

# BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS NEWSLETTER

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The **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS NEWSLETTER** is published four times a year by B.C. Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1018, Surrey, B.C., Canada V3S 4P5. A subscription to the Newsletter is a benefit of membership in the society. Members also receive a semi-annual journal, **BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS**.

### Newsletter staff:

Editor- Wayne Weber

Bird-lister's Corner- Doug Kragh

Mailing & Distribution- Hue & Jo Ann MacKenzie

Material for publication should be sent to the Editor at the society address in Surrey. We especially welcome bird-finding information for the "Site Guide" series and articles about your birdwatching experiences, preferably (but not necessarily) in B.C.

Membership in British Columbia Field Ornithologists is open to anyone interested in the study and enjoyment of birds in B.C. Our objectives include fostering cooperation between amateur and professional ornithologists and promoting cooperative bird surveys and research projects, and supporting conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve birds and their habitats.

Membership dues: \$20.00 (CAN) per year. Library and institutional subscriptions: \$20.00 (CAN).

For further information, or to join, write the Treasurer, B.C. Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1018, Surrey, B.C. V3S 4P5.

**BEACHED BIRD SURVEYS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

By Alan E. Burger

270 Trevlac Place, RR 3, Victoria, B.C. V8X 3X1

A Beached Bird Survey program is now operating in several parts of coastal British Columbia, and birders and naturalists are encouraged to participate. The basic idea is for volunteer observers to cover a section of shore once a month and report on the number and species of birds washed up, the incidence of oiling, and other causes of mortality.

This program began in response to growing concern and awareness over the state of the marine environment, and the lack of data on oiling of seabirds off the B.C. coast. The "Nestucca" spill off Grays Harbor, Washington, in 1988-89 killed over 40,000 seabirds, many of which washed ashore on Vancouver Island. While investigating the impacts of this spill, biologists realized how little was known about natural mortality rates of seabirds, and the effects on seabirds of small, often unreported spills.

Standardized beached bird surveys are done in at least a dozen countries, and in some, such as New Zealand, the Netherlands, Great Britain, South Africa, and the U.S.A. (California), have continued unbroken for 10 to 25 years. Beach surveys give useful indicators of seabird mortality patterns, and the effects of oiling, inshore gill nets, and marine pollution. They provided the scientific evidence needed to force changes in tanker cleaning practices off the Shetland Islands, U.K.; increased surveillance of shipping in the Netherlands; and new laws governing gill-net fishing in California.

The British Columbia Beached Bird Surveys were initiated in November 1989, under the auspices of the Royal British Columbia Museum. The program is now sponsored by the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Environment Emergency Services Branch. A computerized database has been established, and participants use a standardized data sheet. The Museum is still involved as the repository of specimens, particularly skeletons, which are poorly represented in the bird collections.

Birders and ornithologists are particularly welcome in this program, since you have high standards of field identification and are familiar with local bird populations. All it takes is about an hour or two every month. If you live near the coast or regularly visit a beach and would like to participate, please write or call the program coordinator: Dr. Alan Burger, 270 Trevlac Place, RR 3, Victoria, B.C. V8X 3X1 (phone 479-9833).

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Our apologies to Dr. Phil Mattocks for not crediting him in the article "**The Washington State Breeding Bird Atlas**" in the last issue. Much of the text was taken directly from the Atlas Handbook, written by Phil, and he also provided the map and the updated list of County Coordinators listed in the article.

Wayne C. Weber

**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

- August 13-17, 1991 THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION will hold its 109th Annual Meeting at Montreal, Quebec. For details, contact AOU Local Committee, McGill Univ., Box 197, Ste.-Anne-de-Bellevue, P.Q. H9X 1C0 (phone (514) 398-7941).
- August 21-23, 1991 **FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF B.C. FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS** at the Delta Town & Country Inn, Delta, B.C. For further details, see the announcement elsewhere in this issue.
- Sept. 13-15, 1991 ORNITHOLOGICAL ATLAS CONFERENCE, Keystone, Colorado. The program will be of interest not only to atlas organizers and coordinators, but to all participants in bird atlas projects. For information, write Colorado Bird Atlas, Zoology Dept., Denver Museum of Natural History, 2001 Colorado Blvd, Denver, CO 80205.
- Sept. 28-29, 1991 SYMPOSIUM ON B.C.'S THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES at Robson Square, Vancouver, co-sponsored by the Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society and the Federation of B.C. Naturalists. For information, contact Thomas Harder, Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society, P.O. Box 34129, Station D, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 4N3 (phone 736-8750).
- October 4-6, 1991 THE FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS will hold its Fall General Meeting at Courtenay, B.C. For information, contact the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, 321-1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V6H 4A9 (phone 737-3057).
- October 11-13, 1991 THE WESTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION will hold its 66th annual meeting at Boise, Idaho, with a field trip to the Snake River Birds of Prey Area. For information, contact Alfred G. Larson, 3015 Silver Street, Boise, Idaho 83703 (phone (208) 344-2919).
- Dec. 14, 1991 to Jan. 2, 1992 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS. A list of dates, contact people and phone numbers will be published in the next Newsletter.
- Jan. 15-19, 1992 THE PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP will hold its annual meeting at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, Charleston, Oregon. For information, contact Palmer Sekora, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Finley National Wildlife Refuge, 26208 Finley Refuge Road, Corvallis, OR 97333.

### SOCIETY NEWS

**THE FIRST BCFO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will take place at the Delta Town & Country Inn, Delta, from August 23 to 25, and at press time, more than 50 members had registered. We decided to send out a separate meeting announcement, rather than rush this issue of the Newsletter to include it, and everyone who had joined BCFO by July 15 should have received their announcement shortly after that date. We hope you will enjoy the field trips, the program of speakers, and the Saturday night banquet. This will also be a landmark in BCFO's brief history, as we will be electing our first Board of Directors and adopting a Constitution and By-Laws. We look forward to seeing you!

No decision will be made for some time on the location of our 1992 meeting, but it will likely be somewhere in the southern Interior, and two suggestions which have been made are Revelstoke or Creston. We welcome other suggestions for a meeting location, especially if you live there and are willing to help in making arrangements! We also welcome any feedback on this year's meeting-- anything you liked or didn't like, or additional activities you would like us to include.

**A FEW DEFECTIVE COPIES** of the April 1991 Newsletter were discovered, with missing pages or double-printed pages. We hope we caught all of these before they were mailed out, but if your copy of the Newsletter was defective, let the Editor know and we will replace it.

**WHERE IS THE JOURNAL??** Our stated goal is to publish British Columbia Birds twice a year, but we recognized some time ago that we would probably be able to publish only one issue in 1991 without going into debt. We have already received several submissions for the first issue, including the lead article, and we expect to publish the first issue this fall. We currently have about 140 members, but we need at least 200 to be able to publish four newsletters and two journal issues a year on a sound financial basis. So, if you have a bird-watching friend who has not yet joined BCFO, please encourage him or her to join-- we need more members!!

### NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

It may still be summer, but **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS** will be upon us again before long! In the next BCFO Newsletter, we will include the date and the name and phone number of the organizer of as many B.C. Christmas Bird Counts as possible, for the benefit of those members who enjoy doing Christmas Counts. If you are the organizer or compiler of a Christmas Bird Count, please send us this information so that we can include it in the next issue.

We will not be publishing a summary of B.C. Christmas Bird counts, because Dick Cannings already does an excellent summary for the B.C. Naturalist. Dick's summary of the 1990 count appears on

pages 6 to 9 of the July 1991 issue of the B.C. Naturalist. The complete results are published in the journal American Birds, published by the National Audubon Society, and Dick edits all the counts in Western Canada for that publication.

If you or your local group would like to start a new Christmas Bird Count, either an official one (for publication in American Birds) or unofficial, please contact Dick Cannings for advice. You can write him at 3007 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1Z7, or phone him at 734-9489 (home) or 822-4665 (work). The permissible dates for official Christmas Bird Counts next winter, set by the National Audubon Society, are December 14, 1991 to January 2, 1992.

**PARTICIPANTS IN THE B.C. NEST RECORD PROGRAM**, please return your completed nest record cards by October 1 to Margaret Harris, P.O. Box 10, Penticton, B.C. V2A 6J9. Whether you completed five cards or a hundred, your contribution is appreciated. Prompt return of completed cards will allow a complete and timely annual report to be published in the B.C. Naturalist.

Congratulations to BCFO member **WAYNE DIAKOW**, who on July 20th saw his 600th bird species in North America-- the now-famous **STELLER'S SEA EAGLE** which spent the summer of 1991 near Juneau, Alaska.

**BIRD TRENDS**, a new newsletter produced by the Canadian Wildlife Service, is available (so far!) free of charge. The first issue includes 20 pages of interesting reports on such projects as Breeding Bird Surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, atlas projects, Project FeederWatch, and breeding and wintering bird censuses. The editor is Colleen Hyslop. To subscribe, write to Nongame Birds and Latin American Program, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3, and ask to be included on the mailing list.

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#### TROUBLE IN PARADISE

by Brian M. Kautesk  
6-1661 East 10th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V5N 1X6

If you have the Collins/ICBP handbook, Rare Birds of the World, by Mountfort and Arlott, look at Plate XXIII. There you will find Napothera marmorata, the Marbled Wren-babbler. Once believed to be extinct, it formerly lived at altitudes of 2000 to 4000 feet in central Malaya, with a single record from Sumatra. It was recently rediscovered by Dennis Yong at Fraser's Hill in Malaya, apparently by whistling to attract the unknown caller into view. Perhaps fewer than 50 western birders have seen it, and I may have been one. Maybe.

The frustrations of birding in the tropical rain forest never, but never go away. You'll probably have a few good days once you get used to it, but the heartbreaking manic-depressive syndrome will soon return. Your bird will be obscured in whole or in part by foliage, most of which is "protected" by grotesque spines, barbs, thorns, or needles. The light is poor. The bird is directly

overhead at a neck-breaking angle, and as soon as you have figured out your tour guide's directions, the bird flies and you must start all over again. And then there is the happy compatibility of fourteen birders squeezed into a space the size of a Smithrite container, trying to stay still while waiting for the bird to "come in". There is always the worry of water; rain, river dunkings, spray, etc., and if your binoculars get fogged up, tough luck. They will probably dry out when you get back to Medicine Hat, two weeks later. Finally, there are the bugs: mosquitoes, "bullet" ants, sand flies, deer flies, chiggers, and those hateful small flies in the Andes that bite you on the fingers and knuckles, causing an itch that lasts for weeks. But if you are charmed by the Orient, add to all these the leeches that seem to follow you along trails, or drop onto you from leaves. Do I enjoy all this? No!! Sorry you asked.

On July 11, 1988, Dennis Yong, Ben King, and seven others, myself included, went to the spot at Fraser's Hill where Dennis had seen the Marbled Wren-babbler. Despite the shortage of trees in fruit, both in Malaya and Borneo, we weren't doing too badly. But I was having problems. A Malaysian Rail-babbler, one of my "most wanted" birds, could not be seen by anyone, even though Ben swears it was walking on a log only 20 feet away. Also, I had personally missed two important birds. The first was a Malaysian Peacock-Pheasant that ran across the trail. I was looking into the bush. The second was a Banded Pitta, seen in the bush; I was looking at the trail that Ben thought it would cross. It didn't. The pitta was the scourge of the trip for me. Although common, it eluded me for the whole three weeks we were in Malaysia. My only consolation was that Harvey Gilston, currently the world's top bird-lister, had missed it too.

But what about Napothera? We were looking down the slopes of yet another tangled ravine when a bird responded to Dennis's tape. Then all hell broke loose. First, a rather large bird flew up to a perch, and Harvey and I zeroed in on it. It resembled an Ochraceous Bulbul, but did not show a crest. Unfortunately, the bird had its back to us. At first, we thought this was Napothera. Then I saw a tiny bird resembling a Winter Wren foraging in the leaf litter. Certainly this wasn't it. Thinking it might be a Pygmy Wren-babbler, I tried to get Ben's attention, but he was watching a different bird. To this day, I still don't know what it was, but I tend to think it was a Pygmy Wren-babbler. Meanwhile, Dennis had descended into the ravine, hoping to attract in the Marbled Wren-babbler. All I could see was a silhouette of a bird jumping up in a clearing about 100 feet downslope. "That was it!" pronounced Ben. "But how can you tell?" I inquired, by now very, very confused.

Most birders have a certain standard for adding a bird to their life list. My minimum standard is that I must see at least the silhouette of the bird, while it is singing its own unmistakable song. I think that makes sense, although there are few birds on my list which I saw that poorly. The Marbled Wren-babbler that Ben King pointed out-- if indeed it was one-- certainly did not qualify. Nor could I count the Pygmy Wren-babbler; and the first bird "had" to be a crestless Ochraceous Bulbul, a common bird in Malaysia. The great rarity of Napothera marmorata had passed me by. It had never come in close; I doubt if anyone in the group saw it well.

Win or lose, great rarities come and go. I was destined to add to this "lost" list the Red-billed Curassow, Gray and White Tyrannulet, and Whitehead's Broadbill. But enough of this. I am reminded of a remark made by the late Ed Moody when we were birding together in Stanley Park one day about eighteen years ago. A middle-aged woman ran into us and exclaimed breathlessly, "Are you people birdwatchers?". Moody's retort: "We're not just bird-watchers, we're philosophers".

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#### BIRD-LISTER'S CORNER

by W. Douglas Kragh and Wayne C. Weber  
1547 Angelo Avenue, Port Coquitlam, B.C. V3B 1C8 (Kragh) and  
51-6712 Baker Road, Delta, B.C. V4E 2V3 (Weber)

Keeping lists is something that most birdwatchers do, so in deference to those BCFO members who enjoy keeping lists, we have decided to include some listing totals in every second issue of the BCFO Newsletter. We recognize that merely ticking birds off on a check-list makes little contribution to science or to conservation. However, it is our experience that those birders who enjoy "listing" the most are often those who keep the best field notes and are most likely to take part in bird surveys and projects. Bird-listers need not make apologies to professional ornithologists, and we hope the professionals among our members will show some tolerance toward the recreational and sporting aspects of birding. We plan to devote only about 6 pages a year to listing totals, out of a total of 50 to 60 pages in the Newsletter, so if this section doesn't interest you, simply skip it!

In this issue, we have included life list totals for B.C. and for Canada, based mainly on the latest totals published in Canadian Birding and in Winging It (the American Birding Association newsletter), plus a few personal communications. The "cut-off points" for inclusion in the tabulation were 250 species in B.C. and 350 in Canada. These totals were compiled by Wayne Weber; in future, this section will be edited by Doug Kragh. We have designed a "Listing Report Form", which is included as a separate insert with this issue. In future, the listing totals will be based only on those individuals who send in a Listing Report Form. If you want your list totals published, please complete the form and mail it to Doug at 1547 Angelo Avenue, Port Coquitlam, B.C. V3B 1C8.

The majority of BCFO directors felt that we should include only Canada lists, B.C. lists, and lists for areas within B.C. in the Newsletter. If you feel that we should include world life lists, North American life lists, or lists for other areas not included on the form, please let us know; there is a space at the bottom of the form to do so.

## LISTING DATA: JULY 1991

## BRITISH COLUMBIA (448 species)

TOTAL	PERCENT	BIRDER	ADDRESS
392	87.5	Mike Force	Vancouver, B.C.
391	87.3	Gerry Ansell	Vancouver, B.C.
390	87.1	Wayne Weber	Delta, B.C.
388	86.6	David Stirling	Victoria, B.C.
382	85.3	Mike Toochin	Vancouver, B.C.
379	84.6	Doug Kragh	Port Coquitlam, B.C.
374	83.5	Mike Bentley	Ganges, B.C.
374	83.5	Dick Cannings	Vancouver, B.C.
374	83.5	Jo Ann MacKenzie	Surrey, B.C.
373	83.3	Hue MacKenzie	Surrey, B.C.
371	82.8	Brian Kautesk	Vancouver, B.C.
359	80.1	Tony Greenfield	Sechelt, B.C.
358	79.9	Wayne Diakow	Richmond, B.C.
356	79.5	Chris Siddle	Vernon, B.C.
354	79.0	Dale Jensen	Vancouver, B.C.
354	79.0	Audrey Viken	West Vancouver, B.C.
353	78.8	Colin Butt	Surrey, B.C.
353	78.8	Gary Davidson	Nakusp, B.C.
352	78.6	Keith Taylor	Victoria, B.C.
351	78.3	Peter Hamel	Toronto, Ontario
350	78.1	Robin Weber	Prince Rupert, B.C.
349	77.9	Danny Tyson	North Vancouver, B.C.
346	77.2	Rick Howie	Kamloops, B.C.
342	76.3	Mike McGrenere	Victoria, B.C.
339	75.7	David Mark	Tonawanda, New York
336	75.0	Mary Collins	Vernon, B.C.
335	74.8	Bryan Gates	Victoria, B.C.
333	74.3	Stefan Zarembo	Burnaby, B.C.
332	74.1	Barb McGrenere	Victoria, B.C.
331	73.9	Linda Van Damme	Nelson, B.C.
329	73.4	Rick Tyson	North Vancouver, B.C.
328	73.2	Evelyn Jensen	Vancouver, B.C.
323	72.1	Hank Vander Pol	Victoria, B.C.
319	71.2	Barbara Begg	Sidney, B.C.
319	71.2	Richard Klauke	St. Paul, Alberta
319	71.2	Jack Williams	White Rock, B.C.
316	70.5	Frank Hahn	Cary, North Carolina
315	70.3	Roger Foxall	Halifax, Nova Scotia
314	70.0	Lloyd Esralson	Surrey, B.C.
314	70.0	Kenneth Ward	Bayport, New York
310	69.2	Reuben Ware	Halifax, Nova Scotia
308	66.7	Eric MacBean	West Vancouver, B.C.
305	68.1	Eric Tull	Calgary, Alberta
304	67.9	Alex Gray	Mississauga, Ontario
299	66.7	Andy Stewart	Ingersoll, Ontario
298	66.5	Phil Ranson	Vernon, B.C.
297	66.3	John Luce	Surrey, B.C.



TOTAL	PERCENT	BIRDER	ADDRESS
276	61.6	Bill Crins	Alcove, New York
276	61.6	Peter Axhorn	Sooke, B.C.
276	61.6	Wayne Neily	Winnipeg, Manitoba
274	61.2	Dan Brunton	Ottawa, Ontario
269	60.0	Kenneth Burden	Chehalis, Washington
267	59.6	Dennis Paulson	Seattle, Washington
264	58.9	Stan Shadick	Saskatoon, Sask.
264	58.9	Larry Neily	Ottawa, Ontario
263	58.7	Tim Murphy	The Gap, Australia
258	57.6	Laurie Rockwell	Summerland, B.C.
257	57.4	George Cheeseman	Edmonton, Alberta
252	56.3	Gerry Bennett	Woodbridge, Ontario
250	55.8	Maurice Ellison	Trail, B.C.

### CANADA (596 species)

TOTAL	PERCENT	BIRDER	ADDRESS
483	81.0	Hue MacKenzie	Surrey, B.C.
483	81.0	Jo Ann MacKenzie	Surrey, B.C.
461	77.3	Mike Bentley	Ganges, B.C.
457	76.7	David Stirling	Victoria, B.C.
450	75.5	Keith Taylor	Victoria, B.C.
443	74.3	Mike Force	Vancouver, B.C.
436	73.2	Wayne Weber	Delta, B.C.
434	72.8	Doug Kragh	Port Coquitlam, B.C.
428	71.8	Brian Kautesk	Vancouver, B.C.
428	71.8	Mike Tootchin	Vancouver, B.C.
426	71.5	Dick Cannings	Vancouver, B.C.
420	70.5	Jack Williams	White Rock, B.C.
419	70.3	Gerry Ansell	Vancouver, B.C.
419	70.3	Colin Butt	Surrey, B.C.
414	69.5	Rick Howie	Kamloops, B.C.
409	68.6	Audrey Viken	West Vancouver, B.C.
406	68.1	Mike McGrenere	Victoria, B.C.
404	67.8	Stefan Zarembo	Burnaby, B.C.
401	67.3	Barb McGrenere	Victoria, B.C.
400	67.1	Mary Collins	Vernon, B.C.
399	66.9	Allen Wiseley	Victoria, B.C.
389	65.7	Dale Jensen	Vancouver, B.C.
380	63.8	Hank Vander Pol	Victoria, B.C.
374	62.8	Chris Siddle	Vernon, B.C.
374	62.8	Tony Greenfield	Sechelt, B.C.
367	61.6	Gary Davidson	Nakusp, B.C.
364	61.1	Barbara Begg	Sidney, B.C.
363	60.9	Evelyn Jensen	Vancouver, B.C.
362	60.7	Robin Weber	Prince Rupert, B.C.
353	59.2	Eric MacBean	West Vancouver, B.C.
352	59.1	Ed Coffin	Victoria, B.C.

**THE SITE GUIDE: DUCK LAKE, CRESTON, B.C.**

by Gary S. Davidson  
P.O. Box 294, Nakusp, B.C. V0G 1R0

"It is my considered opinion that the unreclaimed portions of the Kootenay Flats constitute the largest and most important resting and feeding ground for waterfowl in the interior of British Columbia."

--J.A. Munro, 1947

Since 1947, much has changed on the Kootenay Flats. With the construction of the Libby Dam in Montana, water levels have been controlled since 1974. An extensive system of dikes has allowed agriculture to develop on the Kootenay River floodplain. Despite these changes, however, wetlands are still abundant in the region. With the establishment of the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA) in 1968, Munro's opinion of 44 years ago is still valid today.

One of the best birding areas within the CVWMA is Duck Lake. Situated just south of the south end of Kootenay Lake, Duck Lake is a shallow lake, about 5 km long and 3 km wide. In addition to being a good birding area, it is a very popular bass fishing lake.

All six species of grebes have been known to nest on Duck Lake, which may be the only lake in B.C. that can make this claim. The Western Grebe colony generally has about 100 pairs, and in 1983 a mixed pair of Clark's and Western Grebes was seen with one chick. Red-necked and Pied-billed Grebes are also common breeders; the Horned and Eared Grebes are rare breeders. Species of waterfowl breeding regularly on Duck Lake or adjacent channels include Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, and Ruddy Duck. Many other species are seen during spring and fall migration.

Ospreys and Bald Eagles regularly spend their summers fishing and hunting at Duck Lake. The fields and marshes around the lake support Northern Harriers, Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawks, and American Kestrels. In addition, Rough-legged Hawks are common migrants. Virginia Rails, Soras, and American Coots nest at Duck Lake.

Duck Lake is not particularly good shorebird habitat, as the water levels are usually too high to provide feeding areas. However, some interesting species have been recorded. American Avocets stop over in spring most years, and the first breeding record in the province for this species was at Duck Lake in 1968. Black-necked Stilt and Stilt Sandpiper have also been recorded.

Duck Lake hosts the only known colony of Forster's Terns in the province. Most nests are built in the marshes on the south side of the lake. Black Terns also nest commonly around the lake. Other species nesting in the marshes and fields include Marsh Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Red-winged, Yellow-headed and Brewer's Blackbirds, and Western Meadowlark.

No visit to Duck Lake is complete without checking out the wooded areas to the west and north of the lake. Great Horned Owls

nest here, and Northern Hawk Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Snowy Owl have been reported in the vicinity. At the north end of the lake there is a Great Blue Heron colony. In 1975, the colony contained 122 nests, although it is not that large today. The large cottonwood trees also provide homes for several species of woodpeckers.

These woods are also home to many passerine species. Some of the species seen regularly include Townsend's Solitaire, Swainson's Thrush, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow, Yellow-rumped and MacGillivray's Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Rufous-sided Towhee, Lincoln's and Song Sparrows, Northern Oriole, and American Goldfinch. In recent years, there have been reports of a small number of Yellow-breasted Chats at the north end of the lake.

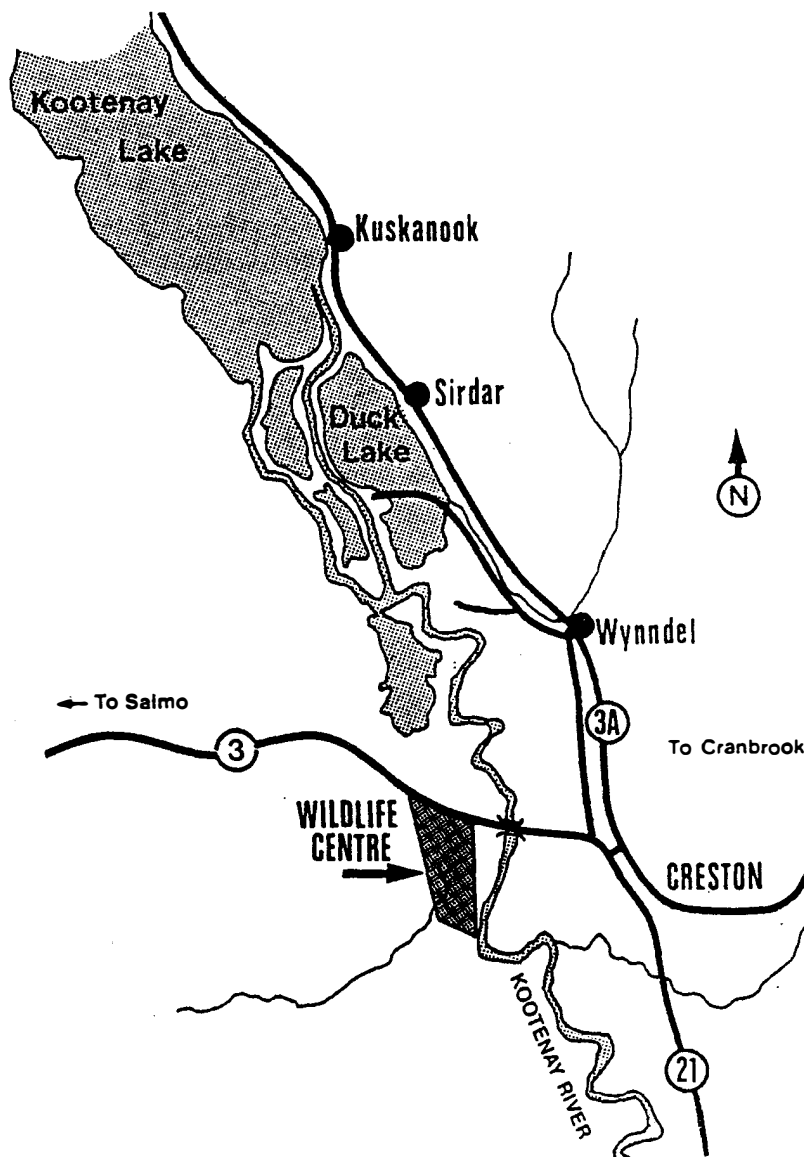


Figure 1. Map of Duck Lake and Creston area, B.C.

The accompanying map shows how to get to Duck Lake. Take the road from Wynndel to the south end of the lake. Access to the lake along its east side from Highway 3A is very limited, as the road is well above lake level. After crossing the south end of the lake on the dike, the road reaches a "T" junction. Turn right here and follow a rough road along the west side of the lake and across the north side. You will eventually come to a locked gate and have to return the way you came.

The Creston Valley Wildlife Centre, located just south of Highway 3 on the west side of the Creston Valley, is also a recommended stop for the visiting birder. It has several attractive displays which explain the ecology of the Creston Valley, plus a variety of interpretive activities during the summer. A checklist of birds of the CVWMA, including Duck Lake, is also available at the Wildlife Centre.

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### THE SITE GUIDE: BLACKIE SPIT, SURREY, B.C.

by Jo Ann and Hue MacKenzie  
15341 21st Avenue, Surrey, B.C. V4A 6A8

This popular birding spot, named for an early farmer (and rum-runner), is situated at the mouth of the Nicomekl River, in south Surrey, about 30 km southeast of downtown Vancouver. It is a sandspit jutting out into Mud Bay, the shallow northeastern part of Boundary Bay. Vegetation consists of various grasses and shrubs, Himalayan blackberry, glasswort (*Salicornia europaea*) in the salt marsh areas, with a scattering of trees around the tidal pond and Farm Slough. Birding the Blackie Spit area is best during migration periods and in winter, although rarities can show up in any season.

When looking for waterbirds and shorebirds, the tide level is important. If you don't have a copy of Canadian Tide and Current Tables, Vol. 5, published annually by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, check the Peace Arch News or Vancouver newspapers for tide tables. Tidal fluctuations in Mud Bay and Boundary Bay are strong, ranging from a 6-foot to a 14-foot range within a 24-hour period. Daily high tides vary from about 13 feet (4.0 m) to 16 feet (4.9 m). Waterfowl are best seen during moderately high tides of 12 feet (3.7 m) and higher; shorebirds are generally best looked for during tides of about 10 feet (3.0 m) to 12.5 feet (3.8 m). During lower tides, there is so much exposed mud and sand that the birds range over an enormous area. High tides push the birds nearer shore where they can be easily seen. On the other hand, maximum tides of 15 feet (4.6 m) or more force the bird to other areas, such as the inaccessible east shore of Mud Bay. Plan to arrive at least an hour before the expected optimum viewing time; the water moves in surprisingly fast.

#### WHERE TO BIRD (see detailed map)

Walk Blackie Spit proper, through the growth in the centre, as well as both shores. Migrant Lapland Longspurs (Sept.-Oct.) and

Snow Buntings (Nov.-Dec.) are sometimes seen. Watch for Dunlin, Sanderlings, and Black-bellied Plovers from fall through late spring. Scan the loons, grebes, gulls, and waterfowl offshore. Black Brant are sometimes seen, especially in spring.

The salt marsh across the Nicomekl River mouth, opposite Blackie Spit, is used by loafing gulls and Great Blue Herons at high tide, and may teem with shorebirds at times. Harbour Seals haul out regularly on certain islets. There is no public access to this area; view it by telescope from Blackie Spit. Do NOT attempt to cross on the railway trestle.

The shallow, sheltered waters off the east side of the spit are attractive to wintering dabbling ducks. Look for Eurasian Wigeon, and occasionally the Eurasian race of Green-winged Teal, among the other ducks. Shorebirds and gulls like to rest in the small salt marsh along the east side of the spit. The common gulls are Glaucous-winged (resident), Mew (winter), and Ring-billed (summer). In fall (Aug.-Oct.), look for the rare Franklin's Gull among the flocks of Bonaparte's. California Gulls are spring and fall migrants. In winter, look for a Herring Gull among the Thayer's. Watch for Caspian Terns (May-Sept.) and Common Terns (Aug.- Sept.).

Farther south along the east side of Blackie Spit is a small tidal pond, surrounded by small trees which attract sparrows and finches in winter and warblers in spring and fall. At low tide, it is possible to continue walking along the shore, across the narrow channel which drains the pond, but at high tide, you may have to detour around the west side of the pond. In either case, after crossing an open, sandy area, you will reach "Farm Slough", a shallow backwater of the Nicomekl River at the southeastern corner of Blackie Spit. At the optimal tidal levels (about 11 feet to 13 feet), this sheltered slough is often full of shorebirds and/or ducks. One of the best viewing spots is on the north side of the slough's mouth, marked by a row of low pilings, remnants of a bygone oyster cannery. From this point, behind a sheltering screen of broom, one may scan both Farm Slough and the adjacent Nicomekl estuary. Summer and early fall produces the greatest variety of shorebirds, but some species are present all year. Small flocks of Greater Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitchers can usually be found in winter. A few non-breeding Whimbrel may linger in the vicinity all summer. A few Semipalmated Sandpipers may be found in late summer among the abundant Western Sandpipers. Such locally-rare shorebirds as Willet, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, and Long-billed Curlew have all been seen here on a number of occasions.

On the south side of "Farm Slough", a path leads along the wooded dyke bordering the slough, which is a good area for passerines. It joins the jogging trail on a parallel dyke on the southern side of the slough's mouth. Turning right (southwest), walk along an unnamed road which parallels the railroad tracks on the far side of the Dunsmuir farm. Scan the field for Northern Shrikes in winter. The road is lined by tall Lombardy poplars, which may harbour Northern Orioles, and by dense shrub thickets. Watch the tall trees up the hillside, and listen, for Pileated Woodpeckers, Band-tailed Pigeons, and Steller's Jays.

The Blackie Spit-Crescent Beach area is heavily used by people and dogs at times, and the "leash law" is often ignored, causing

much disturbance to birds. Birding can sometimes be almost impossible on weekends and on calm, sunny days.

Washrooms, open all year from 8 A.M. to sundown, are located at the foot of Beecher Avenue in Crescent Beach. The White Rock & Surrey Naturalists operate an information centre here on weekends from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M., October through May, and a bird checklist for Blackie Spit is available.

#### HOW TO REACH BLACKIE SPIT

To reach Blackie Spit from Vancouver, take Highway 99 south, past Mud Bay, and take the White Rock/Crescent Beach exit onto Highway 99A (King George Highway). On 99A, turn right (west) at the first traffic light onto Crescent Road. About 5 km from 99A, Crescent Road drops down a hill and crosses a railroad track; at a V-intersection just beyond the tracks, bear right onto Sullivan Street. Turn right again onto McBride Ave., the last road before

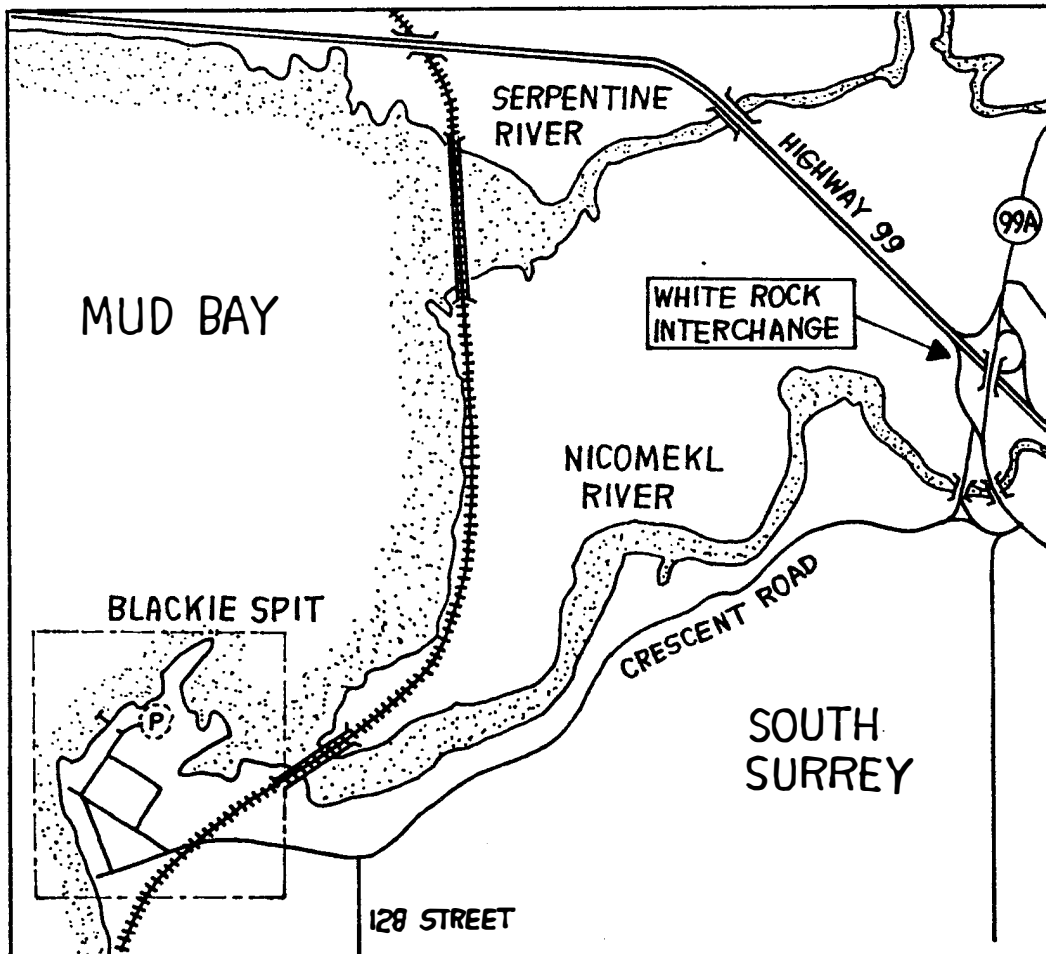


Figure 1. Map of approaches to Blackie Spit, Surrey, B.C.

the beach. The parking area is at the north end of McBride, but is open only from 8 A.M. to dusk; if you arrive before 8:00, park outside and walk in. Another place with room to park a few cars is on Dunsmuir Ave., off Sullivan; this is the closest access point to "Farm Slough".

Blackie Spit can also be reached by the Crescent Beach bus (#351), which provides express service from Vancouver to Sullivan and McBride. Service is every half-hour on weekdays, and hourly during evenings, weekdays, and holidays.

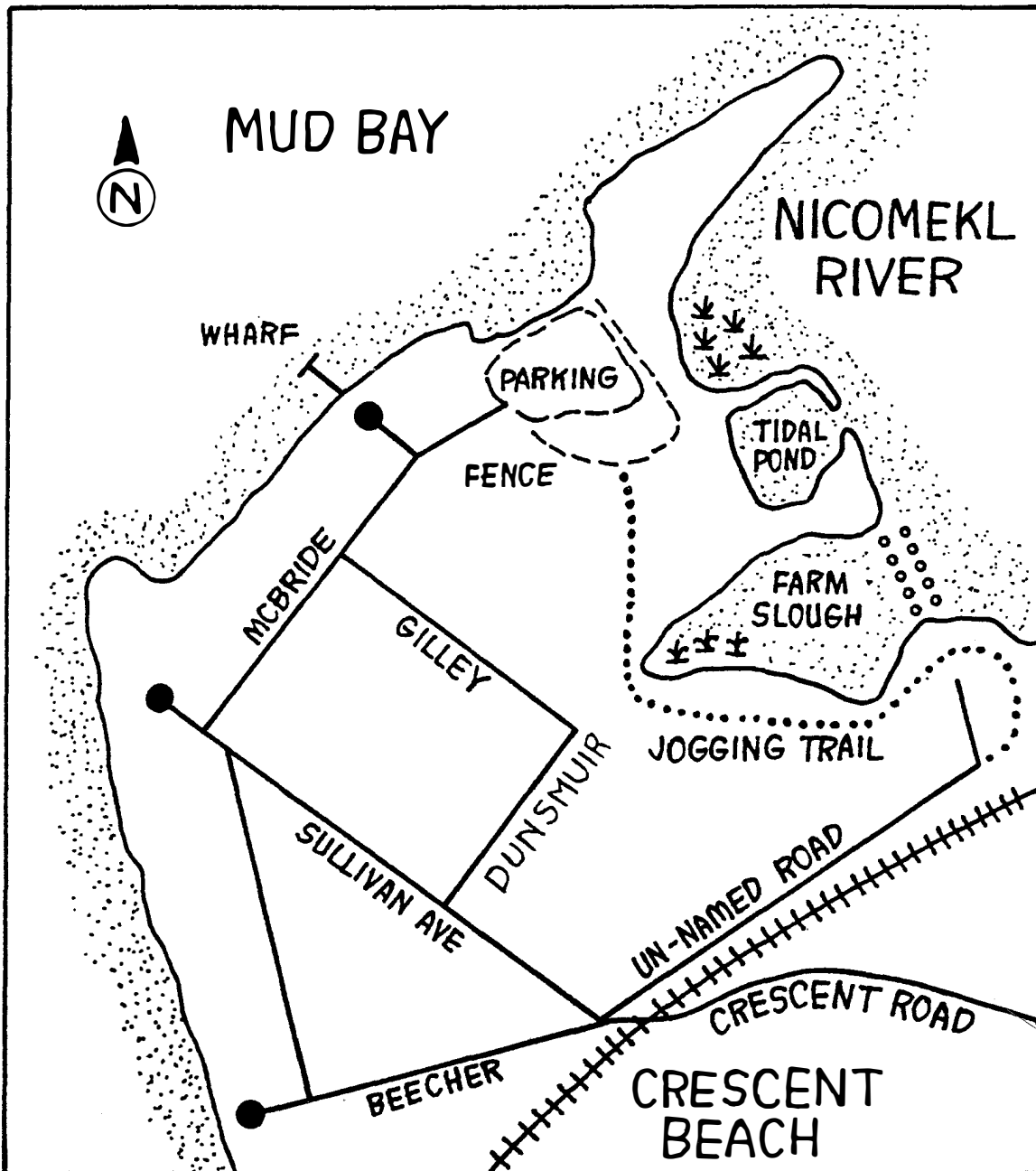


Figure 2. Map of Blackie Spit area, Surrey, B.C.

## SEABIRD TRIPS FROM WESTPORT, WASHINGTON - 1991

20 April (*Pterodroma* try) 4 May (Spring migration)

Fall migration: 13 July 27 July 10 August 17 August 24 August

6 September 7 September 8 September 10 September 5 October 6 October

Since 1966 we have made over 160 trips to the Grays Canyon area 35-40 miles offshore. Species recorded seasonally include Black-footed and Laysan albatrosses, Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed, Flesh-footed, Buller's, Sooty and Short-tailed shearwaters, Fork-tailed and Leach's storm-petrels, Red and Red-necked phalaropes, all 3 jaegers and South Polar Skua, 14 species of gulls including Black-legged Kittiwake and Sabine's Gull, Caspian, Common and Arctic terns, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled, Ancient and Xantus' murrelets, Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets and Tufted Puffin. Many others - pelagics, loons, cormorants, sea ducks, shorebirds, migrant landbirds, cetaceans and other marine mammals, sea turtles, sharks and other animals are seen in season. Though not all species occur on every trip, we typically have lots of animals!

Sea conditions, visibility and weather may vary greatly. We leave about 6 a.m. and return about 4 p.m. Photography is usually possible. Seasickness is known to occur. Several well-known locations for finding migrant landbirds and shorebirds are near Westport, and many seabirds are seen from shore and the Grays Harbor jetties.

Early reservations are advisable. Send check for \$59 per person and confirmation will be sent within a few days. Please make checks payable to T.R. Wahl.

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T.R. Wahl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham WA 98225 (206)733-8255

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ places on the boat trip of \_\_\_\_\_ from Westport, Washington.

name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

city \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_

phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_