

BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

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The **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** is published four times a year by **British Columbia Field Ornithologists, PO Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7**. A subscription to this periodical is a benefit of membership in the society. Members will also receive a copy of the annual journal, **British Columbia Birds**.

Send material for publication in any format (mail, phone, FAX, print, IBM WordPerfect files on discs, etc.) to the Editors (name, address and phone no. page 2). We especially welcome bird-finding information for the "Site Guide" series & articles about birdwatching experiences, preferably (but not necessarily) in British Columbia.

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

Membership dues: Individual memberships or library subscriptions, \$20.00; junior memberships (age under 18), \$10.00; Family memberships (two or more persons at one address), \$25.00; U.S. and foreign memberships, \$20.00 (U.S.). Memberships are for the calendar year. For further information, or to join, write to Michael Shepard, Membership, **British Columbia Field Ornithologists, PO Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7**.

Editors for the **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**: A. & M. Buhler
Distribution of **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**: Allen Wiseley

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS

Well, the summer seems to have flown by without leaving us much opportunity to get in any birding. However, in late spring we were at Witty's Lagoon and we saw a banded Western Sandpiper. We noted the appropriate data and sent the sighting to Rob Butler at CWS. That bird had been banded in Western Panama -- 9000 km away!

This weekend we were able to witness the other end of bird banding. Michael Shepard asked us if we would like to assist with some bird banding at Rocky Point. Unaware that banders are actually a variant species of owlers, we readily agreed. "Great", said Michael, "meet at Helmcken park and ride at 4:30 -- AM!!!" Still, it was good fun. We learned a lot about mist nets, wing formulae, moulting records, Downy Woodpecker's strong pecking ability and the entanglements of Marsh Wrens.

In this issue Laurie Rockwell and Madelon Schouten provide us with some other interesting projects which might help expand your birding beyond just "twitching". David Pearce reports on a new Wildlife Observation System program he has developed which will have utility province-wide and a potential for international application. Dick Cannings and Eva Durance fill us in on the busy month of May in the Okanagan. May was also busy in Kamloops with our 4th AGM but, except for the summary on pages 4-5, nobody seems to have written up anything about field trips or lectures. Offers anyone?? Send your submissions to the Editors.

"The BCFO Rare Birds Committee is alive and well." See pages 5-7 for reports. See also NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS for book bargains, sightings wanted, trips, and CBC information. Please send your 1994-95 CBC dates and contacts to the Editors ASAP.

Alan Macleod has written a great seasonal SITE GUIDE for Martindale Flats. Thanks very much, Alan -- now what about a few more of you interior and northern birders following suit? See Hue MacKenzie's important letter (page 20) about getting involved in YOUR Society. Direction and input must come from the members to keep the Society viable. Marian Porter, your President, has asked us to tell all members that there will be a Society questionnaire (see pg 5) coming out soon. Directors need to know what each member expects from membership. Please let them know!

Too late to classify: an unopened copy of Birds of British Columbia is available for sale (\$100). Contact Laurie Rockwell (address pg 14). ☺

BCFO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 1994-1995

<u>President:</u>	Marian Porter	531-5747 14831 Buena Vista Ave, White Rock, BC V4B 1X3
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UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

compiled by Wayne C Weber

- Sept. 9-11, 1994 **Oregon Shorebird Festival**, Charleston, OR, featuring pelagic trips, shorebirding field trips, and keynote speaker. For information write Cape Arago Audubon Society, PO Box 381, North Bend, OR 97459 or phone Lyn Topits at (503) 267-7208.
- Sept. 16-18, 1994 **Washington Ornithological Society Annual Meeting**, Ocean Park, WA (close to Leadbetter Point, an outstanding shorebird spot). For details contact Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) at PO Box 85786, Seattle, WA 98145 or phone Tom Schooley at (206) 357-8851.
- Sept. 16-18, 1994 **Western Bird-Banding Association Annual Meeting**, Ashland, OR. For information contact Dennis Vroman, 269 Shetland Drive, Grant's Pass, OR 97526 or phone (503) 476-3830 (days).
- Sept. 21-25, 1994 **The Wildlife Society First Annual Conference**, Albuquerque, NM. For details contact The Wildlife Society, 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814 or phone (301) 897-9770.
- Sept. 23-25, 1994 **Western Field Ornithologists Annual Meeting**, Morro Bay, CA. For details: Robert McKernan, 1230 Friar Lane, Redlands, CA 92373.
- Sept. 23-25, 1994 **Oregon Field Ornithologists Fall Birding Weekend**, Malheur NWR, Princeton, OR. For details contact Sheran Jones, 9785 SW Ventura Court, Tigard, OR 97223 or phone (503) 246-5594.
- Sept. 29 to
Oct. 2, 1994 **Federation of B.C. Naturalists Fall General Meeting**, Cedar Beach Resort, Salt Spring Island. For information contact the FBCN at #321-1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6H 4A9/ph (604) 737-3057.
- Oct. 22-26, 1994 **Symposium on Urban Wildlife**, Bellevue, WA. For information write Lowell Adams, National Institute for Urban Wildlife, Trotting Ridge Way, Columbia, MD 21044 or phone (301) 596-3311.
- Nov. 2-6, 1994 **Colonial Waterbird Society 18th Annual Meeting**, Wrightsville Beach, NC. For information write Dr. James Parnell, Department of Biological Sciences, University of North Carolina, College Road, Wilmington, NC 28403 or phone (910) 395-3477.
- Nov. 3-6, 1994 **Raptor Research Foundation Annual Meeting**, Flagstaff, AZ. For details contact Patricia A. Hall, 436 E David Drive, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 or phone (602) 774-0041.
- Nov. 5-6, 1994 **Snow Goose Festival** at Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Delta, BC. Come help celebrate the return of the wintering Snow Geese and other waterfowl. Phone Sanctuary office @ (604) 946-6980.
- Dec. 17, 1994 -
Jan. 2, 1995 **95th Annual Christmas Bird Count** sponsored by the National Audubon Society. A detailed listing of scheduled counts in BC including contact names & phone numbers will be in the BCFO December issue.
- Jan. 7-11, 1995 **American Birding Association Regional Conference**, San Diego, CA. For details write American Birding Association at PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934 or phone toll-free 1-800-835-2473.
- Jan. 10-15, 1995 **8th North American Arctic Goose Meeting & Workshop**, Albuquerque, NM. Contact Evan Couch, Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC V3A 1S4 or phone (604) 291-4475.
- Jan. 10-15, 1995 **Pacific Seabird Group 22nd Annual Meeting**, San Diego, CA. Contact William T. Everett, Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93012. Includes a symposium on "Island Restoration and Seabird Enhancement". ☐

SOCIETY NEWS

**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
14 MAY 1994**

The Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists was held at the University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops on May 14, 1994, convening at 2:45 pm. The following is a summary of the meeting.

1. Introduction

The president, Mike McGrenere, welcomed the members to the business meeting and asked that everyone take copies of the information handouts which would be discussed during the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 1993 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Mike McGrenere indicated that the minutes of the 1993 AGM were published in the June 1993 issue of **BCFO** 3(2): 4-5. Brian Self moved acceptance of the minutes, Lloyd Esralson seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

3. Constitution and Bylaw Amendments

Mike McGrenere mentioned that the proposed changes to the constitution and bylaws were outlined in the March 1994 issue of **BCFO** 4(1): 4. He explained that parts of our bylaws were not in accordance with the Society Act and that the changes were requested by the Registrar of Companies. There was a brief discussion of the changes, the major change being to Bylaw #6 with the deletion of the reference that a family membership was entitled to two votes at any meeting. Tony Greenfield moved acceptance of the changes as outlined in the **BCFO** newsletter, Jo Ann MacKenzie seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted. Mike McGrenere will now forward the new bylaws and constitution to the Registrar of Companies for acceptance.

4. Financial Report

A financial report for 1993 was produced by our treasurer, John Dorsey, and was available for the information of members (see below). Mike McGrenere explained that there was approximately \$2000 remaining from 1992 which would be used to publish and mail the 1992 issue of the journal. The balance of the 1993 revenue (\$2332.50) would be used for the 1993 issue of the journal. Mike McGrenere explained that the financial report must be forwarded to the Registrar of Companies within six months of the date of the report. This will affect the timing of our annual general meetings since the financial report must be accepted by the membership. Wayne Weber suggested that the **BCFO** seek status as a charitable organization under the federal government. Hue MacKenzie moved acceptance of 1993 financial report, Bruce Whittington seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

5. Membership Report

Mike McGrenere reported that the membership total for 1993 was between 280 and 285 (exact total not available at meeting because of some recent 1993 renewals.)

6. Report on Newsletter (British Columbia Field Ornithologist)

Marilyn Buhler (co-editor) reported that 18 people submitted articles during 1993. More letters to the Editors are needed. Marilyn thanked the members for rallying to our empty January "in-basket". The Buhlers were given a loud round of applause for the excellent effort in editing the newsletter.

7. Report on the Journal

Wayne Weber, editor of British Columbia Birds, reported that the 1991 issue was mailed out in August 1993. The 1992 issue should be mailed out by the end of May to the 1992 members of **BCFO**. Wayne asked for some additional short articles for the 1993 and 1994 issues. He explained that the lack of experience in putting a journal together was causing delays as well as a shortage of time to commit to journal production. He reported that an editorial board, which would oversee the content, had been set up for the journal. The editorial board is comprised of Wayne, Martin McNicholl, Chris Siddle and Mary Tait. He stressed that someone was required as a production editor for the journal. He submitted a longer report for the Board of Directors.

FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Continued

Mike McGrenere indicated that the Board of the BCFO intended to place a survey questionnaire in a future issue of the newsletter or journal to seek member's opinions on the content, format and timing of our publications. The publication of a journal has been very difficult and the Board would like to receive information from our membership on our publications. The results of the questionnaire would be placed in the newsletter.

8. Birds Records Committee

Gary Davidson, chair of the committee, explained the operation of the committee. The 1992 annual report of the committee will soon be written. He indicated that good documentation is required when submitting records. The committee reviewed approximately 20 submissions in 1993. A question was asked about the publication of a provincial checklist but this has not yet been discussed.

9. BCFO Award Proposal

Wayne Weber submitted the following motion to the membership regarding the BCFO award:

That the Board of the B.C. Field Ornithologists establish an annual award to be known as the "B.C. Field Ornithologists' Recognition Award", to be presented each year at the Annual General Meeting; that the award be for outstanding long-term contributions to the public appreciation, knowledge, and/or conservation of birds in BC, to a member or non-member of BCFO; and that the Board appoint an awards committee of at least 3 persons to recommend a recipient each year. Martin McNicholl seconded the motion. After some discussion the motion was approved.

10. President's Report

Mike McGrenere thanked retiring directors Wayne Weber and Rick Howie for their participation on the Board. Wayne has been the vice-president of the BCFO since its inception and was instrumental in establishing the BCFO. He has also been the editor of both the newsletter and journal as well as handling the membership and treasurer's duties for the Society. Rick has been on the Board for two years and is the first director from the interior of the province.

Mike indicated that some of the achievements of the BCFO for 1993 were the production of the first issue of British Columbia Birds and the excellent financial reporting from our treasurer, John Dorsey. He stated that the purpose of the BCFO should be further discussed to become more involved in the study of birds through cooperative research projects with government agencies.

11. Election of Directors for 1994

The following members indicated a willingness to serve as directors for 1994/95 and were elected by acclamation. They are John Dorsey, Lloyd Esralson, Tony Greenfield, Mike McGrenere, Martin McNicholl, Ken Morgan, Marian Porter, Michael Shepard and Allen Wisely.

At the banquet, Mike McGrenere thanked Marian Porter and Rick Howie for their significant contribution in organizing this AGM. Tom Dickenson was thanked for arranging the facilities. Thanks was also extended to field trip leaders, speakers and to everyone involved in making this Fourth AGM such a success.

BCFO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

The BCFO Rare Birds Committee is alive and well. The 1992 Annual Report is complete and will be published shortly. There are still two outstanding rare bird reports for 1993, as soon as they are settled the 1993 Annual Report will be written.

In 1992 we received 18 reports and found 14 of them to be acceptable. In 1992 we have already dealt with 26 records, of which 19 were accepted. It should be noted that some records that were "rejected" were done so due to inadequate documentation, not due to mis-identification. For example, a detailed report that went to great lengths to describe how a kingbird was a Tropical and not a Western, failed to consider Couch's.

The following is a copy of the current Review List, the revised Rules & Procedures, and the Goals and Objectives. For Rare Bird Report Forms contact Committee below.

BCFO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REVIEW LIST

Any person seeing any of the following species, or any species not on the current BC Checklist, is requested to complete a **RARE BIRD REPORT** form and submit it to:

BCFO Rare Birds Committee
c/o Gary Davidson
P.O. Box 294
Nakusp, BC V0G 1R0

Clark's Grebe	Bar-Tailed Godwit	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Short-tailed Albatross	Rufous-necked Stint	Scrub Jay
Mottled Petrel	Little Stint	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Black-vented Shearwater	Temminck's Stint	Northern Wheatear
Red-faced Cormorant	Curlew Sandpiper	Brown Thrasher
Magnificent Frigatebird	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	Yellow Wagtail
Least Bittern	Common Black-headed Gull	Black-backed Wagtail
Snowy Egret	Slaty-backed Gull	Red-throated Pipit
Little Blue Heron	Great Black-backed Gull	Loggerhead Shrike
White-faced Ibis	Ross' Gull	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Wood Stork	Ivory Gull	Blackburnian Warbler
Fulvous Whistling Duck	Elegant Tern	Painted Redstart
Baikal Teal	Aleutian Tern	Scarlet Tanager
Garganey	Kittlitz's Murrelet	Indigo Bunting
Common Eider	Xantu's Murrelet	Dickcissel
Steller's Eider	Parakeet Auklet	Green-tailed Towhee
Smew	Crested Auklet	Black-throated Sparrow
Broad-winged Hawk	White-winged Dove	Sage Sparrow
Ferruginous Hawk	Black-billed Cuckoo	Lark Bunting
Eurasian Kestrel	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Mountain Quail	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	McCown's Longspur
Common Moorhen	Costa's Hummingbird	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Whooping Crane	Red-headed Woodpecker	Rustic Bunting
Snowy Plover	Acadian Flycatcher	McKay's Bunting
Spotted Redshank	Black Phoebe	Great-tailed Grackle
Terek Sandpiper	Tropical Kingbird	Brambling
Bristle-thighed Curlew	Thick-billed Kingbird	Lesser Goldfinch
Far Eastern Curlew	Gray Kingbird	[listings revised July 1994]

BCFO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Rules and Procedures [revised September 1993]

1. The chairperson will circulate, on a regular basis, copies of reports submitted.
2. Committee members will critically review each report and return their ballots, with rationale, within one month of date of receipt.
3. Where possible, each member should decide on his/her vote without consultation with other committee members. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to consult non-committee members.
4. Records receiving fewer than two negative votes will be immediately accepted. Records receiving more than two negative votes will not be accepted. Records receiving exactly two negative votes will be recirculated to all members with copies of each member's first round comments.
5. Any record may be recirculated if new information becomes available.
6. Acceptance or rejection of records shall be based on ballots that reach the chairperson by the deadline. A minimum of four ballots is required. Ballots reaching the chairperson after a decision has been reached, may be considered if they contain information deemed relevant by the chairperson.
7. Any member who misses two consecutive deadlines, shall be asked to resign.
8. The chairperson will notify all contributors whose records are not accepted.
9. The chairperson will submit an Annual Report to the BCFO Executive Committee.
10. Vacancies on the Committee will be filled by nomination from the remaining members of the Committee. If more than one nomination is received, the chairperson will poll the committee members.

BCFO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE ContinuedGoals and Objectives [June 1992]

1. To maintain a Review List of bird species requiring documentation in BC.
2. To review all submitted records of species on the Review List.
3. To maintain a permanent file of all submitted records.
4. To make available all data to any agency updating the provincial bird checklist.
5. To encourage documentation of unusual birds and to standardize reporting procedures. ◊

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SANDHILL CRANE INFORMATION NEEDED. A Status Report on the Sandhill Crane in British Columbia is being prepared for the BC Wildlife Branch during 1994. Status Reports are used to guide management of species at risk in BC. Birders who would like to contribute to this project will be gratefully acknowledged in the report. Information on breeding localities, habitat use, migrant staging areas, nests, eggs, and young are needed for the period 1990-1994. Because of the lack of data on breeding sites, even one record of confirmed/possible breeding is important. Recent data on timing and location of migratory movements and use of staging areas would also be appreciated. All records should include date, locality (as precise as possible), numbers, evidence of breeding or possible breeding, and description of habitat if available. Send observations of cranes to: John Cooper, 1278 Laurel Road, RR3, Sydney, BC V8L 5K8. Tel: 656-7848, FAX: 656-7669, E-mail: ui624@freenet.victoria.bc.ca.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE B.C. NEST RECORD PROGRAM please remember to mail your completed nest record cards for 1994 by October 1, if possible, to: Margaret Harris, P.O. Box 10, Penticton, BC V2A 6J9. Phone (604) 492-8958.

THE B.C. BEACHED BIRD SURVEY could still use additional volunteers to survey shorelines for bird carcasses, especially in the Queen Charlotte Islands and the northern mainland coast. Interested persons contact: Dr Alan Berger at 5012 Old West Saanich Road, RR#3, Victoria, BC V8X 3X1 or phone (604) 479-2446.

PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM WESTPORT, WASHINGTON scheduled for September 1, 10, 11, 16 & 24; and October 8 & 9. Cost \$70 (US) per person. For information, or to make a reservation, write T. R. Wahl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham, WA 98225, or phone (206) 733-8255. Spaces fill up quickly, so reserve early!

PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM UCLUELET, BC are operated by the Western Institute of Global Studies (WIGS), 1241 Broad Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2A4. These trips are organized by Michael and Cynthia Shepard. Scheduled dates for 1994 are September 3, October 8, and November 12. Costs of these trips vary from \$120 to \$160, depending on the date; however, early booking discounts of \$10 to \$30 are available, and an additional \$10 discount is offered to members of WIGS. For information write WIGS at the address above, or phone 388-4227.

SPECIAL BOOK PRICE FOR MEMBERS. Derek Hayes of Cavendish Books is offering The Bird, Master of Flight by C.J.O. Harrison to BCFO members for \$32.05 (\$29.95 + P&H + GST). [Suggested retail \$37.95, originally published at \$60.] It is a profusely illustrated and comprehensive account of bird biology, written by a writer known for his ability to convey accurate scientific detail in lay language. Book can be ordered by phone (604) 985-2969 or FAX (604) 985-2955. Identify yourself as a BCFO member for discount price. [Martin K. McNicholl]

PUBLICATION BACK ISSUES FOR SALE. If you would like back issues of the journal, British Columbia Birds (Vol. 1, 1991, or Vol. 2, 1992) please send a cheque for \$8.00 per copy (includes postage) to: **Hue MacKenzie**, 15341 21st Avenue, South Surrey, BC V4A 6A8. Some back issues of the newsletter, the **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**, are available and can be ordered for \$2.00 per issue (\$8.00 for annual set of 4 issues) from **Allen Wiseley**, 1881 Grandview Drive, Victoria, BC V8N 2T8. Make cheques payable to BC Field Ornithologists.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Continued

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH is a continent-wide program which is designed to measure changes in numbers of birds visiting feeding stations. It is organized in the U.S. by the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University, and in Canada by the Long Point Bird Observatory. Project FeederWatch now has more than 8000 participants, including over 1000 in Canada. Participants pay a small annual fee to help finance the cost of data analysis, and receive a semi-annual newsletter which reports the latest results.

Participants do not need to be expert birders, as long as they can identify the species common in their yards. Observers record the peak number of each species seen at their feeders during two-day periods, every second week from November to April. The results document the percentage of feeders visited by each species, the average abundance, and changes in these values between and within seasons. Long-term data should help to detect the reasons for such changes.

To take part in Project FeederWatch, write the Long Point Bird Observatory, PO Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, NOE 1M0. FeederWatch data may be obtained for a small retrieval fee from D. Tessaglia, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850, USA.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS. Once again, we are approaching the Christmas season. As usual, we plan to publish a list of dates and contacts for as many BC counts as possible in the next issue. If you are the organizer or compiler of a CBC, please help our phone bill by sending the date and contact for your CBC when you establish them to **BCFO** Editors, preferably before November 20, 1994.

If you would like to start a new Christmas Bird Count this year, please contact Dick Cannings for advice at 3007 W 7th Ave, Vancouver, BC V6K 1Z7. Phone (604) 734-9489. Dick writes summaries of results in Audubon Field Notes (formerly American Birds) and the BC Naturalist. We strongly encourage groups to submit their count results for publication in Audubon Field Notes, published by the National Audubon Society. However, even if your group does not plan to publish the results, Dick would appreciate a copy of them. Recommended Christmas Count dates this season are between 17 December 1994 and 2 January 1995.¶

NINTH ANNUAL OKANAGAN BIG DAY CHALLENGE
22 MAY 1994

by Dick Cannings
3007 W 7th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6K 1Z7

It was a perfect day for birding -- clear, calm and warm. Eleven teams made up of 38 participants took part in the ninth annual Okanagan Big Day Challenge this year. At the stroke of midnight on May 22, twenty-four hours of frantic birding began with owling in the moonlight (and every Common Poorwill and Yellow-breasted Chat in BC was singing too!) and finished with scanning lakes with fatigued eyes for rare ducks and combing fields for the now-rare Short-eared Owl. After a well-earned rest, birders gathered on Monday morning at the Bishop Bird Sanctuary on Kalamalka Lake, where Mary Collins hosted a sumptuous brunch and everyone traded tales about the previous day's adventures. The Deflated Dippers (Dick Cannings, Keith Riding, Christoph Rohner and Frederik Von Euler) came out on top this year with 163 species, while the Barred Cowbirds (Syd Cannings, George Clulow, Andrew Harcombe and Darrell Kapan) and the Washingtonians (Andy Stepniewski, Michael Carmody and Scott Ray) tied for second with 159. Charlesworths' Angels (Chris Charlesworth, Glenda Ross, Lois Moss and Joan Burbridge) took home the Oka-noggin for bird-of-the-day with a very late Rough-Legged Hawk, but balanced that with the Sour Grapes Award for missing Rufous Hummingbird. The Rough-legged Hawk was a new species for the event, as was a Loggerhead Shrike seen by the Washingtonians on the Colville Indian Reserve. The combined species total for the day was 192, and the total of all nine years is now 238 species. And to cap it off, about \$5000 was raised for the Nature Trust of BC's efforts to buy land for wildlife in the Okanagan!¶

**OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN BIRD COUNT:
NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART AND LIMB!!**

by Eva Durance
Box 5039
Penticton, BC V2A 8L8

Anybody who thinks that birding is a sedentary sport should be subjected to the rigours of the (now) annual count in Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park southwest of Kelowna: more precisely a flora and fauna count with the centrepiece the winged folk. This is a count almost exclusively by Shank's Pony -- and the shanks best be in good condition! The 10,500 ha wilderness park tests both the physical and bird-identification mettle of participants with a vengeance. The terrain is all either up or down (steeply) and much of it is densely forested. The trails are good, but most require fairly rigorous hiking and the heavy tree and brush cover often makes identification of birds by sound alone the only option. The range of habitats and elevations (from lake and bunchgrass-Ponderosa Pine habitat to over 5,000' and Interior Douglas Fir/Engelmann Spruce habitat), however, helps to distinguish among some species such as the wood warblers which have similar songs: Townsend's in the subalpine, MacGillivray's lower down in brushy habitat, with the ubiquitous Yellow-rumped, of course, confusing the matter!

Two other factors made the 1994 count a Park notable. For one, it was the third marathon birding in May: BCFO's annual general meeting in Kamloops, then the Okanagan Big Day Challenge [see pg 8], then this count. Secondly, the weather was most un-May-like with below-freezing temperatures in the higher elevations, at 5:00 am anyway, and cold winds later on. The birds, quite sensibly, woke the dawn hours with song -- and then about 8:00 am most shut up. It was not cheery weather.

The group of three I headed was driven up the Parks road to Divide Lake near the top at the unseasonable hour of 4:00 am by the ever-helpful South Okanagan District Manager for Parks, Don Gough. Stopping at intervals, we were treated to a Barred Owl barking vigorously at about 5:00 am followed shortly by a Great Horned Owl which managed only one faint sequence. Then the forest birds started and we quickly counted, among others, Solitary Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Dusky Flycatcher, our first of many Townsend's Warblers for the day, chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch (never did get a White-breasted Nuthatch), the ubiquitous Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rufous Hummingbird, and Veery -- though not all at the same spot! By the time we left the comfort of the Park's truck about 6:00 am, however, the temperature had dropped (elevation gain) and so had the number of birds singing. By 8:00 am you would have thought it was post-nesting season, except for the chill.

From our official start on the trail to Beaver Lake, the three of us tramped up and down for the next 12 hours; marvelled at the displays of flowers including patches of the dainty pink Calypso orchid half-concealed in the grasses and shaded areas, vivid purple Larkspur, paler purple of Penstemon douglasii's trumpets, and Lupin's stout stalks on the south-facing slopes intermingled with the sun-yellow of Arnica; counted more Townsend's Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Red Crossbills, Dark-eyed Juncos, chickadees, and Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers; heard and then saw a Northern Waterthrush in a small forest wetland; saw three Mule Deer does; missed the turnoff (unmarked!!) for the Wildhorse Canyon trail to the parking lot where we were to meet our compatriots from the South Okanagan Naturalists Club for a lift to the countup; got back on track; spent the next hour hustling along on increasingly tired feet to the lot, and noting in passing the Rufous-sided Towhee we had been lacking; sat for an hour waiting for our ride; got back to countup party after it had been closed down due to cold, rain, and general weariness; heard later of other birders' adventures when they had crossed a very windy Okanagan Lake in the Parks boat; heard also of successes, fun and general enthusiasm from everyone, including about the barbecue we had missed!

As in 1993, about 45 people took part. Ninety-four species were identified and 1862 individual birds counted. Fifteen species not found in 1993 turned up, including some quite uncommon ones: a Great Gray Owl (Laurie Rockwell), 'our' Barred Owl (Eva Durance, Peter Jones, Holly Johnston, and Doug Gough), a Pacific Loon AND a Double-crested Cormorant (Chris Charlesworth, Denise Brownlie, Gwynneth Wilson, Lesley Robertson, and Andy & Marilyn Buhler). The last-mentioned group also accounted for the great majority of the amazing 39 Calliope Hummingbirds seen. Rattle-snakes and coyotes were also noted on a few lists.

OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN BIRD COUNT Continued

In short, this was a memorable bird count which we are looking forward to repeating (sans cold, wind, and missed trails of course) next May. Anyone who is interested in a test of fitness AND birding/plant identification ability, contact either Central Okanagan or South Okanagan Naturalist Clubs in April or early May. Plan now for next year's "blitz". You will be welcomed.

EDITORS' NOTE: We had a much more pleasant day than Eva; easy trails, good company, lots of birds, interesting nesting sites and, though the weather was a bit cool, the Okanagan birders surely weren't. Just like last year, we got a warm welcome & great birding. Oh, Cec, we did not 'plant' the loon and cormorant. We were as surprised as the rest of you when they turned up along our route! ☺

GUIDELINES FOR SITE GUIDES

Site Guides should be about 2-3 pages in length. They should include a map (hand-drawn is fine) with distances to viewing areas clearly indicated from the starting point. Landmarks and terrain should be noted, along with the birds seen in season. Any unusual or special species should be given and a local contact person is always helpful information. Hazards and closed areas should also be indicated so that we may all experience safe birding. Items of historical or geological interest along the route should also be noted. Many birders are interested in a broad range of natural history areas and it is nice to be able to stimulate the grey cells while patiently and quietly awaiting the possible appearance of an elusive lifebird. ☺

SITE GUIDE: THE MARTINDALE VALLEY, SOUTHEAST VANCOUVER ISLAND

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The *Globe & Mail's* Peter Whelan has written of its magic and called it the "... richest Christmas-count route in Canada". Twice it has produced a hundred species for Christmas bird counters. It regularly attracts scarcities, strays and stragglers for listers. 'It' is the Martindale Valley of southeastern Vancouver Island, off Highway 17 about half way between the Swartz Bay ferry terminal and the city of Victoria.

Martindale Valley is defined here as the area bounded by Island View Road on the north, Highway 17 on the west, Welch Road on the east and Dooley Road on the south. Martindale Road divides the area in half. From the north, access is via Island View Road or Martindale Road; from the south, by Welch Road via Brookleigh. From north to south the area covers about three kilometers. The valley is adjacent to the Island View Beach area, whose birding riches are well catalogued by Bruce Whittington in Volume 2, No. 3/4 of *BCFO*. This article in combination with Bruce's should give a visiting birder more than enough to fill a day of birding.

The Martindale Valley -- or "Martindale Flats" as the area is known by local birders -- is agricultural country; apart from wooded areas along the highway and the fenceline hedgerows that trace boundaries between land holdings, the area is wide open -- you can see a long way. Even without birds this is a nice place to go for a walkabout. In growing season much of the valley is under corn and various vegetable crops. All of it is privately owned; it is essential that birders respect the few no-trespassing signs, stay on the perimeters of actively cultivated fields and ensure they have no negative impact on fields or crops. By and large farmers and landowners have not objected to birders; as long as we behave ourselves, we can live in hope that most of the flats will remain largely open to birding in future.

From late October to early spring *gumboots* are essential equipment for birding *Martindale Flats*. In winter much of the area is under water, drainage ditches have to be navigated and the birding routes identified here can be pretty mucky.

The accompanying map (pg 13) indicates -- by an encircled P -- five parking spots and points of access to the flats, together with suggested walking routes.

SITE GUIDE: THE MARTINDALE VALLEY ... Continued

Martindale is a mecca for great numbers and good diversity of wintering waterfowl and hawks. Some 170 bird species have been recorded in this small area. Thirty-four *Anseriformes* species, including Emperor Goose, have occurred in the Martindale zone of the Victoria Christmas count circle, which extends eastward from the area covered here to Cordova Bay. In spring and fall, Martindale has attracted an impressive list of island prizes, including Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Sandhill Crane, Northern Goshawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk and Gyrfalcon. Both Golden-plovers, Baird's Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper and Ruff are included among at least 24 shorebird species recorded at one time or another in the Martindale CBC zone. Passerine highlights include Tropical Kingbird, Palm Warbler, American Tree Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow and Bobolink. Some of these are one-of-a-kind sightings; others have been fairly regular in recent years.

Spring and Summer

At any time of year birding at Martindale is better than a day at the office, but the best times of year are fall -- especially late fall -- and winter. Spring migration is less productive here than elsewhere in the Victoria checklist area because of the shortage of woodland and 'edge' habitat. In early spring the still-wet flats are a good area to see swallows and the valley ponds and drainage ditches are reliable for producing some of the first Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal of the season. Occasionally in spring one or another of the several ponds in the flats produces a surprise such as Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, White-fronted Goose or Wilson's Phalarope. One spring day Bruce Whittington and I were astonished to find a thousand Band-tailed Pigeons on valley fields.

For visiting birders the valley's main spring attraction has been the skylarks. Martindale is one of the last areas on the Saanich Peninsula where one can still hear and see Eurasian Skylark. By March, males are courting and conducting their spectacular aerial song-and-dance routines high above the flats. By April, pairs are nesting, and I have found nestlings by mid-month.

During breeding season Martindale's fields are under intensive cultivation and hold little interest for birders looking for rarities or high species counts. There are rewards, however, for those with other interests. Ring-necked Pheasant populations have declined sharply on the Saanich Peninsula but this species still breeds in the valley. Barn Owls have bred in and near the valley and occasionally they have been seen hunting after nightfall over the flats.

Fall

The Martindale Valley is a fall stopover point for birds on their way to points south, most notably shorebirds and open-country songbirds. In past years, when farm ponds were more frequently drained for agricultural ends, the flats were especially good for shorebirds. Today the ponds often remain full year-round but the valley still helps to refuel southbound peeps, Pectoral Sandpipers and dowitchers and, occasionally, some of the more exotic shorebirds itemized above. Most years one or two Whimbrel make an appearance and later, after the fall rains have flooded fields, Common Snipe often return in numbers. On one November day I counted 78 in the southeast corner of the corn field south of Martindale Road.

Sandhill Cranes occasionally drop in and stay long enough to give listers one more item to add to their year totals. As for passerines, American Pipits gather in impressive numbers; look them over closely -- in 1992 Red-throated Pipit was found close by Martindale, in similar habitat. Yellow-rumped Warblers -- including surprisingly good numbers of the 'Myrtle' race -- migrate in small or not-so-small squadrons. In late September it is not strange to find groups of twenty or more in the hawthorn hedgerows skirting valley fields. Don't be surprised to flush two hundred Savannah Sparrows on a valley walkabout. In fall Lincoln's Sparrows are here, sometimes in good numbers. Thickets and the edges of the drainage ditches and ponds regularly turn up rarer treats: Swamp Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Grackle, and, once, a Bobolink, at the margin of the ditch running east from the L-Reservoir. Later in fall, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs run the birders' gauntlet; more often than not, Martindale is one of the areas in which they are found. Horned Larks also pass through and sometimes linger long enough to gratify CBC counters.

Winter

Winter is Martindale's 'prime time'. The cold, dark season provides a great feeding table for large numbers of waterfowl. In winter fourteen species of *Anseriformes* regularly depend on the larder left behind after fall harvest is done. American Wigeon and Mallard are the most numerous ducks, with Christmas Bird Counts sometimes producing 4,000 or more individuals of each species. A typical CBC will also yield hundreds of Canada Geese, one or two hundred Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal and smaller numbers of Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser and -- a Martindale 'specialty' -- Eurasian Wigeon.

Trumpeter Swan is another popular Martindale draw. As recently as a dozen years ago this once-endangered species was scarce on Martindale Christmas counts (none were recorded in the 1979 through 1981 counts). But Trumpeter numbers have risen and last winter up to 200 gathered and fed in fields on either side of Martindale Road where they provided a fine show for birders and nature-lovers. And for birders with patience and a good spotting scope, it is generally possible to find one or more Tundra Swans among their lookalike relatives. Snow Goose and White-fronted Goose are uncommon but regular in most winters.

Where there are ducks, there are 'duck hawks' too. Martindale is likely the best place in Victoria's checklist area to find Peregrine Falcon. One to three of these marvellous birds rule the roost in a typical winter. Sometimes a birder is lucky enough to see a Peregrine catch and kill a duck, and if that evidence isn't available as proof of their hunting prowess, something else is: the number of picked-clean duck carcasses you can find on a winter day.

A dozen or so years ago, for a period of three winters, Gyrfalcon was a regular visitor to the flats. It is more sporadic now but this big, beautiful falcon does show up once in a while. When one does, lucky birders have been treated more than once to a falcon 'grand slam' -- seeing Gyr, Peregrine, Merlin and American Kestrel on the same day, all the falcons that occur on Vancouver Island. A word of caution, though: captive birds are sometimes flown in the valley, so be watchful for falcons wearing jesses. Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and Cooper's Hawk are everyday raptors in winter; Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Goshawk are more unusual and not to be expected every year.

Duck throngs are not the only mobs to look for at Martindale in winter. Big flocks of Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds forage with starlings and Northwestern Crows, and occasionally a Rusty Blackbird or Brown-headed Cowbird shows up -- just to ensure you're paying attention. As for shorebirds, groups of Dunlin and Black-bellied Plover sometimes join the Killdeer and Common Snipe; rarely, a dowitcher lingers into winter.

Martindale boasts other winter specialties. Usually one or more Short-eared Owls can be counted on to make a winter appearance. They are typically flushed from or near the grassy fringes of one of the valley's drainage ditches. A couple of years ago, a Long-eared Owl was found in the teasel woodlot southeast of the model plane airstrip. Snowy Owl has been recorded, and it's no surprise: the flats are well suited to this species' habitat preferences; in their periodic 'invasion' years Snowies are as likely to turn up at Martindale as anywhere else on the peninsula.

One or two Northern Shrikes are present throughout the winter, competing for attention with the 20 to 30 Western Meadowlarks that make the valley home in winter. Skylarks are usually present in small numbers, identifiable by the 'chirrup' call they give on being flushed. They no longer appear in the big flocks they once did.

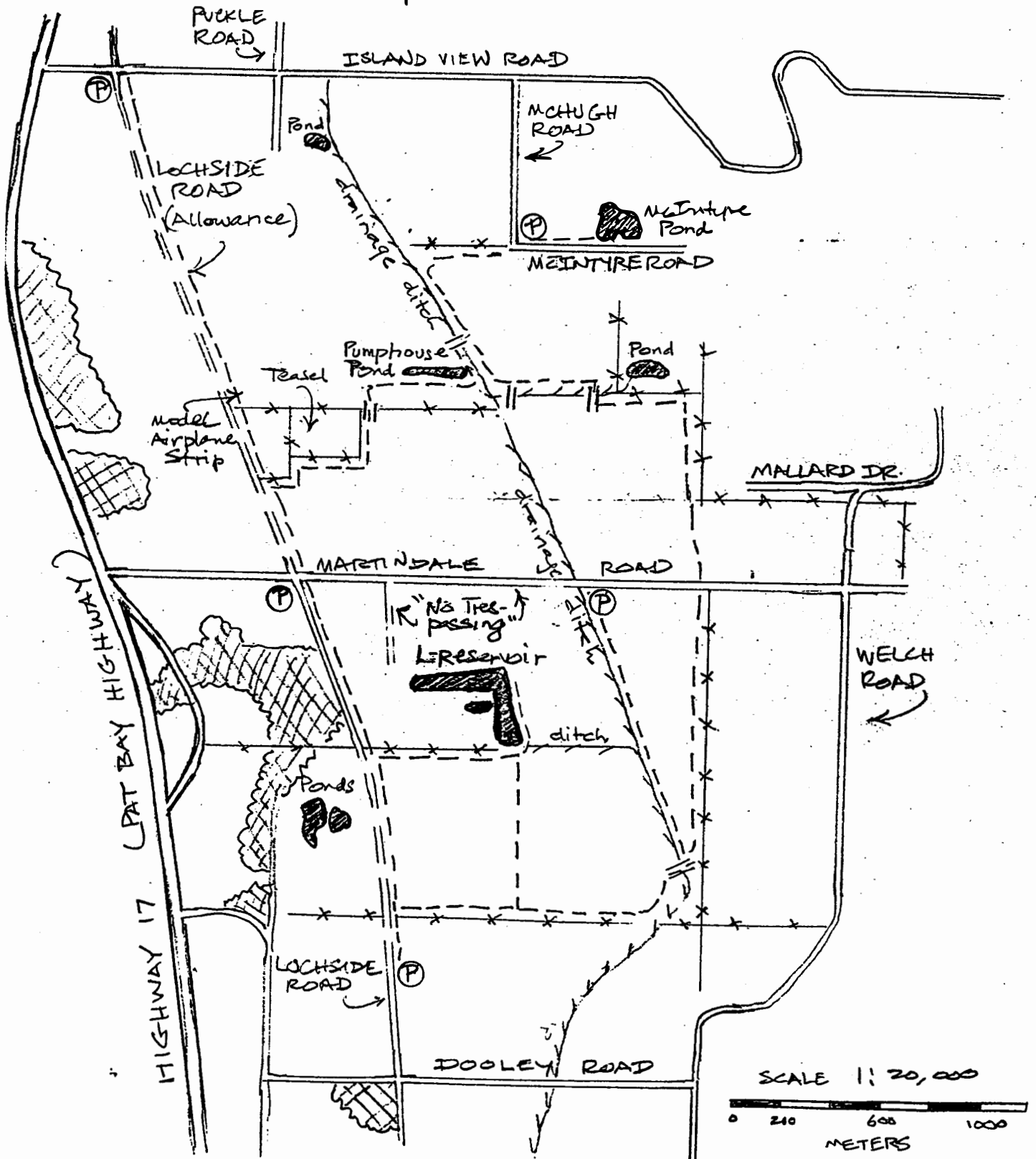
The Martindale Valley is a 'hot spot' for winter rarities. Almost every CBC produces something special to warm a counter's heart: Harris' Sparrow in 1993, Orange-crowned Warbler & American Tree Sparrow in 1992, Horned Lark & Swamp Sparrow in 1991, Mountain Bluebird in 1990, Snow Goose in 1989, Palm Warbler in 1988, Swamp Sparrow in 1987. The Martindale zone always produces a higher species count than others in the Victoria count circle, and reached a peak of 104 in 1990 and 1991.

The Martindale Valley deserves the attention Peter Whelan and others have given it. In all seasons, and in its many different faces, Martindale is a vital and beautiful oasis for a great number of migrant and breeding birds. ◻

MARTINDALE VALLEY

LEGEND:

- = fence
- = drainage ditch
- = walking route
- = Parking/Access
- = vloots
- = Pond



THE GRAY FLYCATCHER IN SUMMERLAND: A PERSONAL STORY

by I. Laurie Rockwell
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The Gray Flycatcher, *Empidonax wrightii*, is only known to breed in North America: generally in the Western United States, in four Mexican states and in the South Okanagan Valley of BC.

The first sighting in Canada was that of a vagrant found near Toronto, Ontario in 1981. In June 1984 there was a probable sighting along Camp McKinney Road east of Oliver, BC by Hue and Jo Ann MacKenzie. On May 18, 1986 Dick Cannings heard the distinctive 'chelep chelep -- chelep sweet' at the same site. On July 6, 1986 a pair was found nesting in the same area; by June 18 the nest had four eggs and one Brown-headed Cowbird egg (which was destroyed).

On June 14, 1986 Dick must have had a pleasant surprise when he discovered Gray Flycatchers (GRFL) singing in the Summerland area, about 50 km northwest of Oliver. In 1990 Al Preston located 51 birds between Oliver and west of Summerland; most of these had established territories. [Al Preston. Personal communication]

I arrived in the South Okanagan in October 1986, oblivious to all this and the special interest I would develop in this species within a few years. On May 17, 1987 I saw my first GRFL at the aforementioned site on Camp McKinney Road during my first Okanagan Big Day Challenge. This site is now a must for twitchers.

A Summerland resident since December 1986, I have made many perambulations in the area. Occasionally I used to hike behind the Summerland Research Station. On July 29, 1988 I sighted a pair of dull-gray birds that puzzled me at first. As I watched them it dawned on me that their size, shape and habits denoted a flycatcher. Heart pumping, I recorded the now distinctive features of *Empidonax wrightii*: light gray; indistinct eye-ring; long tail slowly pumped down; outer tail feathers edged in white; a relatively long, slim bill with a dark tip and orange mandible (this makes the head look proportionately small); the belly with a light yellow suffusion early in the breeding season.

Song/Call

Although distinguishing between Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers by song and call can prove frustrating, I have no problem distinguishing between Dusky and Gray Flycatchers, both of which inhabit the site mentioned above. To me the song of the Gray is distinctive. The song is usually quite emphatic as is the male's sharp 'whit' call. Cannings records the song as 'chelep chelep -- chelep sweet'; Kaufman, as 'chuwip' and an irregular 'teeah'; National Geographic as 'che-wip' or 'che-bit' followed by a liquid 'whilp'.

Not to be outdone by the pros, I have come up with my own copyrighted version: 'cheeip cheeip; cheeip cheeip chee (cheet)' with variations. I have also heard 'gleep' and a rapid high-pitched 'pee-up up(r)' reminiscent of a Say's Phoebe. I have heard young make a 'peep' or 'sweet' sound as well as a soft trill.

The Nest

The nest appears to form a deep cup. The one intact specimen I found measured about 6.25 cm deep by 7.5 cm x 6.25 cm (inside) and 8.75 cm x 12.5 cm (outside). The nest is loosely bound and relatively unstable. I have found one on the ground during the breeding season; nearby the parents fed a single flightless young. The nests disintegrate readily. Nests I located in a tree one year I have not found in the tree the following spring. Once on the ground they quickly break into small fragments, appearing more like forest duff because of the preponderance of pine needles. In my area old Ponderosa Pine needles are the basic construction material. I have also found grasses & small twigs as well as Pasture Sage (*Artemisia frigida*).

Despite the instability of the nest, I have never found eggs or dead young below the nest site, and have no evidence of predation; body fragments, feathers, foot prints, etc. I have cautiously speculated that periodic high winds which funnel through this valley may be a significant cause of nest destruction.

GRAY FLYCATCHER IN SUMMERLAND Continued

I have yet to determine if both male and female build the nest and if they have more than one brood per year. Given that the sexes are identical, banding may be one way to solve this dilemma.

Nest Site

The nests that I have found are located in a flat-bottomed valley that runs north-south, then SE to Penticton. This area is very dry. The typical vegetation consists of a Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)/Interior Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) association with a xerophytic understorey: Squaw Current (*Ribes cereum*); Pasture Sage (*Artemisia tridentata*); Buckbrush (*Ceanothus veluntinitis*); Balsam Root (*Balsamorhiza sagitata*); Saskatoon Berry (*Amelanchier cusikii*); Brown-Eyed Susan (*Gallardia aristata*); and a scattering of grasses.

This site was thinned in 1988. It is a very young, previously-logged forest with many openings and good visibility. Such a site would, of course, provide less resistance to the winds that I spoke of earlier. Unfortunately, all but the largest wildlife trees were cut down during thinning. Although flat-bottomed, the area is terraced on the east side. It is unfortunate, also, that removal of the railway track between Penticton and the Research Station has opened the east side of the area, despite a locked gate and fencing, to access by motor and mountain bikes.

Nest Location

All but two nests were found in young Ponderosa Pine. Those two were found in Douglas Fir. All were located about 1.5 to 5 meters from the ground with a mean height of 2.5 meters. Thus, generally, they allow fairly easy external observation, but they all but preclude internal observation of nest material, egg detail and so on. Tree diameter at chest height ranged from 12.5 cm to 25-30 cm (avg. 19.5 cm).

I have one record of the same tree [Douglas Fir], but not the same nest, being used for two consecutive seasons.

Most nests are located against the tree trunk, balanced on a small branch about 3.75 cm to 5.0 cm in diameter. Of course, this tends to make them unstable since there are no other supporting branches at this location on the tree.

Sibling Species and Interspecific Territoriality

As many of you are aware, *Empidonax* flycatchers are notoriously difficult to separate in the field. Often one has to rely on habitat & song. This is largely true with Dusky & Gray Flycatchers. Almost indistinguishable, they share the same habitat in my area, but are reproductively isolated. They are thus known as sibling species.

On June 3, 1992 I located a Dusky Flycatcher (DUFL) nest not more than 10 meters from a GRFL nest. Adults fed respective young without any obvious conflict. Both nests were about 2-3 meters from the ground; the GRFL in a Ponderosa Pine; the DUFL, in a Douglas Fir part way out on a limb, away from the trunk.

With such similar species living in the same habitat one might expect inter-specific conflict over available food and mates. One theory is that the species respect each other because of their similarities. It is also thought that similar habitat with restricted resources, notably food, ensures that each species cannot readily change.

My observations indicate that the DUFL forages primarily within the tree canopy. On the other hand, although I have seen the GRFL hawking from treetops, I more commonly see them foraging on the forest floor and lower tree limbs. In fact I rely on this habit of the GRFL, flying down to the ground and then up to a low limb or small shrub, to locate the nest.

Parasitism

Although there was evidence of cowbird parasitism at the Oliver site, and despite regular cowbird parasitism among the DUFL, I have thankfully found no such evidence at my site although cowbirds do frequent the site. I have, however, seen evidence of heavy blowfly larvae infestation after the birds have fledged, in the one complete nest I found.

GRAY FLYCATCHER IN SUMMERLAND ContinuedArrivals and Departures

Gray Flycatchers have arrived at this site from April 29th to May 8th; the latter date is not indicative due to my delay in getting to the site. The average arrival is about May 2nd. Departures generally occur around mid-August, although I recorded a GRFL on September 2, 1991.

My records show that the DUFL also arrives about the same time. Usually I first record both on the same day, or the DUFL on the next visit. Departures are more uncertain for the DUFL. They can occur two weeks earlier or on the same day as the GRFL. Unusual this year was the paucity of DUFL recordings all season long.

The fact that I can get out only on weekends certainly accounts for a lack of accuracy in the arrival and departure data for the GRFL.

I have been going out to this site now for three years (this is my fourth) every weekend from the last week in April, or first week in May, until mid-August. Yes, this is quite a time commitment (minimum 2.5 hours each trip), especially when I cannot drive to the site. The benefits, however, far outweigh the commitment.

This is my project and I am responsible only to myself. It is my own bird breeding survey, so to speak. The walk is very therapeutic and it has a definite spiritual effect on myself. I have come to know myself better as Mother Earth reveals her secrets to me. I have developed a special care, concern and respect for these flycatchers. In studying them, I have come to know other flora & fauna better and have developed a greater appreciation for the connectedness of all things.

Although I do this for myself, if my own research provides useful information for the Nest Records Scheme and, thereby, helps establish the status of the Gray Flycatcher in BC, we all benefit. I urge you to look for such a project, too.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Laurie kindly presented us with this report at the AGM in Kamloops earlier this year and he followed up with a final update just last week. Thanks Laurie! We found the report to be an interesting example of what one person can do to help expand our knowledge of a little known species in BC.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WILDLIFE OBSERVATION SYSTEM (WLD)

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Having developed computer systems for other people for the past 25 years, I considered bird watching to be a hobby where I could escape my desk-bound discipline of programming. Having faithfully recorded my observations in diaries since 1959 and my bird nesting surveys for the British Trust for Ornithology in the 1960's, I had not thought about computerizing my hobby until Mike Shepard approached me with the idea in March, 1994.

Mike has been responsible for helping to collect and analyze bird sighting index cards in BC for the Royal British Columbia Museum. When he showed me a design for collecting bird observation details -- including habitat, ecoregion, biogeoclimatic zone, and map coordinate specifications -- the idea for a neat new system came to mind. My first task, as a systems analyst, was to remove the complicated parts of the observation requirements to a separate screen based on location, not bird species. Mike divided the Victoria Checklist Area, which stretches across the south-east of Vancouver Island from Ladysmith in the north to Otter Point west of Sooke, into 730 different locations. Now, if the system is to meet the requirements of a serious research tool, it will be necessary for the researchers in each region to pre-define all the locations within their district for local observers to use.

The name of the system is the Wildlife Observation System (WLD), since the intention is to develop future menus to enable observers to record other types of animal observations. The system has been developed using FoxPro 2.6 for DOS and is divided into locations and species observations. Associated with each location are alias names, UTM mapping coordinates, ecoregion, biogeoclimatic zone plus town/city, province/state, country & continent codes. Associated with each species observation are the date, location, number of adults and immatures of each sex, up to 6 observer names, unlimited remarks, habitat type and bibliography. Observations at this level of detail require a lot of data entry and would normally be entered only for rare and unusual sightings. To speed up data entry, we added the capability to create and save multiple checklists. Each checklist can be printed and taken to the field to record observations. A fast data-entry screen showing the checklist can then be used to simply enter the number of each species observed.

WLD contains powerful search capabilities and context-sensitive help screens for each data entry field requiring a predefined value (locations, habitat classes, biogeoclimatic zones, etc.). Various reports can be produced based on species, locations, date ranges or by an individual month. Bird lists can be obtained by location, city/town, province/state, country, continent or life list and they can be printed in taxonomic or chronological sequence. There is a module that will permit data to be downloaded as a batch file to a diskette. Future system upgrades will allow data to be transmitted from individual systems to a central system via modem.

The program contains the potential to interface with a mapping program. Using the Quickmap GIS system the user can map all observations for a specified species in British Columbia. Quickmap contains a zoom feature that permits any part of the province to be depicted. A run-time copy of Quickmap GIS with mapping capability is NOT present on the software package as currently offered but may become available for an additional cost (about \$60) at a later date.

WLD system comes with a self-installing diskette and a user guide explaining its functions. It has the design potential to be set up to operate anywhere in the world and to contain all species in the world. WLD will run on any IBM compatible PC and sells for \$68.40 (includes GST & PST). Contact: David Pearce, ORCA Consulting Group Inc., 4781 Timber Place, Victoria, BC V8Y 2L6 (phone (604) 658-0295). ◻

EDITORS' NOTE: The software, as purchased by us, included a list of birds in the Victoria checklist area, many habitat designations and over 700 mapped locations within the Victoria checklist area. The mapping and modem communications are NOT included with this WLD 1.1 version. The utility of the program will increase as birders provide the central database with more UTM map locations, sightings, habitat types, etc. Adding and sharing information from the whole province, through the use of a standardized format, should really make this a very useful research tool.

BIRDING AND BEHAVIOUR WATCHING

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Little did I know when I started my birding "career" in 1962 that I would get involved with such investigations as Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys and Big Days. Well do I know the "joys" of getting up at midnight without groaning, not much anyway, to drive many kilometres along highways and backroads in order to check out nest sites or to "tick" as many species as possible. Now, although the excitement is still great when I get a lifer, it is behaviour-watching which is fascinating me more and more.

The obvious behaviours such as flight, song, habitat preferences, etc. which aid in identification are well known to birders. Although Konrad Lorenz wrote extensively about bird behaviour years ago and more literature is available now about bird behaviour, I've found that references on the less "visible" behaviours seem to be few and far between. Behaviours such as cooperative feeding, distraction of prey in order to catch it, cooperation between two different species in food finding and communication -- those behaviours require time and patience to be observed plus they require understanding to prevent the observer from falling into the trap of making anthropomorphic statements.

Early in my birding years the distraction displays of Killdeer were a source of excitement. Watching fledglings from a first nesting of a pair of Bushtits assist in feeding a second brood gave a sense of wonderment. Such observations began to encourage me to a slower pace of birding in order to catch the elusive behaviours. So, with the following anecdotes, I would like to tell you about some of the activities of birds I've noted during my birding years. Who knows, maybe some of these observations will add to the knowledge in the field!

Observing the Pileated Woodpecker

The suet mixture I serve the birds, either rubbed on trees or set in logs, attracts Pileated Woodpeckers much as it does the smaller members of this family. In the winter of '91/'92 a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers started to come to the five suet feeders in the yard. Spring arrived and in between visits to the logs, the pair engaged in courtship activity which in itself is fascinating to watch. In May and early June only the male came regularly, flying off with a distended crop. This led to the deduction that he must be feeding the female on the nest. She usually came once a day, mostly in the evening, for a quick feed. After about three weeks both adults made countless trips back and forth with suet. They were also collecting carpenter ants from decaying tree stumps on the five acre property.

In early August two fledglings arrived with the adults and were fed with the suet on site. The young would cling to nearby trees, begging and fluttering their wings, while the adults were flying back and forth, collecting suet and stuffing it into the waiting beaks. After about ten days the adults began to withhold the food. They would cling to the suet log, make frequent flights to the young, followed by quick returns to the log. It was hard not to think that some teaching was going on!

An interesting thing was that the adult male always fed the young male, easily recognized by an emerging red moustache; the adult female always fed the young female. This never varied. Also interesting to note was that the young birds had dark eyes which did not turn yellow until the birds dispersed in November.

In 1993 the adults were back again, already feeding young, when a severe windstorm must have destroyed their nesting tree. I never saw the female again and to this date the male is still single, contrary to the saying that Nature fills a void. Maybe next year?

Cooperative Food Searching: Pileated and Hairy Woodpeckers

Hairy Woodpeckers are abundant in this region and for several years now I have noted Hairy's following Pileated Woodpeckers around, mostly in fall, winter and early spring. While the Pileated chisels the bark of Cottonwood and Aspen trees,

BIRDING AND BEHAVIOUR WATCHING Continued

the Hairy Woodpecker waits about six feet away. As the Pileated moves on up the tree, the smaller bird moves into the broken-up site and apparently finds a great deal to peck at.

Also noteworthy is the communal roosting the three woodpecker species engage in. I've seen two Pileated, three Hairy and five Downy Woodpeckers all together on a winter's day at the top of a Cottonwood, often roosting there for up to half an hour. As they are quite close, sometimes with no more than six inches between them, sharing body heat or possibly safety must be the advantage. The smaller woodpeckers also follow Pileated onto the suet logs. Since the suet is rock-hard in winter, the larger bird's bill obviously dislodges food to the advantage of the smaller birds.

Cooperation in Catching Prey

Blackie Spit, in South Surrey, juts out into Boundary Bay and is a feeding and resting area for shorebirds in winter. Some years ago, during an unusually cold winter, I observed the following incident at the Spit.

A large flock of Dunlin were resting on the Spit, bunched tightly together against the cold. A few birds were sentinels but most had their heads tucked under the wing and stood, one foot drawn up. Two Northwestern Crows came flying toward the flock, flying quite high, tumbling and calling, seemingly without any other interest but in their antics. The Dunlin were alerted, but most reassumed their sleeping postures. All of a sudden, when almost over the flock of Dunlin, one crow dropped silently and caught a Dunlin from the perimeter of the flock. The second crow continued to do its barrel-rolls and cawing. The pair then joined up again, now silent, landed 200 feet away and began to feed on the Dunlin. Curiously, although the flock of Dunlins shifted around a bit and every one of them became alert, they did not fly and soon after settled again in their sleeping posture.

That same day I saw cooperative hunting behaviour in a Northern Harrier and a Northwestern Crow. The harrier was chasing a Western Sandpiper in a small diked-in marsh on the Spit. A crow was also present, deliberately cutting off any escape attempts by the sandpiper. After about 15 minutes the exhausted shorebird was caught. The harrier began to feed on the spot, watched by the crow. Whatever was left when the raptor took off was finished off by the crow.

Cross-species Communication?

One final incident, this one on communication. However, the communication was not between two birds but from a wild bird to a human.

In 1976 I had occasion to look after two fledgling crows. Housed in a cage, they lived on the patio where they could see and hear their own species. No adult crows ever came near the cage, nor did they mob me while I fed the young.

One day I arrived home to find one of the young gone but the cage closed. Obviously it had been taken by someone. Neighbours had seen a teenage boy with a box in the back lane. In the meantime I noticed an adult crow sitting on the roof of the house, cawing loudly and making short flights down the lane, returning time and again to the house. I could hear, about half a mile away, a flock of crows cawing as if mobbing a predator. It seemed obvious to me at the time, that the crow on the roof was trying to communicate something to me, so I decided to follow him on one of his sorties down the lane. The bird joined the flock in a large Fir, at the base of which was a box with the missing young crow! As soon as I picked up the box the crows fell silent and dispersed. Corvids, of course, are well known for their intelligence but I've always felt that this incident was quite noteworthy. Incidentally, the young crows were released and joined the flock two weeks later and assimilated quite readily -- not that Surrey did not have enough crows already!

Possibly the behaviours I've described have all been noted by others, but to have observed them myself has added immeasurably to my pleasure in birding. ◊

EDITORS NOTE: A very good reminder from Madelon that birding should grow into more than just 'ticking' the species. While chasing lifers is fun and a challenge, the detailed observation and recording of bird behavior can provide us with both insight into, and a fuller appreciation of, the actions and needs of our feathered friends.

AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

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Dick is curator of the Cowan Vertebrate Museum at the University of British Columbia. An avid birder, Dick is actively involved in the Vancouver Natural History Society and, with his brothers, was co-author of the excellent book, Birds of the Okanagan Valley.

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An indomitable birder and hiker, Eva has been a driving force for both the first and second annual Okanagan Mountain Bird Blitzes. She is also current president of the South Okanagan Naturalists Club.

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Alan, a labour negotiator who has relied on birding since 1978 to maintain his sanity, lives for Vancouver Island's fall hawk migration & likes to tramp Greater Victoria's highlands looking for birds and wildflowers. Since 1983 he has been team leader in the Martindale Christmas count zone.

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Hue MacKenzie birded for many years with the Ottawa Field Naturalists and is now an active member of the White Rock and Surrey Naturalists & the Vancouver Natural History Society. He & Jo Ann also distribute **British Columbia Birds**.

David Pearce

David started birding early and by age 12 was on the committee of the Rugby Natural History Society. He has done nesting studies for the British Trust for Ornithology and has also lived and birded in Australia. Since 1989 he has organized the Victoria CBC. In 1991 he initiated the Victoria Spring Count.

I. Laurie Rockwell

Laurie Rockwell had early tutelage in birding from Jim Grant in the Vernon area. He currently lives in Summerland and is an active member of the South Okanagan Naturalists. He found the Great Gray Owl on this year's Okanagan Mountain Bird Blitz!

Madelon Schouten

Madelon started birding in 1962 after taking a bird ID course at UBC. In the 1970's she was involved at the inception of Surrey & White Rock Naturalists. She has taught bird ID courses, led birding trips to Arizona & Texas, done CBCs and also Breeding Bird surveys. Currently a member of Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists, Madelon is working on a checklist of Princeton area birds.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

From: H.N. (Hue) MacKenzie, Surrey, BC

At the very successful 1994 annual general meeting in Kamloops one disturbing thing happened. Only six people were willing to stand for office for the British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO). After much persuasion three additional people agreed to serve as directors, thus giving us a full slate of nine officers of the Society. As a result of the lack of candidates from elsewhere, all of the present directors live within the southwest corner of BC. While this makes it easier for the officers to assemble for meetings, it does not give full voice to the needs and ideas of birders in the rest of the province.

One of the objectives of the founders of BCFO was to avoid an undue influence over Society policy and activities by those of us who live in the more populated parts of the province. With over 250 members in the Society there should be no problem selecting an executive which is more widely representative of the entire province. So how about it? Let's have a real election in 1995! We need active participation by people who do not necessarily live in the Vancouver and Victoria regions. YOU may be the very person to stimulate the Society into becoming truly representative of the interests of birders in all parts of BC. Stand for election next time and give your fellow members the benefit of your special talents!!

Let me leave you with this thought, paraphrasing the words of John F. Kennedy. "Ask not what your Society can do for you, but what you can do for your Society." ☺