



BC BIRDING

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

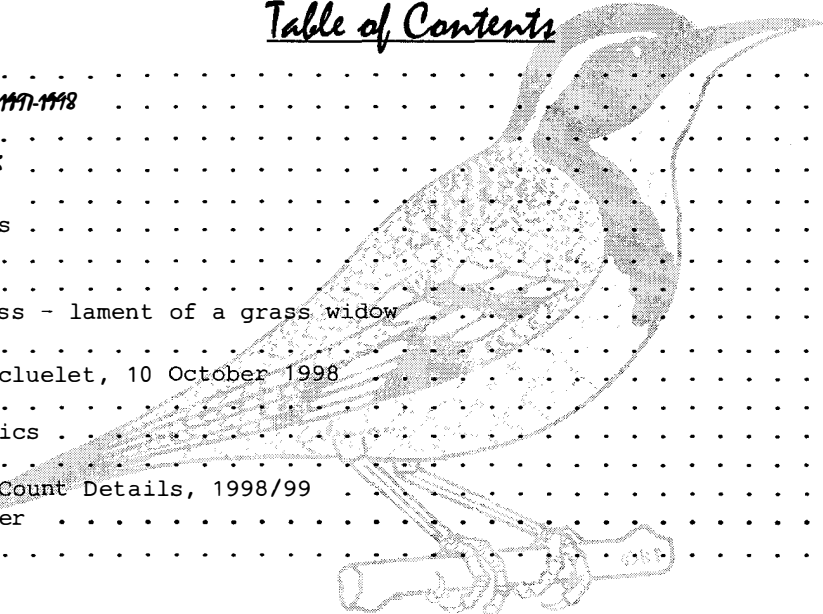
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A subscription to this quarterly is a benefit
of membership in the society.
Members will also receive a copy of the annual
journal, **British Columbia Birds**.

Membership in BCFO is open to anyone interested
in the study and 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.

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Send material for publication in any format to
the editors. We especially welcome bird-finding
information for our "Site Guide" series and any
articles about birding experiences, preferably
but not necessarily, in British Columbia.

**Deadline for receipt of material for
publication is the 15th of the month preceding
the March, June, September & December issues.**

Advertising rates available upon request.

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EDITORS' NOTES & NOTIONS

The end of 1998 already! Just four more issues and we will have to put 2000 on the banner so long as our computer is Y2K compliant. Before our computer crashes and the century turns we send a plea to all members to support the organization and your publications. Send Martin some materials. Send us some materials. We left for holidays at the beginning of October with absolutely nothing in our "in" basket. We returned in November with just one article in our e-mail and eighteen pages still to fill (we have always been able to somehow print twenty pages an issue). We pushed several panic buttons. The executive were very supportive and we have a full issue again. Still, BCFO has nearly three hundred members. Make 1999 your year to drop us a note, write us an article, or send us an observation - in short, get involved in BCFO!

Moving off the soapbox..! We hope you will read with interest the reports from Hank and Prue relating to BCFO's first difficult-to-find species field trip. Let's hope there will be many more of these events. Since the "in" box was so bare and our holiday was so fresh in our minds, Andy wrote an article about our pelagic trip. Coincidentally, Bruce and Russ also wrote pelagic trip articles for us. Theirs are from BC locations and they had great birds also. See if you can fill in some white space on your checklist in '99. Ken W. gives us a whole different perspective on birding which should be quite a thrill for the adventuresome. Ken M. has revised his Bird-Listers' Corner a bit so be certain to check the column and the insert for details. Martin continues to keep us updated on upcoming meetings and events as well as keeping us abreast of significant news briefs. Tony also has let us know about BCFO happenings and provides a plug for editors so read and heed. Well done to Elsie from all the BCFO members! You do good work. Thanks to Cameron for giving BCFO members an unexpected Christmas present - and it comes from up North too!

Just a short space to remind members to get involved with your local, and possibly other, CBC counts. Several locations are short counters and would welcome any assistance. Its fun and useful.

Be kind to each other and we wish everyone a happy, healthy, prosperous new year. Good Birding.

Andy and Marilyn

**Missing Some Earlier Issues?**

BCFO still has a limited selection of back copies of both the annual peer-reviewed journal **British Columbia Birds** and this quarterly newsletter **B.C. BIRDING** available for sale. The prices (which include postage and handling) are \$8.00 for the journal and \$3.00 for the newsletter. Contact: Editors c/o PO Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I will begin with an accolade. Jack Bowling, a BCFO Director, has recently resigned his position as Regional Editor of **Field Notes**, the journal of record for North American bird sightings. Jack held the position for several years, but decided he had to quit when a new job required a lot of traveling. I asked Jack how many hours a week it took to produce the quarterly report, and he mumbled something about "...like having a second, unpaid, full-time job." That was about what I expected! Anyway, thanks Jack for doing such a professional job and we hope you will now have time to chase those winter chickadees in Prince George!

While speaking of editors, our Journal editor, Martin McNicholl, reports that he hopes to have Volumes 6 and 7 (1996 and 1997) of **British Columbia Birds** in the hands of members in the near future. Editors are a patient lot as they are perennially doomed to wait for the contributions of others before they can sleep themselves. Our **B.C. BIRDING** editors, Andy and Marilyn Buhler, are sitting on the edge of their seats right now, waiting for articles to appear, so if anyone has potential articles - get to it!

The BCFO Boreal Owl trip to the Okanagan on 7 November was a success, with 25+ participants. Thanks to Dick Cannings who led the trip and conjured up some real, live Boreal Owls, along with four other owl species that were seen or heard.

Work is progressing on arranging our next Annual General Meeting, which we hope will be in the southern Okanagan. May the thought of hot, dry June days in the Okanagan sustain you through the cold/wet winter ahead.

Good winter birding.

Tony Greenfield, President BCFO



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

- Nov. 28 1998 - **AUDUBON'S WILDERNESS PALETTE: THE BIRDS OF CANADA**, touring exhibit of one hundred works from the Toronto Reference Library's copy of John James Audubon's **Birds of America** double-elephant folio at Vancouver Art Gallery, 750 Hornby St., Vancouver, BC V6Z 2H7; phone (604) 662-4700.
Jan. 24 1999
- March 30 - **COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING**, Portland, Oregon. Contact Erick G. Campbell, BLM, 1515 SW 5th Avenue, Portland, OR 97201, USA; phone (503) 952-6382.
Apr. 3 1999
- June 10-13 1999 **WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY 80th ANNUAL MEETING**, Waterville, Maine. Contact: W. Herbert Wilson, Department of Biology, Colby College, Waterville, ME 04901, USA; phone (207) 872-3432.
- June 18-20+ 1999 **B.C. FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**, somewhere in the Okanagan. Contact and other details to be announced, but **MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW**. Tentative field plans will probably extend the meeting to June 22nd.
- Aug. 13-16 1999 **AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION 117th STATED MEETING**, Cornell, NY. Contact: to be announced.



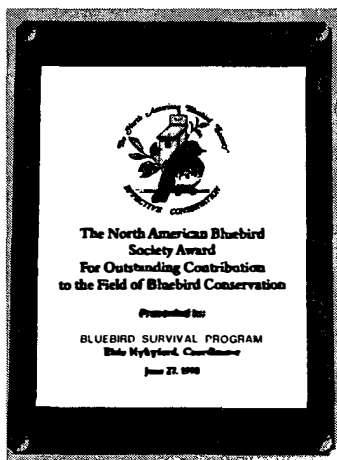
B.C. BIRDING NEWS BRIEFS

compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

Clulow Doubly Honoured -George Clulow, past chair of the birding section of the Vancouver Natural History society was awarded the society's "premier trophy," the Ney Award, in April 1998 for his various contributions to the birding section and to the society as a whole (Anonymous. 1998. *Discovery* 27:113-115). These contributions continue, as he currently chairs a committee in charge of revising the society's popular book on bird-finding in the Vancouver area. Two months later, George was given an Environment Award in Community Stewardship by the City of Burnaby for contributions to environmental management of Burnaby Lake and Deer Lake parks, for environmental education through articles published in **Burnaby Now**, for co-authoring a bird checklist for Burnaby Lake, for leading nature walks, and for advice on other environmental planning issues in the city (Anonymous. 1998. *Discovery* 27:115-116).

Jude Grass Honoured -Although a federation, by definition, cannot be synonymous with a single name, few naturalists in British Columbia in the last couple of decades will be able to think of the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists without Jude Grass coming to mind. Thus, most will join me in my delight at reading that an Outstanding Service Award to her was announced at the most recent annual meeting of the federation (Anonymous. 1998. *B.C. Nat.* 36(3):18). Jude was twice President of the federation, edited the **B.C. Naturalist** for many years, and has chaired and served on various committees and sub-committees of the federation (not to mention her many contributions to some of its federated clubs!).

Walter Fitzpatrick -The Courtenay/Comox area of eastern Vancouver Island lost one of its most prominent birdwatchers earlier this year with the death of Walter Fitzpatrick, a resident of Denman Island since 1963 (J. Luman. 1998. *B.C. Nat.* 36(3):28). Fitzpatrick taught bird courses in the area, compiled the Comox and Deep Bay Christmas Bird Counts for several years, and served as President of the Comox Valley Naturalists Society.



In 1989 **Elsie Nykyfork** initiated a program to attract bluebirds back to the North Okanagan area. As coordinator for the present Bluebird Survival Program Elsie writes:
"I started this Program in 1989 with ten bluebird boxes around my yard. The North Okanagan Naturalists Club asked me to take it on as a project. This year [1998] we had 646 boxes out on 39 trails, being tended by 61 people. We have gone from fledging five Western Bluebirds [in our early years] to fledging 453 Western and Mountain Bluebirds in 1998. At their AGM in Regina on 27 June 1998 The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) honoured the Bluebird Survival Program with their Award For Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Bluebird Conservation. As far as I know it is the third such award to go to Western Canada, one in Alberta and one in the South Okanagan."

EDITORS' NOTE: Congratulations, Elsie! It is great to hear positive news in the area of bird conservation. In **British Columbia Field Ornithologist** 3(1): 17-18, 1993, Elsie gave us some background on her interest in birds, bird feeding, and nest boxes. Her more recent article on the Predator Ridge Golf Course published in **B.C. BIRDING** 6(2): 11-13, 1996, discussed the initiation of the Bluebird Survival Program.



SOARING WITH RAVENS

by Kenneth G. Wright
6090 Blink Bonnie Road
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I noted all birds seen while gliding in the Pemberton Valley and adjacent mountains on 8 September 1997 and this summer from 10 May through 25 September 1998. A Czechoslovakian Blanik L-13 two-seater glider was used on all flights. Birds were either observed on the aero-tow or while soaring after release. Approximated altitudes were obtained with use of the aircraft altimeter or topographic maps. While observations were limited to the unaided eye, the majority of birds were identified to species level, owing to the close proximity to birds a glider affords.

I saw five species and two unconfirmed species while gliding (Table 1). Raptors made up the majority of observations. All birds were relatively close to the ground, normally within 1500' [457m] above ground level (AGL).

Table 1.

Summary of birds observed from a Blanik glider in the Pemberton Valley, British Columbia.

<u>Species</u>	<u>No. observed</u>	<u>Altitude*</u>
Gull spp. (<i>Larus spp.</i>)	1	1800
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	1	1900
Eagle spp.	1	2200
Northern Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)	1	1700
Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	2	2200 (n=2)
Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	2	2200, 4700
Unidentified raptor	3	6700
Common Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	3	8000

* feet above sea level (ASL).

Raptors of various species (Table 1) were most often encountered while soaring in both ridge lift (caused by wind being deflected upwards over topographic features) and in thermals (upward moving warm air caused by uneven heating of the earth's surface). These birds were useful in determining where thermals existed and therefore assisted in the glider gaining altitude. This was best illustrated on 8 September 1997. On that day I noted a flock of three Common Ravens performing acrobatic maneuvers over a high flank of Ipsoot Mountain. They circled, dove, rolled and cart-wheeled repeatedly in what must have been a strong thermal. My instructor promptly joined the ravens and we were quickly lifted 800 vertical feet [244m] in strong lift. The ravens seemed unperturbed as we flew several steep turns among them.

The Osprey takes a particular liking to thermals. On a particularly turbulent day I encountered an Osprey in a strong thermal 4000' [1219m] AGL. When I glided beneath the bird it rapidly out-climbed me and quickly vanished from my plexi-glass canopy viewscape!

It is interesting to consider the use of thermals by birds. Soaring in birds has been studied in East Africa where Pennycuik (1972) observed two primary functions;

- 1) patrolling in search of food and,
- 2) traveling across country.

In this study, the Ruppell's Griffon Vulture was documented traveling cross-country 75 km from a kill site to a nest. This bird used thermals extensively over the 96 minute flight duration. From my observations in Pemberton, most birds appeared to be patrolling

as they were usually within 1000' [305m] AGL, well within the patrolling range reported for raptors.

In summary, I highly recommend gliding to anyone with an interest in flying, if not just to observe the birds from their primary vantage point.

For more information and to arrange for a flight contact:

Pemberton Soaring Center, Box 725, Pemberton, BC, V0N 2L0

Telephone: 1(800)831-2611

website: <http://mountain-inter.net/soaring/> e-mail: pemsoar@direct.ca

LITERATURE CITED

Pennycuik, C.J. 1972. *Soaring behaviour and performance of some East African birds, observed from a motor-glider.* Ibis 114: 178-218.



AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

Prue Spitmann

Prue first became interested in birds and their nests as a child growing up in southwest England. Some of her happiest memories are of exploring the countryside when visiting her "country cousins". Prue and her husband Bernie are avid birders who greatly enjoy birding as often as they can find an excuse. At home Prue's time is divided between keeping a sharp eye on the feeder birds and caring for the resident "flock" of Anna's Hummingbirds, a year-round labour of love.

Russ Tkachuk

After birding for many years on the Prairies, Russ retired to Roberts Creek on the Sunshine Coast. In 1996 Russ joined the BCFO Board of Directors and has contributed both energy and artwork to the organization. Although he did not give us a bio we understand that he is busy right now in Seattle visiting the latest member of the Tkachuk flock, another potential junior birder.

Hank VanderPol

Hank has been passionate about birds since he was a boy in his native Holland. He has been active in many natural history organizations, has taught birding classes, has lead many field trips, is the secretary with the Victoria Natural History Society, has done many bird surveys plus research with the Canadian Wildlife Service, and he is now chasing after his 700th ABA bird - only seven more to go!

Bruce Whittington

An active birder, Bruce operates The Field-Naturalist and is a member of the Victoria Natural History Society. He has birded in the Victoria area since the early 1970's.

Kenneth G. Wright

Ken has been birding since childhood. He is currently researching Harlequin Ducks in the Chilcotin and Strait of Georgia, British Columbia. Ken is especially interested in alpine and grassland birds, where much of his free time is spent.



BOREAL OWL QUEST

by Hank VanderPol
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It was about 7:15 pm when our fearless leader, Dick Cannings, managed to get twenty-seven eager birders into five vehicles for the start of the Boreal Owl quest. The date was 7 November 1998. We were in the parking lot of the Okanagan Lake Resort hotel in Penticton, where we gathered for the first "target species" field trip organized by the BCFO. Although some hefty showers had drenched Penticton in the late afternoon, by 7:00 pm it had stopped raining. We were hoping for the best!

As the small column of vehicles followed Dick's lead car, the moon made an occasional appearance. Several stars were visible as we snaked up the hill east of town. Our spirits were high in anticipation of finding that most elusive of all owls - the Boreal. In fact, some people doubted it actually existed.

Dick told us he had three stops in mind for the owl but he said that we needed to behave if we wanted to SEE it. "No movement or sound of any kind between the playing of the tape," he had warned us. If we needed to move a foot or an arm, it had to be done while he played the tape. In other words, stand like a statue, and hold your breath!

We came to our first stop, Ellis Dam #4, at 4400' [1341m] altitude. Dick had heard his first Boreal Owl here some thirteen years earlier, and others since then. Leaving our vehicles, we hiked the short distance to the edge of the forest. Planting ourselves firmly on solid ground, Dick played the tape. In an instant, the response came! A chorus of coyotes began howling from somewhere within the forest. Surprised, but delighted, we took in this awe-inspiring natural phenomenon under now almost clear skies. But no luck with any owl response. Thus, after about twenty minutes, we moved on to stop number two, Rabbit Lake at the 5200' [1585m] level. Here we found ourselves in a good four inches of snow and temperatures below freezing. Still, the sky was clear, the stars sparkled, and the moon shone brightly through the trees. Awesome! Passing by some startled campers who had sought seclusion from the maddening crowds elsewhere, we followed Dick through the snow to the next "listening" point. Again, firmly planting our feet on the slippery ground, we waited as our leader played the tape. At last, after about ten minutes, a response - somewhere in the woods ahead of us the typical call note of the Boreal Owl. Then silence. More tape playing, the occasional response from the owl, then silence. Our powerful flashlight could not discover the owl. "Okay," said Dick, "we'll take a ten minute break, move around a bit, then try again." Get rid of the onset of hypothermia, I thought to myself. Not a split second after we all started to move, the owl flew over our heads, and landed in the trees just behind us. The flashlight found the owl quickly, very visible, some seventy-five feet away. At last, the sought-after Boreal Owl was captured in our sights. It looked left, then right, then stared right at us, and stayed for almost ten minutes to allow all of us to have "devastating" looks, to quote one observer. So much for needing to be quiet and motionless! When it finally flew, our spirits were high, the cold forgotten, and the night was still young.

Stop #3 was at Venner Meadows Junction (4000'/1219m) where our target bird was the Barred Owl. The tape brought a sound from several hundred feet away which Dick identified as a Northern Saw-whet Owl. Coyotes howled in the far off distance. Some time lapsed before another sound, somewhere right in front of us, brought out the flashlight. No sign of an owl, and no recognition of the sound. We were about to leave when one last sweep of the flashlight revealed a Barred Owl, in full view. Great looks! It never called, but no doubt the unidentified calls we heard earlier belonged to this owl.

The next three stops were along Irrigation Creek Road where we tried for Northern Saw-whet Owls and Western Screech-Owls. This road proved to be quite a challenge, as it was not only steep in places, but very rough and rocky. Our van, with the weight of seven big birders, was not designed for such a challenge. Several times six of us needed to get out so driver and van could navigate their way around and between the boulders. Those short hikes were actually quite enjoyable for us, but our capable and challenged driver, Dan Soberg, had to do all the hard work.

Our quest was rewarded when, at stop #5, we had great views of a Western Screech-Owl. With the moon shining through the trees, and a clear star-studded sky overhead, the owling excitement just kept on growing.

Our last stop brought sounds, but not sights, of another Northern Saw-whet Owl. From there we ended up at Vaseux lake, and back to Penticton shortly after midnight, a total distance of one hundred kilometers. What a great owling experience this had been! Thanks to the twenty-seven birders who behaved like model "owlers", and thanks to Dick for an experience that will remain with us for a long time. I can't wait for the next "target species" field trip!



AURORA BORE-OWL-LESS - LAMENT OF A GRASS WIDOW

by Prue Spitmann
14951 24th Avenue,
South Surrey, BC V4P 1N9

Early one Sunday in November, I was staring morosely out at a totally birdless garden ("Time that dratted Sharpie moved on," I thought grumpily). Flipping the last half of the bagel out of the toaster, I was startled to hear the telephone ring. Muttering under my breath that this was an ungodly hour to interrupt my lonely repast, I snatched up the receiver. My testy "Hello" was drowned out by a very familiar and very excited male voice: "WOW! WOW! WOW!, I got it, I got it, I got the Boreal Owl, so now we're even again ..." a small pause, then "Oh sorry. Good morning honey. How are you doing?" It was my other half calling from Penticton where he had joined up the previous night with Dick Cannings and the rest of the BCFO owling gang.

The original plan had been for both of us to attend BCFO's inaugural field trip for hard-to-find species. However, our two cats (both indoor, I hasten to add) begged and cajoled us not to kennel them yet again so I drew the short straw to kittysit (translation: I already had Boreal Owl for BC). Bernie got a ride in Bob Morford's car and figured his sighting of a Pygmy Owl at eye-level just east of Manning park was a great omen for the day.

Well after dark, the group assembled at the appointed place and I'm told that Dick blanched when he counted twenty-seven eager birders before him, nearly double the optimum number. Gamely, he recited the ground rules, "Keep your arms away from your body so that the jackets don't rustle, don't use your spotlights until I have the bird fixed, etc, etc..." before packing everyone into as few cars as possible. Off into the night they went and within two hours, standing up to their ankles in snow, had fabulous views of a Boreal Owl somewhere near Rabbit Lake.

Frozen solid, but really pumped now, the group opted to continue. During the ensuing four hours Dick skillfully called in a Barred, a Northern Saw-whet and a pair of Western Screech-Owls. Now, I ask you, was that fair to the rest of us at home? As if a five-owl day was not enough for a well-iced cake, shortly after talking to me, Bernie and Bob further enhanced their bragging rights with their discovery of a covey of twenty-five wintering Chukar on a grassy plateau high above Vaseux Lake.

So those two spoilt felines really appreciated the supreme sacrifice of one super unselfish owner, right? Wrong! They faithlessly slept the whole weekend away, surfacing only at mealtimes. You wait until next time, you guys, you just wait!

Author's note: This was the first in a series of BCFO field trips for difficult-to-find species and now we would like your help. If you have any ideas for future target species please contact any member of the Board of Directors [see page 2]. Your suggestions may be wistful but should still be within the realms of a reasonable possibility.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Cameron Eckert, editor of *Yukon Warbler* and webmaster of the excellent Yukon Bird Club website (<http://www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc>) has sent kind words and, just in time for Christmas, a gift from the Yukon. Cameron writes:

"I just received the latest **B.C. BIRDING** - lots of great info! I was thinking that if you are interested we could send out a copy of the new Yukon Checklist (as an insert) with the next issue of **B.C. BIRDING**. I know its not exactly BC content - but lots of BC birders have an interest in Northern birds..."

EDITORS' NOTE: Thanks very much Cameron. We are certain the membership will appreciate the Yukon Checklist. It may remind some Southern birders to migrate North next summer.

Matt Pelikan, editor of *Winging It*, Newsletter of the American Birding Association, also sent some kind words. He had given us permission to reprint a *Winging It* article in our newsletter and he obtained our, and Hue's, permission to reprint Hue's guidelines for birders published in **B.C. BIRDING** 8(2): 6-7, 1998. Matt writes:

"Thanks for the copies of your excellent newsletter; I hope your readers find the shorebird-size piece useful. Including Mr. MacKenzie's guidelines and permission for reprinting them was thoughtful: as it happens, one half of that article neatly filled a hole in the October issue of WI, so I'm going to put it to use right away. I'll save the other half for later;...it's a thoughtful and well presented set of guidelines."

EDITORS' NOTE: Soon after the publication of Hue's guidelines in *Winging It* we received a request from the editor of *The Badger Birder*, newsletter of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, also asking for permission to reprint Hue's guidelines. Thanks, Hue, for your original article and, BCFO members, remember you saw it here first in **B.C. BIRDING!**

The Organizing Committee for a conference on **Biology and Management of Species at Risk** has put out a call for papers. The conference is to be held at the University College of the Cariboo, Kamloops, BC, from 15-19 February 1999. For further information on this conference see the web page at: <http://www.cariboo.bc.ca/speciesatrisk>.

Michael G. Shepard, soon to be the new regional editor of *Field Notes*, and current editor of the **VGI VISION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER**, sent us the following announcement: "Newsletters of the VISION FOUNDATION highlight projects of the Foundation, and report on current topics of interest to amateur and professional field biologist/naturalists. The newsletter is posted on our web page and distributed by e-mail to members and potential contributors." The URL is <http://visionfoundation.org>. Volume 1(6) contains information on some results from Rocky Point Migration Monitoring Station plus information on Victoria and Esquimalt Harbours Bird Survey. Check the web page for further information.

Gary S. Davidson provided us with a complimentary copy of the most recent **Checklist of West Kootenay Birds**, compiled by himself with assistance from R.Wayne Campbell and Linda Van Damme. The checklist, published March 1998. provides a map showing the area covered, and lists, with seasonal abundance, the 303 species which have been seen in that area. Contact Gary at Box 294, Nakusp, BC V0G 1R0 if you wish to purchase a copy.

PELAGIC BIRDING: UCLUELET, 10 OCTOBER 1998

By Russell Tkachuk
Box 132,
Roberts Creek, BC V0N 2W0

My clock went off at 06:15 with that annoying beep-beep-beep. As I turned the alarm off, I wondered where I was, as everything seemed so strange. Suddenly it came to me that I was in Ucluelet and in my vehicle, and that I had been asleep since 22:00 the previous night. Looking up, there were patches of clear sky! Fantastic, this means that this pelagic trip might actually happen!

The reader is correct to detect concern on my part regarding the weather. Two of my previous pelagic trip attempts out of Ucluelet ended in failures. In the first attempt on 27 September 1997, we did not even get out of port because of a fierce storm. In the second attempt on 7 March 1998, we actually got out of the harbour for approximately 18 km, before turning back because of worsening weather and ship equipment breakdown. It was of course a disappointment to turn back after getting approximately half way out to our pelagic destination! Besides the disappointment of missed birding, my home location of Roberts Creek also meant that each missed Ucluelet pelagic was at a cost and effort of an overnight travelling trip. However, today was a new day. With each passing minute the sky cleared further and this meant that we were going out on the deep blue open sea!

At 07:55 nine birders left the harbour on the Coho Princess, with Keith Nakagawa as Captain and Barb Taylor as Helper. The Coho Prince has a beam and length of 4.3 meters and 15.2 meters respectively, and cruises at approximately 12 kph. The ship looked to be in excellent shape, and was well equipped with twin diesels, radar, radios, compass, depth finders and a global positioning system (GPS).

We cruised out at a bearing of 196° for approximately two hours. Sightings of various birds, especially Sooty Shearwaters, occurred often enough to keep everyone on their toes (and on handhold too, as there was an approximately two-metre swell with occasional whitecaps and a brisk 20 kph SE wind). Our aim was to get to the closest edge of the La Perouse Bank, in the hopes of encountering up-welling water rich in fish food, which in turn should attract birds. It was good to see that the sky kept clearing more and more.

We realized our fondest birding hopes 39 km out from Ucluelet. At 48°36'0"N and 125°38'40"W (thank heavens for GPS!) we encountered an enormous feeding frenzy of six to eight thousand sea birds! It was curious and puzzling to see, from a distance, that this huge (approximately three to four hundred meters in diameter) raft of birds contained several brownish regions. As we drifted slowly nearer to the birds, the brown regions turned out to be Northern Fulmars that were feeding closely together. We obtained unbelievably close looks at hundreds of Sooty Shearwaters, and had several "close-enough encounters" with Short-tailed Shearwaters, so that all of us were able to review the difficult identification characteristics of these birds. Care is necessary because the Short-tailed is very difficult to differentiate from the very common Sooty Shearwater.

Our excitement in the presence of thousands of birds only increased further, when someone shouted, "Black-footed Albatross!" and then, unbelievably, a shout rang out, "South Polar Skua!!" In the presence of such enormous bird numbers, the photographers in the group rapidly ran out of film, and the rest of us wished that we had brought our cameras too. The presence of three young birders on the boat also added to the general excitement. When one of these young birders was asked how many lifers he had seen today he replied, "Well, nearly all are lifers, except of course for the few species that one commonly sees at the sea shore"!

In addition to over-excited birders, a Humpback Whale and two salmon fishing boats also shared this very interesting area at the edge of the La Perouse Bank. (Earlier, closer to shore, we had also seen several California and Harbour Seals).

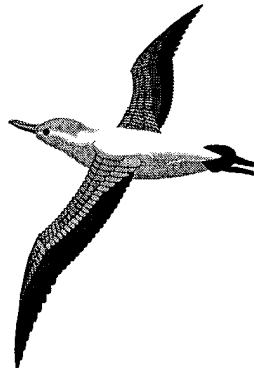
At 11:55 we turned around sooner than expected and headed back to port. Our trip had to be shortened somewhat because of the presence, on the SE horizon, of a nasty looking black cloud that was moving towards us. According to the marine radio weather channel, this cloud represented a low-pressure system with very high winds. Actually, we were not too disappointed to leave as we had seen virtually all the bird species that we had set out to find. True, we had not seen a Laysan Albatross, but making up for this omission was the sighting of the South Polar Skua.

In just over two hours we returned to Ucluelet harbour. It was a happy group of birders that got off the boat. Personally, I felt that an outstanding pelagic trip such as this one, more than made up for the disappointments of the two previous cancelled attempts.

A list and the number of the forty-five bird species, seen on this pelagic trip are given below. Species seen in Ucluelet the evening before, and those seen in Grice Bay and Tofino following the pelagic trip are not indicated. I would like to thank Bryan Gates for checking the species list and Roger Foxall for organizing the trip.

BIRD SPECIES SIGHTED

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Pacific Loon(5) | 24. Black Oystercatcher(2) |
| 2. Common Loon(3) | 25. Black Turnstone(40) |
| 3. Horned Grebe(2) | 26. Surfbird(1) |
| 4. Red-necked Grebe(3) | 27. Red Phalarope(5) |
| 5. Black-footed Albatross(1) | 28. South Polar Skua(1) |
| 6. Northern Fulmar(1000) | 29. Pomarine Jaeger(3) |
| 7. Pink-footed Shearwater(100) | 30. Parasitic Jaeger(2) |
| 8. Buller's Shearwater(7) | 31. Heermann's Gull(3) |
| 9. Sooty Shearwater(3000) | 32. California Gull(4000) |
| 10. Short-tailed Shearwater(3) | 33. Herring Gull(2000) |
| 11. Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel(5) | 34. Western Gull(2) |
| 12. Brandt's Cormorant(8) | 35. Glaucous-winged Gull(1000) |
| 13. Double-crested Cormorant(10) | 36. Sabine's Gull(5) |
| 14. Pelagic Cormorant(10) | 37. Black-legged Kittiwake(15) |
| 15. Great Blue Heron(3) | 38. Common Murre(30) |
| 16. Greater White-fronted Goose(40) | 39. Marbled Murrelet(2) |
| 17. Northern Pintail(7) | 40. Ancient Murrelet(10) |
| 18. Harlequin Duck(1) | 41. Rhinoceros Auklet(7) |
| 19. Surf Scoter(20) | 42. Belted Kingfisher(3) |
| 20. Common Merganser(8) | 43. Northern Flicker(1) |
| 21. Bald Eagle(1) | 44. Steller's Jay(6) |
| 22. Peregrine Falcon(1) | 45. Northwestern Crow(50) |
| 23. Killdeer(1) | |



A MAGIC PELAGIC

by Andy Buhler
1132 Loenholm Road
Victoria, BC V8Z 2Z6

Our bird-ticking pens have always passed quickly over that long section between grebes and pelicans. One Northern Fulmar and a few Fork-tailed Storm Petrels from the Port Angeles ferry, one Sooty Shearwater from Amphitrite Point in Ucluelet, and a Wedge-tailed Shearwater which had tagged along after our vessel on the way to Molokini were our lifetime claims to pelagic birds. Twice Marilyn and I had tried to go on a pelagic trip and twice we were foiled by the weather. This year, we decided we really must do something about that deficiency on our lifelists. In late May we investigated both the listings of trips and our bank account and decided that we might actually be able to afford a Shearwater Journey out of Monterey Bay, California. Plans were made and fees were paid and we eagerly awaited our holidays in October.

October finally arrived and we pointed our van southward. We arrived in Monterey Bay a day early so that we could get our bearings and have a good night's sleep before heading out onto the water. Our heads had barely hit the pillows when we are jolted out of bed by the clanging of our alarm clock. "Five am! - Isn't this supposed to be a holiday morning"? I grumbled sleepily. Still, our day started with a brisk and rather chilly walk to old Fisherman's Wharf. We had been told to meet near Sam's Fishing Shack by 07:00. Since we set ourselves such a brisk pace we arrived early. However, Sam's already had the coffee on and steaming. Several fishing vessels were gathering their passengers in the same area so there was constant activity on and around the docks.

The morning was cool but, as had been recommended in our brochure, we were dressed in several layers. Our trip was to be eight hours long and the weather could change a lot during the day. While we awaited our boat and crew we watched the day brighten and listened to the resonant barking of California Sea Lions. Western and Ring-billed Gulls cried and circled overhead hoping for handouts from the fishermen. A splash down by the dock pylons drew our attention. We peered over the railings to discover a Sea Otter calmly floating on its back as it breakfasted on a spiny sea urchin.

Gradually our crew gathered - six naturalists and our captain, Richard Ternullo. The boat we were to embark on, the Pt. Sur Clipper, was normally chartered for fishing but for today's trip it was to be strictly a birding vessel. Smoking and alcohol were banned on board. We got our pre-departure briefing and were introduced to the naturalists on board. Questions were fielded and finally we were ready to embark. The naturalists positioned themselves strategically around the vessel. Engines were started and we departed smoothly from the dock, moving out toward a breakwater which was literally covered with Harbour Seals and California Sea Lions. The naturalists were expressing some concern about wind because the weather had been a bit erratic all week. They did warn us that all we might see on this day could be some Sooty Shearwaters but "... if we had been here for the two previous trips when a Wedge-tailed Shearwater was sighted..." Anything was possible. Eavesdropping on the murmur of conversations around us we discovered that one passenger was hoping to get North American bird #442 for his year list if he saw the wedge-tail today. He kept company and compared notes with a similarly high-tally birder. Marilyn and I were on our very first pelagic trip - relative novices with fewer than 440 species total on our North American life list. I suppose the forty or so other passengers spanned ranges of experience somewhere in between.

The breakwater was reached. Several Black Turnstones, a Ruddy Turnstone, and a Willet were noted probing among the slippery rocks. A Great Egret was observed standing on a large patch of floating bull kelp. Someone shouted "Pomarine Jaeger" but we missed it. A Brown Pelican flew past.

As soon as we left the inner harbour the crew started "chumming" using popcorn and frozen sardines. They explained that by developing a good following of gulls early and continually the gull swarm might attract in some of our hoped-for species. An Elegant Tern was pointed out. Pigeon Guillemots, a Common Murre, and some Surf Scoters swam by. Heerman's Gulls and Brandt's Cormorants were noted. We ventured further from the harbour and soon saw Sooty Shearwaters streaming across the waves like a rippling layer of black oil. A yell, "There, among the Sooties"! Eyes left and we were treated to our first lifer of the trip, Black-vented Shearwaters hurrying by, rapid wingbeats taking them somewhere in a rush. Another yell and the boat heeled around to allow us all a view of Buller's Shearwaters. First we saw only tens, later hundreds, of Buller's. However, the first seen were the most special as they were unexpected lifer's.

A small cloud of spume was sighted several times on the horizon. We made for it and were treated to very good views of a Blue Whale, our first life cetacean of the trip. The naturalists were experts, not only on the birds, but also on the cetaceans we observed. Blue Whales are large, so large that you see the spray, then you follow a very long back, and at last see a tiny little dorsal fin. How small we seemed sharing its space! Someone calls "Cassin's Auklet, flying away from the port bow"! We did not see it so lost a lifer but were still exhilarated with the whale. A small flock of Rhinoceros Auklets tug-boated past, dark and sturdy.

In fairly rapid succession we tallied several more "lifers" - a Pink-footed Shearwater, a Flesh-footed Shearwater, several Short-beaked Common Dolphin. Suddenly great excitement - a Black-footed Albatross had seen the chumming gulls and approached our vessel to investigate. "An albatross!"- this was one of our hoped-for birds. We had been warned on departure that we were probably too late in the season to see one. Greater excitement! One of the crew hollered, "South Polar Skua, port bow at 11 o'clock, flying near the water". We hardly knew the name, much less the bird. We got quick, but excellent views of a great brown bird with striking white wing patches powering by. A bonus bird seen here, so far from its usual Antarctic waters! A Northern Fulmar also cruised in close to our boat to remind us that northern species also fished these waters.

Occasionally during the day we had stretches of time when the only activity was gulls still chowing down on popcorn and fish, and birders quietly munching dry crackers. Those windows of time allowed us to experience the sea, to reflect on what we had seen, and to enjoy the glorious day. The sea was not always dead calm. Much of the day we had troughs and swells rising and falling through several metres. However, the captain was excellent. He maintained the vessel on so level a course that the motion was barely noticeable. Also, he maneuvered the boat so that viewing was always in the best light and he ensured that as many birders as possible saw every new bird and beast.

A Baird's Whale was sighted by a naturalist. It was quite close. We did see the spume several times, then nothing. The whale had sounded. Baird's can apparently stay under water for the better part of an hour so we continued after other sights. Another Pomarine Jaeger. This time we got to see it - today's life bird number seven! All afternoon the vessel tacked and turned, going from one group of resting or rising seabirds to another all around the bay. By mid-afternoon the constant throb of the engines and the smell of diesel exhaust started to affect a few of the passengers. One or two looked a bit greenish. We just munched our dry crackers and thought other thoughts.

The afternoon stayed clear. We were treated to several more good views of a Black-footed Albatross and also of a South Polar Skua. Buller's Shearwaters were in abundance. When we drifted through one group of gulls we looked down and there, staring up from the surface of the water like a dismembered face, was a lifer fish - a Pacific Ocean Sunfish. Someone calls "Dall's Porpoise". We watched in awe as these marvelous swimmers raced with the bow wave then flashed back and forth across the bow just below the hull.

A Common Loon is sighted. A Red Phalarope waits until the last minute then swims quickly away from our vessel. The trip is drawing to a close. We were working our way shoreward when the captain announced that there was quite a large pod of Risso's Dolphin (Grampus) ahead and that Right Whale Dolphins were traveling with them. More lifers! As we neared these huge grey dolphins and their speedy, sporty, black-and-white companions, the captain stated that both dolphin species were showing some sort of "behavior". Sure enough several Grampus' were breaching and landing on their sides. This seemed to set off the Right Whale Dolphins who did some very high-diving and extremely energetic tail-walking as they sped away across our bow. Apparently the displayed behavior was unusual enough that even the captain took some photos of it.

Finally, back to port at about 16:00 hours after an exhilarating day - seven life birds, five life cetaceans, one life fish and a whole different perspective on pelagic birding. We would go again in a minute if time and the dollar allowed. Thanks to Captain Rich, Debra, and the naturalists on board the Pt. Sur Clipper for providing us such a special day.

For anyone contemplating a trip out of Monterey Bay, book early; take appropriate food, liquids and clothing; study up on marine mammals, cetaceans, and birds *before* you actually get out on the water; and be prepared for a memorable day. We would suggest that birders read **Ocean Birds of the Near Pacific: a guide for the sea-going naturalist**, 1990, by Rich Stallcup, published by Point Reyes Bird Observatory. This book shows not only the birds you are likely to see but also many of the marine mammals and cetaceans as well. Other suggestions include: **Pelagic Birds of Monterey Bay, California**, 1981 by Richard W. Stallcup. It may be out of print but the original article on which it is based appeared in *Western Birds* 7:113-136, 1976. **A Field Guide to Seabirds of the World**, 1987, by Peter Harrison should also be consulted in addition to your favorite regular field guide.



PORT RENFREW PELAGICS

by Bruce Whittington
1974 Hovey Road, RR #3
Saanichton, BC V8M 1V8

There are a few things in birding, as in life, that just do not come easy. One of those is seeing those seafaring birds we call pelagics. Well, yes, there is a certain backyard in Tofino which has Laysan Albatross on its list, but otherwise these things just do not often come close to shore. If a birder wants to see these pelagic birds, a boat trip offshore is a must.

For BC birders, it's not easy. For while we lie on the shores of the open Pacific, opportunities are limited. Most birders will have seen their pelagics from a boat out of Ucluelet, but these trips are infrequently organized. In addition, they involve a seven to nine hour round-trip drive to the west coast from Nanaimo or Victoria, plus an overnight stay in a motel. If the trip is delayed for a day because of weather or sea conditions, another night's stay is required.

This fall, on very short notice, **The Field-Naturalist** tried an experimental pelagic trip which left from Port Renfrew, a two hour drive west of Victoria. Birders were able to make the drive in the morning, avoiding an overnight stay. But would there be any birds?

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence, from commercial fishers and others, about seabirds in these waters. There are even accounts of vagrants such as frigatebirds. However, there is little of the sort of information that gives birders an idea of what they might see.


We left Port Renfrew at about 8:30 in the morning, with Black-legged Kittiwakes among the regulars in the harbour at Port San Juan. The boat was a fast aluminum fish-boat, and we were not long underway when the first Sooty Shearwater sliced past the port side. After a run of only an hour and a quarter, we made the Swiftsure Bank, where hundreds of shearwaters and Northern Fulmars were visible.

We did not have much of a plan, so we simply followed the birds. As we moved further out, we came across small groups of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, and several Red Phalaropes, looking as grey as the name the Brits give them. We began to see some of the dozen or so Pink-footed Shearwaters we would find, and Short-tailed Shearwaters, approaching close enough to the boat for no-mistake looks.

As on most pelagic trips, there were birds seen by some, and missed by others, such as South Polar Skua, Buller's Shearwater, and Parasitic Jaeger. A Northern Harrier fooled us for a while.

The boat operator is actively documenting whale sightings in these waters, and we took some time to get photo id shots of their tail flukes. One Grey Whale was seen and we noted eight Humpback sightings. On two occasions, two whales blew, blew again, and then sounded, their tail flukes glistening in unison as they slipped into the depths. A boatful of birders erupted into roars of approval. In all, six species of marine mammals were sighted.

On the same day, another pelagic trip sailed out of Ucluelet*. It appears that this trip saw larger numbers of birds than the Port Renfrew trip, and one species that we missed: Black-footed Albatross. They were definitely further offshore, and over La Perouse Bank. It should not be difficult, though, given a decent weather forecast, for a boat from Port Renfrew to reach the same waters.


Does Port Renfrew hold promise for pelagic birders? It certainly looks hopeful, and as we gain experience with more trips, we should learn more about the comings and goings of this most intriguing group of birds. 

EDITORS' NOTE: * See pages 10-11 of this issue for a separate report of the Ucluelet trip.

BANDED BIRDS

On 30 October 1998 we (Marilyn & Andy) were out at the Iona STP. There were nearly two hundred (200) Snow Geese feeding close to shore so we scanned them carefully with our binoculars and noted that one goose had a dusky-pink, numbered, collar. We recorded the numbers from the collar and continued over to Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. At Reifel there were literally thousands of Snow Geese. We scanned the masses from the tower and again spotted a couple of Snow Geese with collars. The codes on their collars differed from the codes on the Iona goose so we recorded them also. On our way back along the eastern pathway we observed a very dark Song Sparrow. That sparrow was also banded.

When we returned home we sent a message to Dr Rob Butler giving the specifics of our sightings. Within a day or so we received back from him the following message: "Sean Boyd told me that both of the geese are Wrangle Island birds. The neck bands were red at one time. The banded Song Sparrow is probably one of Jamie Smith's birds banded at Reifel over the years. Mary Tait has been involved in that project."

Spotting the bands had been interesting but now we knew where the birds had been banded and who might have further information on them. Those snippets of information added another dimension to our birding experience. You can learn a lot too if you check for bands on the birds you see, carefully record all the data (codes, time, date, behavior, etc), and report that information to the appropriate authorities. 

B.C. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DETAILS, 1998/99

This listing of Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) is published as a service to BCFO members who would like to take part in CBCs in their local area or in nearby areas. It includes counts with the name and telephone number of the organizer(s) and the scheduled date. This information also appears on the new BCFO website <http://birding.bc.ca/bcfo> courtesy of webmaster, Kevin Slagboom. A **DNA** indicates that the contact person is correct but **Date Not Available** at press time. Data were accurate as known to the Editors on **19 November 1998**. Check with the area organizers for any late-breaking changes.

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Bamfield	DNA	Alan Burger	(250) 479-2446
Bowen Island	DNA	Allan Shatwell	(604) 947-2133
Broughton Strait	(250)
Castlegar/Trail (WKN)	2 Jan 99	Dorothy Beetstra	(250) 368-9716
Chilliwack	19 Dec 98	Annabelle Rempel	(604) 823-6549
Clearwater	20 Dec 98	Helen Knight	(250) 587-6532
Comox/Courtenay	20 Dec 98	Barbara Sedgwick	(250) 335-0064
Cranbrook	27 Dec 98	Greg Ross	(250) 489-2566
Creston (Inaugural Count)	28 Dec 98	Sheila Reynolds	(250) 866-5453
Deep Bay	3 Jan 99	Barbara Sedgwick	(250) 335-0064
Duncan	2 Jan 99	Derrick Marven	(250) 748-8504
Fauquier	DNA	Ruth Bumpus	(250) 269-7481
Fort St. James	27 Dec 98	Joanne Vinnedge	(250) 996-7401
Galiano Island	27 Dec 98	Mike Hoebel	(250) 539-2003 (H)
		or	(250) 652-0396 (H)
Golden	27 Dec 98	Ellen Zimmerman	(250) 348-2225
Kamloops	20 Dec 98	Rick Howie	(250) 578-7542
Kelowna	19 Dec 98	Don Wilson	(250) 763-8036
Kimberley	2 Jan 99	Mildred White	(250) 427-3605
Kitimat	(19 Dec 98 or 2 Jan 99)	Dennis Horwood	(250) 632-2004
Ladner	27 Dec 98	Jude Grass	(604) 520-3706
Lake Windermere District	24 Dec 98	Larry Halverson	(250) 342-3305
Lardeau	28 Dec 98	Gail Spitler	(250) 366-4601
Masset	19 Dec 98	Peter Hamel	(250) 626-3585
Mackenzie	19 Dec 98	Derek Connelly	(250) 997-4001
Mayne Island	20 Dec 98	Doreen Tamboline	(250) 539-2730
Nakusp	2 Jan 99	Gary Davidson	(250) 265-4456
Nanaimo	27 Dec 98	Peter Van Kerkoerle	(250) 245-2530
Nelson	3 Jan 99	Burke Koral	(250) 354-0165
Oliver/Osoyoos	3 Jan 99	Tom Ethier	(250) 496-4171
		or Joan King	(250) 495-6907
Parksville/Qualicum	19 Dec 98	Will Lemon	(250) 757-2387
Pender Harbour	22 Dec 98	Tony Greenfield	(604) 885-5539
Pender Islands	20 Dec 98	Mary Roddick	(250) 629-3308
Penticton	20 Dec 98	Dick Cannings	(250) 496-4019
Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge	3 Jan 99	Kees van den Berg	(604) 463-8743
Port Alberni	2 Jan 99	Sandy McRuer	(250) 723-5436
Port Clements	2 Jan 99	Peter Hamel	(250) 626-3585
Prince George	20 Dec 98	Nancy Krueger	(250) 563-7896
		or Cathy Antoniazzi	(250) 562-3897
Prince Rupert	2 Jan 99	Robin Weber	(250) 627-1129 (H)
		or	(250) 624-3207 (W)
Princeton	20 Dec 98	Madelon Schouten	(250) 295-7078
Quesnel	DNA	Adam Moss	(250) 747-3455
Revelstoke	19 Dec 98	George Winingder	(250) 837-3655

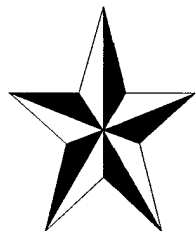
LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Rose Spit	<i>date depends upon tides</i>	Peter Hamel	(250) 626-3585
Salmon Arm	26 Dec 98	Frank Kime	(250) 835-8537
Saltspring Island	DNA	Nancy Braithwaite	(250) 537-9335
Shuswap Lake	17 Dec 98	Rick Howie	(250) 578-7542
Skidegate Inlet	26 Dec 98	Peter Hamel	(250) 626-3585
Smithers	27 Dec 98	Rosamund Pojar	(250) 847-9784
Sooke	3 Jan 99	Michael Shepard	(250) 519-0530
Squamish	3 Jan 99	Jim Wisnia	(604) 898-2000
Sunshine Coast	19 Dec 98	Tony Greenfield	(604) 885-5539
Terrace	DNA	Diane Weismiller	(250) 635-6984
Vancouver	20 Dec 98	Larry Cowan	(604) 942-0931
Vaseux Lake	1 Jan 99	Dick Cannings	(250) 496-4019
Vernon	20 Dec 98	Mary Collins	(250) 542-5673
		or Phil Gehlen	(250) 542-8053
Victoria	19 Dec 98	David Pearce	(250) 658-0295
Wells Gray Park	DNA	Trevor Goward	(250) 674-2553
Whistler	2 Jan 99	Max Gotz	(604) 932-7247
White Rock and Surrey	2 Jan 99	Ian Robertson	(604) 530-1080
Williams Lake	2 Jan 99	Anna Roberts	(250) 392-5000

NOTES:

Interior Swan-and-Eagle Count	10 Jan 99	Rick Howie	(250) 578-7542
Nelson Winter Bird Count	9 Jan 99	Linda Van Damme	(250) 354-1182

WASHINGTON STATE BORDER AREAS

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Bellingham	20 Dec 98	Joe Meche	(360) 738-0641
Edmonds	20 Dec 98	Sally Van Niel	(425) 778-7568
Everett	27 Dec 98	Christopher Hill	(425) 258-3680
North Cascades	18 Dec 98	Bob Kuntz	(360) 424-9099
Oak Harbour / Whidbey Island	19 Dec 98	Bob Merrick	(360) 678-3161
Padilla Bay	DNA	Kraig Kemper	(206) 789-9255
Port Gamble	19 Dec 98	Scott Downes	(206) 361-7073
Port Townsend	19 Dec 98	Richard Johnson	(360) 385-5418
San Juan Ferry	30 Dec 98	Jim Duemmel	(360) 733-3448
(Anacortes to Victoria)			
San Juan Islands Archipelago	19 Dec 98	Barb Jensen	(360) 378-3068
Sequim-Dungeness	DNA	Bob Boekelheide	(360) 681-4867
Skagit Bay	27 Dec 98	Art Campbell	(206) 783-2449

CBC AWARDS: for earliest notification of CBC dates in 1998

Gold Star goes to Annabelle Rempel

Silver Star goes to Phil Gehlen

Bronze Star goes to Burke Korol

Many "Thank You's" to all those great people who sent us their CBC info. without having to be reminded, thereby assisting our phone bill!!

BIRD-LISTERS' CORNER

by Ken Morgan
1945 Lands End Road
Sidney, BC V8L 5J2

Hello again. This is your annual reminder to start thinking about tallying up regional bird lists. For the second year in a row, the BCFO ran an extension in conjunction with the AGM. If you took part in the extension to Alberta or just in the AGM field trips, you were treated to great birding and possibly saw a few new species.

Over the past year, I have spoken to many BCFO members about this corner, and several of them suggested that keeping track of total species in each of the provincial Ecoprovinces was not a good idea. Those comments, reinforced by a fairly low level of response during the past two (2) years prompted me to drop Ecoprovinces from this column.

The following lists the areas that will be considered for 1998 and the "rules of the game". In recognition of the Alberta extension trip, I have added Alberta to the list. Unless someone provides a strong, compelling reason to add a new area (along with reference to a published checklist or a detailed description of the boundaries) this is probably the list that will be used from here onward.

As with previous years, I will only accept lists that reach me by the end of January (1999). For your convenience, you can e-mail me your totals; my e-mail address is <kenmorgan@sprint.ca>. Phone-in totals will NOT be accepted.

I have tried to present the most recent species count for most of the areas (**in bold**). Please notify me when you submit your lists if any of the numbers are inaccurate.

LISTING AREAS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) A.B.A Area (906) ¹ | 12) Sunshine Coast Checklist Area(271) ¹⁰ |
| 2) Canada (628) ² | 13) West Kootenay Checklist Area(303) ¹¹ |
| 3) British Columbia (481) ³ | 14) Prince George Checklist Area(273) ¹² |
| 4) Alberta (307) ⁴ | 15) Creston Valley (265) ¹³ |
| 5) Vancouver Island (387) | 16) North Pacific Pelagic Waters |
| 6) Queen Charlotte Islands (250) ⁵ | 17) Mount Robson Provincial Park |
| 7) Vancouver Checklist Area (364) | 18) Manning Provincial Park (208) ¹⁴ |
| 8) Victoria Checklist Area (354) ⁶ | 19) Mitlenatch Provincial Park (159) ¹⁵ |
| 9) Okanagan Valley Checklist Area (316) ⁷ | 20) Pacific Rim National Park (254) ¹⁶ |
| 10) Princeton Area (247) ⁸ | 21) Mount Revelstoke & Glacier National |
| 11) Kamloops Checklist Area (295) ⁹ | Parks (183) ¹⁷ |

Explanations of superscripts

- ¹ = ABA area species total (1997) provided by E. MacBean.
² = Canada species total (1997) provide by B. Korol.
³ = BC species total from Wild Bird Trust Checklist of BC Birds (1998) by R.W. Campbell.
⁴ = Alberta species total based on checklist by Provincial Museum of Alberta (no date).
⁵ = Queen Charlotte Island species total (1996) provided by P. Hamel.
⁶ = Victoria Checklist Area species total (1998) provided by B. Gates.
⁷ = Okanagan Valley Checklist Area species total based on checklist by Cannings et al. (1995).
⁸ = Princeton species total (1997) provided by J. Hertzig.
⁹ = Kamloops Checklist Area species total based on checklist by R. Howie (1994).

Explanations of superscripts (continued)

- ¹⁰ = Sunshine Coast species total (1997) provided by T. Greenfield.
¹¹ = West Kootenay Area species total based on checklist by G. Davidson (1998).
¹² = Prince George Checklist Area species total (1998) provided by C. Antoniazzi.
¹³ = Creston Valley species total based on checklist by L. Van Damme (1996).
¹⁴ = Manning Park species total based on checklist by Grass and Tilitsky (1996).
¹⁵ = Mitlenatch Park species total based on checklist by Sirk et al. (1993).
¹⁶ = Pacific Rim National Park species total (1997) provided by D. Allinson.
¹⁷ = Mount Revelstoke & Glacier National Parks species total based on checklist by Gyug et al. (no date)

LISTING RULES

- Determine the total number of bird species you have observed in each area up to the end of 1998 (for the benefit of new listers this means all years, not just during 1998).
- For areas 1, 2 and 3 (ABA, Canada, BC) include all land and water bird species including marine species seen out to the two hundred (200) nautical mile (approx. 370 km) limit.
- For areas 5 through 8 and 12 include all terrestrial as well as marine species that you have seen but only out to five (5) nautical miles (9.6 km) from land.
- For area 16 (North Pacific Pelagic Waters) include only those species that you have seen no closer than five (5) nautical miles from land, north of the Tropic of Cancer (23°27'N) and south of the Aleutian chain. For this area, you can count species seen beyond the 200 nautical mile limit (unlike ABA rules). Birds that can be included in this list are: loons, grebes, albatrosses, fulmars, shearwaters, gadfly petrels, storm-petrels, frigatebirds, tropicbirds, pelicans, boobies, cormorants, geese, ducks, phalaropes, skuas, jaegers, gulls, kittiwakes, terns, and alcids - misguided passerines, etc. cannot be counted.
- Phone-in totals will NOT be accepted. **I will only list those totals that reach me by or before, 31 January, 1999. Starting this year, I will accept list totals that are e-mailed to me (kenmorgan@sprint.ca).**
- If I do not receive a listing form on time, I will re-print the totals from the previous year. If a person does not submit a form for two (2) consecutive years, he or she will be dropped from the list.

**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. ☺



SEEN IN PASSING

Wondering about Tufted Ducks? Check Mike Toochn's article in *Birding* 31(5):370-383, 1998 for ID and more. Concerned about Sky Larks? Read Barbara Begg's informative article in *BIRDERS JOURNAL* 7(5):242-249, 1998. Want to know how to Romance a Harlequin? Learn how Ken Wright and Trudy Chatwin study this colorful bird in *Cordillera* 4(2):36-42. Want history on our Xantus's Hummingbird? Danny Tyson tells all in *Discovery* 27(3):101-103, 1998. Remember that Crested Caracara found at Drury Inlet, BC? Tom Plath has an article plus excellent photo proof in *BIRDERS JOURNAL* 7(4):215-216, 1998.

Good reading and good birding.

IN CLOSING...

As we phoned around the province we heard that there had been Cattle Egrets found in the Queen Charlottes and a Brambling documented near Williams Lake (probably not the same one as was seen in Tofino). If you find an unusual or rare bird during your birding outings be certain to document as much as you possibly can then forward your sighting to Gary S. Davidson, Chairman of the Bird Records Committee, for vetting. (See page 2 for Gary's address and phone number.)

Check your envelope for an enclosed Checklist from Cameron, a membership renewal form for 1999 (consider enrolling a friend too), and the 1998 listing form from Ken.

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