

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 or Word for Windows files on 3.5" or 5.25" floppies) to the BCFO Newsletter Editors (name, address and phone no. page 2). We especially welcome bird-finding information for the "Site Guide" series and any 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: **Allen Wisely, Membership, British Columbia Field Ornithologists**
PO Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7.

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Distribution of BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST: Allen Wisely

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS

Christmas is coming and so are those Christmas Bird Counts. We have again phoned all over the province to find out "where, when and who". Although Marilyn makes most of the calls, we both get some spin-off benefits by hearing about what people are doing or saying. We hope members find the information useful. Thanks to those who sent us CBC dates -- they really help to reduce our personal phone bills.

Between issues we went on a birding holiday to the San Diego area. It took two weeks to get to San Diego so you know the trip was leisurely. However, we tallied 194 species, including eight lifers! We would like to thank Leon Abrams and Cathy Purchis who co-led the bird blitz at Point Reyes. It was a most enjoyable day.

This issue is again filled with an interesting mix of articles, upcoming events, a trip report and a SITE GUIDE. We would like more input from our members (review Hue MacKenzie's letter on page 20, September 1994 issue). Any donations of articles, SITE GUIDES, notes or letters to the BCFO "Empty January In-basket" would be most gratefully received for, like last year at this time, the submission cupboard is quite bare. The Editor of Winging It [the Newsletter of the American Birding Association] is considering republication of one or two of our BCFO SITE GUIDES in their publication. NOW is the time for all of you closet authors to get writing for us. Your authorship could gain international attention.

We understand that some members received their September issue late. Apologies to any members who were affected. We make every effort to have each issue published by the first half of March, June and September and by the first week of December. Please contact the Membership Director if you think that your own copy is missing, strayed or tardy. We ask that you please keep both your membership and your address current. Check for 1995 Membership Renewal Form as an insert in this issue. In fact, check for three (3) different inserts in this issue. My librarian soul could not allow for a "cutting" defacement of this issue. The other two inserts are: a Journal Questionnaire and the Annual Listing Form.

We would like to draw your attention to two commercial advertisements in this issue. They appear on pages 18 and 20. If you are contacting these advertisers please let them know that you saw their ad in the BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST.

Finally, Seasons Greetings to everyone from Andy & Marilyn and the BCFO Directors. ☺

BCFO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 1993-1994

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UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

compiled by Wayne C Weber

- Dec. 17, 1994 - **95th Annual Christmas Bird Count** sponsored by the National Audubon Society. A detailed listing of scheduled counts in BC including contact names and phone numbers are listed on pages 16 to 18.
Jan. 2, 1995 .
- 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. 10-13, 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".
- Jan. 15, 1995 **Bald Eagle Census** in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Squamish and the Sunshine Coast will take place on Sunday, 15 Jan. 1995. If you wish to assist on count day please contact Carla Lantham at the Ministry of Environment in Surrey @ (604) 582-5200. Leave your name and number and she will call you back. [BC Naturalist]
- Jan. 15, 1995 **Southern Interior Swan and Eagle Counts**. For information about participating contact Rick Howie in Kamloops (604) 578-7542.
- Feb. 1-4, 1995 **Trumpeter Swan Society 15th Annual Conference**, Cotton Tree Inn, Mount Vernon, WA. For Information, contact The Trumpeter Swan Society, 3800 County Road 24, Maple Plain, MN 55359; or phone Martha Jordan (206) 787-0258.
- March 24-29, 1995 **60th NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONFERENCE**, Minneapolis, MN. Contact L. L. Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20005, or phone (202) 371-1808.
- April 7-9, 1995 **BRANT FESTIVAL**, Parksville and Qualicum Beach, featuring Big Day birding competition, wildlife art show, children's activities. Contact Brant Festival 95, PO Box 99, Parksville, BC V9P 2G3, or phone (604) 248-4117 or (604) 248-4347.
- April 27-30, 1995 **FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**, Naramata, BC (near Penticton), hosted by the South Okanagan Naturalists. Contact FBCN at 321-1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6H 4A9 (604) 737-3057. Penticton contact is Glenda Ross (604) 493-7500.
- May 4-7, 1995 **WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING** (held jointly with Virginia Society of Ornithology), Fort Magruder Inn & Conference Center, Williamsburg, VA. Contact Dr. Ruth Beck, Department of Biology, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA.
- May 4-7, 1995 **HAWK MIGRATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA** annual meeting, Windsor, ON. Contact Robert C. Pettit, Monroe County Community College, 1555 S Rainsville Rd, Monroe, MI 48161. (313) 242-7300.
- May 6-7, 1995 **VANCOUVER BIRDING BIG DAY**, sponsored by the Vancouver Natural History Society. A fund-raising event for the Nature Trust of BC, earmarked for wetland acquisition in the Vancouver area. There are prizes for the most successful teams. For information, phone George Clulow (604) 438-7639.
- May 8-21, 1995 **Birding Tour to Point Pelee & Southern Ontario**. Book your trip early! Six days at Point Pelee, 1 day at Long Point, 7 days in Southern Ontario. Last year we found **211 species, including 34 species of warbler**. For details: Derrick Marvin (604) 748-8504.

- May 21, 1994 **OKANAGAN BIG DAY CHALLENGE.** A team competition to see who can find the most bird species in a day in the Okanagan Valley. It is run as fund-raiser for Nature Trust of BC. Contact Dick Cannings, 3007 West 7th Ave, Vancouver, BC V6K 1K7. Phone (604) 734-9489.
- May 29 - **Birding Tour to Southern Alberta & Saskatchewan.** Trip will visit
June 11, 1995 Calgary, Lethbridge, Brooks, Milk River area, Cypress Hills. We will be looking for such birds as Sage Grouse, Baird's Sparrow, McCown's Longspur & MANY others. Contact Derrick Marvin (above).
- June 16-18, 1995 **WASHINGTON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY & WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS JOINT MEETING,** Spokane, Washington. Contact Bill Tweit, 623 N 7th Street, Tumwater, WA 98502. Phone (206) 754-7098.
- June 18-25, 1995 **Birding Tour to Okanagan & Southern BC.** Trip will visit Oliver, Osoyoos, Vernon and Creston. Contact Derrick Marvin (above). □

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

WINTER PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP FROM WESTPORT, WASHINGTON is scheduled for Jan 7, 1995, with a possible trip on Jan 8 if the first one fills up. Rarities such as Laysan Albatross, Mottled Petrel, Thick-billed Murre, & Red-legged Kittiwake are possible. Weather may be inclement and cancellation is quite likely. Contact T.R. Wahl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham, WA 98225, or phone (206) 733-8255.

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 over 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, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 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, U.S.A.

STRAIT OF GEORGIA BRANT SURVEY. The Canadian Wildlife Service is coordinating a Brant survey of spring staging areas along the Strait of Georgia. The object of these is to identify key staging areas, determine the timing of migration, and possibly to detect changes in numbers from year to year. In addition, thousands of Brant have been banded with coloured, coded leg bands, which can be read in the field. This makes it possible to tell which migration and wintering areas are used by birds from specific breeding areas.

Volunteer observers to make counts of Brant between late February and late May, and to read band numbers by telescope, are needed. The east coast of Vancouver Island is generally well covered, but additional observers are needed to cover staging areas in the Lower Mainland, the west coast of Vancouver Island, and the Queen Charlotte Islands. If you can help, contact Neil K. Dawe, Canadian Wildlife Service, Site 12, Comp. 4, RR 1, Qualicum Beach, BC V0R 2T0. Phone (604) 752-9611.

EAGLE AND SWAN COUNTS will be taking place in both the Lower Mainland and the Thompson/Shuswap/Okanagan areas on January 16, 1995. These counts are an enjoyable opportunity to take part in efforts to track annual changes in numbers of these important bird species. The Lower Mainland count focuses on Bald Eagles, and covers the area from Squamish to Hope; if you are interested, phone Carla Lanihan at the Surrey office of the Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks at (604) 582-5200. The Southern Interior count features mainly Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, but also attempts to count the smaller number of eagles which winter in that area. For information on this count, phone the coordinator, Rick Howie, at (604) 578-7542.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS continued

LOOKING FOR BANDED HARLEQUIN DUCKS. Hundreds of Harlequin Ducks have now been marked with coloured leg bands (right leg) which have a two (2) digit code bearing any combination of the following symbols:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPRSTUVXYZ
0123456789

Harlequin Ducks frequently haul out on rocks. Find areas where Harlequin Ducks haul out and set up before they arrive. Visit areas around the high tide cycle, be patient and await the right opportunity. Too much movement will disturb the birds. The ideal viewing distance is about 40 metres but up to 80 metres is possible. Try to view bands with the sun behind you. With a spotting scope it is possible to read leg bands. Note the colour of the band and the digits. Read the band from the foot upward. Report sightings to:

Ian Goudie
c/o Canadian Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 340
Delta, BC V4K 3Y3

Phone: (604) 946-8546 Fax: (604) 946-7022
E-mail: Goudiei@CWSVan.Dots.DOE.Ca

SOCIETY NEWS

NEW EDITOR FOR THE B.C.F.O. JOURNAL, British Columbia Birds. 1995 promises to be a dynamic year, bringing new initiatives for publications undertaken by the B.C. Field Ornithologists. Martin McNicholl has taken over as the Editor of British Columbia Birds and is currently editing the 1994 issue. This will ensure we will meet all of our publishing objectives during 1995. A unanimous decision at the last Directors' meeting removed the bird sighting records from the journal to create a separate publication. This will greatly reduce the time spent editing the journal, and increase both the number and scope of articles in each issue. An increase in annual dues will enable the Editorial Board to employ a professional desktop publishing service. An evolution of B.C.F.O. publications has begun and your input on our progress will be greatly appreciated.

It gives me great pleasure to announce Martin's appointment as journal editor. He comes as a distinguished professional who has gained an extensive ornithological background throughout much of Canada, and recently, in Latin America. An interest in birds from early childhood led to a graduate degree on Forster's Terns in Manitoba and a PhD on Blue Grouse in British Columbia. Martin has edited newsletters for the Natural History Society of Manitoba, the Federation of Alberta Naturalists and the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario. He was senior editor of the book Ornithology in Ontario, for the Ontario Field Ornithologists; and literature editor of North American Bird Bander. An author or co-author of over 200 publications, and board member of 28 organizations, Martin continues his work as an ornithological field researcher with experience in Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba, Yukon Territories, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Cuba. All of the BCFO directors welcome Martin and support his position in the organization.
[Marian Porter, President BCFO]

DUES INCREASE NOTIFICATION. In order to meet an ongoing increase in the Society's costs, the Board of Directors have determined that membership dues must be increased slightly in 1995. New membership rates can be found on the renewal notice included with this issue.

FIRST DIRECTORS' MEETING FOR 1995. The first Directors' meeting of 1995 is scheduled to be held in Victoria on 22 January. Please contact your Directors if you have points you wish to have considered. Directors' names, addresses and phone numbers can be found on page 2 of this newsletter.☺

'BIG DAYS': NOT JUST FOR LUNATICS

by Alan MacLeod
4 - 251 Ontario Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1N1

Among us there are people, thought to be lunatics, who believe that one of *Homo sapiens'* finest inventions -- a sure-fire way to have fun, see a lot of countryside, get some exercise and enjoy a bit of healthy competition -- is the birders' Big Day, an all-out effort to count as many bird species as possible over a 24-hour period in any area you care to mention. You can cover a lot of ground or a little, take on the whole Okanagan Valley or focus on Kalamalka Park.

Big Days are not for everyone: no doubt there are some who would argue that driving maniacally to 50 or 60 locations, rushing through fields, woods and swamps to find a single bird, or shivering in the dark for the chance of hearing an owl are all poor substitutes for a day at the mall if it's fun you're looking for. But, the fact is, Big Days are fun for any number of people, none of whom are otherwise regarded as demented.

Big Days are a better known quirk of human nature today than they were a decade ago when my passion for these events was at its peak. Then, the prospect of 20-or-so hours of nonstop, hardcore birdfinding with two or three pals was the closest I could come to matching the wondrous excitement and anticipation of Christmas I experienced as a child -- in both instances it was impossible to sleep the night before.

I am mellow today and the notion of spending a day rushing from one place to the next, jumping in and out of a car sixty times and covering 300 kilometres in the process has lost much of its former lustre. I still like Big Days, mind you, but now I prefer the kind that can be done in one place, on foot, at a leisurely, civilized pace. Indeed, while I've never tried one, I confess to having considerable interest in a Big Day form called the Big Sit. Big Sitters plunk themselves down in some suitable vantage point by an avian thoroughfare and spend the day watching what flies past. But I digress.

This article is directed not at prospective big sitters but at those who are intrigued by New Jersey's 'World Series of Birding', or the Okanagan Valley's 'OK Big Day', or the Big Day associated with Parksville's Brant Festival but may wish to apprentice on a low-profile big day of their own before reaching for the brass ring in those high-stakes events.

A Big Day can occur any time it suits you to do one, but because the customary objective is to tally as high a count as possible, aficionados in our part of the world tend to focus efforts on the month of May. Then, more species can typically be found in a 24-hour period than at any other time of year. For a few days each May, when the return of spring migrants from their wintering grounds is well underway but before our winter birds have flown north to do their bit for the continuance of their species, the potential for a high count is generally at its best.

If you've never participated in a Big Day how do you know what is involved? What to do? How to get started? My experience leads me to suggest that a successful Big Day effort depends on the ability to make the most of the following factors.

Target List. A basic Big Day imperative is knowing the birds it is possible to find in the area you intend to cover. Prepare a 'should-get' list of all the birds you can reasonably expect to find in the coverage area. Your list shouldn't be all-inclusive -- it isn't appropriate to include every species that ever occurred in the area -- but it should cover all the predictable species as well as the plausible possibilities, including not-so-common but regular birds it is reasonable to look for, given place and time of year.

Itinerary. With your 'should-get' list in hand, choreograph a stop-by-stop itinerary of the sites you need to visit in order to find each of your predictable and possible target birds. The itinerary should be carefully chosen to maximize the potential for finding each of the target species. The aim is to cover all the necessary habitat types and arrive at target-bird sites at the optimum time of day.

'BIG DAYS' continued

For example, songbirds are usually most active and vocal right around sunrise; if your itinerary takes you at sunrise to suitable songbird habitat, you have a better prospect of making a big score by ear than might be accomplished visually later in the day. But there's a catch-22: not only must the itinerary maximize birdfinding potential, it must also minimize the amount of time wasted driving from one site to another -- OK, I admit, this is no easy task.

Make your itinerary ambitious but not hopeless: push yourself to cover as much ground as you need to, but ensure your reach doesn't exceed your grasp, otherwise you'll find yourself running out of your most precious resource, time, just when you need it most. As the Big Day flies past, the 'should-get' list facilitates tracking of missing species. Your itinerary eliminates the possibility that an important stop might be missed and it helps focus your mind on where to look for missing species.

Research. Research is a vital part of Big Day planning. You have to know where the birds actually are -- not just where they're presumed to be. Successful players scout their area ahead of time to determine the whereabouts of late lingering winter birds. They pay attention to Rare Bird Alerts and track any strays that may happen to be in the count area as Big Day approaches. They monitor appropriate habitat to determine whether target migrants have returned in time for the Big Day. A key element is ensuring that your team covers local birds, those which occur only in small numbers, specific locations or specialized habitats, or which are active only at certain times of day.

Timing. Timing is everything. The date must be late enough to maximize the number of migrants and resident breeders that can be found, but not so late as to miss the last of the departing wintering residents. On south Vancouver Island the ideal day generally falls sometime later in the first ten days of May. The best day will vary in the interior of BC and will typically be later the further north you are.

The Team. No attempt to seriously challenge a Big Day record will be effective without giving careful attention to the makeup of your team. There are three important roles to fill. One absolute essential is the participation of at least one member who is a whiz at identifying birds by ear. In my experience, at least half the species found on a typical Big Day in May are located by ear, often by ear alone. Your team should include at least one individual who is as familiar with what he hears as what others see.

Another important role is the spotter. We all know individuals who seem to be better at picking birds out of the ether than anybody else is. If a friend of yours has such a talent make sure that person is a part of your team, not the opposition's.

Then there is the organizer/conductor, another essential player. This is the team member who knows the Big Day area like the back of his hand, understands what habitat and sites have to be covered to reach the goal, and is unafraid to crack the whip when that's what is required to keep the whole enterprise on track when spirits lag, as they always do. This is the role I used to relish. If all of these skills can be found in three individuals, that is an ideal number for a big day team, neither too big nor too small.

Coverage. This may be self-evident, but Big Day results typically vary in proportion to the number and variety of stops the team makes, rather than by the average time spent at each stop. As a general rule (and within limits) the more stops you make, the higher your count is likely to be. An average stay of sixty minutes at 15 stops never seems as productive as thirty stops of thirty minutes.

Two reasons come to mind for explaining this. The first is that, like the rest of life, Big Days never run exactly as planned. Species expected at a given site sometimes do not appear there. Your organizer should anticipate the species that might easily be missed and provide contingent stops for sites and habitat types that are most likely to fill the gaps. A second factor is that when all is said and done, plain old luck is as much an element in Big Days as it is in any other endeavour. It makes sense that the more stops you make, the greater the likelihood is that you may turn up some 'lucky' finds. There are obvious limits: if you spend all your time in a car, you'll have none left to find birds.

'BIG DAYS' continued

Equipment. Some Big Day enthusiasts rely on taped calls to induce vocal responses from birds such as rails and owls. There are two reasons for being cautious, though. Use of taped recordings is not permitted in some of the high-profile Big Day competitions I've mentioned. The other consideration is for the birds. Tapes should be used sparingly, especially in known nesting areas, as some birds can be distressed or even frightened away by the intrusion of a vocalizing 'rival' hidden away in a tape recorder.

Commitment. A Big Day effort aimed at establishing or challenging a record for a given area must involve a commitment of planning, time, travel and work. Idlers need not apply. Teams participating in the Big Day events I've already referred to use every minute of the 24 hours available to them. Yes, all of the night time too. One must bird at night to find owls, and many passerines and other species are active and vocal in the pre-dawn hours.

In addition to several kilometres on foot, teams can travel hundreds of kilometres by car (or, sometimes, in the 'major leagues' of Big Days, by aircraft). Creature comforts are given short shrift: as old friends will verify, I used to insist we have no food breaks until we had found a hundred species and even then, dining would be permitted only 'on the fly'. Losing interest yet?

Attitude. On the other hand, though it's all well and good to invest a solid effort in your Big Day campaign -- in fact it's essential -- if fun is one of your objectives, as opposed to just another big list, there's something else to keep in mind. Something perhaps best expressed in the immortal wisdom of Robert Burns: "The best laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft a-gley". No matter how good your game plan is, or how skilled your team members are, or how excellent your coverage may be, things can and almost certainly will go awry. They always do. Even the most successful Big Days are usually memorable for their extraordinary gaps, the birds that couldn't possibly have been missed but were. Get used to it, it's only life.

So there you are, mix in some planning, with a bit of know-how, a chunk of work, some substantial lightheartedness, and you have a recipe for experiencing the joy of Big Day birding. Good luck, and don't forget to take your sense of humour. ♪

AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

B. Max Gotz

Max is employed by the Municipality of Whistler. He was born in Hudson, PQ and has always had an interest in the outdoors. When his family moved to near Cape May, NJ, Max developed a serious interest in birds & birding which continues to the present.

A. G. (Tony) Greenfield

Owner of Whiskyjack Reforestation Ltd and former president of the Sechelt Marsh Protective Society, Tony has been an active birder on the Sunshine Coast for over 20 years.

Alan MacLeod

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

Anne Speer

Anne lives in Victoria and has done extensive travelling along the BC and Alaska coast. Although she is not a "birder" per se, Anne has found her interest and knowledge of birds, plants and wildlife have increased over the years and this contributes very much to her enjoyment of her journeys.

Wayne C. Weber

Born in North Vancouver, Wayne started birding in the Penticton area. He credits Stephen Cannings with fostering his early interest in birding. At age 12 Wayne went on his first CBC and he has retained an avid interest in birds and birding ever since. ♪

**Cetaceans and Seabirds:
A Cruise Through Alaskan waters.**

by Anne Speer
Victoria, BC

A long-awaited trip was finally at hand. Alaska, with the Kenai Peninsula and the remote Aleutians, was to be our destination. After a Seattle to Anchorage flight we boarded the Alaska Railroad for the excursion to Seward on the south-west corner of the Kenai Peninsula. During this four hour journey we glimpsed our first Alaskan wildlife. Glaciers flowed into valleys where several moose and calves were seen grazing in meadows alongside beaver dam bounded waterways. Dall Sheep overlooked the train from cliffs along the narrow right of way.

Seward, a town of approximately 2,500 people, sits at the head of Resurrection Bay. Alexander Baronov, the Russian explorer, was said to have given the name to the bay as he and his men sailed into the waters on Easter or Resurrection Sunday in 1794.

On day two we embarked on a day cruise of the Kenai Fjords National Park for a glacial and wildlife viewing treat. Jagged, snow-covered peaks rose above the sea as we set out from the bay under brilliant sunshine and blue skies. Our first encounter with sea birds was soon upon us. A Red-faced Cormorant with his sleek black elongated body was spotted sitting on a set of piles. He gave us a mere cursory glance as we glided by. We noticed his triangular shaped feet which he uses to propel himself through the water. We were told that the cormorants will make nests of seaweed and guano in which they lay two to four eggs a year.

Near the entrance of Resurrection Bay a low rocky island is home to a colony of Glaucous-winged gulls. Our passing stirred up a fly-by of white bodies with gray wings and yellow beaks. Later we learned that gull colonies have a definitive hierarchy with a leader and sub-leaders who controlled a colony. A naturalist from US Fish & Wildlife related a personal story of trying to protect a newly established colony of Atlantic Puffins whose eggs were being destroyed by the Glaucous-winged Gulls. They identified the leader who proved to be so tenacious that, despite the loss of one wing and leg from shooting, he held the colony together until his life was finally claimed. Only then did the colony of gulls move away.

Around the point we encountered loud, raucous calls of the Black-legged Kittiwakes, swooping and diving along the cliff fronts where they had established their nests of grasses and guano. Their black wing tips stood out against their gray wings and white bodies. They are not considered very intelligent. Some of them build their nests on the water line and the nests are occasionally wiped out in a high tide. Sharing the cliff fronts were Common Murres. They are sometimes known as the Arctic penguins because of their long, upright, white-fronted chests and black heads and backs. Their nesting sites tend to be in dark crevices on the cliffs. We glimpsed them there looking serene and unflappable behind the more excitable Kittiwakes.

Heading out of Resurrection Bay we spotted two Humpback Whales feeding with short diving maneuvers. The whales proceeded to hump their backs and flash their tails in swooping, graceful movements as they sounded beneath the surface. Rounding Aialik Cape we spied a Sea Otter playfully swimming on his back, clutching a large shell on his chest. A Peregrine Falcon had been sighted on the cliff side but was not showing himself today. Instead, near the water's edge, a pair of brown mottled coloured Marbled Murrelets swam very contentedly like an everlasting twosome.

We paused to see the spectacular Holgate glacier. Large chunks of ice were breaking off, or calving, with accompanying rifle-sounding cracks as they break and hit the water. The Chiswill Islands, a breeding area for Horned and Tufted Puffins, were our next stop. Puffins are solitary birds and tend to swim alone. As we approached the islands we noticed that puffins have difficulty getting airborne as their wings are devised for swimming and not for taking flight in a hurry. What a lonely life the puffin leads! After a short upbringing, the baby puffin leaves the nest and heads off to sea for a period of three to five years and then instinctively returns to its place of birth. Only one egg is laid in the burrows or crevices of these rocky Alaskan islets. Puffins are definitely the most colourful birds on the coast. The Horned Puffin sports a black collar, a white body and a bright yellow and red bill. The Tufted Puffin has an all black body with tufts of yellow feathers on the back of its head. They both have a unique fish holding device. A wedge shaped hinge at the rear of their beaks enables them to hold many caught fish at one time.

Cetaceans and Seabirds... continued

Below the cliffs occupied by the puffins, on a flat outcropping, a Stellar sea lion was guarding his harem and pups while keeping a wary eye on our boat. Heading back to Seward we were called to the port side as Finback Whales were sighted feeding in the distance. A little further on a pod of Orcas crossed right in front of our bow. Nature overload!!!

From Seward we travelled back to Anchorage for a flight up to Kodiak Island and a continuation of our journey. On our descent into Kodiak we spotted a whale beneath the water which suddenly rose to the surface with a great blow. A tour of Kodiak took us to a fish weir at Buskin Lake where we saw King salmon fish tailing back and forth trying to enter the lake to spawn. At peak times over 1000 salmon a day cross through the weir. The grassy slopes leading to the cliffs of Fort Abercrombie Park had just spread their carpet of wild flowers in a myriad of colours. There were brown Chocolate Lilies, blue Forget-me-nots (the official state flower of Alaska), white Bunch Berry flowers, purple Lupine stalks, pale blue Jacob's Ladder, nodding purple-pink blossoms of the Star Flower, wild orange Columbine, wild pink Roses, and the white umbrella-like cluster of Cow Parsnip.

On Kodiak Island we were to embark on the M.V. Tustumena. This vessel is part of the Alaska Marine Highway System and provides a summer only, monthly trip out the Aleutian chain to Dutch Harbor. That evening, with our excitement hardly contained, we boarded the M.V. Tustumena or 'Tusty' as she is affectionately called by old hands. The Alaskan peninsula & the Aleutians beckoned us south-west on our journey.

The next morning found us, once again, in brilliant sunshine which really heightened the awesome view of the chain of snow covered, volcanic mountains. Some volcanos are still active and one can often see wisps of smoke from their cones. We passed steep cliffs, showing a green carpet for the short summer season. Clear water bays and fjords appeared around each corner. The small settlement of Chignik was one of our ports of call. It has two canneries. This busy little village has a population that swells from 190 to over 600 in the summer. At the various docks, ocean going fishing vessels were rafted four and five deep. There was great excitement as we tied up. Villagers were greeting friends, family and, in one case, a new baby born on the 'outside'. One enterprising villager had set up a bakery in part of her home and from it I purchased the best blueberry-filled donut I have ever tasted.

Carmen Field, our US Fish & Wildlife person, was on board and had films and talks as we continued along on our journey. Sea birds became more and more abundant. Our first Northern Fulmar was sighted. They resembled gulls but had longer wings and seemed to be more of a glider in their flying compared to the gulls. They also had large tubular nostrils on the tops of their bills.

The Shumagin Islands, approximately 100 miles south-west of Chignik, were seen off the port side. They are home to a large population of sea birds with numbers estimated to be in the region of 2.5 million. Flocks of shearwaters were spotted. They were sitting in large groups on the water and according to the naturalist they can gather in rafts of hundreds of thousands in the fall before heading south! The Shearwaters, Sooty and Short-tailed, are summer residents in this area and can be identified by their gliding flight pattern, looking as if they are going to shear off the top of a wave. They also have tubular nostrils.

As we neared the end of the Alaskan peninsula we saw Mt. Pavol steaming from its volcanic cone against the everlasting blue sky. Off our starboard bow a pod of Sei Whales was seen, their blows looking like fireworks as they surfaced not far from us. They are shallow divers and tend to skim the surface as they feed, resulting in the great show of blows. It was very exciting for us as these whales are very rare and are not normally seen.

Visits followed to King Cove and Cold Bay. The former is a small cannery village and the latter a communications base with a huge airstrip. Cold Bay appeared very desolate and mysterious with its tundra ground cover, satellite dishes and scattered observatories. Apparently the Russians use this strip to change their fish boat crews since nothing here is appealing enough to warrant desertion from their ships.

False Pass was our next stop and our first stop in the Aleutian chain. The hills were covered in wild flowers and grasses and were such a treat to walk through. In the early morning light of the next day we reached Akutan, a very small Aleutian settlement. The two dozen or so homes together with the church and graveyard are

Cetaceans and Seabirds... continued

nestled right at the base of the hill with the dock alongside. A yellow lab sat quietly at the edge of the dock as we slipped away in the misty midnight blue light. Soon Dutch Harbor and Unalaska were in sight. This is the major cannery port of the Aleutians and even boasts a new hotel! We visited the Russian Orthodox Church and were watched over by a bald eagle sitting like a sentinel on the cross atop the onion-shaped dome on the roof.

The return journey began. Not far from port, a Minke whale passed right alongside. This apparently is one of their characteristics as they have a habit of approaching ships. Later that afternoon we saw our first Whiskered Auklets. Through the binoculars we could see the gray body, darker gray head with the three white plumes on the side of the face and the quail-like crest above the red beak. Very exciting as they are only found near Dutch Harbor or much further out in the Aleutian chain. Almost at the same time a Black-footed Albatross was spotted flying slowly across our stern. It was brownish-gray in colour with a relatively small body, but a wing span of over six feet. It had a brown coloured bill with grooves down the side.

We made a stop at Sand Point and hiked up the hill to the Aleutian Commercial General Store -- wide-eyed at all the goodies for sale! We reached Chignik at 10:30 at night. There a dozen pieces of heavy equipment had been brought to the wharf to be loaded on board. They had been borrowed from another town to build a gymnasium for the school. It was fascinating to watch workers reset the ramp with lumber and then drive the equipment to where it was hoisted into the hold via an elevator arrangement. It was then chained down to a stationary track to hold it in place in case of rough seas. This all took time so we eventually went off to sleep and woke to propellers throbbing at 5:00 am. Our journey carried on back to Kodiak, then back to the Kenai peninsula where we crossed, in high seas, to Seldovia, an isolated community with access by air and boat only. On the third try we were close enough to throw lines and tie up to the wharf. Homer was our next destination. There in the soft light of the midnight sun at 11:30 at night we watched from the rails as salmon were caught off the beach with a mere cast of the rod. Valdez and Prince William Sound for our final day on board. On the way we took a detour for a close-up look at the Columbia glacier -- one of the largest on the coast. The wildlife has returned again to the Sound after the massive oil spill and we spotted Humpback Whales, Orcas, and an adult Sea Otter swimming by with her pup on her chest.

Valdez was our final destination and is also the final destination of the Alaskan pipeline. After touring the pipeline terminus the first afternoon we drove the next day toward the slopes of the Wrangell-St. Elias mountain range to visit McCarthy -- an old mining town. We travelled along dirt roads, through vast, breath-taking valleys and at the end of the road, loaded into a two seater aerial tramway and pulled ourselves across a fast flowing river to visit the old site. Then back to Valdez and the next day we flew Alaska Airlines to Seattle and home to Victoria.

An incredible journey and one which I would highly recommend to anyone interested in the birds and other wildlife of south-western Alaska! ☺

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: Whistler/Pemberton area.

by B. Max Gotz
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Birding in Whistler is seasonal. In late May and early June songbirds, most notably warblers, pack the valley bottom areas. However, development is wiping out valley bottom riparian habitats and some birds are becoming difficult to find. Late summer and fall are the poorest birding seasons. Winter can be interesting but the bird densities are often low.

Spring and fall migration will bring Trumpeter Swans in groups of ten or twenty. During the winter smaller groups of these birds may be seen, mainly at the south end of Green Lake and Daisy Lake but also possible on any open water from November to April. Many dozens of Black Swifts can be seen in migration in late May/early June. Almost all of my summer records for Black Swift (15 of 16 sightings in 1994) note bright sunny days and low elevations. Sightings in the breeding season are usually of 4-20 birds in a group. Birds of British Columbia has Whistler as the northernmost coastal breeding location of the Green Heron but it probably does not breed here anymore due to loss of the riverine habitat along 21 Mile Creek.

Although the ski areas offer easy access to alpine areas in summer and winter the chances of seeing alpine birds are low. During ski season, flocks of Rosy Finch and White-tailed Ptarmigan are seen regularly though not often. In summer you should board the Whistler Mountain gondola and access numerous well-marked, short trails around the alpine areas. Obviously the less disturbed areas are more difficult to access but offer good chances to see White-tailed Ptarmigan, Hepburn's form of the Rosy Finch, American Pipit, Savannah and Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Golden Eagle (rare), Clark's Nutcracker, Common Raven, Gray Jay plus Pika and Yellow-bellied and Hoary Marmot. For the more mobile, a spectacular day hike begins and ends at the village. Ride Whistler Mountain gondola to the top terminal and hike the "Musical Bumps" -- Little Whistler, Piccolo, Oboe and Flute -- to Singing Pass and return along Singing Pass trail to Whistler Village. It is a full day, about 25 km, but provides sweeping views of the Spearhead and MacBride Ranges and Cheakamus Lake. Wedgemont Lake is a steep, unrelenting, 6 km one-way hike from the BC Parks parking lot but offers good alpine birding in early summer with in-your-face views of Wedgemont Glacier. A BC Parks hut beside this gorgeous glacial lake is convenient for overnights and mountain goat can be spotted in the area.

CAUTION: travel in backcountry mountain areas requires foreknowledge of many, possibly serious, hazards. Be prepared for sudden weather changes, unstable terrain and encounters with larger wildlife. Carry supplies in anticipation of an unexpected overnight stay and remember the "pristine" streams may often carry Giardia, the causative organism of "Beaver Fever".

Whistler Area Birding Sites

Km 00.0

From Vancouver on Hwy 99 north, watch for a large Whistler Welcome sign on the right just after the rail crossing. Pull out 100 metres beyond the sign at the present site of the Museum and Archives. A large roadside map shows Whistler and area. (Maps of Whistler and area are also widely available.)

Km 00.1 Cheakamus Lake and Municipal Dump

Turn right onto Cheakamus Lake road and after 0.6 km bear left onto dirt for 5 km to Cheakamus Lake trail-head. Easy, level 6 km round trip walk to Cheakamus Lake is good in spring and early summer.

The first km of the trail is through logging slash, the last two km through old growth woods. Look for woodpeckers -- Three-toed, Pileated, Downy and Hairy plus Red-breasted and possibly Red-naped Sapsuckers (one record here this spring).

For a short side trip and a chance at Harlequin Duck and American Dipper, take the Helm Creek trail 300 metres down to the Cheakamus River at km 2 of the Cheakamus Lake trail. A human powered cable car spans the river and provides excellent views. Hang over the river for a while if no one is waiting. Harlequin Ducks are also spotted regularly at Km 3 where the river flows out of the lake.

SITE GUIDE: Whistler/Pemberton area continued

In winter the Cheakamus Lake Road is not cleared so try the Municipal Dump for Bald and Golden Eagle, accipiters and gulls. Most sightings of the "black" Merlin come from this area. Pass the Cheakamus Lake Road and continue across the bridge to the dump. Wait, obtain a strange look from the dump attendants as you tell them you are just looking for birds, then proceed to the domestic dump area.

In spring stop before the bridge over Cheakamus Gorge and walk downstream a few metres to check for American Dippers which nest along the opposite wall.

Km 02.5 Westside

Alta Lake Road (Westside Road), which provides alternate low traffic access northbound and reconnects to Hwy 99 at km 11.8, is also used for access to Rainbow Park (north end of Alta Lake) and Rainbow trail. About 2 km along the road is the start of Cardiac Hill. This area is heavily sanded and salted in winter and attracts numerous Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak and Common Redpoll. It also give some good views of Alpha and Alta Lakes.

Km 03.7 Alpha Lake

Turn left at lights and follow Lake Placid Road to Alpha Lake Park. Good area for warblers and vireos in spring. In winter look for Trumpeter Swan, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks and gulls. Underground springs keep Alpha Lake with varying areas of open water in winter.

Km 07.8

Whistler Village is on the right and this is an opportune time for you to pick up maps and information about the area.

Km 08.5 Whistler Wetlands (see map pg 14)

Turn left at lights onto Lorimer Road, follow down the hill to a dead end, and park here. Best in spring and summer, the 1 km trail to Rainbow Park is well marked. From the dead end walk to the paved trail and go left. DO NOT cross the pedestrian bridge.

During spring migration, late April to early May, look for Townsend's Solitaire. In mid- to late May the riparian areas along Alta Creek have an abundance of warblers, the most common of which are: Yellow, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's & a few Myrtle's), MacGillivray's, Townsend's, Wilson's, Orange-crowned, and a few Black-throated Gray plus Common Yellowthroat. Also regularly seen or heard in May/June are Bald Eagle, Osprey, Ruffed Grouse, Vaux's Swift, Rufous Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker (nested beside the trail this year), Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, three flycatcher species (Olive-sided, Willow, Hammond's), Western Wood-Pewee, Eastern Kingbird, four swallow species (Tree, Violet-green, Barn, Northern Rough-winged), Steller's and Gray Jay, American and (?) Northwestern Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, thrushes (Swainson's, Hermit, Varied), Cedar Waxwing, Solitary and Warbling Vireo, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Rufous-sided Junco, sparrows (Song, Savannah, White-crowned), Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak.

One kilometre along this path will bring you to the north end of Alta Lake. During breeding season look for Canada Goose, Mallard, Barrow's Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck, Common and Hooded Merganser, American Coot, Spotted Sandpiper and Pied-billed Grebe. Uncommon to rare species include: Western and Horned Grebe, Green Heron, teal (Green-winged, Blue-winged, Cinnamon), American Widgeon, Wood Duck, Bufflehead, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawk, Sora, gulls (Glaucous-winged, Ring-billed, Bonaparte's), Band-tailed Pigeon, Black Swift, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Cliff Swallow, Clark's Nutcracker, Red-eyed Vireo, American Pipit, Purple Finch and the following sparrows (Chipping, Golden-crowned, Fox). In winter watch for Common Redpoll, Pine Grosbeak, Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Pileated Woodpecker and Bohemian Waxwing.

A 7 km route loops from the same parking spot around the "Wildlife Refuge". This almost level route can be done a variety of ways using paved or dirt trails and roads (see map pg 14). Although it has no official status, this area is known locally as the "Wildlife Refuge" thanks to a sign posted some years ago on Alta Lake Road. It is a quieter area that can be productive in spring and winter. Skis or snowshoes are helpful in winter.

SITE GUIDE: Whistler/Pemberton area continuedKm 11.3 21 Mile Creek & Green Lake

Watch for Whistler Pool & Ice Arena on the left and park there. Carefully cross Hwy 99 and follow trails along 21 Mile Creek (River of Golden Dreams) downstream to Green Lake. This area is presently under construction on all sides but has been very productive in the past. Almost all Green Heron sightings are from this stretch of meandering river.

In spring, warblers, sparrows and hummers abound. During fall migration, the seasonally inundated gravel bars and mud flats at the mouth of 21 Mile Creek have provided the bulk of shorebird sightings in Whistler and they are favored loafing areas for waterfowl. Look for dowitchers, yellowlegs and peeps on the bars and Common Snipe in the grasses along the shore. In winter, expect occasional Trumpeter Swans & other waterfowl along the open stretches of river. Eagles, accipiters and Northern Shrike are all uncommon to rare. Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Red Crossbill and large flocks of Pine Siskins are sighted regularly. In breeding season look northwest across the river for the Osprey nest which has been occupied for at least the last nine years.

Km 11.8 Westside

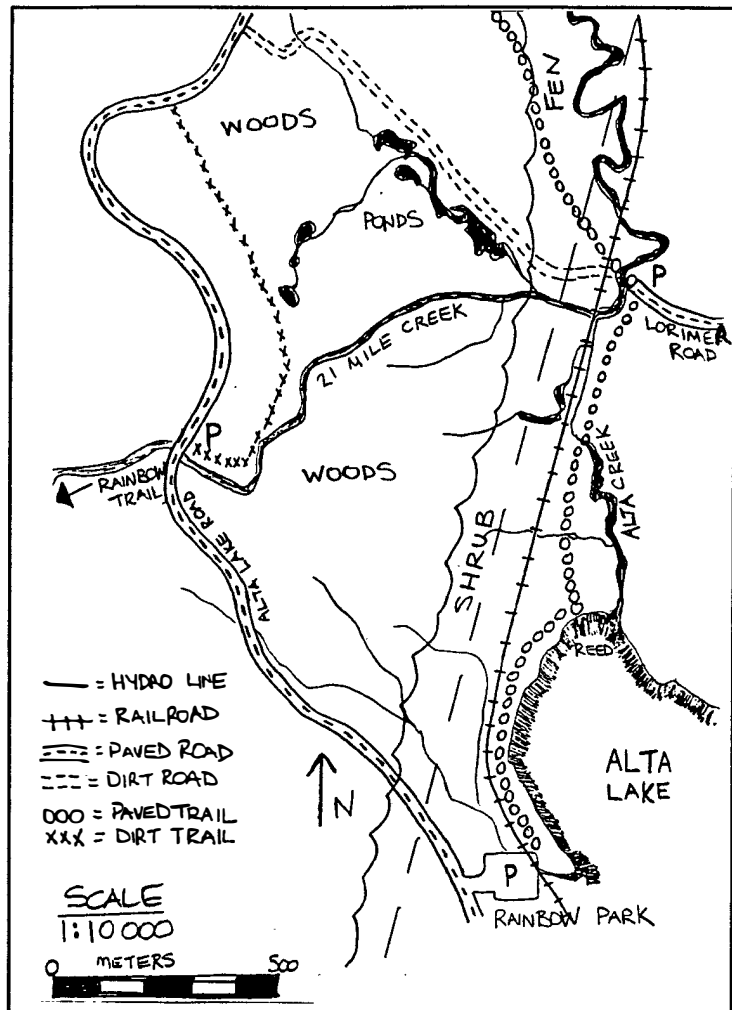
Turn left onto Alpine Way and left again onto Rainbow Drive which turns into Alta Lake (Westside) Road. This alternate southbound route to Rainbow Park and Vancouver reconnects to Hwy 99 at Km 2.5.

Km 13.2 Green Lake (High School Site)

The southwest corner of Green Lake can be viewed from the shoulder of the highway here. There is not much room to pull off and it is dangerous in snowy conditions. An unmarked pullout at Km 13.0 may be used if there is no snow plowing underway. This shallow corner of Green Lake, usually kept unfrozen by seepage from the adjacent wetlands and salt from the highway, is the most productive area in Whistler for waterfowl throughout the year. Trumpeters can usually be found here in small numbers from November until March. Northern Pintail, American Widgeon, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveller and Surf Scoter are seen here regularly in spring and fall. In late summer and fall look for Great Blue Heron which has turned up on our CBC. Although directly beside the highway, this area is difficult to access and view except from the highway shoulder. A new high school is being built west of the lake beside the highway and access may be improved.

Km 13.9 Green Lake

An official pullout with excellent views of Green Lake is available here but a spotting scope is helpful. In spring and fall migration look for mixed flocks of waterfowl. Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Mallard, Canada Goose, American Widgeon and Common Mergansers are common in spring. Uncommon to rare sightings include Trumpeter Swan, Snow Goose, Common Goldeneye, Northern Pintail, Surf and White-winged Scoter, Hooded Merganser, teal (Green-winged, Blue-winged, Cinnamon), Oldsquaw, Redhead, Canvasback, Greater Scaup and Lesser Scaup.



Whistler "Wildlife Refuge" Area

SITE GUIDE: Whistler/Pemberton area continuedKm 24.3 Soo River Valley

Turn left off Hwy 99 onto a good dirt road (2-wheel drive vehicles are no problem). Continue 5 km to a small dam/weir and cross the bridge just before the dam for the hydro generating plant. Once on the north side of the valley, or the right side when looking upstream, you can follow an active logging road for over 25 km along the valley side. The road is about 16 metres higher than the valley floor and has excellent views from approximately Km 6-15 (with Km 0=dam).

Often seen or heard in June include: American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Spotted Sandpiper, Townsend's Solitaire, flycatchers (Hammond's, Willow, Olive-sided), Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's and Hermit Thrush, American Pipit, warblers (Yellow, Orange-crowned, Wilson's, Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's, Townsend's), Common Yellowthroat, Rufous-sided Towhee, sparrows (Chipping, Fox, White-crowned), Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Common Nighthawk, Vaux's Swift, Rufous Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-breasted Sapsucker, woodpeckers (Downy, Hairy, Pileated, Three-toed), Northern Flicker, swallows (Tree, Violet-green, Barn, Northern Rough-winged), Gray and Steller's Jay, Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Common Raven and American Crow.

In fall Moose and Deer are seen browsing the valley bottom and, although rare, Wolverine, Bobcat, Cougar and both Black and Grizzly Bear can be seen.

PEMBERTON AREA BIRDING SITES

I have just started exploring this area recently and have so far found two reliable areas.

Area 1 Pemberton Golf Course Area

From the Petro-Can station go 1.9 km north on Hwy 99 toward Mt Currie. Turn right as marked to the golf course and proceed 1 km through fields & woods. Stop and listen/observe every few hundred metres until you reach a small bridge. Park on the left before the bridge.

NOTE: this is private property but the owners are tolerant of tourists without dogs.

This is a good spot for American Redstart. Other warblers, Black-headed Grosbeak and Veery are common. I have not put a lot of time in the area but it seems excellent for songbirds. Arrive early or late since the midday heat is stifling in spring and summer. Farther along the road toward the golf course and airport is the most reliable spot I know for Black Swifts. Look for them above the Lilloett River and toward Mt Currie in the company of Vaux's Swift and swallows. The views of Mt Currie throughout the Pemberton area are excellent but here they are stunning. Also check the Green River bridge area accessed by a dirt logging road between the two golf courses. This area has been the site of confrontations between tree-hackers and tree-huggers.

Area 2 Pemberton Meadows

Another area in the opposite direction is Meadowlands Estate in Pemberton Meadows. From the Petro-Can Station pass through Pemberton Village and turn right on the Pemberton Meadows road and after 18.0 km pull off to the right every few hundred metres. A slow moving section of Ryan Creek at Km 18.9 has been preserved with the adjacent marshes and can be easily viewed from the shoulder. Wood Duck are common. Numerous puddle ducks & songbirds abound in breeding season. Check the telephone wires & fenceposts along the way for Western Kingbird, Western Meadowlark, Northern Harrier and sparrows. Watch for flocks of Band-tailed Pigeons in the feed-lots on the left of Meadowlands Estate.

NOTE: during the "mushroom" season or hunting season it may be hazardous to your health if you are mistaken for a picker or a deer whether you are trespassing or not. Some growers of the famous Pemberton seed potatoes are understandably touchy year-round but most locals are friendly once they figure out what you are up to.☺

**BCFO FIELD TRIP REPORT
BOUNDARY BAY AND ROBERTS BANK JETTY, MARCH 13, 1994**

by Wayne C Weber
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On Sunday, March 13th, ten BCFO members turned out for a field trip in the Boundary Bay and Roberts Bank areas of Delta. The group included 5 members from the Lower Mainland, 3 from Prince George, and 2 from Princeton. The group met at 8:30 AM at Highway 10 and 104th Street in east Delta, and spent the morning birding the north side of Boundary Bay between 112th Street and 72nd Street. Large numbers of waterfowl were seen including a male Eurasian Wigeon. Shore-birds included 2000 Dunlin, 90 Black-bellied Plovers and 3 Greater Yellowlegs. At the foot of 112th Street, patience paid off as an immature Harris' Sparrow, known to be present in the area for weeks, finally came in to the bird feeder after a long wait. While we were waiting, numerous other birds came in to the feeders including Golden-crowned, White-crowned, Fox and Song Sparrows; Red-winged Blackbirds and at least 8 Brown-headed Cowbirds, the latter being uncommon in winter.

The main attraction, however, was the birds of prey. Seven species were seen including about 50 Bald Eagles, 20 Northern Harriers, 15 Red-tailed Hawks and 8 Rough-legged Hawks. East of 72nd Street, a total of 13 Snowy Owls were counted, a decrease from the 18-20 which had been there in December and January. The owls often stayed low, hidden behind logs and stumps, and it took at least 20 minutes to determine that there were 13 of them there; often, only 8 or 9 were visible. The count process led one wag to comment -- if birders have this tough a time counting a few Snowy Owls, imagine the challenge in counting a flock of Dunlin or American Wigeon.

After a leisurely lunch at the Pantry restaurant in Tsawassen, most of the group continued on to the Robert's Bank coal port jetty to look for additional species. At least 100 Brant were present on the south side of the jetty, a regular wintering area, and a variety of deep-water birds including Horned, Red-necked and Western Grebe; Surf and White-winged Scoters and Oldsquaw were all seen near the end of the jetty. The wind got stronger and the weather looked threatening so all of the participants, except the leader, left by about 3:30 PM. The leader continued checking scouring the area. His perseverance was rewarded as he found two Semi-palmated Plovers, very rare in winter and about 3 weeks early for spring migration, which were foraging on the mudflats along with [about] 2000 Dunlin and 100 Black-bellied Plover. The day total was 62 species -- not bad for a gray day in March.

B.C. Christmas Bird Count Details, 1994/95

This listing of Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) in B.C. is published as a service to BCFO members who would like to take part in CBCs in their local area or nearby areas. It includes counts listed for B.C. last winter with the name and telephone number of the organizer(s) and the scheduled date, if known at press time. This year we again include a couple of CBC dates from just across our southern border. We apologize for any errors in these details. Data were accurate as known to the EDITORS on Nov 26, 1994. Check with area organizers for any late-breaking changes.

Best of luck to everyone during the 1994/95 Christmas Bird Counts!

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Bamfield	Dec 30	Alan Burger	479-2446
Bowen Island	Dec 26	Allan Shatwell	947-2133
Broughton Strait	Dec 17	Bob Waldon	974-2281
Burns Lk.-Francois Lk.	Date and contact unknown at press time		
Campbell River	Date and contact unknown at press time		
Castlegar/Trail (WKN)	Jan 7, 95	Madge Hollington	365-2381
Chilliwack	Dec 17	Annabelle Rempel	823-6549
Comox	Dec 18	Barbara Sedgwick	335-0064
Cranbrook	Dec 27	Greg Ross	489-2566

B.C. Christmas Bird Count Details, 1993/94 continued

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Creston	Dec 30	Bob Purdy	428-3554
Deep Bay	Dec 29	Barbara Sedgwick	335-0064
Duncan	Jan 2, 95	Derrick Marven	748-8504
Fauquier	Ruth Bumpus	269-7481
Fort St. James	Jan 2, 95	Joanne Vinnedge	996-7357
Fort St. John	Date and contact unknown at press time		
Galiano Island	Dec 30	Mike Hoebel	539-2003 (H)
		or	652-0396 (H)
Golden	Dec 27	Ellen Zimmerman	348-2225
Grand Forks	Date and contact unknown at press time		
Kamloops	Dec 17	Rick Howie	578-7542
Kelowna	Dec 17	Don Wilson	763-8036
Kimberley	Jan 2, 95	Mildred White	427-3605
Kitimat	Dec 17	Dennis Horwood	632-2004
Ladner	Dec 27	Jude Grass	520-3706
Lake Windermere District	Dec 26	Larry Halverson	342-3305
Masset	Dec 17	Margo Hearne	626-5015
		or	Peter Hamel 626-3585
MacKenzie	Dec 17	Derek Connelly	997-4001
Nakusp	Jan 2, 95	Gary Davidson	265-4456
Nanaimo	Dec 17	Peter Van Kerkoerle	245-2530
Oliver-Osoyoos	Dec 31	Syd Cannings	721-0338
		or	Joan King 495-6907
Parksville-Qualicum	Dec 17	Keith Fortune	752-1285
Pender Harbour	Dec 21	Tony Greenfield	885-5539
Pender Islands	Dec 17	Mary Roddick	629-3308
Penticton	Dec 27	Steve Cannings	492-2303
		or	Dick Cannings 734-9489
		or	Anthia Bryan 492-0312
Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge	Dec 18	Wilma Robinson	465-5207
Port Alberni	Jan 2, 95	Sandy McRuer	723-5436
Port Clements	Dec 20	Margo Hearne	626-5015
		or	Peter Hamel 626-3585
Prince George	Dec 18	Nancy Krueger	563-7896
Prince Rupert	Dec 17	Robin Weber	627-1129 (H)
			624-3207 (W)
Princeton	Dec 18	Madelon Schouten	295-7078
Revelstoke	Dec 17	George Winingder	837-3655
Rose Spit	Dec 19	Margo Hearne	626-5015
		or	Peter Hamel 626-3585
Salmon Arm	Dec 18	Frank Kime	835-8537
Saltspring Island	Dec 11	Glen Moores	537-4306
Shuswap Lake	Dec 18 or 23	Rick Howie	578-7542
Skidegate/Sandspit Area	Dec 18	Margo Hearne	626-5015
		or	Peter Hamel 626-3585
Smithers	Dec 27	Rosamund Pojar	847-9784
Sooke	Dec 18	Michael Shepard	388-4227
Squamish	Date and contact unknown at press time		
Sunshine Coast	Dec 17	Tony Greenfield	885-5539
Terrace	Diane Weismiller	635-6984
Vancouver	Dec 18	George Clulow	438-7639
Vaseux Lake	Dec 28	Dick Cannings	734-9489
		or	Steve Cannings 492-2303

B.C. Christmas Bird Count Details, 1993/94 continued

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Vernon	Dec 18	Mary Collins	542-5673
		or Chris Siddle	542-1034
Victoria	Dec 17	David Pearce	477-2664
Wells Gray Park	Dec 30	Trevor Goward	674-2553
Whistler	Jan 2, 95	Max Gotz	932-7247
			or 682-5248
White Rock and Surrey	Jan 2, 95	Hue MacKenzie	538-1676
Williams Lake	Jan 2, 95	Anna Roberts	392-5000
Yoho National Park	Date and contact unknown at press time		

WASHINGTON STATE BORDER AREAS

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Bellingham	Dec 18	Terry Wahl	(206) 733-8255
Padilla Bay	Dec 31	H & T Armstrong	(206) 766-8521
San Juan Ferry (Anacortes to Victoria)	Dec 21	Jim Duemmel	(206) 733-3448a

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submitted by Wayne C Weber

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A Birdie, An Eagle, ... A SHOREBIRD???
Sechelt Golf and Country Club

by Tony Greenfield
Box 319, Sechelt BC V0N 3A0

Golf courses have traditionally been anathemas to birders & conservationists, as wild land is cleared for the sterile, herbicide-laced, lawn-type habitat of the fairway. So, it was with some trepidation that Sechelt birders, in 1992-93, watched 60 hectares of the plateau above Sechelt Inlet be transformed from a second growth forest to a golf course.

After being logged, the area sat for a couple of years and rapidly became a weed field full of various sparrow species with the wetter spots reliable in winter for Common Snipe.

As the golf course construction proceeded, the area passed from ornithological consideration until August 8, 1993 when Arnold Skei, a Sechelt birder with some pretensions as a golfer, noticed some shorebirds around a shallow pond constructed to catch errant golf balls.

On the 8th Arnold recorded, among common peep species, a Baird's Sandpiper and ten Lesser Yellowlegs (a high number for the Sunshine Coast). Arnold called the author with this news and I headed down to the golf course the following day hoping to see the Baird's which is a very uncommon (barely annual) fall migrant on the Sunshine Coast.

Upon arrival at the golf course the first bird I saw, at a tiny pond near the entrance, was a Solitary Sandpiper. This set me back as it was only the second Sunshine Coast record of this species; the previous bird being 19 years earlier! I proceeded to check the other four or five ponds and found eight species of peeps, yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, and a Spotted Sandpiper with three young. Having done my round of the ponds, and feeling elated at the variety of shorebird species and the bonus of a Solitary Sandpiper, I was preparing to leave when a distant bird on one of the fairways attracted my attention. Closer approach revealed the unique profile of a bird I had never expected to see on the Sunshine Coast -- a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. The juvenile bird was foraging on the lush short grass of the fairway in company with Lesser Yellowlegs and Killdeer. The orange breast, the immaculate scalloping of the back, and the attractive and unique profile of this west coast rarity framed against the dense green fairway was an exhilarating sight.

After absorbing the experience for a while, I raced off to the phone and called Arnold who showed up promptly and saw the bird. It was still there the following day, along with a record high 20 Lesser Yellowlegs and another species for our new golf course list, a Pectoral Sandpiper.

Arnold and I were now doing a daily watch on the ponds after work. On the 14th a juvenile Stilt Sandpiper appeared (a third Sunshine Coast record), and on the 15th it was joined by a second bird of the same species.

That was the end of the excitement for 1993, as numbers and species diversity dwindled to the end of the month. In the week August 8-15 we had seen 12 species of shorebirds, with first, second and third Sunshine Coast records among them.

In 1994 another Solitary Sandpiper appeared on July 31, followed by a Baird's on August 10th. Between August 11 and September 3 four additional species were recorded: Red-necked Phalarope, Semipalmated Sandpiper, American Golden Plover (second Sunshine Coast record), and Short-billed Dowitcher. The golf course list now stood at 16 species!

The Sechelt Golf and Country Club is located about two kilometres northwest of Sechelt, on the Sechelt Peninsula proper. It is close to the Strait of Georgia and Sechelt Inlet, both of which might act as flyways for migrating shorebirds. The course has about ten small shallow ponds or water hazards. (Ponds to birders, water hazards to golfers!) One of these, larger than the rest, has been most productive. The key feature of the ponds which has proven so attractive to the shorebirds is a narrow strip of mud, less than a metre wide, between the water and the bank.

A Birdie, An Eagle, ... continued

The golf course has unwittingly provided two new habitat types in the Sechelt area:

- 1) freshwater ponds with a muddy margin, and
- 2) short grass.

Additional birds, other than shorebirds, have also been attracted. A variety of dabbling ducks have used the ponds, including a male Redhead for three weeks in September/October 1994 (3rd Sunshine Coast record), and the previously infrequent Northern Shoveler is now regular. American Kestrel has been attracted to the short grass, and Merlin to the shorebirds at the ponds. In August up to four species of swallows have been seen together and a Yellow-headed Blackbird made one of its few Sunshine Coast appearances. In November a Northern Shrike was seen.

Visiting this location is problematic! Despite being a hot new shorebirding spot this habitat, not surprisingly, is plagued with an abundance of golfers, and of dubious skills at that. The ponds are not visible without crossing fairways, and generally dodging golfers and golf balls. Consequently, very early morning or the evening are recommended for your visits and extreme care should be taken NOT to interfere with the golfers.

The success of these small, artificial ponds in attracting shorebirds suggests that it might be a positive step if they were incorporated as a mitigation factor in all of the many projected new golf courses in BC. □

[EDITORS' NOTE: Birders intending to travel to Sechelt might check Tony's December 1992, "SITE GUIDE: Lower Sunshine Coast". BCFO 2(3/4): 24-29 for more goodies.]

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