

Project Title/Task: Year one Pigeon Guillemot summary report

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## 2023 Pigeon Guillemot Monitoring Project

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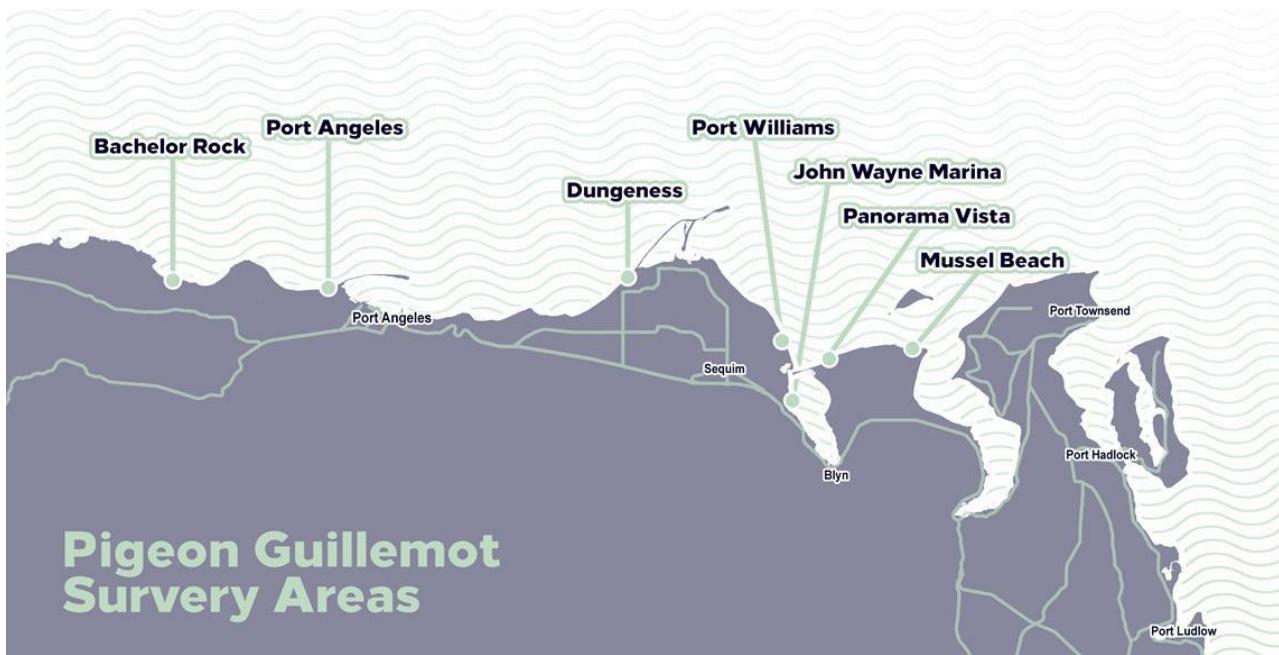
### Introduction

Pigeon guillemots (*Cephus columba*) have been used as an indicator species of nearshore ecosystem health in the Salish Sea for many years (Puget Sound Partnership [www.psp.wa.gov/vitalsigns/birds.php](http://www.psp.wa.gov/vitalsigns/birds.php)). This monitoring effort was initiated on Whidbey Island in 2009, expanded to South Puget Sound in 2013, and a pilot project started in Clallam County in 2015. Beginning in 2016, Clallam County Marine Resources Committee (Clallam MRC) adopted this effort as one of its citizen scientist monitoring projects and has continued as such to this current year. This regional program is part of the Salish Sea Guillemot Network (<http://www.pigeonguillemot.org/>), which is part of the Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program's Marine Birds Workgroup.

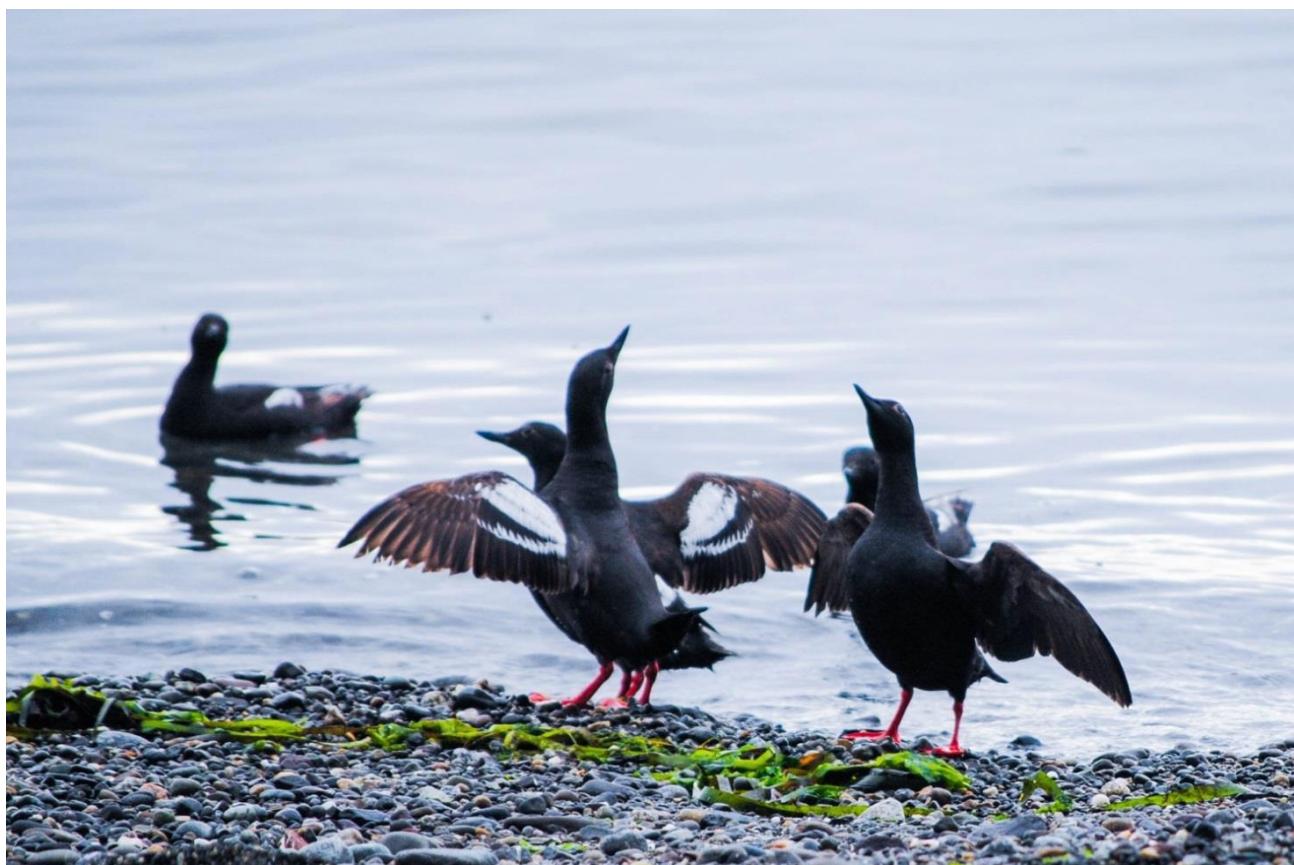
### 2023 Effort

In 2023 the recruitment campaign was once again impacted by Covid-19, preventing any in-person promotion and training. Recruitment was posted on the Clallam MRC Facebook page and website. Several hundred people were reached through Facebook and many people engaged in the post. Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS), co-sponsor of the project, also posted the recruitment information on their website. The online training included the history of the program and explanations on the monitoring protocols and field data forms. The training was available at this link: <http://www.pigeonguillemot.org/survey123-data-system-training.html>. Over 37 volunteers, including many brand new volunteers from the MRC, OPAS and local residents assisted with the surveys (Table 1). New volunteers were teamed up with experienced volunteers whenever possible and acted as substitutes when others were on vacation.

Clallam volunteer teams began monitoring colonies on the week of June 4<sup>th</sup>. Six geographical areas were monitored in 2023, from east to west: Mussel Beach, Panorama Vista, Port Williams, Dungeness Spit, Port Angeles (Crown Park), and Bachelor Rock (Figure 1). John Wayne Marina was not monitored in 2023 since birds were not present. Two new sites in 2023 included additional sites in Port Angeles: PA Wharf and one further west PA McDonald Bluff. Due to the length and complexity of Port Williams (PW), it required many monitoring teams and was divided into 3 regions, PWSouth (1 team), PWCentral (6 teams), and PWNorth (2 teams). The last active Clallam colony site monitored in 2023 was conducted in mid-September.



**Figure 1.** Pigeon guillemot colony monitoring sites for Clallam County in 2023.



**Figure 2.** Pigeon guillemots at Port Williams beach.

**Table 1.** Clallam Pigeon Guillemot Volunteers 2023

Site Name	Primary Monitors
Mussel Beach	[REDACTED]
Panorama Vista	[REDACTED]
John Wayne Marina	Discontinued for 2023
Port Williams (PW) South	[REDACTED]
PW Central:	
C 0.5	[REDACTED]
C 1	[REDACTED]
C 1.5	[REDACTED]
C 2	[REDACTED]
C 2.5	[REDACTED]
C 3	[REDACTED]
PW North:	
N 4	[REDACTED]
N 4.5	[REDACTED]
Dungeness Spit	[REDACTED]
Port Angeles 1 (Crown Pt)	[REDACTED]
Port Angeles Wharf	[REDACTED]
Port Angeles McDonald	[REDACTED]
Bluff	[REDACTED]
Bachelor Rock	[REDACTED]

Standardized protocols were revised in 2023 to better accommodate population modeling by University of Washington PhD candidate Amanda Warlick and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's new database, Survey123. This larger regional collaborative effort for the Salish Sea Pigeon Guillemots included not only volunteer monitors in Clallam County, but also Whidbey Island, South Puget Sound and Jefferson County. Clallam field data sheets and protocols are shown in Appendix A.

Mary Sue Brancato (MRC volunteer) performed the online data entry for all Clallam field data sheets into the regional database (Survey123), which will be available once final data entries are completed at the Salish Sea Guillemot Network (<http://www.pigeonguillemot.org/>).

**Acknowledgements.** We wish to thank all of our dedicated volunteers for their citizen science monitoring efforts in 2023; our co-sponsor, Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society; and the collaboration and support from Frances Wood, Dave Krause, and Shannon Boldt of the Guillemot Research Group. Supplemental funding from the Northwest Straits Commission helped to make this another successful monitoring year.

## **Appendix A**

## Pigeon Guillemot Study – Protocol

1. The four foci of this study are:
  - a. Three point-in-time counts of the birds: beginning, middle, and end of survey.
  - b. The number of active burrows.
  - c. The type and number of fish delivered.
  - d. Colony wide response to a known or unknown event. (see Disturbances, below.)
2. The Protocol and Beach Data Sheet have been revised to reflect changes in procedures. Please recycle all old Beach Data Sheets. All regions should copy and use the Beach Data Sheet available in this toolbox: <http://www.pigeonguillemot.org/survey-toolbox.html>
3. **Safety is our first priority.** If you can't go with a partner, take a cell phone and/or be sure someone knows you are on the beach and when you're planning to return. Consider the tide before going, to make sure you won't get stuck or have to wade through water.
4. **The earlier you can get to your colony** the better the chance of seeing more activity. Begin your one-hour survey no later than 8:00 am. We need three counts of birds (beginning, middle and end) before 9:00. Arrive early and let the birds settle into normal behavior (approximately 15 minutes) before you begin the survey. (The settling period can be skipped when there are absolutely no PG present within the visual range of the entire colony.) All volunteers at one colony should begin at the same time. It is expected that for each weekly data sheet record you will sit quietly at your study area for exactly **one hour** and observe the activity.
5. We ask that you **visit your site at least ten times this season**. One visit should fall during **every** calendar week (Sunday-Saturday) beginning with the first designated week for your colony. Ideally visits will be on the same day each week, however, when tides or schedules make it difficult to get out for a survey, you may adjust the timing by one or two days. Continue visiting your site for 10 consecutive weeks. If, prior to the completion of the ten weeks there are two consecutive weeks with no burrow activity, contact the Colony Contact to determine if you should continue the survey. Once the 10 consecutive weeks of the survey have passed, you may stop the survey as long as you have two consecutive weeks with no burrow activity and no birds are congregating near the bluffs.
6. **First locate and identify the active/occupied burrows.** Make a drawing or take a photo so that you can locate, number/letter, and remember the burrows. Make a duplicate drawing or photo to have available for substitutes and/or your Colony Contact so that we can understand your colony more completely. A copy of your colony map will be uploaded to the data system, once all your active burrows have been identified.
7. A burrow is considered "active/occupied" when: You see a bird **disappear into or emerge from** the burrow. (A "ledge sit" is not valid, nor is fresh guano.) However, only count a bird emerging from a burrow if you did not see it first fly into the burrow, to prevent the same visit from being double counted. If you observe a bird flying into a burrow and then see it leave a burrow a few minutes later, that is considered only one visit.
8. For each active/occupied burrow, **document the times of each activity** observed. These will include **Visit to Burrow (No Prey)**, fish deliveries of **Sculpin**, **Gunnel** or **Other/Unknown**. Record the time for each activity.
9. **Guest Policy:** The survey coordinators carefully assign volunteers to colonies taking into account the number of volunteers needed to adequately cover the burrows. We expect all volunteers to attend volunteer training so that the quality of our data remains high. A guest may accompany you on the

survey provided that he/she remains quiet and does not interfere with the birds' activity. Guests may not serve as data collectors.

10. **Substitute surveyors:** All substitutes must be trained and have received site orientation by a member of the coordinating team. Substitutes may be assigned by the Volunteer Coordinator.
11. **Pet Policy:** No pets may accompany you on the beach.
12. **Make a decision:** Question marks or number ranges are not acceptable.
13. Either before or after your survey walk under the burrows and look for dead chicks, eggshells, rejected prey, etc. We encourage you to mark down any unusual behavior or anything that seems noteworthy.
14. **If for any reason you must miss a week, or your plans change and you are not able to complete the study, contact the Colony Lead and/or the Colony Contact assigned to your site immediately.** For a planned vacation, please let your Colony Lead know at least one week ahead of your absence so that a substitute can go out with you and shadow your survey to learn about the colony.
15. **Review data sheets** for completeness and clarity when you finish your survey.
16. **Carry information brochures** to share with interested or curious people you meet on the beach. Be courteous and answer questions but refrain from engaging in extended conversations if you are in the middle of a survey.
17. **Be respectful if crossing private property.** Move quickly and quietly to the beach so as not to disturb property owners and neighbors.
18. **Compile data and enter into Survey123 on a weekly basis** to allow for reporting throughout the survey season.

#### Additional Notes to Protocol:

**Population counts:** Only include the guillemots that are associated with your colony. These are the birds that gather in the water in front of the bluffs. The birds may spread out and fly around, but they'll return and form loose groupings. Do not count birds off in the distance that are not part of the colony. Also count the birds associated with the colony that may be sitting on the bluff and the beach. It is important to count the guillemots at exactly the beginning, middle and end. If more birds are present outside of these times, do not include them.

**Disturbances:** A disturbance should be recorded if a majority of the birds change their normal behavior by flying off shore and/or retreating away from the bluffs. The beginning and end time of the disturbance should be recorded. (End time may be difficult to determine since the birds tend to return gradually to the area near the bluffs. When the majority of the birds have returned, you may consider the disturbance ended.) Make note if the birds are still disturbed when your one-hour survey is over.

**Burrow Identification:** Each burrow must have a unique identification. These IDs can be changed and updated yearly, but they must remain in place for the entire summer survey season. The burrow ID can be no more than three spaces. Numbers or letters may be used. If letters are used, they must be capital letters. Do not use special characters or spaces.

# Pigeon Guillemot Survey - Beach Data Sheet

General Note: Use decimal notation. Example: 2 hours and 15 minutes =2.25

Colony Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Survey Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Observers: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Tide in feet @ start \_\_\_\_\_ + / - (circle + or - tide value)

Direction: Incoming/Outgoing (circle)

Volunteer Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Hours\*

\*Total for all volunteers including round trip travel, settling in, survey, and data entry.

PIGU Counts:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Start    \_\_\_\_\_ Middle    \_\_\_\_\_ End

Admin/QC  
Only

## Disturbances (only document if birds react)

Enter beginning and end time for each disturbance. Also note if the disturbance ended before the survey ended with Y/N. Add a brief description of disturbance, if needed/desired. An example disturbance is shown below.

Eagle	Beach Walker	Walker w/ Dog	Motorized Boat	Non-Motor Boat	Unknown	Other Cause
8:48, 9:00, N						
Eagle flew low along beach. PGs flew out beyond the kelp and stayed there beyond the survey end.						

General Survey Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box if there were no visits to burrows for this survey date:

**Survey Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Survey Week:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Burrow Data

**For each distinct burrow use a single row. Please enter all visits to burrow and prey deliveries for that burrow on that row. An example is shown below.**

**Burrow Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_