

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
**FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**

ISSN 1192-0270

Volume 5, No. 1

March 1995

**CONTENTS**

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS	2
BCFO Officers and Directors	2
SOCIETY NEWS	
President's Message	3
Message from Membership Coordinator	3-4
UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS	4-5
NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS	5-6
Nest Box Dramas (1993)	7-8
AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE	8
Boundary Bay Lot List	9-10
Possible Bark Scaling by a Red-Breasted Sapsucker	11
Little BIG Day, Kootenay Style	11
Chichester Bird Sanctuary, Kelowna, BC	12-13
1995 Spring 'Armchair Birders' Challenge	13
Duncan Christmas Bird Count 1994	14-15
Rare Bird Alerts in Pacific Northwest: Part 1 -- BC	15
Wildlife Tree Patches and Cavity-nesting Birds: ...	16
22nd annual Pacific Seabird Meeting report	17-18
Birding and Baseball: Part 1, Conflicts	19-20
A Gyrfalcon Hunting Incident	20

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, \$25.00; junior memberships (age under 18), \$10.00; U.S. and foreign memberships, \$25.00 (U.S.). Memberships are for the calendar year. For further information, or to join, write:

**Allen Wiseley, Membership Coordinator**  
**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**


---

It seems like just yesterday we were sending the last issue to the publishers and here it is, time to finalize another one. Happy Spring!! In this issue we pose a question only our members can resolve. We know birders are very good at spotting details. They can differentiate one *Empidonax* from another. We know that birders are also good at documenting unusual sightings. Our dilemma is that we didn't get one letter on our inadvertent use of a **September** 1994 header on every page of the **December** 1994 issue. We hope that the real reason members did not report on this unusual sighting was because birders are diplomatic, NOT because they do not read each issue. Feedback anyone?? We checked the header at least twice in this issue.

Thank you to all who sent articles. Again the 'in' basket is empty so keep up the good work and keep sending in more. The big news is that the BCFO AGM will be held this September here in the Victoria area. [see Society News on following page] Come and view the Hawk migration, enjoy our Island hospitality and birding, get ready for some great lectures and presentations, and check out a Skylark for your checklist.

In this issue we welcome three or four new authors and welcome back several who have contributed to earlier issues. As usual they have provided us with a variety of topics ranging from habitat issues to bird behaviour to census projects. Your BCFO directors have written up two reports relating to Society News, one report from a PSG meeting, and one article on the trials of having two passions. Lots of things are happening in the Upcoming Meetings and Events this spring so you can plan your travels. Jot down the Vancouver and Victoria Rare Bird alert numbers in preparation for the AGM. You may also wish to review: Sept 1994. SITE GUIDE: Martindale Valley, SE Vancouver Island. 4(3): 10-13; June 1994. Becher Bay Headlands: a place for raptors & their watchers. 4(2): 14-15; December 1992. SITE GUIDE: Island View Beach. 2(3/4): 20-23; and, December 1992. Hawk Ridge, BC. 2(3/4): 15-17.

We ran out of submitted articles so we decided to provide you with one quiz for birders with the really big bucks (no prize) and one quiz that actually has a prize (donated from our own library; we have no shame, we'll try anything to get you to write). Get your answers in early. There is only one prize. In the event of a tie those members who remembered to include an article for publication with their quiz answers will get positive consideration.

Good birding! We look forward to meeting new members and renewing acquaintance with all members at the BCFO Annual General Meeting on Vancouver Island this September. ☺

---

**BCFO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 1993-1994**

<u>President:</u>	<b>Marian Porter</b>	531-5747 14831 Buena Vista Ave, White Rock, BC V4B 1X3
<u>Vice-President:</u>	<b>Tony Greenfield</b>	885-5539 P.O. Box 319, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0
<u>Secretary:</u>	<b>Lloyd Esralson</b>	581-4736 309 - 14881 104th Ave, Surrey, BC V3R 1M6
<u>Treasurer:</u>	<b>John Dorsey</b>	857-1768 26641 - 29th Ave, Aldergrove, BC V4W 3B3
<u>Membership:</u>	<b>Allen Wiseley</b>	477-4593 1881 Grandview Drive, Victoria, BC V8N 2T8
<u>Directors:</u>	<b>Mike McGrenere</b>	658-8624 1178 Sunnygrove Terrace, Victoria, BC V8Y 2V9
	<b>Martin McNicholl</b>	294-2072 4735 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1L3
	<b>Ken Morgan</b>	655-1987 9604 Barnes Place, Sidney, BC V8L 4W9
.....		
<u>Newsletter Editors:</u>	<b>Andy &amp; Marilyn Buhler</b>	744-2521 (Home) 1132 Loenholtm Road 952-2196 (Work)/952-2180 (FAX) Victoria, BC V8Z 2Z6
<u>Newsletter Distribution:</u>	<b>Allen Wiseley</b>	477-4593

---

---

**SOCIETY NEWS -- PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

---

by Marian Porter, BCFO President

The first directors' meeting for 1995 was held at the Swan Lake Nature Centre in Victoria on January 29, 1995.

Allen Wiseley has taken over as Membership Secretary and has purchased a new software program to upgrade existing files and improve membership record keeping. He is working to bring records up to date in order to ensure that all paid members receive their newsletters and journals.

Martin McNicholl is making good progress on the 1994 Journal and indicated the 1993 issue was also near completion. Ken Morgan was welcomed as the newest member of the **British Columbia Birds** Editorial Board. Volunteers are still needed for the positions of photo editor and production manager. Authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts. Martin was pleased by the response to the Journal questionnaire and agreed to prepare a summary of results for the Newsletter. Thank you to all members who took the time to participate.

A program for the 1995 Annual General Meeting was outlined. It will occur in the fall within the greater Victoria area. Sidney was identified as a favourable location for a meeting. The AGM will have a focus on migration. Lower Vancouver Island is becoming known as a focal point for migrating birds, from the Becher Bay Headlands of "Hawkwatch" fame to the Canadian Wildlife Service migration monitoring program at Rocky Point. In the early spring of this year a new initiative with National Defense will study the detection of migrants by radar. Ken Morgan will lead boating trips into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Terry Wahl will be speaking on seabird migration. **The dates for the AGM are September 15, 16, and 17, 1995.** Bird migration has been identified as one area where our knowledge has tremendous gaps, despite the fact that both optimal wintering habitat and migration routes are critical to the survival of some of our most familiar birds.

In 1994 I attended a joint meeting of the A.O.U., the Cooper Ornithological Society & the Wilson Ornithological Society held in Missoula, Montana. A component of this meeting was a symposium on the stopover biology of neotropical landbird migrants. I also participated in a conference sponsored by the Endangered Species Coalition in Seattle in late January 1995 to gain background knowledge on the effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act in the United States and I will be representing the B.C.F.O. at an Endangered Species Conservation meeting sponsored by the Canadian Wildlife Service on March 18, 1995. Ken Morgan, another director of B.C.F.O., attended the Pacific Seabird Group Annual Meeting in San Diego in January 1995. [EDS' NOTE: see report on Pacific Seabird Group meeting on pg 17]

The next B.C.F.O. directors' meeting will be in White Rock on March 5, 1995. Note that nominations are needed for the Board of Directors. Elections will be held at the AGM in September. Send your nominations to any of the current directors.

---

**MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR**

---

by Allen Wiseley, Membership Coordinator

Since taking over the membership files late last fall, I have had a number of inquiries about the status of memberships -- whether cheques had been cashed, or to report that publications hadn't been received. It seems the system for recording memberships and handling membership money had been somewhat uncoordinated and in need of better organization. To accomplish this, I have taken several steps toward reworking the system. The mailing list is now handled by more efficient computer software which allows for data storage, sorting and recall, as well as preparation of mailing labels. I intend to review any misunderstandings with memberships during the past year or more and have sent out some letters to begin this process.

I am verifying membership status on many of the records with the deposits to our account made last year. Although our attention has been directed to this by several members, other members may not realize there had been a problem. I would suggest that all of you check the status of your membership as far as possible from your records. Are you paid up for 1993, 1994, and 1995? Do you have cancelled cheques? Do you have all four newsletters for each of 1993 and 1994 (journals are

**MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP** continued

still to come)? Unpaid members for 1994 who were 1993 members have still received three of the four newsletters: if you are one of these members, please pay for 1994 if possible. Some may think that a cheque written in 1994 was for 1994 membership when it had actually been applied to dues owing for 1993.

Please notify me or other executive member if you discover irregularities in your membership. Please be patient; this will all be sorted out eventually! ☺

---

**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

---

compiled by Wayne C Weber

- March 9-11, 1995 **NORTHWEST SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION** annual meeting, Idaho Falls, ID (jointly with Idaho Chapter, The Wildlife Society). Includes optional birding field trip on March 11. Contact Gail Whitney, Continuing Education, Idaho State University, Campus Box 8062, Pocatello, ID 83209-8062. Phone (800) 753-4781.
- March 23-25, 1995 **SOCIETY FOR NORTHWESTERN VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY**, 75th annual meeting, Rosario Resort, Orcas Island, WA, including marine bird & mammal cruise plus land-based field trip March 25. Contact Jan Kershner, Forest Sciences Lab, 3625-93rd Ave. SW, Olympia, WA 98512-9193.
- March 24-29, 1995 **60TH NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONFERENCE**, Minneapolis, MN. Contact L. L. Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute, 1101-14th St. NW, Ste. 801, Washington, DC 20005. Phone (202) 371-1808.
- April 4-9, 1995 **COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY** annual meeting, La Paz, Baja California, Mexico. Contact Juan Guzman P., Universidad Autonoma de Baja California Sur, Apdo. Postal 19-B, La Paz, B.C.S., Mexico. FAX 112-1-18-80.
- 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, 1995 **SPRING BIRD COUNT, VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**. Count from midnight to noon. Post count gathering and reports at Swan Lake Nature House. For details contact David Pearce (604) 658-0295.
- 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 Marven (604) 748-8504.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS** continued

- 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 27, 1995 **THIRD OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN PARK BIRD COUNT,** hosted by the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club, with help from the South Okanagan Naturalists & BC Parks. All birders are invited to join in this survey of a large but relatively little-known Provincial Park. Contact Eva Durance (604) 492-3158 in Penticton or Brenda Thomson (604) 764-4296 / Eileen Dillabough (604) 862-8254 in Kelowna.
- May 29 -  
June 11, 1995 **Birding Tour to Southern Alberta & Saskatchewan.** Trip will visit 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 Marven (above).
- June 2-4, 1995 **MOUNT ROBSON PROVINCIAL PARK BIRDING WEEKEND.** BC Parks will allow free camping at Robson Meadows in the Park. For additional information please contact Gail Ross (604) 563-1017 [home] or (604) 565-6270 [work]
- June 10-11, 1995 **STRATHCONA PROVINCIAL PARK BIRD SEARCH,** a Strathcona Wilderness Institute annual event. You can ski, paddle or hike but we need good birders to assist in recording the species of this area. Camping available. Contact Betty Brooks, 1630 Seaview Road, Black Creek, BC V9J 1J5. Phone (604) 337-8180.
- 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 Marven (above).
- August 5-11, 1995 **FIFTH NEOTROPICAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS,** Asuncion, Paraguay. Contact Nancy Lopez de Kochalka, c/o Comite Organizador Local del V CON, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural del Paraguay, Sucursal 19, Campus, Central XI, Paraguay. Phone 595-21-505075.
- Aug. 13-20, 1995 **AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGIST' UNION** annual meeting, Cincinnati, Ohio. Please contact Robert S. Kennedy, Museum of Natural History, 1720 Gilbert Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45202. Phone (513) 345-8510 or FAX (513) 345-8501.
- Sept. 15-17, 1995 **BCFO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** to be held in the Sydney/Victoria area of Vancouver Island. Start making your plans to attend. We expect details to follow in the June issue and look forward to seeing you all over here on the Island this September.
- Sept. 22-24, 1995 **WESTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION** annual meeting, Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque, NM. Contact Catherine I. Sandell, 8101 N. Main St., Las Cruces, NM, 88012.

**NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM WESTPORT, WASHINGTON** for 1995 are scheduled for May 20; July 16, 29; August 12, 19, 26; September 9, 10, 23; October 7, 8. Contact T.R. Wahl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham, WA, 98225 (phone 206-733-8255). In addition to the usual trips which travel up to 40 miles offshore, two deep-water trips, travelling up to 70 miles offshore are scheduled for April 22 and May 6, 1995. A special trip is also scheduled on June 10, 1995, from Westport to the seabird colonies to the north near Point Grenville, WA.

**NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** continued

**PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP FROM UCLUELET, BC** is scheduled for October 1995. Contact Michael Shepard at (604) 380-9195.

**BC NEST RECORD PROGRAM** is a volunteer project designed to gather as much information as possible on nesting biology of birds on BC, including nest locations, geographic distribution of breeding birds, timing of the nesting season, and breeding success of common species. All nests found with eggs or young, even of common species like American Robin or Barn Swallow, can produce valuable information. The best information comes from repeated visits to a nest. An annual report on the results is published in the **B.C. Naturalist**. Even if you only have time to report on 5 or 10 nests, your contribution will be appreciated. Contact Margaret Harris, P.O. Box 10, Penticton, BC, V2A 6J9. Phone (604) 492-8958.

**THE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (BBS)** is a cooperative project supervised by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service. It involves running a 39.4 km survey route by car, once a year, during the month of June or first week of July. The observer stops every 0.8 km for exactly 3 minutes and records all birds seen & heard at each stop. About 2000 routes are surveyed every year in North America, including 40 to 50 in BC. The BBS is designed to measure both short-term and long-term changes in bird populations in a statistically reliable way. For most species, it is the single best indicator of continental or regional population trends.

An ability to recognize the songs and calls of all common birds species is essential, although it is not mandatory that you know the calls of every bird species found in your area. Breeding Bird Surveys are not for everyone, as they must be started 30 minutes before sunrise and are often in remote areas, but running a BBS route can be an enjoyable way of honing your skills at identifying birds by ear. It is preferred that observers survey the same route every year, but if you will be visiting a remote part of BC and can only commit yourself to survey a route once, there are some assigned routes which have never been surveyed.

If you are interested in the BBS and would like to be assigned a route, contact the BC coordinator, Richard J. Cannings, Cowan Vertebrate Museum, Department of Zoology, UBC, Vancouver, BC, V6T 2A9. Phone (604) 822-4665 (work) or (604) 734-9489 (home).

**OKANAGAN BIG DAY CHALLENGE 1995** -- if you enjoy birding in the Okanagan Valley in late May, consider taking part in the 10th annual Okanagan Big Day Challenge. This event is a competitive team effort to find as many bird species as possible in the Okanagan Valley on the Sunday of the May long weekend (May).

Each team is led by a top birder who is familiar with the Okanagan, and we try to pair newcomers or beginning birders with an expert. If you do not mind an 18-20 hour marathon, this is a good way to get a quick introduction to the birds and birding areas of the Okanagan Valley. Prizes will be awarded and teams will compare notes on the unusual birds they saw.

The Big Day Challenge is also planned as a "birdathon" to raise money for the Nature Trust of BC for habitat acquisition in the Okanagan, and teams are asked to solicit pledges from as many friends as possible. The target for this year's challenge is \$10,000 (about \$1000 to \$1500 per team). See **BC Field Ornithologist** 3(3):6, September 1993 for a writeup by Dick Cannings.

If interested please contact Dick Cannings at 3007 West 7th Ave, Vancouver, BC, V6K 1Z7. Phone (604) 734-9489.

**BCFO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will be held in the greater Victoria area of Vancouver Island on September 15-17, 1995. Now is the time to start making your plans to attend. We expect to have most details available for the June issue and look forward to seeing everybody here on Vancouver Island this September.

---

**NEST BOX DRAMAS (1993)**

---

by Elsie Nykyfork  
RR #4, Site 11, Comp c-29  
Vernon, BC V1T 6L7

Violet Green & Tree Swallows have nested in adjacent boxes on our fence for the past three years. On March 24, 1993 the Tree Swallows came back, circling and sitting on the box and generally proclaiming ownership of box #108. A few days later the Violet Green Swallows arrived and did the same thing with box #109. This went on until April 19 when a Black-capped Chickadee decided to build her all-moss nest in #109. When the Violet Green Swallow returned and looked into "her" box, she acted like she just couldn't believe her eyes. Someone else was in her box!! There were several real skirmishes with locked beaks and spirals down to the ground. Each time I looked into the box there was a different bird on the nest protecting it. Finally, by April 24 the Chickadee filled the box with moss right up to the hole & proceeded to pack it down to about 4". All the while the Tree Swallow kept coming back to #109 and the Violet Green Swallow is slowly conceding she doesn't own #108.

May 3 -- I checked the box and there was the usual shallow scoop nest in the box.

May 7 -- when I looked the Chickadee had made a round hole in the centre of the nest and had laid five eggs in the hollow all in a pile. She must sit over that hollow to incubate the eggs. There seems to be some order in these first two boxes.

Now we have two pair of Violet Green Swallows fighting over the next two boxes, #111 and #112. I hope they use both of them. A pair of American Robins are nesting in the fir tree. Something is predated their eggs as I find them under the tree.

Interlude: While awaiting developments I went to Point Pelee for some marvellous birding. I'm home again now watch over my bird boxes and report status.

The Violet Green Swallows have occupied both boxes and full nests are made, blowing apart the idea that the same species won't nest beside each other. The Chickadee has six eggs and the Tree Swallow three so far.

May 27 -- Chickadee has four hatched, Tree Swallow has five eggs, V/G #1 has six eggs and V/G #2 has five eggs. All is peaceful at 7461 Fleming Road.

June 4 -- I was coming into the house when I noticed a Bull Snake entering box #111. I yelled for Nick, he ran over with a garden cultivator and we were able to remove all 3' of snake in a big coil. It thumped down onto the ground with two young swallows in its grasp. Much to-do and now we have four young swallows in #111.

June 5 -- The Black-capped Chickadee has fledged five. A House Wren is building a nest in Box #110.

June 24 -- I watched all five Tree Swallows fledge and sit on the neighbour's fence.

July 4 -- The Violet Green chicks are feeding at the box hole of #111. I watched one fledge from the box and fly up onto the roof of the house.

July 5 -- Another chick left box #111 and sat on the fence. I peeked into the box and saw two more ready to go. Meanwhile box #112 chicks are developing at the same rate and I watched one leave the box. The adults seem to feed the young at the hole for a few days then, in order to get them to leave, they fly by with food but don't give it to them. They fly by again and again. I saw one young bird reach out so far to get the food that it fell out. So, another one was launched on its flying career.

Meanwhile: the House Wren has lost his mate and sits singing and calling on the very top of the fir tree. He did this for over a week.

**NEST BOX DRAMAS (1993) continued**

July 6 -- One more chick fledged from box #112. It's brown with no sign of swallow coloring. It landed on the cement retaining wall. It's doing a lot of preening, is very unsteady on its feet, calling and flutter pleading for food. It still has the yellow lining in its mouth. The adults swoop by trying to get it to fly. After about 15 minutes it decides to fly shakily away. I use my binos to follow its maiden flight until it is out of sight. It must be fun to fly! All six are gone now from #112.

The Robin is feeding young in her new nest in the fir tree. A pair of Northern Orioles come every day to our liquid oriole feeder. The young are not here yet. Calliope and Rufous-sided Hummingbirds are active in the garden and at the feeder. Mostly females.

Three pair of California Quail and a pair of Ring-necked Pheasants are here on a regular basis. I haven't seen young yet, they are late this year. Finally, in August, we get about 24 quail. They are all different sizes so are from all the pairs. There are young pheasants now, about three-quarters grown.

September -- the quail are in coveys and now we count 30-40. They move so fast. They fill the yard and flower beds, dust bathing and hunting for bugs. The young male pheasants really look strange as they change into adult plumage.

The snow has arrived and so have the Evening Grosbeak, Bohemian Waxwing, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Pine Siskin, House Finch, Cassin's Finch, Northern Shrike and several others. It has been a fun year birding in our yard. ↩

---

**AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE**


---

**Chris Charlesworth**

Chris, a member of the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, has been birding in the Okanagan for about 6 years. He has lead many groups birding in the area and welcomes calls from interested visiting birders. (604) 765-6048.

**Al Grass**

Al Grass has worked as a Park Naturalist for some 25 years. He is the author of a variety of publications. His ornithological interests include raptors, uses of native trees and shrubs by birds, and woodpecker feeding habits.

**Les W. Gyug**

Les developed his interest in birding while working in Glacier and Mount Revelstoke national parks in the early 1980's. He is currently a wildlife consultant principally involved with forestry issues affecting wildlife.

**Derrick Marven**

Thirteen years ago, while sitting on his porch awaiting employment, Derrick saw, and was enthralled by a hummingbird. A neighbour, Dr Murray Spiers, encouraged this budding interest in birds and now Derrick monitors the whole Duncan-Cowichan Bay area and leads birding trips to Ontario and the Okanagan.

**M. F. (Mike) McGrenere**

Former BCFO president, Mike has been an active member of the Victoria Natural History Society & enjoys many types of birding, especially the alpine trips.

**Ken H. Morgan**

Ken Morgan, a member of the Victoria Natural History Society, started birding as a youngster in Ontario. Although he only birded off-and-on in his teens, he now 'birds' seriously with a primary interest in pelagic birding.

**Elsie Nykyfork**

Elsie has compiled a plant species Herbarium for Shuswap Lake Provincial Park Nature House, monitors bluebird & duck nest boxes and has been an Ecological Reserve Warden, a volunteer park Naturalist and an FBCN Camp Director.

**G. Allen Poynter**

Allen Poynter, who has birded since his teens in England, has had a special interest in seabirds. He has been active with both the Vancouver & Victoria Natural History Societies and also with the Canadian Nature Federation. Ⓞ



---

**BOUNDARY BAY LOT LIST**

---

by G. Allen & Helen Poynter  
1238 Beach Grove Road  
Delta, BC V4L 1N6

Number 180 flew in and on its first pass picked up a healthy male Green-winged Teal as it lifted from a tide water channel making me spill my second morning coffee in my haste to use my binoculars; definitely an immature Northern Goshawk, sitting on a mudbank to apply the coup de grace before feeding!

Having changed our residence on several occasions and being ardent birders for the past thirty-eight years it was logical that we selected our present retirement home with good birding potential in mind. We established by a long and complex process of elimination that a waterfront property on Boundary Bay, specifically on the 12th Avenue Lagoon in Delta, had potential.

We had no sooner accepted this fact than a house appeared for sale while we were working in the area on a shore bird survey. We jumped at it!

Our 50 x 100 foot lot has a two storey house on it with all of the glass facing the water and we have now converted the area of burnt grass and sandy soil into a potential birding garden with pine tree, Mountain Ash, Red Flowering Currant, flowers and the usual feeders and bird baths. We are in a rural area of established gardens with mixed coniferous and deciduous trees and are only 50 metres from a 260 hectare open space of grasses, brush, Alders and Birch trees all mixed in a Savannah habitat interspersed with marshes of cattails and bulrushes, this all behind a combination of dykes and deep fresh water drainage ditches.

The protrusion of land mass that is known as Point Roberts (USA) & Tsawwassen runs behind us and is heavily treed in mixed forest, the ridge forms a mini-flyway that extends into the Straits of Georgia and is used during migration only to the degree that it would take a birder to recognize it as a flyway.

On the seaward side we look out on a 300 degree view over a strip of sedges, grasses, and wild roses in front of a five hectare salt water mudflat/tidal lagoon that is protected from Boundary Bay by a grassy, log strewn sandbar. Beyond this is the 12 kilometres of Boundary Bay with its extensive mudflats and sand bars, changing continually with tides running from zero to fifteen feet and exposing up to three kilometres of mudflats.

If this is not sufficient to convince a birder that he had died and gone to heaven (or whatever place it is that good birders go) the entire backdrop is surrounded by range after range of islands and mountains, some of them high enough to maintain snow throughout the year. Among these are these 10700 foot glaciated slopes of Mount Baker with its own mountain range, that greets us in the mornings with backdrop sunrises, catching the pinks and reds of the sunsets.

The birds seen on or flying over the lot are not spectacular in numbers with only 111 species. The now defunct Canadian Birding in volume 1 number 1, qualified eligible birds as "birds also seen from the property" which in our case becomes dramatic. The first twelve months were obviously the highlight with new species weekly and rarities appearing on a regular basis, TOTAL = 157 SPECIES. Years two and three have added several species bringing the lot total up to 180 species to date. This is approximately 40 % of all BC birds & 30 % of total Canadian species.

Reviewing our species count it includes 7 sparrows, 16 raptors, 24 ducks and 27 shorebirds. Super highlights would include Prairie Falcon, Great Egret, Common Grackle, Olive-backed Pipit, Bar-tailed Godwit and Lesser Goldfinch. The real highlight of the lot is not the species count, but the continuous bird activity, particularly during the July to May period when up to 70,000 ducks are in the Bay, when flocks of 20,000 shorebirds perform dynamic aerial flights to avoid Peregrine or a Merlin, when a thousand Black-bellied Plover fly past in the dusk with their characteristic whistling call, or a single Barn Owl drifts past the window at dawn on its way back to its roost. We have single counts of 124 Great Blue Herons and 69 Bald Eagles from the house and with a new Kawa TSN 4 scope, hopefully we will soon both be fully retired and can settle down to some serious birding and look forward to at least improving our lot list, 200 is not out of reach.

**Lot List for Beach Grove, BC 10/7/88 to 1/9/94**

Authors' note: Since the time of writing (April 1992) eight new species have been added to give a new total of 188 species, thirty of which are shorebirds.

Red-throated Loon	Solitary Sandpiper	Bushtit
Pacific Loon	Spotted Sandpiper	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Common Loon	Whimbrel	Bewick's Wren
Pied-billed Grebe	Long-billed Curlew	House Wren
Horned Grebe	Hudsonian Godwit	Winter Wren
Red-necked Grebe	Marbled Godwit	Marsh Wren
Western Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Double-crested Cormorant	Black Turnstone	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Pelagic Cormorant	Sanderling	Swainson's Thrush
Great Blue Heron (H 167)	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Hermit Thrush
Great Egret	Western Sandpiper	American Robin
Green Heron	Least Sandpiper	Varied Thrush
Tundra Swan	Baird's Sandpiper	American Pipit
Trumpeter Swan	Pectoral Sandpiper	Cedar Waxwing
Snow Goose	Dunlin	Northern Shrike
Brant (H 1600)	Stilt Sandpiper	European Starling
Canada Goose	Short-billed Dowitcher	Orange-crowned Warbler
Wood Duck	Long-billed Dowitcher	Yellow Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Common Snipe	Yellow-rumped Warbler
(NB 7 Eurasians)	Wilson's Phalarope	Common Yellowthroat
Mallard	Red-necked Phalarope	Wilson's Warbler
Northern Pintail	Parasitic Jaeger	Western Tanager
Blue-winged Teal	Franklin's Gull	Black-headed Grosbeak
Cinnamon Teal	Bonaparte's Gull	Lazuli Bunting
Northern Shoveler	Mew Gull	Rufous-sided Towhee
Gadwall	Ring-billed Gull	Savannah Sparrow
Eurasian Wigeon (H 13)	California Gull	Fox Sparrow
American Wigeon	Herring Gull	Song Sparrow
Canvasback	Thayer's Gull	Lincoln Sparrow
Redhead	Western Gull	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Greater Scaup	Glaucous-winged Gull	White-crowned Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Glaucous Gull	Harris' Sparrow
Oldsquaw	Caspian Tern (H 23)	Dark-eyed Junco
Black Scoter	Common Tern	Red-winged Blackbird
Surf Scoter	Rock Dove	Western Meadowlark
White-winged Scoter	Band-tailed Pigeon	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Common Goldeneye	Mourning Dove	Brewer's Blackbird
Bufflehead	Barn Owl	Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Merganser	Western Screech-owl	Northern Oriole
Red-breasted Merganser	Great-horned Owl	Purple Finch
Ruddy Duck	Short Eared Owl	House Finch
Turkey Vulture	Common Nighthawk	Red Crossbill
Osprey	Black Swift	Pine Siskin
Bald Eagle	Vaux's Swift	American Goldfinch
Northern Harrier	Anna's Hummingbird	Evening Grosbeak
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Rufous Hummingbird	House Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	*****
Northern Goshawk	Downy Woodpecker	Clark's Grebe
Red-tailed Hawk	Northern Flicker	Prairie Falcon
Rough-legged Hawk	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Bar-tailed Godwit
Golden Eagle (3)	Western Wood-Pewee	Common Grackle
American Kestrel	Willow Flycatcher	Lesser Goldfinch
Merlin	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	*****
Peregrine Falcon	Eastern Kingbird	American Black Duck
Gyr Falcon	Tree Swallow	Olive-backed Pipit
Ring-necked Pheasant	Violet-green Swallow	*****
American Coot	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Snowy Owl
Sandhill Crane	Bank Swallow	Common Murre
Black-bellied Plover	Cliff Swallow	Willet
Lesser-golden Plover	Barn Swallow	Ruff
Semipalmated Plover	Steller's Jay	Mute Swan
Killdeer	North-western Crow	Western Kingbird
Greater Yellowlegs	Common Raven	American Avocet
Lesser Yellowlegs	Black-capped Chickadee	(H = high counts) <

---

**AN OBSERVATION OF POSSIBLE BARK SCALING BY  
THE RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus ruber*)**

---

by Al Grass  
103 - 7065 Stride Avenue  
Burnaby, BC V3N 1T3

The Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*) not only feeds on sap from wells, which it excavates, but also probes under loose bark. [Bent, 1964] Bark scaling, the removal of tree bark scales or plates as a feeding strategy, is well recognized in the Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*). [Bent, 1964] Recently, the author observed what he believes to be this behaviour in the Red-breasted Sapsucker.

"In 1988, I kept extensive notes on sapsucker feeding preferences, although I did not have time to carry out an exhaustive study. Despite this limitation, some useful insights into the feeding habits of the Red-breasted Sapsucker were obtained.

In my field notes, I identified five feeding strategies as follows: well excavating for sap; well excavating for cambium (inner bark); gleaning (feeding on the surface of a trunk or limb); flycatching or 'hawking'; and fruit-feeding." [Grass, 1990]

In May 1994, at Mount Seymour Provincial Park, North Vancouver, a male Red-breasted Sapsucker was observed removing bark scales from a Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*). Scaling may now possibly be added to its other feeding strategies.

The author undertook a literature search but could find no reference to bark scaling by sapsuckers, or other possible explanations of this behaviour.

References:

- Bent, A. C. 1964. Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers. New York: Dover.  
Grass, Al. 1990. "The Red-breasted Sapsucker in Golden Ears Provincial Park". Discovery 19(3): 87-88g

---

**LITTLE BIG DAY, KOOTENAY STYLE**

---

by Ruth Goodwin  
404 Aspen Road  
Kimberley, BC V1A 3B5

After a successful Little Big Day in 1994, the Rocky Mountain Naturalists are again hosting this event on May 13, 1995. Six teams were in the field last year from 6 am to 6 pm counting as many birds species as possible by sight or sound. A total of 133 species were identified with the winning team accumulating 99 species. Weather was perfect with clear skies and no wind. A spirited dinner in the evening allowed for teams to share their adventures of the day! Some sightings of interest to us were the Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater Yellowlegs, Tennessee Warbler, Western Kingbird and Sandhill Cranes. A notable absence was no recording for jays.

Our boundaries for this event are the Alberta border, USA border, Invermere and Yahk. Fees per team are \$20.00. After costs are deducted, the money will be donated to a local conservation effort. For registration information write:

Ruth Goodwin  
404 Aspen Road  
Kimberley BC V1A 3B5 (phone) 604-427-5405

Join us for a day of exploring marshes, prairie and mountains. Perfect weather can't be guaranteed but adventures await for birders as they ramble in this corner of the province. ◊

---

**CHICHESTER BIRD SANCTUARY, KELOWNA, BC**

---

by Chris Charlesworth  
725 Richards Road  
Kelowna, BC V1X 2X5

The green oasis of trees, marshland and waterways that make Chichester Bird Sanctuary such a productive birding area must look very inviting to migrant birds as they fly over. Completely surrounded by suburban developments, Chichester Bird Sanctuary acts as a migrant trap for birds as they fly over the city of Kelowna. Established in 1983, I began to visit Chichester in 1987. Since then 170 species have been recorded in the 5 acre area. It is hoped that in the future the sanctuary will encompass 30 acres of adjacent marshland also.

Waterfowl congregate in large numbers in the spring at Chichester. Hundreds of Mallards and Canada Geese dominate the flocks. Smaller numbers of Gadwall, Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, Redheads and Ruddy Ducks are often present. American Coots, Sora and Virginia Rails can be heard in the marshes. Red-winged, Yellow-headed and Brewer's Blackbirds mass in the willows encircling the ponds. In March the first migrant song birds appear. Violet-green and Tree Swallows are usually the first to arrive and are soon followed by Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers. A few rarities have appeared in spring. The most memorable for me was when two Black-necked Stilts alighted as I walked home from school. One of the birds remained while the other flew off. The stilt only remained for a short time but many people from Kelowna were able to see it. A male Eurasian Wigeon mingled with the American Wigeon in 1992 and provided birders with very close views. On May 1, 1994 a lovely male Purple Finch (first for the Kelowna area) sat atop a tree, the sun glistening off of his head, and sang his heart out.

If you wish to see large numbers of birds at Chichester Bird Sanctuary in the summer you'll have to get up pretty early. I visit the sanctuary at 5:30 am and often see 40 species, while at 9:00 am I'm lucky to see 25 species. There are not that many species present in the heat of the summer but it is still very enjoyable to walk around and see the young Canada Geese, Mallards, Coots, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Robins, Northern Orioles and House Finches. A few of the rarer summer birds have been Common Tern, American Bittern, Peregrine Falcon, American Avocet (which is regular in July and August), Clay-coloured Sparrow and Lazuli Bunting.

Chichester Bird Sanctuary is at its best during the fall migration. I have recorded over 50 species in two hours in mid-August. The willows fill up with Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers; American Redstarts (uncommon); Common Yellowthroats and Northern Waterthrushes. On two occasions I have found single Tennessee Warblers in the mixed flocks. House Wrens; Ruby-crowned Kinglets; Swainson's Thrushes; Gray Catbirds; Solitary, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos; Western Tanagers; Black-headed Grosbeaks; Chipping, Vesper, Savannah, White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrows join in on the feast of insects too. Every night thousands of European Starlings and swallows swirl above the marsh, while Common Nighthawks snatch insects from just above the water surface. Shorebirds are common in some years and include: Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs; Solitary, Spotted, Upland (accidental), Semipalmated, Western, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers; Dunlin (accidental); Long-billed Dowitchers; Common Snipe; Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. Just to add a little confusion Western Wood-pewees; Willow, Hammond's, Dusky and Pacific-slope Flycatchers silently perch on the trees at the north end of the sanctuary. Some of the rare fall birds have been Black-crowned Night Heron, Greater White-fronted Goose, Bobolink, Swamp Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow.

In the winter birding is a little more relaxed at the sanctuary. In some years, when the ponds freeze over, there are no waterfowl. In most years, however, there will be a few hundred Mallards and usually some American Wigeon. Large flocks of Bohemian Waxwings are often chased by accipiters or Northern Shrikes. Common Redpolls, Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins are abundant in some winters. Marsh Wrens and a single Virginia Rail usually overwinter but take quite an effort to see because of their elusive habits. In the winter of 1994 a Common Yellowthroat was present for a short while and in 1991 a Savannah Sparrow was closely observed. Some of the other rare winter birds have been Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Rusty Blackbirds and Fox Sparrow. Large numbers of gulls often fly over Chichester in the winter. A sharp observer should pick out Herring, California, Ring-billed and Glaucous-winged Gulls and possibly Thayer's, Mew and Glaucous Gulls as well.

**CHICHESTER BIRD SANCTUARY** continued

As houses are built on the last remaining fields around the sanctuary, valuable habitat for migrating birds is lost. I was quite disturbed when a development proposal sign was recently put up in a field where American Pipits and Horned Larks feed in April. This sanctuary is valuable enough to be purchased by the BC Nature Trust or a similar organization. I hope that it will not go the way of many of the Okanagan's precious wetlands have gone.

EDITORS' NOTE: location of Chichester Bird Sanctuary (see BCFO V. 4, #2 June 1994) From Rutland Road turn west onto Fitzpatrick Road (north of the Catholic Church) and continue along for approximately 500 meters, then turn left (south) onto Chichester Court. Proceed to the end of the court and park here. There are a series of trails that take you around the various ponds.¶

---

**1995 SPRING 'ARMCHAIR BIRDERS' CHALLENGE**

---

Each spring there are a number of 'Big Days' and 'Challenges' throughout the province. In order to help our readers hone their skills we present the following little challenge, an excerpt from Gerry Bennett's book More about Birdwatchers. The challenge is to see how many birds you can discover in the excerpt provided. This time we have an actual prize. For the person who is first to submit to us (your Editors), by or before May 15, 1995, a **complete** list of birds hidden in the excerpt, or, since the contest is not as simple as it first may seem, for the person who is first to submit the listing with the most correct answers by May 15, 1995, we will send a copy of Gerry Bennett's Laughing Matter. Gerry's reported tally and our winner will be printed in a future issue of the BCFO. NOTE: The Editors have only **one** prize available so write soon. Good Birding!!

**GERRY BENNETT'S BIRDS**

Swiftly, like a halo on the Managuan sky, the moon's waning old crest faded as a dying rebel while summer lingered.

Startled, as the cat's mew so rankled the sprat in Coleridge's poem, up above he could see a gleam as a crooked, flickering light was flaming over dinner. A bitter night it was.

"Is kindling and cedar terribly dear?" he railed with a sob, ranting on. "Is not our host rich? Ought we not rave now, poised at an age riddled with rushing and fussing?"

The host interposed, "A pox on ruffians and grouzers! Taboo by my vote always, nitwit. Esther regretfully calls Paul or Ike ethnic rowdies, and pipers puff in footloose pagan netherworlds!"

"Mogul, look not at Esther," he added. "She is gone. I saw her on the bus, tardy again, to the West Orkneys. Another woman gone, her pathos preying as the mouser in Ocho Rio. Less haggling! Is this tilt to be a sylphan orgy or a meadow lark?"

"It ends by helping keep lovers on course," Red said. "But bar a Caribbean feast? One never riles Omar about it."

"Mousey Omar! Tingling over chastity ratings that repel."

"I can only demur," replied the host. "With the bistro gone, it is over."¶

EDITORS' NOTE: Readers may remember Gerry as editor of "BIRDFINDING IN CANADA", a bimonthly National newsletter. Gerry has also written three little books, all in a 'lighter vein' style. "Wild Birdwatchers I Have Known", "More About Birdwatchers" & "Laughing Matter". He advises that a set of all three can be obtained by remitting \$12.50, payable to: Gerry Bennett, R.R. #2, 10780 Pine Valley Drive, Woodbridge, Ontario L4L 1A6. This temporary offer is available to readers until June 3, 1995.¶

---

**DUNCAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1994**

---

by Derrick Marven  
1887 Frances Street  
Duncan, BC V9L 4Z9

It has been five years since I participated in my first Duncan Christmas Bird Count and I have seen it grow to one of the best counts in Canada. We have gone from an average of 30 participants and 115 species to an incredible 70 participants and 128 species. I feel we could do a lot better and become one of the top three counts in Canada if we could attract more good birders and cover more of our area. The sky is the limit -- I estimate that barely half of our circle is covered at this time and some areas which are covered by just 2 people could in fact accommodate at least 10 people.

Over the past few years we have found our share of rare birds. In 1991 we had a Cattle Egret and 1993 provided an immature Black-crowned Night Heron, a Rough-legged Hawk, 2 Palm Warblers and 11 Swamp Sparrows. However, this year saw an incredible number of records. The reasons for this are unclear but the weather had been wet and warm and suddenly turned dry and cold. Maybe it brought the birds more out into the open but who really knows.

This year we had 3 new species records. First, and one which I think was the most astonishing, was the Tree Swallow seen along Somenos Creek by Len van Driel. Earlier that morning while I was sitting in McDonald's after a hard night's owling, I was chatting with Debbie Montgomery, one of my count group. She informed me that she thought she had seen a swallow the day before in Somenos Marsh. Since I had only had one cup of coffee and 2 egg McMuffins this observation took a bit of believing, and under my breath I said, "yeah, yeah". We did search for about an hour but no avail. The next day I phoned Debbie and apologised for doubting her. I think this Tree Swallow is the first to be recorded on a Canadian Christmas Bird Count. The bird stayed in the area for two more days.

The second record, and just as astounding, was the Lewis' Woodpecker found by Colleen O'Brian and Aziza Cooper. It was seen by many over the next week. A very rare bird at any time of the year on Vancouver Island, this was possibly a first Christmas Bird Count record for Vancouver Island. Kelowna and Penticton are the only other counts in Canada to record this species. The bird survived on old apples and pears which were on trees and in a compost pile at Fairburn Farm in Duncan.

The third record was 2 Saw-whet Owls, long overdue, called out by Dave Aldcroft's party near Bright Angel Park. This species nests in the Cowichan Valley and, with more people owling, will likely become a regular species on our counts.

Some of the other unusual species were: Northern Goshawk, the first since 1984; Greater Yellowlegs, not seen since 1977; Sanderling, the first since our inaugural count in 1970; Long-billed Dowitcher, not seen since 1979; and finally 2 Western Meadowlarks, the first since 1979. There were 36 new individuals records. Leading the way was Pacific Loon. The tally of 874 was probably the highest count ever recorded in Canada. Trumpeter Swans, at 730 were up by 60. Northern Pintail were way up at 1155 as were Ruddy Ducks at 250. However duck numbers declined for the third straight year in the Cowichan Valley. Also on the down side, Bald Eagle numbers were lower by well over half at 261. This is not helped by the extensive illegal hunting of this species in the valley for its feet and feathers. Red-tailed Hawk numbers were up by one third at 64, three Golden Eagles was also a record. California Quail put on a big rebound at 282. Killdeer, at 266 were our highest count for this species by 86. This was mainly due to the fields being frozen which drove the birds towards open water. We had our best year for owls at 17, primarily because more people got out of bed earlier. Pileated Woodpeckers were almost double our previous record at 32, Common Raven more than doubled at 492. Again on the "down" side, there were record numbers of European Starlings, at 5907 this was an increase of over 2000 from previous years. White-crowned Sparrows doubled at 79, and Dark-eyed Juncos, at 2838, were up 700. Both blackbird species were high, as were House Sparrows. Evening Grosbeaks, at 211, were way up.

Our final tally was 128 species and 50,702 individuals and if, big word IF, the species listed below had been found we would have beaten Vancouver for the position of third highest count in Canada.

**DUNCAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** continued

Birds missed included Eared Grebe, Black Scooter, Green Heron, Blue Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasant, Barred Owl, Hutton's Vireo, and finally Red Crossbill. Many others come to mind but we don't want to get to the top too quickly do we?

So, if you have nothing to do, especially you birders in the North and the Interior, on December 30, 1995 come to SUNNY DUNCAN and take part in one of the best counts in Canada.☺

EDS' NOTE: Derrick has added this unusual postscript: Please bring your umbrella.

---

**RARE BIRD ALERTS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: PART 1 -- BC**


---

by Wayne C. Weber  
51-6712 Baker Road  
Delta, B.C. V4E 2V3

Taped rare bird alerts (RBAs) as a means of notifying birders of rare birds are a relatively recent invention; first such tape began operating in Massachusetts in the 1950s. Now, however, there are at least 120 such RBAs operating in the United States and Canada, according to the August 1993 issue of **WINGING IT** (newsletter of the American Birding Association). The Pacific Northwest is well served by the five RBAs which operate in our area. For the benefit of travelling birders who may not be aware of all of these RBAs, the following summary may be helpful.

All of these RBAs have provision for the caller to leave his/her own message about a rare bird sighting at the end of the tape -- a handy provision, as it may save the caller the cost of a second long-distance phone call. However, only the Vancouver RBA lists phone numbers of two or three persons who can provide additional information on birding in the local area. This is a useful feature which should be adopted by more RBAs.

**VICTORIA, BC RARE BIRD ALERT** -- (604) 592-3381, sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society. Bryan Gates has operated this tape for several years, with backup service from Bruce Whittington and Hank Vander Pol when Bryan is out of town. It is usually updated 2 to 3 times a week. Coverage concentrates first on the Victoria and Duncan areas and second on the rest of Vancouver Island, but exceptionally rare birds from anywhere in B.C. are often mentioned as well. There is usually good communication between Victoria and Vancouver, such that an extremely rare bird found in either area usually finds its way onto both tapes within 24 hours.

Although the frequent updates on this tape are a great help to birders, a disadvantage is that rare birds, even those known to be present for 2-3 months, are sometimes dropped off the tape if they have not been seen in the last 3 days or so.

**VANCOUVER, BC RARE BIRD ALERT** -- (604) 737-9910, sponsored by the Vancouver Natural History Society. This tape has been operated since 1990 by Michael Price, with Cathy Aitchison substituting when Michael is away. It is updated at least 2-3 times a week, and sometimes daily when an extremely rare bird is present (e.g. the Dusky Thrush which appeared in 1993). Detailed directions are sometimes given to rare birds, and the tape sometimes exceeds 5 minutes in length. Because of the heavy usage, the length of the message can be a problem; it sometimes takes 5 or 10 calls to connect with the tape at peak times (e.g. weekend mornings in spring or fall).

Coverage concentrates on the Vancouver area, although extremely rare birds from anywhere in B.C. are mentioned when information is available. Like the Victoria tape, this one has the disadvantage that even extremely rare birds which may still present are not mentioned if they have not been reported in the last 2-3 days.☺

EDS' NOTE: Wayne's notes on the rare bird alerts for some of our American Pacific Northwest neighbours will appear in a future issue.

**WILDLIFE TREE PATCHES AND CAVITY-NESTING BIRDS:  
INITIAL RESULTS FROM TWO STUDIES IN THE SOUTHERN INTERIOR**

---

by Les W. Gyug  
Okanagan Wildlife Consulting  
3130 Ensign Way  
Westbank, B.C. V4T 1T9

A lot of hopes are being put on wildlife tree patches to save some places for cavity-nesting birds in the managed forests of this province. Despite these hopes, a lot of questions have yet to be answered. Simple questions like: How large should patches be? How far apart should they be? What percentage of the forest should be retained in patches? Will cavity-nesters use them? Will cavity-nesters use patches as nesting sites while foraging in the surrounding managed forest or will wildlife tree patches only provide a minute amount of habitat that will be insufficient for viable populations? Research efforts throughout the province are beginning to address these questions. The research reported on here is one of those efforts and is funded by B.C. Environment.

Between 1966 and 1970, Pope and Talbot Ltd. left seedtree patches (designed to promote regeneration of western larch and Douglas-fir) in several large clearcuts in the Southern Interior of B.C. In the Wallace Creek valley, 3 km N. of Greenwood, about 10% of a 1000-ha clearcut was retained in 2-ha patches dispersed throughout the cut. In the Gable Creek drainage, 36 km north of Greenwood, about 7% of a 200-ha clearcut was retained in 0.75 to 2-ha patches dispersed throughout the cut. Since these seedtree patches are almost exactly like the wildlife tree patches now being recommended, these made ideal sites to examine bird use of tree patches within a regenerating forest.

Birds were sampled at the Wallace Creek site in May and June of 1994. During the breeding season, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Northern Flickers and Mountain Chickadees were using the wildlife tree patches like we hoped they would--the patches were small (and probably very important) parts of larger territories that included the regenerating forest around the patches. Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Pileated, Hairy and Three-toed Woodpeckers were using the wildlife tree patches as isolated habitat islands within a sea of non-habitat. The patches may have been large enough to contain complete territories of Red-breasted Nuthatches but not for the woodpeckers which must have been doing a lot of travelling across the regenerating forest from patch to patch. The woodpeckers were also probably relying on adjacent uncut forest as parts of their territories, so that wildlife tree patches at the given level of 10% of the total forest area might not be successful in maintaining viable populations. Plans are being made to test this hypothesis in 1995.

Birds were sampled at the Gable Creek site in January 1995. At least two flocks of Mountain Chickadees were resident in the regenerating forest with wildlife tree patches. Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Pileated and Hairy Woodpeckers were using the patches, as well as the regenerating forest in between the patches. By way of contrast, no nuthatches or woodpeckers were using a regenerating forest of the same size and age that lacked wildlife tree patches. In fact, the only birds resident in a 25-year-old regenerating forest in the winter (without wildlife tree patches) were Ruffed Grouse. Mountain Chickadees were visiting the site without patches but were not there regularly. The Gable Creek sites will be sampled for breeding birds during the spring of 1995.

The Wallace Creek and Gable Creek sites are not completely typical of more modern clearcuts because non-merchantable trees and snags throughout the sites were NOT necessarily felled during clearcutting. In modern clearcuts, a crew is sent out after clearcutting just to fell snags and "defective" trees that the feller-buncher may have left standing. So, when we find that woodpeckers aren't using an old-style clearcut in the winter (even though it has snags dispersed throughout the site), the presence of wildlife tree patches to promote woodpecker use seems to be even more important.

Thanks must go to Michael Price of Vancouver who collected the breeding season data at Wallace Creek, and to Don Wilson of Kelowna who assisted in collecting the winter data at Gable Creek. Copies of the reports detailing these results can be obtained from the author (604) 769-5907 or from Brian Harris of B.C. Environment, 2547 Skaha Lake Rd., Penticton, B.C. V2A 7K2 (604) 490-8200. q



---

**22nd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP  
JANUARY 10-13, 1995**

---

by Ken Morgan  
9604 Barnes Place  
Sidney, BC V8L 4W9

The Pacific Seabird Group's (PSG) annual meeting was held this year at Mission Bay in north San Diego, California. The meeting was centred mainly around the symposium "Conservation of Island Ecosystems and Restoration of Biodiversity" but, as usual, it featured excellent general paper and poster sessions. This was only the second PSG meeting that I have attended; as with the first meeting, I was very impressed with the quality of the contributions. Over the three days, 80 papers and 25 posters were presented!

For those unfamiliar with the organization, the PSG was formed in 1972 out of a need for better communication among Pacific seabird researchers. The PSG coordinates and stimulates the field activities of members involved in research and informs its members and the general public of conservation issues relating to Pacific seabirds and the marine environment.

The symposium began with a presentation that highlighted some of the steps New Zealand has taken to solve problems associated with introduced pests on seabird islands. Introduced pests are one of the most serious problems seabirds are facing worldwide. To illustrate the impact of exotics, in 1938 there were approximately only 100 pair of Buller's Shearwaters nesting on Aorangi Island. After the removal of introduced pigs [I forgot to note the year] the population of Buller's rebounded, and today there are an estimated 200,000 birds that nest on the island!

The presentations not only covered a wide variety of subjects, but were also geographically diverse. To give you a flavour of the spatial coverage of the presentations that could be assigned to a specific location: 21 pertained to ongoing work in Alaska, California (19), British Columbia (9), Hawaiian Islands (9), Mexico (7), Oregon (4), Japan (4), Canadian Arctic (3), New Zealand (3), Russia (3), Tropical Pacific (3), Antarctica (2), Peru (2), Washington (2), West Indies (2), and one each on Argentina, the Northwest Atlantic, Greenland, and Maine.

I could easily fill several issues of the newsletter if I attempted to summarize all of the talks. Instead, I would like to point out a few of the sobering facts gleaned from the talks. The common thread linking most of the following is the fact that humans are the cause of the problems.

a) Many tropical seabirds are obligate commensals of large marine predators, such as dolphins and tuna. In other words, the feeding success of these birds (and ultimately their survival) is largely dependent upon their ability to locate and follow groups of these predators and take advantage of the prey that are driven to the surface. Over-exploitation of these predators, by high-seas fisheries, is thought to be impacting several species of seabirds.

b) Newell's Shearwaters (threatened) are facing serious problems on Kauai (Hawaiian Islands), primarily due to the attraction of fledglings to streetlights (and resultant collisions with powerlines), and predation by cats.

c) Steller's Eiders apparently no longer breed on the Yukon-Kuskowim Delta (Alaska) and are experiencing a world-wide decline, likely because of excessive hunting pressures.

d) The number of Pigeon Guillemots wintering in the Kodiak area (Alaska) have declined significantly in the last 15 years. The cause of this is unknown, but it makes one wonder how the local populations are doing.

e) Due to an increase in the Jungle Crows that visit offshore breeding colonies, the rare Japanese Murrelet is suffering from high levels of predation. The crows are visiting the islands more often to scavenge refuse that has been left by fishermen.

f) In spite of initiatives to reduce or eliminate the input of toxic materials into the environment, in many areas of the North Pacific, numerous species (eg. Brandt's

**22nd ANNUAL MEETING... continued**

Cormorant, Pigeon Guillemot, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Black-footed & Laysan Albatross) are still carrying high contamination loads of DDE, PCB's and Mercury.

g) Chronic oil pollution continues to be one of the major causes of seabird mortality, and in many regions, kills more birds each year than highly publicized, large spills.

On a positive note, a personal highlight of the meeting was an unforgettable "Penguin Encounter" at Sea World. Although one can question the merit of keeping animals in captivity, it was marvellous being able to watch the various species of penguins 'fly' underwater.

Another high point was a boat trip to the Coronado Islands of Mexico. Although a certain individual claims to have seen one, the remaining 40-50 people on the boat could not find a single Black-vented Shearwater. (Apparently, hundreds of these shearwaters are regularly seen along the route that we followed.) As a consolation, we were treated to wonderful views of American Oystercatchers, Brown Pelicans, Royal Terns and Elephant Seals.

As you likely recall, California experienced record-breaking rains during early January (eg more than 20cm in a 24 hr period). A scheduled field-trip to the Anza-Borrego Desert and Salton Sea was cancelled because some roads were completely flooded. To say I was disappointed is a major understatement! This was my VERY FIRST visit to California, and I had anticipated seeing many lifers on the Salton Sea trip.

With time to kill, and unwilling to spend our last day stuck in a hotel, Alan Berger, Ken Wright and myself split the cost of a rental car, and set off on a (quasi) Big Day. Considering that we didn't have a spotting scope and that we frequently didn't know where we were, I feel that we did fairly well. Between 8:30 and 16:00 hrs we tallied 84 (or 85) species. (I still say that the Western Grebes with the bright yellow-orange bills were really Clark's Grebes). Highlights of the day (for me at least) included excellent views of Stilt Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Little Blue Heron, Loggerhead Shrike, Black and Say's Phoebe, California Towhee, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Clapper Rail.

All in all, I found the meeting (and California) to be most stimulating and very enjoyable. For those of you with a passion for seabirds, I highly recommend joining the Pacific Seabird Group. If you would like to become a member, you can join by sending US\$20.00 to: Jan Hodder,  
Treasurer, Pacific Seabird Group,  
Oregon Institute of Marine Biology,  
Charleston, Oregon 97420

---

**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. ☐

---

**DO YOU KNOW ...?**


---

Without actually taking out your wallet or your purse try to list the birds which are found on the following Canadian bills:

\$2	_____	\$5	_____
\$10	_____	\$20	_____
\$50	_____	\$100	_____
\$1000	_____		

(Answers on page 20) ☐

---

**BIRDING AND BASEBALL: PART 1 -- CONFLICTS.**

---

by Mike McGrenere  
1178 Sunnygrove Terrace  
Victoria, BC V8Y 2V9

I can remember that I got the telephone call at work on April 28, 1992, around 4:00 in the afternoon. It was Peggy Goodwill phoning people on the rare bird hotline. "Mike, there is a Hermit Warbler on the top of Mount Douglas. Bryan Gates found the bird and he is staying up there to assist people in locating it." This is the type of hotline message that most people dream about. But why did it have to come on that day and not the day before or the day after? You see, at 5:15, I was supposed to be at softball practice, our last practice before opening day on Sunday.

My favourite spring and summer activities, birding & baseball (fastpitch softball, formerly called fastball), have brought about some very difficult decisions. Should I head out in search of a rarity or should I go to the ballgame? I wish that rare spring migrants had better sense of timing. In the case of the Hermit Warbler, a quick bit of calculating indicated that it would take me 20 minutes to get home to get my binoculars, 5 minutes to get to Mount Douglas Park and another 20 minutes to get back to the ball park. If I left work at exactly 4:30, I would have just a few minutes to look for the bird. I gave it a go.

As it turned out in this instance, I was one of the fortunate people who saw the bird. It took me about 15 minutes to actually see the bird, although I heard it singing soon after I arrived at the top of Mount Douglas. I was approximately 20 minutes late in arriving at the ballpark and the coach, who was not sympathetic to late arrivals, gave me the standard lecture about promptness and my lack of any notice that I was going to be late. (I didn't think he would really understand the significance of a Hermit Warbler sighting so I made up a "busy at work" excuse.)

I haven't been so lucky, however, with other rarities that have shown up on southern Vancouver Island on game days. A few years earlier, a Black-throated Sparrow was found near Duncan by Derrick Marven. When I received the call about the bird, I decided to play ball that evening and to search for the bird on Saturday. The Black-throated Sparrow was sighted very early on Saturday morning, BEFORE I got to Duncan, and it was not seen again. I also missed, because of a softball game, the only Blackpoll Warbler that has been found in the Victoria area.

Why would someone who is interested in birds decide to play in a softball game when a rare bird has been sighted? There will always be more softball games but there might not be another Blackpoll Warbler in the Victoria area. I guess it is the challenge that each activity presents and the rewards from participating in that activity. Playing competitive fastpitch softball, or any other competitive team sport, also means that you have to commit to playing. Your teammates are counting on you to be part of the team so you are expected to be there at game time as well as at weekend tournaments.

The decision to play a competitive team sport at spring migration time means that some birding activities have to be compromised. Many of the Big Day counts take place at this time of the year, as well as birding trips to prime habitats. My late spring trip up the Peace River area will have to wait a while (and I'm NOT going up in the Winter!). In 1993, I missed the Sunday pelagic trip at the BCFO annual general meeting in Tofino because I drove back to Victoria for our opening game on Sunday afternoon. As those on the trip will recall, that was the pelagic trip where a Laysan Albatross was sighted, providing everyone with fantastic views as the bird circled the boats.

The compromise between birding and baseball does not involve just a decision as to whether to go for a bird or to the game. Sometimes a compromise occurs right at the game. Many times I have heard calls overhead or in the trees surrounding the field and have had to concentrate on the play in front of me rather than on the 'distraction'. I can recall a game during a tournament in Cumberland a few years ago where, from centre field, I spotted a robin-sized bird flying at the edge of the park. I am fairly certain, from the flight characteristics, bird size and colour, that the bird was a Western Kingbird. However, the bird was a long way away and I couldn't find it after coming in from the -- the view is quite limited from the on-deck circle. So, I have yet to record a Western Kingbird on Vancouver Island.

**BIRDING AND BASEBALL** continued

There are other birders in the Victoria area who have played softball with me both as teammates and as opponents who will have faced this same dilemma. Bryan Gates, BCFO member and operator of the Victoria rare bird alert, played fastpitch softball for many years in the government fastball league in Victoria. Bryan 'hung up his spikes' a few years ago and can now concentrate fully on birding activities in his spare time. However, John Cooper, also a BCFO member and Birds of British Columbia co-author, still plays infield between his field surveys and consulting.

It will soon be spring training time and a new season will begin in May with the sounds of Robins and House Finches singing around the park. I can just imagine, as I'm getting set to catch a routine fly ball in the outfield, that a flock of gulls is flying overhead with a small dark-headed gull in amongst them. Is it a Bonaparte's Gull or a Common Black-headed Gull? Can't think about that now -- there is a runner on third base!q

EDS' NOTE: Ball players do not despair. Your twin loves are not all 'conflicts'. Check here next issue for **BIRDING AND BASEBALL: Part 2 -- Opportunities**.

---

**A GYRFALCON HUNTING INCIDENT**


---

by G. Allen Poynter  
1238 Beach Grove Road  
Delta, BC V4L 1N6

While the analogy that raptors cull their prey species by removing the weak and infirm individuals, leaving the prime and healthy individuals to propagate the species, a December observation of a dark morph Gyrfalcon hunting foray in Boundary Bay indicates a flaw in this generalization.

Flying low over a shoreline lagoon, the Gyrfalcon flushed a flock of 20 plus Green-winged Teal that were known to be in a moult condition. After missing on its initial attack, the Gyrfalcon drove the ducks into a tight flock over the open water of the Bay at about a three meter elevation and pushed them as hard as possible. After about 800 meters a single teal was seen to be falling behind. The Gyrfalcon moved in quickly in an attempt to pick the bird out of the air but was frustrated when the teal dove to the water at maximum speed to briefly disappear leaving the falcon to hover over the duck, circling three times in an effort to pick it up from the water.

Abandoning this failure the falcon relocated the main flock now settled on the water, flushing them again to continue an attempt to isolate the slowest bird in the flock. This attempt was followed again by the dive and escape routine.

On the last of several attacks, and after a five minute hunt, the teal were pushed to maximum speed over an extensive distance. The flying capability of the entire flock was demonstrated with the tight flock formation breaking down into a line of birds elongating with time to the advantage of the Gyrfalcon. But again the high speed dive from the air, the multiple splashes, and disappearance of the whole flock foiled the Gyrfalcon who finally terminated the chase to fly off to a distant shoreline perch.

During this chase the flock of teal were observed to roll from side to side showing black and white similar to a flock of shorebirds under attack, as well as fly in unison in an undulating wave action giving one the impression these combined actions were attempts at distraction.

This hunt process, while supporting the survival of the fittest philosophy, could have terminated with the killing of the healthiest bird/birds in the flock that may have temporarily lost one or two primary flight feathers during a moult. These could have been taken in the chase because of their inability to outfly less healthy individuals in the flock.q

---

Answers to Do You Know...: \$2 -- Robins; \$5 -- Belted Kingfisher; \$10 -- Osprey; \$20 -- Common Loon; \$50 -- Snowy Owl; \$100 -- Canada Goose; \$1000 -- Pine Grosbeaks.