black-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) — This small subspecies of Mule Deer with a black tail and big mule-like ears was seen several times at close range in Port Townsend and elsewhere throughout the tour.

Roosevelt Elk (*Cervus canadensis roosevelti*) — Seen briefly in a field while driving toward Clallam Bay. This is the largest subspecies of elk in North America, named after Theodore Roosevelt, whose conservation efforts helped establish Olympic National Park to protect their dwindling habitat.

Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) — Seen at Nisqually. This invasive species competes with native squirrels and can displace them in urban and suburban environments.

Douglas Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*) — This small, charismatic native squirrel with reddish fur and prominent ear tufts was seen multiple times and heard frequently in the forest, chattering like a laser gun while twitching its tail.

Townsend's Chipmunk (*Neotamias townsendii*) — This charming lowland chipmunk is difficult to distinguish from its endemic high-elevation cousin, the Olympic Chipmunk. All chipmunks we observed were in lowland forests and were almost certainly this species.

Olympic Marmot (*Marmota olympus*) — This charismatic rodent is endemic to the Olympic Peninsula. Adapted to alpine meadows and subalpine terrain, it plays a key role in the ecosystem as both seed disperser and prey species. Its limited range makes it a symbol of the Peninsula's unique natural heritage.

Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) — Seen at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, swimming near the edge of marsh vegetation.

OTHER SPECIES (Not a comprehensive list, but species that intrigued our group)

FISH

Spotted Ratfish (*Hydrolagus colliei*) — A member of the chimaera group, this bizarre deep-sea fish has a long, pointed raftlike tail and a blunt snout like a rabbit. Its ghostly appearance and cartilaginous skeleton mark it as a relative of sharks and rays. One was found washed up on Kalaloch Beach.

REPTILES

Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*) — Seen at Nisqually, this is Washington's only native freshwater turtle occurring west of the Cascades. Recognizable by its smooth, dark shell and lack of red stripe behind the eye (invasive Red-eared Slider), it is often seen basking on logs in ponds, sloughs, and slow-moving channels.

INSECTS

Echo Azure Butterfly (*Celastrina echo*) — Observed at a roadside stop on Hurricane Ridge Road. This early spring-flying member of the gossamer-winged family has a fascinating mutualistic relationship with ants, which tend to and protect its larvae in exchange for sugary secretions.

Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*) — Seen at Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge, this large swallowtail has creamy wings edged with black.

Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*) — Abundant at Point Wilson and Ediz Hook. This non-native species, considered a pest, damages garden crops such as kale and other cruciferous vegetables by skeletonizing leaves.

Other Whites and Sulphurs (Family *Pieridae*) — Likely included species such as Margined White (*Pieris marginalis*) or Pine White (*Neophasia menapia*), though not all were conclusively identified.

Silver-spotted Tiger Moth caterpillar (*Lophocampa argentata*) — Seen on the observation deck at Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. Its bold coloration warns predators, and it feeds on Douglas-fir.

Western Tent Moth (*Malacosoma californicum*) — Also observed at Dungeness. This caterpillar spins communal silk tents in trees and can defoliate large patches.

MOLLUSKS

Pacific Banana Slug (*Ariolimax columbianus*) — Seen multiple times in coastal forests. One of the world's largest slugs, it secretes a unique mucus that functions as both adhesive and lubricant. This slime has fascinated biomaterials researchers for its dual properties and structural complexity. Banana Slugs help break down detritus, fertilize the soil, and disperse lichen spores like *Lobaria pulmonaria*.

California Mussel (*Mytilus californianus*) — Common on rocky intertidal zones. We examined their strong byssal threads, which have inspired innovations in surgical sutures. Mussels are prey for sea stars, Black Oystercatchers, and sea ducks.

Whelk Snails (*Nucella* spp.) — These predatory snails bore through the shells of mussels and barnacles using a rasping radula. We found a drilled mussel shell indicating snail predation.

Limpets (*Lottia* spp.) — Cone-shaped snail relatives clinging to rocks in the intertidal zone. Their shape helps them resist wave action.

Chiton (Class Polyplacophora) — Seen just before the tide came in, captured in a photo. These armored mollusks have eight dorsal plates and cling tightly to rocks.

CRUSTACEANS

Acorn Barnacles (*Balanus* spp.) — When the trap doors of barnacle shells open underwater, you can watch the crustaceans inside feed by filtering seawater with a feathery foot. We found a molt of these feet washed up along the shore. Charles Darwin was fascinated with the sex life of this hermaphroditic creature, which has the largest penis relative to body size in the animal kingdom—nearly eight times the total body length. This adaptation allows these sessile animals to reach and fertilize nearby barnacles.

Thatched Barnacle (*Semibalanus cariosus*) — A larger cousin of the acorn barnacle, this crustacean constructs a shell that resembles a thatched roof. We examined some specimens attached to mussel boulders at Ruby Beach.

Gooseneck Barnacle (*Pollicipes polymerus*) — These distinctive filter-feeding crustaceans attach to rocks via long, leathery stalks called peduncles. We looked closely at specimens washed ashore during our intertidal explorations.

DIPLOPODS

Yellow-spotted Millipede (*Harpaphe haydeniana*) — This black and yellow millipede, with two pairs of legs per body segment, uses aposematic coloration to warn of its chemical defenses. When threatened, it secretes a compound that smells of almonds and contains cyanide-based chemicals. Some of us detected a faint whiff of the scent firsthand at Grays Harbor.

ECHINODERMS

Ochre Sea Star (*Pisaster ochraceus*) — A keystone predator in the intertidal zone, this sea star feeds on mussels and regulates the balance of the shoreline community. If removed, the ecosystem structure collapses, a discovery made at Tatoosh Island—the birthplace of the keystone species concept. We saw striking color morphs ranging from bright orange to royal purple at Ruby Beach.

CNIDARIANS

Giant Green Anemone (*Anthopleura xanthogrammica*) — This predatory animal resembles a vivid green flower but uses venomous tentacles to capture invertebrates and small fish. Its color comes from symbiotic algae that provide energy through photosynthesis.

Aggregating Anemone (*Anthopleura elegantissima*) — These clonal anemones attach to rocks and reproduce both sexually and asexually. Colonies can engage in territorial battles known as "clone wars" by stinging each other with specialized cells.

PHYTOPLANKTON

Although we did not view individual phytoplankton under a microscope, we saw their impact in aggregate. The emerald color of the sea and the green and brown foam on the shore were caused by blooms of diatoms—tiny photosynthetic organisms that form the base of the marine food web. Fueled by sunlight and nutrients upwelled from deep waters, these phytoplankton blooms feed zooplankton, which are consumed by forage fish like herring, which in turn sustain seabirds and whales. Phytoplankton are among the most productive organisms on Earth, also producing more than half the oxygen we breathe.

KELP

Bull Kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) — One of the fastest-growing organisms on the planet, bull kelp can increase in length by two feet per day. It forms dense forests in nearshore waters that sequester carbon and provide critical habitat for many hundreds of species. Sea Otters use kelp fronds to anchor themselves and their pups.

Rockweed (*Fucus distichus*) — A brown alga common in the intertidal zone. We enjoyed popping the buoyant air bladders filled with a gel that helps prevent desiccation and has moisturizing properties—studied for potential skincare uses. Its gel is also a natural sunscreen.

NATIVE PLANTS

Western Redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) — This towering conifer of the lowlands can live for over a thousand years and grow more than 200 feet tall with a diameter exceeding 19 feet. Revered by Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest as the "Tree of Life," its wood was traditionally used for canoes, totem poles, longhouses, and tools, while its bark served in basketry and cordage. It plays a key ecological role in the moist forests it dominates.

Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) — Common along the foggy outer coast, Sitka Spruce can grow over 200 feet tall and more than 18 feet in diameter. Its needles are stiff and sharp, and its flaky gray bark has been likened to potato chips. This species' wood, valued for its strength-to-weight ratio, was essential in early aviation.

Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) — A shade-tolerant giant and climax species in coastal rainforests, Western Hemlock can live over 1,000 years and reach a height of more than 270 feet. We learned to identify it by its small cones, and "bacon strip" bark.

Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) — Often exceeding 300 feet in height, this fire-resistant conifer is vital to both wild and managed forests of the Pacific Northwest. Its thick, ridged bark and distinctive three-pronged cone bracts are signature features. It's a cornerstone of Pacific Northwest timber production and forest ecosystems.

Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*) — A pioneer species of disturbed areas, Red Alder fixes nitrogen through a symbiotic relationship with root-dwelling bacteria. Its smooth bark is often whitened by lichens. Indigenous peoples valued its non-aromatic wood for making utensils, as it imparts no taste to food.

Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) — Seen near Port Townsend and at close range along the Olympic Discovery Trail, this broadleaf evergreen tree sheds its bark in papery strips, revealing a smooth surface in shades of pistachio-green or bright red that stays cool to the touch—hence its nickname, "refrigerator tree." Its clusters of urn-shaped white flowers mature into bright orange-red berries, which provide important food for birds, including Varied Thrushes in winter.

Subalpine Fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) — A high-elevation conifer that forms dense stands near treeline, Subalpine Fir is known for its narrow, spire-like shape and soft, flat needles with a bluish cast. Adapted to heavy snow loads, its flexible branches bend under winter weight without breaking. Atop Hurricane Ridge, we saw its upright cones perched near the top of the tree and some of us sniffed its fragrant needles, which are often dotted with resin blisters.

Mountain Hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) — Found in subalpine forests and along ridgelines, Mountain Hemlock is a slow-growing conifer distinguished by its nodding top and soft, bluish-green needles spiraling around the twig. Unlike its lowland cousin, Western Hemlock, it thrives in colder, snowier environments like Hurricane Ridge.

Pacific Crabapple (*Malus fusca*) — Seen at the Cape Flattery overlook. This small native tree bears tart fruits that were traditionally harvested by coastal Indigenous communities and stored for winter.

Deer Fern (*Struthiopteris spicant*) — This elegant understory fern has two types of fronds: low-lying sterile fronds that photosynthesize and tall, upright fertile fronds that release spores. Deer feed on the foliage, especially in winter, and the species thrives in shaded, moist environments typical of the Pacific Northwest.

Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*) — One of the most iconic ferns of the Pacific Northwest, recognized by its large, arching fronds with serrated edges. Sword Ferns dominate the forest floor in both young and old-growth forests, providing cover and structure to the understory ecosystem.

Licorice Fern (*Polypodium glycyrrhiza*) — Spotted growing epiphytically on mossy Bigleaf Maple trunks in the Hoh Rainforest, this delicate fern thrives in the moist, shaded environments of coastal forests. Named for the sweet flavor of its rhizomes, which contain glycyrrhizin, Licorice Fern was traditionally chewed by Indigenous peoples for medicinal purposes. Its presence high on tree limbs is a hallmark of the Pacific Northwest's living green architecture.

Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*) — This tall, robust plant has large, divided leaves and broad flower umbels. We saw young specimens at Grays Harbor. While important as a food source for some wildlife, its sap contains compounds that can cause photodermatitis when exposed to sunlight, so care should be taken when handling it.

Western Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*) — Named for its pungent odor, which attracts pollinating beetles and flies, this dramatic plant produces enormous leaves and a brilliant yellow spathe. It generates heat, allowing it to bloom in early spring by melting through snow. Common in swampy areas, it evokes a primeval presence on the forest floor.

Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*) — Observed in bloom during our tour, this native shrub bore clusters of creamy-white flowers that brighten forest edges in spring. Later in the season, they develop into bright red berries that are eagerly consumed by birds and mammals.

Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*) — A shade-tolerant evergreen shrub with glossy leaves and tart, dark berries. The berries are eaten by birds, bears, and people alike.

Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) — A deciduous cousin to the evergreen huckleberry, it bears bright-red, slightly sour berries that stand out in shaded forest understories.

Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) — This tough evergreen shrub thrives in Pacific Northwest forests. Its leathery leaves form dense thickets, and its sweet, purple-black berries ripen beneath the pink and white, bell-shaped flowers we admired. The berries were a traditional food source for coastal tribes. We examined the drip tips of the leaves—narrow, pointed extensions that help shed excess rainwater quickly, reducing the growth of fungi and moss on the leaf surface in this perpetually damp environment.

Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) — Recognizable by its butterfly-shaped leaves and thorny stems. The berries ripen early in the season and have high water content, making them a useful “hydration station” for animals and hikers alike.

Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*) — Though the berries had not formed by the time of our visit, we enjoyed the soft, felt-like leaves—so beloved they are sometimes called “nature's toilet paper.”

False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*) — Seen blooming near Madison Falls, this forest understory plant bears arching stems and clusters of creamy white flowers. Its red berries appear later in the season.

Pathfinder (Trail Plant) (*Adenocaulon bicolor*) — Its two-toned leaves—dark green on top, silvery-white beneath—flip when stepped on, marking a path through the forest. Used as a navigational aid by Indigenous peoples and settlers.

Fireweed (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) — Seen providing nesting material for Bushtits along the Olympic Discovery Trail. Known as the Calendar Plant in Alaska, it blooms from bottom to top, marking the progression of summer. Its seeds disperse in silky tufts once flowering is complete.

Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*) — Seen along the bluff at Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. A native wild rose with fragrant pink flowers and prominent thorns. Its hips provide winter food for birds and mammals.

Baldhip Rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*) — A delicate, shade-tolerant rose with small, fragrant blooms. So named because the sepals fall away, leaving the fruit bare.

Mosses (Order Bryopsida) — Pacific Northwest forests host hundreds of moss species, forming lush carpets and coating tree trunks. Species we observed included Oregon Beaked Moss, Stairstep Moss, and Menzies' Tree Moss.

Clubmoss (*Selaginella* spp.) — Seen in the Hoh Rainforest, these fern allies resemble mosses but are more closely related to ancient vascular plants. Their tiny, scale-like leaves spiral around creeping stems.

Hooker's Fairybell (*Prosartes hookeri*) — Its dangling, pale-yellow bell-shaped flowers known as “drops of gold” were admired by our group near Madison Falls.

Trillium (*Trillium ovatum*) — Spotted in bloom along the Sol Duc forest floor. This slow-growing perennial with three-petaled flowers is an icon of Pacific Northwest spring.

Western Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum tenuipes*) — Observed blooming near the Elwha. This plant produces clusters of lavender flowers and thrives in moist forest understories.

Western Lily-of-the-Valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*) — Common on the forest floor, this low-growing plant has heart-shaped leaves and tiny white flowers, later replaced by red berries.

Woodland Starflower (*Trientalis latifolia*) — Another forest-floor resident with delicate, star-shaped blossoms and whorled leaves.

Fringecup (*Tellima grandiflora*) — A saxifrage admired by many in the group for its fringed, pale-pink flowers and lobed leaves. Common in moist woods across the region.

Forget-me-not (*Myosotis* spp.) — These delicate blue flowers caught our attention multiple times during the tour. Some species are native; others are garden escapees.

NONNATIVE PLANTS

Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) — With its brilliant yellow pea-like flowers, this shrubby legume drew admiring glances from our group—but looks can be deceiving. Introduced from Europe as an ornamental and erosion-control plant, Scotch Broom is now a highly invasive species in the Pacific Northwest. It outcompetes native vegetation, alters soil chemistry by fixing nitrogen, and reduces habitat quality for wildlife. Despite its cheerful blooms, it poses a serious ecological threat to prairies, coastal bluffs, and forest edges.

Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) — Known as “Stinky Bob,” this pungent non-native geranium seen throughout the tour. Members of the group were intrigued by its musky scent.

FUNGI

Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) — A few of our group members spotted this striking mushroom with yellow caps speckled with white. Known more commonly in its red form, this psychoactive fungus has long been used in rituals by Viking warriors and Siberian shamans.

False Morels (Genus *Gyromitra*) — Though superficially similar to edible true morels, these fungi can contain toxic compounds. Identification to species is critical, as some are dangerously poisonous.

Conks (Various species in the Polyporaceae) — Shelf-like fungi seen growing on trees, often indicators of decay within the host tree. These wood-decaying fungi play an essential role in nutrient cycling within forests.

LICHENS

Witch's Hair (*Alectoria sarmentosa*) — A pale-green, stringy lichen that hangs in moist forests like strands of hair. It contributes to nutrient cycling and provides food and habitat for creatures such as deer and flying squirrels.

Methuselah's Beard (*Usnea longissima*) — One of the longest lichens in the world, its green strands can grow to several feet. It is elastic, pollution-sensitive, and dependent on old-growth conditions.

Fairy Vomit (*Icmadophila ericetorum*) — This lichen's bright green patches, resembling mint-chocolate chip ice cream, grow on rotting wood and play a role in decomposition and nutrient cycling.

Lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) — Known for its leafy, lung-like appearance, this lichen thrives in old-growth forests and is a sensitive indicator of clean air. It plays a key role in nitrogen fixation and is a favored food of Banana Slugs, which help disperse its spores and enrich the forest floor with nitrogen through their droppings.