

**Field Trip – Point Whitehorn Park July 3, 2019**

by Bert Bartleson - Linda Schroeder photos unless otherwise marked

I woke up to the alarm near dawn at 5:00 AM. I was going to drive from Olympia to North of Ferndale to visit a place that I had never heard of, let alone visited. Linda Schroeder and Bob Lemon are both part of a group that does routine monitoring of this and other saltwater beach sites in Whatcom County and they invited me to join them. Linda hoped to expand the species list for this location. Bob was hoping to find new algae species. I left my house at 6:00 and cruised along I-5 until Tacoma and then again in downtown Seattle when traffic slowed and then stopped before inching slowly forward. I sure don't miss having to commute to Seattle for weekday meetings anymore. My estimate of a four-hour drive was very close, and I found the parking lot with a few minutes to spare at 10:00. Linda and Bob had arrived just a couple minutes earlier. We packed up and headed for the beach.

To get there you must hike along a very gentle, wide gravel trail to the beach. It's about 3/4 mile and very well maintained. Some of the huge trees had been uprooted during 2 violent Northeaster storms in February.

We also found some terrestrial mollusks in the moist edge of the trail: several *Arion rufus* (Linnaeus, 1758), two *Ariolimax columbianus* (Gould, 1851) and a single nice *Monadenia fidelis* (Gray, 1834). Bob also showed me a bald eagle's nest with a young eagle trying to learn to fly. At the top of the bluff are several stone picnic tables and a switch-back trail down to the beach. Point Whitehorn Park is part of the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve which spans an area from the refinery at Cherry Point, northwest to the tip of Point Whitehorn and around the corner to the boundary of Birch Bay State Park. The tide was a minus 3.0' tide at about 12:30 PM. We walked South and explored a nice reef about a half mile from the trail head. Since this is a reserve no shells were taken, just photos and notes.

The beach is a mixture of sandy areas with cobble and some larger boulders. Lots of nice rocks were picked up or turned over and explored and many critters were discovered beneath. We added two bivalves to Linda's list: *Tellina modesta* (Carpenter, 1864) [found two pair



One of the large trees that fell in February



Bert Bartleson photo

Linda and Bob

of dead shells in sandy areas] and a nice live *Endodesma navicula* (A. Adams & Reeve, 1850). We also added two more shelled gastropods to Linda's list: *Alvania compacta* (Carpenter, 1864), found live, and a dead shell of *Calyptrea fastigiata* Gould, 1846. In addition two more nudibranch species were found live: a tiny *Acanthodoris nanaimoensis* O'Donoghue, 1921 and a *Dirona albolineata* MacFarland,



*Dirona albolineata* with parasitic copepod eggs and a tiny *Acanthodoris nanaimoensis* just 1 cm long



*Entodesma navicula*, new to our list

1905 with parasitic copepod eggs. Linda also found a new Chiton for her list: *Mopalia swanii* Carpenter, 1864. A full list of species for the Point Whitehorn Reserve is available on the club's website.

After we were chased off the reef by the incoming tide and were wandering back to the stairs, Linda encountered a family exploring the beach. Some of their kids had dug into one of the mounds of sand and unearthed a Ghost shrimp. They were excited to learn what it was and some information about how it lived under the sand in burrows. During our explorations we also encountered a number of healthy Blood Stars and Purple sea stars, including tiny babies.

We then hiked back up to the cars and cleaned up at Linda's house before having an early dinner at the local Mexican restaurant. The company and conversation were enjoyable. Soon afterwards I headed back to I-5 to drive home. Once again, I was stuck in backups, this time both in Seattle and Tacoma. I made it home just before dark at 9:00 PM, tired but having had a wonderful time at a great beach.



The Ghost shrimp, *Neotrypaea gigas*, found by the kids



A colorful *Mopalia kennerleyi*



Some baby *Pisaster ochraceus* next to a mature one