



BC BIRDING

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

ISSN 1206-1611

Volume 10 Number 2

June 2000

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BC BIRDING is published four times a year by British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO), P.O. Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7.

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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Membership Dues:
Individual memberships \$25.00
Library subscriptions \$25.00
Junior memberships (age under 18) \$10.00
U.S. and foreign memberships (US) \$25.00

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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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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.


EDITORS' NOTES & NOTIONS

What piqued your initial interest in birds and birding? In this issue Chris has asked a number of birders about the first special, or catalyst, bird that got them going and shares the responses with us. Jerry and Gladys, good friends and good birders, describe how romance, Reisling and robins all fit remarkably well together. Martin allows us to be the 'document of record' for sightings made in an underbirded area of BC and Les gives us a recent update on the Alki Lake Avocets. Russ tells us Whooo saw what and Whooo did not on the BCFO-sponsored Spotted Owl trip that went out in April. See Hue's note on some parking restrictions in some lower mainland birdy areas. Adrian read our March newsletter and has sent us a letter which we hope will stimulate some feedback from the membership.

Do not forget that the 10th Annual BCFO AGM will be held at the University of British Columbia from 11-13 August 2000. See page 24 of this issue for more details. As you read the President's Report remember that we will be needing to appoint new directors at this AGM. Think about how you may be able to assist or support the organization. We have been a viable organization for the last 10 years because people have been willing to devote their time and efforts to make the organization work. No organization runs itself - it takes many willing people to volunteer time and effort to keep it running. What can you do?

It is with regret that we report that two endemic BC species have recently become extinct. Cordillera published its last issue 5(1) Winter 1999. Bruce Whittington's Field-Naturalist store, known to many of you around the province, closed its doors for the last time at the end of April this year. We are very sorry for the loss of both of these as each, in its own way, did a lot to foster appreciation of natural history within British Columbia.

Our birding year started very well with the Victoria Valentine Big Day Bird Competition but we missed, for only our second time ever, the OK Mountain Critter Count. Sorry about that folks but work unfortunately got in the way this year. We hope that the birding year has been good to all of our members and we look forward to the usual great birds, camaraderie, and lectures at this year's AGM. Hope to see most of you there.

Good Birding. Andy & Marilyn 

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Tony Greenfield

This will be my last report as the president of the BCFO. The society's by-laws require directors to resign after two consecutive three year terms, and therefore both Martin McNicholl and myself are retiring.


It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be a director of the BCFO, and I will take this opportunity to thank all those who have served as directors of the society. BCFO requires three new directors for the upcoming years, so if you feel you can contribute to the future of the society please contact me (as nominating officer for the 2000 AGM).

Apart from the directors, who gather regularly to chart the course of BCFO, I would like to pass on our special thanks to the real workhorses of the society - Andy and Marilyn Buhler who write and produce our excellent quality newsletter BC Birding, to Martin McNicholl, the consummate editor of our Journal, and to Gary Davidson, recently retired after a long stint as the chair of the BCFO Bird Record Committee. Many other people contribute their time and energy to BCFO over the course of a year, particularly around organising our AGM.

Recently, Bryan Gates and myself met with Wayne Campbell in Victoria, and Wayne brought us (BCFO) up to date on some exciting developments for the future of ornithology / conservation in BC. Wayne will be addressing BCFO at the AGM in Vancouver in August, so I hope you will be there to hear this first hand.

I will remind you to register for the AGM to be held at UBC in Vancouver on August 11-13, 2000. The timing is to coincide with the southbound shorebird migration. Vancouver has some of the best shorebird hotspots on the continent. Plan to take this opportunity to be there at a peak time with leading field experts. In addition, Dennis Paulson, our banquet speaker, is a world authority on shorebirds. Remember, also, to register for the BCFO pelagic trip from Vancouver Island on September 23-24, 2000. For registration details for these events see page 24 for AGM information and page 19 for the pelagic trip info.

I hope to see you all in August and September. Until then,

Good summer birding, 

Tony Greenfield

For Fun and an Educating Time
join BCFO birders at
The 10th BCFO Annual General Meeting
which will be held at
The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC
from 11-13 August 2000
See page 24 for further details

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

by Martin K McNicholl

- June 8-11 2000 **HAWK MIGRATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA 25th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE**, Lake Harmony, Pennsylvania. Contact: Laurie Goodrich, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, 1700 Hawk Mountain Rd., Kempton, PA 19529-9449, USA; phone (610) 756-6961.
- June 10-11 2000 **Strathcona Park Bird Search**. For participation or information please contact: Betty Brooks (250) 337-8180.
- July 5-9 2000 **WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS 25th ANNUAL MEETING & 30th ANNIVERSARY**, Kern River Preserve, California. Contact: Bob Barnes, State Director Conservation Programs, Audubon California, Box 953, Weldon, CA 93283, U.S.A.; phone (760) 378-3044.
- Aug. 11-13 2000 **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**, Vancouver, B.C. See page 24 of this newsletter for more details. Contact: Either Ian Robertson, ph. (604) 530-1080, e-mail res@quick.com or Ev Miyasaki, e-mail bmiyasaki@home.com, phone (250) 656-8066.
- Aug. 14-20 2000 **118th STATED MEETING, AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, JOINTLY WITH BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION and CANADIAN SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY**, Memorial University, Saint John's, Newfoundland. Contact: William A. Montevecchi, Biopsychology Programme, Depts. of Psychology & Biology, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 3X9; phone (709) 737-7673.
- Aug. 8-10 2000 **BIRD STRIKE COMMITTEE - U.S.A., CANADA 2nd ANNUAL JOINT MEETING**, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. Contact: Richard A. Dolbeer, U.S.D.A. Wildlife Services, 6100 Columbus Ave., Sandusky, OH 44870, USA; phone (419) 625-0242.
- Sept. 8-10 2000 **WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING**, Fairbanks, Alaska. Contact: Andrea Swingley, Alaska Bird Observatory, Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK 99708, U.S.A.; phone (907) 451-7059.
- Sept. 21-24 2000 **FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS FALL GENERAL MEETING**, Chilliwack, BC. Contact: [name and address not yet indicated]; phone (604) 858-5141.
- Sept. 23-24 2000 **BCFO SPONSORED PELAGIC TRIP**. There will be a one-day pelagic birding trip for BCFO members, to leave from Ucluelet on the west coast of Vancouver Island. See page 19 for details.
- Oct. 11-15 2000 **2nd NORTH AMERICAN DUCK CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP**, Saskatoon, Sask. Contact: Bob Clark, Canadian Wildlife Service, 115 Perimeter Rd., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0X4.
- Nov. 8-12 2000 **RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING**, Jonesboro, Arkansas. Contact: Jim Bednarz, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Box 599, State University, Arkansas 72467, USA.; phone (870) 972-3082.
- Nov. 24-26 2000 **NORTH AMERICAN GULL CONFERENCE 2000**, Niagara Falls, Ontario. Contact: *Birders['] Journal*, Suite 393, 701 Rossland Rd. E., Whitby, ON. L1N 9K3.



BC BIRDING NEWS BRIEFS

compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

Vicky Troup -Birders in B.C. will be saddened to learn that former B.C.F.O member Victoria Troup died on 9 February 2000. A biology instructor at Capilano College, Vicky was co-author of a Whistler bird check-list and occasional participant in Squamish bird counts, as well as an active participant in various natural history and environmental projects in the Howe Sound area. -based on Wisnia, J. 2000. *Wandering Tattler* 23(7): 4-5.

Millikin Receives International Award -Rhonda Millikin of the Pacific Wildlife Research Centre of the Canadian Wildlife Service has received a 1998 Public Awareness Award from Partners in Flight for her work on increasing public awareness of songbirds through community groups, schools and colleges. -based on Anonymous. 2000. *Partners in Flight Canada* spring 2000:3.

Allan Brooks -British Columbia lost another leading naturalist and conservationist with the death of Allan Brooks, son of Major Allan C. Brooks, at Miracle Beach on 3 February 2000. Although I knew him slightly prior to our 1999 AGM in Oliver, I became better acquainted with his broad natural history knowledge when I rode with him and his wife Betty and daughter Jocie during one of the Oliver meeting field trips. He contributed substantially to the efforts of several naturalist and park organizations in the vicinity of his homes on South Pender Island and at Miracle Beach on Vancouver Island, and served several positions in the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, including as Vice-President. Brooks Point on South Pender Island, preserved as a regional park, forms part of his lasting legacy. -based partly on Anonymous. 2000. *B.C. Nat.* 38(2):24.

SOCIETY NEWS**A BCFO SPOTTED OWL FIELDTRIP**

by Russell Tkachuk

Box 132, Roberts Creek, BC, V0N 2W0

The BCFO Spotted Owl Field Trip occurred on Saturday, 15 April 2000. This is a good time of the year to find Spotted Owls, as they are more vocal than usual at this time. Marion Porter, who has had much experience finding Spotted Owls, led the trip. The plan was to find a calling Spotted Owl that night in Manning Park, and to see the bird the next day. The original plan was to find Spotted Owls near Boston Bar. However, because of the enthusiastic BCFO Membership response to the trip, Marion changed the locale of the trip as she thought that it was too dangerous for a large group to be traveling at night over the very steep Boston Bar logging roads.

Earlier in the day I had a great day of birding with Wayne Weber. Wayne found Chukar for me in North Kamloops, and then we birded the Nicola Valley. It was a delightful warm, calm spring day, with migration in full swing. Ducks and geese were everywhere, and three Golden Eagles and a Baird's Sandpiper were an added bonus. Later in the day, a little further south, the weather was dramatically different: Coquihalla Highway had blowing snow and Hope torrential rain. But then it cleared up in Hope and we ended with a pleasant evening.

Before the owling trip commenced many of the 23 birders present got together for dinner at Rollei's restaurant. The four or five people that had already eaten waited for us in the adjacent parking lot and they were lucky enough to see a Long-eared Owl fly overhead!

We drove east on Highway 3 to Manning Park. Before it got dark we hiked a short distance into Sumallo Grove, and Marion played her Spotted Owl tape. However, no owl answered. We returned to Highway 3 and, once it got dark, started a routine where we stopped at suitable safe spots on the highway, played the tape, and then listened intently. This procedure was followed on the highway between Sumallo Grove and the west park entrance until approximately 2:30 am. While cool, it was still and dry, and it was pleasant to stand listening for owls, watching the clouds drift slowly over the moon. However, no Spotted Owls called. It did get quite foggy for a while, and Marion mentioned that the fog tended to curtail Spotted Owl calling. It got exciting for approximately 30 minutes when we thought we heard a Spotted Owl call. However, on getting closer to the vocal bird it turned out to be a Barred Owl. We also heard at least four Saw-whet Owls but the denizen of the old growth forest that we were after remained silent.

Alas, another Canadian Spotted Owl trip ended unsuccessfully for the author. But no matter, we had an enjoyable night in one of Canada's most beautiful mountain parks, shared good conversation with pleasant companions and, of course, still look forward to finding that elusive Spotted Owl.



The BC Coastal Waterbird Survey during the Summer.....

What a fantastic beginning-year for the BC Coastal Waterbird Survey! I thank all the enthusiastic and talented birders who contributed to the 1999/2000 province-wide coastal waterbird monitoring database. With all the winter 1999/2000 recording forms mailed-in, I am busy compiling and summarizing the BCCWS data. Look for details in your copy of the BC Coastal Waterbird Survey newsletter later this summer!



BC COASTAL
WATERBIRD
SURVEY

The primary goal of the BC Coastal Waterbird Survey is to monitor the large wintering population of coastal waterbirds in BC, however, any energetic birders who are willing to continue through the summer months are definitely encouraged to do so! Most importantly, enjoy the summer and the break from counting huge flocks of scoters and other waterbirds!

If you have any questions, suggestions, or to register in the BC Coastal Waterbird Survey please call the Bird Studies Canada, BC Programs, toll-free number 1-877-349-2473 (BIRD). Or you can contact me, Stephanie Hazlitt, BC Coastal Waterbird Survey Coordinator at: BC Coastal Waterbird Survey, Bird Studies Canada, BC Programs, 5421 Robertson Road, RR1, Delta, British Columbia, V4K 3N2.



LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Hi Andy & Marilyn,

I wanted to write and applaud your dedication to producing newsletters for the BCFO. It must take tremendous time and commitment on behalf of yourself and Marilyn.

I recall as a youngster near Manchester, attempting to produce a newsletter with a few friends, for the younger group in our local naturalists society. We just could not find the time and / or drive to carry on with it.

I must admit that one item I have a problem with, is people who persist in trying to make a simple and wonderful hobby, that of birding, into something ever more scientific, and mysterious, as if to isolate themselves and the hobby, even more, from the general populace.

I was delighted to read Tony Greenfield's comments in his President's Report, which did put the five pages of league tables of listers in perspective.

In my opinion, this is utter drivel. I am sure I cannot be alone in this view. Yes. It is always a thrill to see a new species, but to reduce such an incredible pastime to self-glorifying league tables seems somewhat pathetic.

Let's face it. Almost anybody can see any bird they wish so long as they have the relevant info, or local guide, a stack of money, and a profession that allows lots of free time to chase down these birds. There is absolutely no intrinsic value in this pursuit.


And, this practice of reducing birds names to four letter abbreviations. Why? CRAP springs to mind.

Hope you are not offended by my opinions, Andy, after all, that is all they are.

I just had an urge to vent, and I am aware that political correctness has reached mammoth proportions in BC.

I know only too well that the politically correct stance is that all bird enthusiasts should be able to enjoy the hobby in whichever form they choose. Right?


All the best!

Adrian Leather, Quesnel Birding Group. 

Ooops...!!

"In the last issue of BC Birding, I inadvertently left out Larry Cowan's totals for 1999. The following are Larry's latest totals:

A.B.A. Area - 397
 Canada - 381
 British Columbia - 330
 Alberta - 138
 Vancouver Island - 165
 Vancouver Checklist Area - 284
 Victoria Checklist Area - 122
 Okanagan Valley - 147
 Washington State - 174

Please accept my apologies for this oversight. Ken Morgan" 

PAGE 7

Somebody Actually Reads BC BIRDING!

First let me state that whatever any member's opinion, it is always satisfying to know that somebody, somewhere, actually reads **BC BIRDING**. As the editors we put together the issues, send them forth, and frequently hear nothing -- good, bad or indifferent -- from which to judge how any issue has been received. Thanks, Adrian, for the input.

Now to address Adrian's input. **BC BIRDING** is intended to be a regular vehicle to bring together birders of all levels and stripes. However, it is the vehicle of an organization which is interested in the various aspects of Field Ornithology (BCFO). We try to keep the articles informal enough to interest casual birders but we also wish to assist the more serious birder through site and travel guides; interesting bird behavior or sightings; conservation efforts or habitat notes; happenings within the birding community; trips and/or projects that birders can get involved with and, once every year, with milestones within our birding community. Listing stats were requested by a number of our members.

Why publish bird listing stats? Perhaps an analogy would help. As novice sports fans we do not follow hockey too closely. We just enjoy watching the sport. We may be aware that extensive statistics are kept for each and every player. However, we can still enjoy a hockey game without worrying about any of those statistics. There are more savvy fans and players for whom the statistics are vital to make useful predictions upon the outcome of any particular game or series. We enjoy the sport at one level, others enjoy it at a different intellectual level. Annual listing stats are like the hockey statistics of our sport. We may get great enjoyment from the sport without worrying at all about numbers. Others may look at the stats to assist them in finding a 'keen' birder for a new area they wish to explore. Cumulatively listing statistics take up less than 10% of the pages we print each year so I hope that you can allow us that concession to those who enjoy them.

Regarding the four-letter codes, we are of two minds about their use. Perhaps they are more appropriately used in **British Columbia Birds**, our peer-reviewed publication. However, the document was received from a naturalist to whom the codes are routine and, we used the document as received. Standardized codes do perform a very useful service for data exchange between professional naturalists. Often keen amateur birders provide records for areas where limited data has been collected. If standardized codes have been used by the data collector it makes the job of the researcher/compiler/interpreter very much easier. Since most of us keep some sort of shorthand when noting down our sightings, might it not be useful to conform to a standardized version which all are familiar with? If you do not use some sort of shorthand then you will still be writing out 'Northern Rough-winged Swallow' while your companions have already documented the BASW, CLSW, and VGSW and are ready to move on. We will take your request under advisement and will try to use the full names rather than standardized codes in this newsletter venue. However, we do open the forum up to all members.

So fellow BCFO Members -- give us your input on listing statistics, on lists of birds seen in areas of British Columbia (we are sometimes the 'Document of Record' for these important listings), on the Shade-Grown Coffee article, on whatever you wish to applaud or 'vent' about. Let Adrian's letter be the trigger to send us a note, to send us an article or to send us a Site Guide (which we desperately need). Consider this an informal poll to let us know whether we are meeting your needs and, if not, how we might better serve you. Members have always come through in the last-minute stretch to allow us to put together a 20 page (minimum) newsletter on time every quarter for the last eight years. Now we also need input to see that we are doing it right for all members' needs.

Update on American Avocets in British Columbia

by Les Gyug

3130 Ensign Way

Westbank, B.C. V4T 1T9

If you'll remember, in 1997 Jason Weir found B.C.'s only known American Avocet colony in the garbage-strewn remnants of the south half of Alki Lake in Kelowna (see "Great Birding at Avocet Marsh" September 1997). However, very ironically, no sooner was this colony discovered than he learned that the City of Kelowna was about to expand their landfill into this alkaline wetland that had recovered itself quite nicely since the mid 1980's when it was last used for garbage dumping. Jason went off to first year university in Alberta that fall and that left us, the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club (CONC), to grapple with the nuts and bolts of wetland and avocet conservation.

It turned out that not much could be done to save that particular site. The Ministry of Environment's Waste Management Branch was pushing to have this wetland drained—because water on top of old garbage (or new for that matter) could be forming a toxic waste pool. However, the City of Kelowna had just purchased a large buffer zone around the south half of Alki Lake where they intended to re-expand the landfill. Within that buffer zone they were going to have to construct water-retention facilities to intercept water before it contacted the buried garbage. So, why not make those water-retention facilities into avocet wetlands? They simply needed to know what this water-interception site needed to look like, and presto (maybe) we could be looking at a new avocet colony as a mitigation measure when garbage would start refilling the current colony.

After the 19 nests Jason had discovered at Alki Lake in 1997 (see Jason Weir. 1997. The breeding biology of an American Avocet colony in British Columbia. British Columbia Birds, Vol 7:3-7), 1998 was a major disappointment. High water levels flooded out all the nesting islands used the previous year. Desperate avocets nested on one lonely island that was all of about 1-m diameter, put two nests on the dike adjacent to the site, and there was one nest on the shoreline of Robert Lake 1 km away. The breeding season of 1999 was shaping up to be just as much of a disappointment since the water levels in March 1999 hadn't receded from 1998. In April, I built floating nesting platforms (4-foot square plywood sandwiches with a 4 or 6 inch styrofoam middle) and put out six in Alki Lake and two in Robert Lake. While I knew that this was a common method for making waterfowl nest sites, I could find nothing indicating whether these would be accepted as breeding sites by avocets.


By May of 1999, CONC had put up some funding with additional funds from the City of Kelowna, Central Okanagan Foundation, Baillie Memorial Fund, Canada Trust's Friends of the Environment Fund and B.C. Environment's Youth Team. We hired Jason to monitor the colony from his lonely outpost atop the cliff at the northeast corner, with weekly forays out into the mud. We also got help from three students (Lisa Dreger, Samantha Ambrozzi and Christina MacNeil) provided by Okanagan University College and the Deep River Sciences Academy who did water chemistry and invertebrate prey studies.

In 1999, 13 breeding avocet pairs successfully hatched five broods in 21 nesting attempts. I think the number of successful nests was low because too many avocets waited too long to nest as the water dropped and exposed more nesting islands. It turned out that the floating platforms were used by avocets for nesting, and by lots of other waterfowl for loafing. Five nests were on the platforms, only one of which hatched, however. At least one of the floating platforms was unsuccessful because it floated too low in the water and waves splashed onto the eggs (next time all the platforms need 6 inches of

styrofoam in the sandwich, not just 4 inches). Another platform was used, but only too late in the season once the water had dropped and it was high and dry. The platform with the successful nest was used by another pair for a nest after the first nest was finished, but again probably too late in the season. The fifth nest on a platform was abandoned before any eggs were even laid. As near as I can tell this is the first record of American Avocets nesting on floating structures.


In the spring of 1999, I also asked for the co-operation of other birders to contribute any new avocet sightings in B.C. Thanks to all of you who contributed. Outside of the Kelowna area avocets only occasionally stopped down near Penticton, Vernon and Kamloops. Thanks to the CONC and other volunteers who kept on top of 12 sites in the Kelowna area, we saw the numbers of avocets here swelling and rapidly diminishing on almost a daily basis through late April and early May. This seemed to indicate that Kelowna was a stopping point for migrants and there must be another avocet colony somewhere further north. It turns out there was. On June 1st we were led to a colony 20 km NW of Clinton in the Cariboo. There were 12 avocets sitting on nests on one island and at least 32 adults there in total. A few people seem to have known about this site for many years now, and I can't help but wondering if some of the other alkali lakes and sloughs in the Cariboo might hold more avocet colonies that are really unknown, rather than just little known.

Jason presented the preliminary results to the BCFO AGM at Oliver in June 1999, and by the end of the summer, we had finished the reports. In B.C. successful avocet colonies (apparently) require wetlands with high alkalinity (pH >9.1), mudflats covered by 5-13 cm deep water and with lots of invertebrate food, and low, barren islands for nesting on. Each pair uses about 0.5 ha for feeding and for raising the chicks, with smaller foraging territories averaging 0.25 ha defended during nesting (although not necessarily right at the nest).

As of May, 2000, Jason is sojourning in South America somewhere, but the avocets have returned to Kelowna with 12 active nests at Alki Lake and numbers of "resident" adults between the high 30's and mid 40's on any given day. Thirty-one avocets were seen on May 5th at the Cariboo colony by Roger Packham of B.C. Environment, so it appears that both colonies are still thriving. How long the Kelowna colony will continue to thrive depends on continued cooperation with the City of Kelowna to make sure that whatever mitigation wetlands are built will give avocets the best chance possible. 

Sharing the Glory and the Goodies

This year we entered the Valentine's Day Couples Bird Count. Dannie Carsen, a local birding enthusiast, set up this challenge two years ago as a way to get in some February birding, to raise a few dollars for conservation efforts, to allow couples to get in some quality time birding together, and to provide a fun way to compete for some great prizes.

Our thanks to Dannie for providing this venue -- perhaps we should take the concept province-wide. Our very special thanks to Jerry and Gladys for being the generous friends that they are -- Pagliacchi's was delightful. (Members must read **Valentine Day Sweet-heart's Bird Competition 2000 or... How We Won The Wine** on the following page to be enlightened.) Tension mounts -- the pressure is on...! Andy & Marilyn 

Valentine Day Sweetheart's Bird Competition 2000

or... How We Won The Wine

by Jerry and Gladys Anderson
11034 Trillium Place
Sidney, BC V8L 5M4



The Valentine Big Day Bird Competition, was an idea of Dannie Carsen, a member of the Victoria Natural History Society. The first one was held in 1998. The idea was for couples, husband and wife, girlfriend and boyfriend, or sweethearts, to go out on Valentine Day and count as many bird species as possible. The count was to start at 6:00 AM and finish at noon, we would then meet at 12:30 at the Swan Lake Nature House, to tell of our adventures and all the easy birds we missed, but most importantly, who would be the winner. Starting at 6 AM at this time of the year, meant that we would have about 1-1½ hours of darkness to start with.

We have done three or four big days a year, just for our own enjoyment, for the last 10 years or so. We don't really manage big days anymore, more like what we call "medium sized days". Because we live in North Saanich we had a fairly established route around the end of the Peninsula and then worked our way in towards Victoria. The week before, we thought we should have a dry run but, because of reluctance to get up early, we decided to forgo the 6:00 o'clock owling and just do a dry run of our route. Over the years we have learned that a lot of birds are really undependable little critters. They do not wear watches or look at their calendars so they are not always where they are supposed to be on the day you need them. This year we thought we would be really organized because there was a possibility of more competition. We had won last year and we had our reputation on the line. We listed all the stops we would be making, places where we thought we would find good birds or a variety of birds. Then we scheduled times for each of our stops. With a few adjustments we would end up at Cattle Point, sometime before 12 noon.

We started our day at about 10 minutes to 6 and drove to Canoe Cove Marina, where we knew a Western Screech-Owl had been heard calling, At about 6:05, we heard our little friend, one tick. We then drove to Tatlow Road to listen for a Barred Owl. We had no sooner stopped the car and jumped out when we both heard the last part of a Barred Owl's call, two ticks. We drove around Curteis Point area listening for a Great Horned but no luck. I guess three owls was too much to hope for. We sped back to Canoe Cove Coffee Shop for breakfast. The coffee shop, needless to say, wasn't too busy at 6:30 Sunday morning. As we got out of the car, even though it was still dark, we heard a Bewick's Wren, a Varied Thrush and an American Robin. Jean, the lady who runs the coffee shop, wanted to talk, I guess because we were her only customers. I could see our schedule starting to collapse and I was trying to will her in the kitchen to start our breakfast. All wasn't lost though, sitting by the window just as it started to get light, we saw a Great Blue Heron, a flock of Northwestern Crows and a couple of Glaucous-winged Gulls fly over the marina.


After our Eggs Benedict, "a sweet heart's breakfast", and I might add that Jean makes the best Eggs Benedict anywhere, we drove back to Tatlow Rd, a quiet road with a lot of brushy hedgerows. Usually this area was good for dickey birds and further along there is a stand of dead deciduous trees where you can usually find a woodpecker or two. We both heard someone pecking in one of these dead trees. Together we thought "Downy", but when we finally saw it, it turned out to be a Red-breasted Sapsucker, a good bird for us. We also got a pretty good count of little birds, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Spotted Towhee. A little further along we found a flock of California Quail. Time is up here, so off we go. The end of Tatlow has a beach

access on Deep Cove and here we hoped to get some of our ducks and seabirds. Our prime bird here was hopefully a Barrow's Goldeneye and right away we found our bird, plus a Common Goldeneye, a Common Loon, Bufflehead and Red-breasted Merganser. "Barrow's" are hard to find around Victoria with usually only a few in a couple of locations all winter.

Time to go again, this time back to our own backyard. We had a Hutton's Vireo, that had been singing, since the middle of December, this should have been a sure thing, but no such luck, we waited and waited, not a peep, A good place for a pit stop, then off again, this time to Pat Bay. All winter there is usually a large mixed flock of scoters in the bay, with maybe one or two Black Scoters amongst them. Black Scoters are not too common in the Victoria area, so this would be another good bird. Anyway about the end of January most of the birds left, I guess due to our mild winter. A few Greater Scaup, some American Wigeon, and a Belted Kingfisher. By now it's 9:15, half of our time has gone by and we have 40 birds. We know we probably need 75 to keep in the running: So now we start worrying, where will we find 35 more birds and our schedule has all gone to pieces, we're about an hour behind. Oh well, this is supposed to be fun.

From Pat Bay it's up to the airport and scan the infield there, just yesterday we saw a Northern Harrier here, but can't seem to find him today. We did locate a small flock of Black-bellied Plovers in the wet grass, never have seen them here before. Then Gladys spots an American Kestrel, another good bird. Over on the Sidney side of the Peninsula now but at our favorite place for shore birds it is high tide and the wind is blowing, not a bird to be seen. Oh, Oh here's a pair of Harlequins and further out a flock of Oldsquaw and a Bald Eagle. Sidney dock gets us a Pigeon Guillemot and Red-necked Grebe, two Cormorants species. Then on to Vantright's Bulb Fields, where we had two Mourning Doves the week before, but no sign of them today. No Ring-necked Pheasant either. Just as we were getting into the car we heard a Sky Lark start to sing. We did get a American Coot and a Northern Pintail in the reservoir there, also a Lesser Scaup. We didn't spend any time at Martindale, it's a great birding place, but requires a bit of walking and we were quickly running out of time. So it's along Hunt Road to get a Trumpeter Swan, then to Elk Lake for a Canvasback, then on to Viaduct Flats for, hopefully a few more ducks. We're in luck and get five more ticks here. We have to really hustle now to get a Wood Duck at King's Pond and then to Cattle Pint for shorebirds. We get to Cattle Point at about 7 minutes to 12:00 and hurry out onto the point. It's blowing and things don't look too good, then up the shoreline we spot two Black Oystercatchers, number 76 and our time's run out.

We've just got time to eat our muffin and fill out our tally sheet. Now, it's off to Swan Lake Nature House to see how everybody else did. It turned out there were eight couples that took part in the bird count. Dannie had asked Tom Gilleppe to sit in as a judge and to hand out prizes. So after each couple had told their stories, how early or late they had started or where they went or how far they drove or mostly all the birds they missed. Tom tallied up all the birds and the grand total was 111 species, which seemed pretty good for a half a day birding. Of this total, our count of 76, tied with Andy and Marilyn Buhler. How to break a tie? Tom in his great wisdom decided that three of our birds were rarer or harder to find than Andy and Marilyn's, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, an American Kestrel and a Western Screech-Owl, and so awarded us first prize. Because we had won last year, we decided we would accept second prize and let Andy and Marilyn have first prize, A ROMANTIC MEAL AT PAGLIACCI'S no less. Second prize was a fancy basket with all sorts of goodies in it and that is how we won our bottle of wine.

Everybody said they had a fun day and all agreed they would be back next year. 

Catalyst Birds

by Chris Charlesworth

725 Richards Rd

Kelowna, BC V1X 2X5

There he was, in all his splendor. A male Pileated Woodpecker with a crest so fire red that I could almost feel the ultra-violet rays burning through my retinas. As he worked his way up and down the trunk of the fir tree, a clamorous call rang from overhead. It was a female, most likely his mate, who quickly joined him and began chasing him around the trunk of the tree. I was on the Kelowna Christmas Bird Count and to increase the excitement of the day it was my 12th birthday. This, being one of the only birding trips I had taken outside of my local haunts, was my first experience with Pileated Woodpeckers. From that day on I have felt a special kinship with the Pileated Woodpecker and whenever I see one it conjures up fond memories of seeing the magical, "prehistoric" looking bird for the first time. The Pileated Woodpecker sparked in me a life long passion for birding. It was my catalyst bird - the first bird to really capture my attention.

Most birders can trace their birding experience back to a similar event. A particular bird, the Pileated Woodpecker in my case, can have such a strong impact on you that the amazement and excitement of that first experience will remain with you for the rest of your life. When you get hooked on birding your relatives, friends and especially your spouse becomes overly jealous because all of your attention and time is revolving around birding and not them anymore. For some people an object or a person can pique their interest. Whatever form it comes in, the experience can ignite a flame, so to speak, and your curiosity and wonder for birds will stay with you forever. It seems that birders, people who are as varied as the creatures they watch, like to talk about the birds that sparked their interest. Here are some of their stories.

Mary Collins, of Vernon, explained how she bumped into a bird that would change the rest of her life, as she was working on her farm in Lavington. "I was doing the usual chores of moving sprinklers and such when I noticed a bird perched on a fencepost. As it faced me it appeared completely black, but then as it twisted around my eyes lit up. On its back and nape was a striking pattern of gold, black and white. What was this bird?" It was a male Bobolink of course. Mary says that the event of seeing the Bobolink that day has stuck in her memory ever since. "I actually named our farm on Mabel Lake Road, Bobolink Farm," laughs Mary.

Not all people need a flashy bird, like Pileated Woodpeckers and Bobolinks, to interest them in birding. Sometimes it is the tiny and drab, but lively birds that catch your eye. Jo Ann Mackenzie, of Surrey, was living in Scarborough, Ontario when her birding career began. The painters were painting her house in May and in the act of trying to avoid the confusion, she stumbled upon the bird, which captivated her and lead her into a life-long passion for birding. "The bird was working the bushes back and forth all day long," she says. "At first it appeared all gray and drab, but when I got a view of its head I noticed a bright tomahawk of red running down the middle of the bird's crown," says Jo Ann. She later identified the bird as a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, one of the smallest and most hyperactive members of the North American bird family. "I began to wonder what other birds I may have missed throughout my life," Jo Ann says.

Gary Davidson, of Nakusp, explains how his passion for birding began. "Nineteen years old at the time, I was camping near Pemberton with a friend of mine, neither of us birders. We were walking along a path when a small, yellow bird flitted across in front of us. We looked at it and were instantly curious about what it was. That night we got hold

of a field guide and started going through the pages. We were amazed when we found out that it was a MacGillivray's Warbler. We were so pleased with ourselves that we spent the rest of the trip looking for birds and attempting to identify them in the field guide." It's little wonder that this bird caught Gary's eye. Warblers pack about as much punch as a left-hook from Mike Tyson. Their gorgeous colors, enchanting songs and lively characters dazzle birders beyond imagination.

A particular bird isn't always responsible for one's birding passion. A person, rather than a bird, sparked Hue Mackenzie's interest in birds. A man, ironically named John Bird, was mostly a parliamentary writer for a newspaper in Ottawa, but he also wrote a column on birds. "Unfortunately he was a heavy drinker, but he sure could write wonderfully on the subject of birds," says Hue. After reading many of his columns on birds I got the inspiration to go out and find birds for myself." The rest is history, as they say. Hue and his wife Jo Ann have racked up an impressive number of species in British Columbia and Canada.

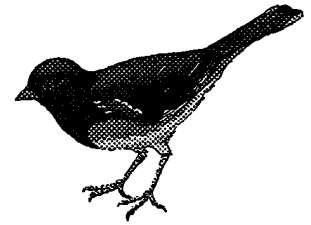
Pete Dunne, influenced by Roger Tory Peterson, the legendary grandfather of birding, is an accomplished birder and a very witty writer. Pete, who resides in New Jersey, says, "My interest in birds was triggered by an instrument rather than a single bird species. A pair of binoculars," Pete says, "brought that little creature wrapped in feathers to life. Its identity made little difference to me, however the binoculars that made him look so close are what captivated me."

Sometimes family dynamics are as important as seeing exciting birds for the beginner. "Well, growing up in a birding household meant that birding was always there," says Dick Cannings of Naramata. At the young age of six Dick can remember spotting and identifying a Northern Shrike on the 1960 Christmas Bird Count. "It didn't actually spark my interest, but it demonstrated that I could do this too. Up to then I'd just let my parents and older brother point things out," says Dick, who has become one of the most respected birders and ornithologists in the country.

Birds of immense rarity are very exciting, and for some, seeing an ultra-rare bird is enough to turn them into avid birders. "It was the moment of a lifetime, the bird of the century," says Rick Toochin, of Vancouver. It was 1978 and Rick was nine years old at the time. The bird was a Spoonbill Sandpiper, one of the world's rarest shorebirds, and it was at the Iona Island Sewage Ponds. "I will never forget the morning when my dad and brother Mike walked though the front door and dad announced, "Myra, pack a lunch and gather the kids. We're going to Iona for the rest of the day because we just found the bird of the century." I saw the bird every day it was there. It will always be a part of us and a part of the myth and legend that is Iona." Not surprisingly, Rick's passion for birds, and especially shorebirds, has stuck with him ever since. Shorebirds are one of the most fascinating bird families in the world. Their gorgeous, yet subtle plumages and the identification challenges they present are very attractive to birders.

Birds as common as flies in a prairie diner can play a role in persuading a young boy into the hobby of birding. "The robins and waxwings in the cherry trees, the goldfinches in the thistles, swallows nesting under the eaves and ducks, pheasants and Killdeer in the fields", says Jack Bowling. "It was no single bird, rather the sum impetus of my backyard bird life when I was growing up in Tsawassen", says Jack, who now calls Prince George his home. He took part in the 1968 Vancouver Christmas Bird Count, joining up with Tom Steven's group. This put the seal on the envelope for Jack. He was hooked.

Childhood is a time of curiosity and exploration, thus it's no wonder many birders get started at an early age. "When I was twelve years old, living with my parents on the edge of a large forest west of Mission, three birds in quick succession got me started," says Chris Siddle, an English teacher and accomplished birder who lives in Vernon. "The first was a Spotted Towhee (Rufous-sided at the time) which seemed wonderfully easy to identify compared to some of the streaky, tiny birds I was struggling with." Chris' first pair of binoculars, which he bought off the rack at a local supermarket for just ninety-eight cents, only magnified about two times. Through those binoculars Chris observed the towhee's plumage. "It stood out against the brush along the driveway. Black and white with broad rufous sides. It looked just like it's painting by Louis Agassiz Fuertes in Gilbert Pearson's 1917 classic The Birds of America." The second bird was seen a day later and in the same location. It was a Downy Woodpecker and a fairly tame one too. It was the third bird that really caught Chris' attention, a Pileated Woodpecker whacking apart stumps in the thick woods behind his house. Inaccurate predictions in the 1917 bird book suggested that the bird was soon to follow the footsteps of the near extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker, due to extensive forest removal in the eastern United States. "So I was amazed; what a bird, right there in my backyard! It seemed so close to a miracle. How could I not become a birder after sights like these?"



Birding is a great hobby for many reasons, but the most important reason is that birders can, and do, make significant contributions to the knowledge and conservation of the animals they love. A small boy and his grandfather were exploring the wilderness of Jasper National Park when a traumatic event triggered the boy's interest. The boy was Wayne Campbell, one of the founding fathers of birding in British Columbia, and his grandfather was the first park warden in Jasper National Park. "We were out exploring a small pond when we noticed something unusual under the water. It was a small stainless steel fish mounted on a block of wood, submerged below the surface. The resident Belted Kingfishers flew over the pond and the fish, glistening like polished silver, would grab their attention. They would hover above the pond in typical kingfisher fashion and dive head first into the water in pursuit of the fish. As the bird hit the water and made contact with the steel fish, the kingfisher's neck would snap, leaving the bird dead," explained Wayne. Poachers were deliberately luring the kingfishers to their deaths, to sell their feathers to people who used them in creating flies for fishing. Isn't it ironic that a bird admired for its amazing fish catching capabilities should meet its end in this way? "One day my grandfather retrieved one of the dead birds and took it home to stuff it. He placed the stuffed bird on a branch and when one of the poachers took a shot at the bird, he nailed them." Wayne was so inspired that there were people out there who actually cared about the welfare of birds. Wayne decided to dedicate the rest of his life to the protection of birds and their habitats and along the way increase our knowledge of birds in British Columbia and North America.



EDITORS' NOTE: ...and what bird was YOUR "Catalyst Bird"? Chris has done quite a lot of asking around but perhaps he did not get a chance to interview you. Tell us how you got started in birding. What triggered your urge to get to know these feathered flyers? Whether you relax and enjoy the birds in your own back yard or you 'twitch' whenever you hear of a rarity there must once have been a 'WOW!' moment when your interest was piqued. How has birding changed how you look at or interact with Mother Nature? Send us your stories. We'll get you into print. Thanks.

Birds Observed along the Alaska Highway in North-eastern British Columbia in September 1974

by Martin K. McNicholl
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Burnaby, B.C. V5G 1L3

The avifauna of the north-eastern corner of British Columbia remains rather poorly documented. The best documented areas within the region are Dawson Creek (Phinney 1998), the Fort Nelson vicinity (Rand 1944; Erskine and Davidson 1976) and a portion of the area along the Sikanni Chief River (Greenfield 1998). Because of the general paucity of published information from this area, even brief observations can help assess the validity of our impressions to date of the distribution and chronology of each bird species in the area.

On 6 and 7 September 1974, Patricia G. Haugh and I travelled along the British Columbia portion of the Alaska Highway, entering B.C. from Yukon Territory on the morning of the 6th, stopping briefly that day at Liard Provincial Park, camping overnight at Buckingham River wayside (south of Fort Nelson), and exiting into Alberta near Dawson Creek on the 7th. Although the infrequency of our stops and heavy rains during part of the drive limited our observations, they provide some information on fall migrants in that area. Although Rand (1944) remained in the area until 19 September in 1943, and Griffiths (1973) published some late summer-fall bird notes at Summit Pass, most of the observations summarized in the four papers mentioned above were from spring and summer. Thus, observations from the fall and winter periods are of particular interest. Milepost numbers in the species accounts below are in the order encountered (i.e. from northwest to southeast, with mile 0 near Dawson Creek).

Red-tailed Hawk

One each at miles 434, 414 and 372, all on 6 Sept. All were of the reddish-tailed, dark-backed, light-bellied plumage (i.e. light phase, *Buteo jamaicensis calurus*) described by Erskine and Davidson (1976) as typical in the Fort Nelson lowlands and by Phinney (1998) as the most common form in the Dawson Creek area. In contrast, only two of seven birds observed in early October in the Pine Pass area west of Dawson Creek were light phase (Sherrington 1999).

American Kestrel

One male at mile 535 and one female at Fort Nelson on 6 Sept.; one each (sex not determined) at miles 101 and 21 and at Dawson Creek on 7 Sept. This species is considered both a migrant and breeding resident in the area (Phinney 1998) and was "fairly common" in Summit Pass during the same period [1-8 Sept.] of 1943 (Rand 1944) that we drove through the area.

Belted Kingfisher

One female at Liard Hot Springs on 6 Sept. (listed in Campbell et al. 1990). Although excluded from some waters in the area by turbidity (Erskine and Davidson 1976; Greenfield 1998; Phinney 1998), sightings along the Liard River seem fairly frequent (Rand 1944).

Northern Flicker

One male of the Red-shafted race at mile 255 on 7 Sept. Most flickers reported in the area have been of the Yellow-shafted race (Rand 1944; Erskine and Davidson 1976; Price 1993; Greenfield 1998; Phinney 1998), but Red-shafted and intergrade individuals have been

seen in the Dawson Creek area (Phinney 1998) and in the Donna Creek area near the Williston Reservoir to the west of Dawson Creek (Price 1993).

Gray Jay

Seen at numerous places between Buckinghamhorse River campsite and Dawson Creek on 7 Sept., in agreement with their common status in the area (Rand 1944; Erskine and Davidson 1976; Phinney 1998).

Black-billed Magpie

One at mile 72 on 7 Sept. Neither Rand (1944) nor Erskine and Davidson (1976) had records of this species in the area, although Erskine and Davidson (1976) predicted that it would occur. It now occurs regularly at Fort Nelson (Campbell et al. 1997) and has become common at both Fort St. John (Campbell et al. 1997) and Dawson Creek (Phinney 1998).

Common Raven

Seen at numerous places between Buckinghamhorse River campsite and Dawson Creek on 7 Sept. This may suggest a seasonal movement, as in this area the species is most common north of the Muskwa River (Rand 1944) and around towns (Erskine and Davidson 1976; Phinney 1998), although several were seen near Buckinghamhorse River by Rand (1944) and they appear sporadically throughout the area (Erskine and Davidson 1976; Phinney 1998).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

We saw two and heard others in Liard Provincial Park on 6 Sept. This is within the 2-17 Sept. period in which Rand (1944) observed this species to become common.

American Pipit

As noted by Neily (1975), flocks of American Pipits moved through southern Yukon Territory on 4-6 Sept., including one that we saw at milepost 705 on 4 Sept. and ten at Watson Lake on 5 Sept. This movement continued into British Columbia as we drove through, with about 25 at Muncho Lake viewpoint, about 40 at mile 407, about 50 at mile 377, about 40 at mile 372 and six at mile 280 on 6 Sept., and about 50 at mile 129, about 40 at mile 123, and about 60 at mile 117 on 7 Sept., as well as additional sightings of one to five birds at scattered locations on both days.

Orange-crowned Warbler

Two were among a large flock of warblers at Liard Hot Springs on 6 Sept. Rand (1944) considered this species a fall transient in the area, although it also occurs as a spring migrant (Erskine and Davidson 1976; Phinney 1998) and breeds in the Dawson Creek area (Phinney 1998) and possibly along the Sikanni Chief River (Greenfield 1998).

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Most warblers in a large flock at Liard Hot Springs on 6 Sept. were too distant to permit identification, but at least 45 were Yellow-rumped, of which seven were "Audubon's" and at least ten "Myrtle." The common race in northeastern B.C. is Myrtle (Rand 1944; Erskine and Davidson 1976; Greenfield 1998; Phinney 1998), but "Audubon's" has been observed migrating through the Dawson Creek area (Phinney 1998).

Dark-eyed Junco

Sighted frequently all along the route on both days. All that could be identified to subspecies were Slate-colored, the race that breeds in the immediate area (Rand 1944; Griffiths 1973; Erskine and Davidson 1976; Phinney 1998), although other races and intergrades occur as migrants at Dawson Creek (Phinney 1998) and as migrants and uncommon breeders to the west at Donna Creek (Price 1993).

Rusty Blackbird

A flock of 20-25 were at Liard Hot Springs on 6 Sept. Deirdre Griffiths saw "small flocks" there on 4-5 Sept. 1969 (Erskine and Davidson 1976) and both observations are within the 1-8 Sept. period when Rand (1944) observed 1-25 daily at Muncho Pass in 1943.

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AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

Jerry and Gladys Anderson

Jerry and Gladys live in Deep Cove, at the north end of the Saanich Peninsula, on Vancouver Island. They have birded this area since 1983 and say it is still one of their favorite places.

Chris Charlesworth

Chris, an enthusiastic and knowledgeable birder and member of the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, has been birding in the Okanagan for a number of years. He has lead many groups birding in the area and welcomes calls from visiting birders.

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.

Martin K. McNicholl

Martin is a former Editor of *Alberta Naturalist* and current Editor of *British Columbia Birds*. He has been watching birds since the age of three.

Russell Tkachuk

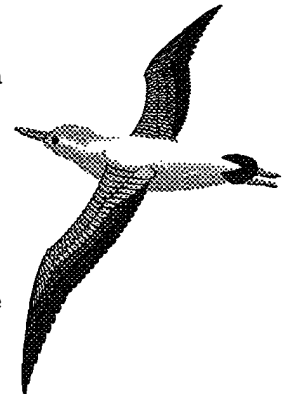
Russ was active in Manitoba birding and art circles for many years. Now retired in Roberts Creek, on BC's Sunshine Coast, he continues the above activities, and is an active member with BC Field Ornithologists, the Sunshine Coast Natural History Society and the Sunshine Coast Arts Council.



BCFO Pelagic Birding Trip - 2000

submitted by Bryan Gates

The Board of Directors has agreed to arrange a one-day, late summer pelagic birding trip for BCFO members, to leave from Ucluelet on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Plans are now underway with Canadian Princess, with a tentative date set for September 23-24, 2000. Optional dates of the weekend before and the weekend after the tentative date will be considered and will depend on boat availability. The final date will be confirmed and announced as soon as possible. The 8- to 9-hour trip will leave early on the Saturday morning, weather permitting, or early on Sunday morning if we are weathered-out on Saturday. Participants must therefore be prepared to over-night in Ucluelet on the Friday and Saturday nights, although the Saturday night reservations could be cancelled if we are successful on Saturday.



The cost for the boat trip itself will be approximately \$110 per person, and participants will be responsible for their own transportation and accommodations. We recommend car-pooling and may be able to give some guidance with accommodations. Our objective is to follow an offshore course set by Ken Morgan, based on his lengthy experience with pelagic bird surveys off our coast. Ideally, we will extend 45 or more miles offshore, will reach Barclay Canyon and may intercept commercial fishing fleets. Participation will be limited to approximately 30 people, depending on availability of boats. Non-members can participate by joining BCFO in advance. If you are interested please contact me (Bryan Gates) at (250) 598-7789 or by email at: Bgates@pacificcoast.net



Manning Park "Bird Blitz"

A BIRDING PARADISE:

The Manning Park "Bird Blitz" is a fun event for expert and novice birders alike. Manning's rich blend of coastal, mountain, and interior climates support a huge variety of birds --- over 200 species. June is a great time to visit the park, when forests are alive with a riot of birds noisily advertizing for mates and defending territory. This, combined with the park's extensive network of scenic trails, makes Manning a paradise for birders!

ITINERARY:

The Bird Blitz begins on Friday evening with registration at Little Muddy Campground -- camping is FREE for birders. On Saturday, birders will be sent into different areas of the park to record species and quantities of birds (by sight or call). All participants will receive a bird checklist and park map. After a full day of birding, birders will return to a FREE barbecue with buns, salads, and drinks (bring your own protein!). After dinner, birders will meet around the campfire for a quick run-through of the day's sightings, followed by a guest speaker. Coffee and donuts will be served after dinner. Sunday morning will involve more birding in those areas not covered on Saturday, with people leaving Sunday afternoon. A summary of the weekend sightings will be mailed to all participants following the event.

HISTORY:

Established in 1983, the Manning Park "Bird Blitz" is one of BC's longest-running bird counts. The event provides a vital service to Manning Park -- birders are helping to build a database that now spans 18 years, giving park managers a better picture of the park's changing species diversity over time.

DATES:

June 16, 17 & 18, 2000

PLACE:

E.C. Manning Provincial Park (a three-hour drive east of Vancouver, in the beautiful Cascade Mountains)

ACCOMMODATION:

Free camping at "Little Muddy Volunteer Campground" (a map will be provided upon request). Come prepared for tenting or RV camping. No electrical or sewage hookups. Facilities include pit toilets, drinking water, covered cook shelter, additional weather-proof tent shelters, picnic tables, group campfire ring.

Bed & Breakfast at the Manning Park Lodge. If you don't want to ROUGH IT, consider staying in a comfortable hotel room! The Manning Park Lodge is offering a "BIRDER SPECIAL" this year:

- \$49.00 per person, per night, breakfast included
- Price includes all taxes
- Based on double occupancy
- Phone the Manning Park Lodge to book: (250) 840-8822

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BIRD BLITZ:

Contact Kelly Pearce of Firelight Communications
Phone: (604) 869-3745 Fax: (604) 869-3755 E-mail: kpearce@uniserve.com
Pre-register and let us know you're coming! (not mandatory)

Shade-Grown Coffee - Part 2

by Jim Williams
5239 Cranberry Lane
Webster, WI 54893

Assuming you buy shade coffee, would you like an expert's comments on brewing this high-pedigree product into the perfect cup?

Peter Matlin of Thanksgiving Coffee, director for its Song Bird coffee project, was more than willing to share his secrets during my visit with him. He began with the roasting process.

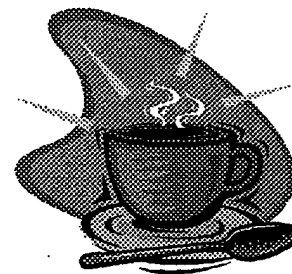
"What is happening in the roast of the green beans is the conversion of starches to sugars," Mr. Matlin said, "as with the ripening of a green banana in the sun. The green bean needs the heat of the roast process to accomplish this chemical change.

"Eventually, the starch molecule absorbs enough heat so that it can no longer remain a starch molecule. Through a process called pyrolysis, rather than continuing its rise in temperature, the starch molecule takes on energy. At 405 degrees, the starch molecule breaks down into a simple sugar," he said.

The next step is continuing the roast until at from 415 to 425 degrees the sugars caramelize, like onions in a frying pan when they turn translucent and sticky sweet. As the roasting continues toward a dark roast (french) the sugars are carbonized, as with a marshmallow when it catches fire and the sugars turn black.

"Coffee flavors and caffeine are volatile compounds," he said, "and the longer and darker you roast the coffee, the more flavors and caffeine go out the chimney. The lighter roasts have about five percent more caffeine and more complex flavors than the darker roasts, which are more monotone in nature.

"The lighter the bean, the sweeter and milder the brew," Mr. Matlin said, "and the darker the bean, the stronger and less sweet your coffee. We are talking flavor here, not caffeine as a measure of strength," he said.



He went on to explain that if the grind of the coffee is too fine and the water too hot, your coffee will be over-extracted and bitter. On the other hand, if the grind is too rough, the water too cold, your coffee will be under-extracted and weak.

What is critical is the bed of coffee in the filter. "If it's not thick enough," said Mr. Matlin, "the water runs through too quickly."

Water has to go through the ground coffee slowly to extract the sweetness. If it goes through too quickly, you get bitter coffee. If you try to correct that by using less coffee, you get weak bitter coffee, according to our expert.

Your cup of coffee must have 1.1% to 1.4% coffee solids in solution to achieve Mr. Matlin's recommended level of flavor intensity. This translates to two heaping tablespoons of ground coffee per eight ounces of water (one cup). Don't be stingy, he said. If your brewed coffee is too strong, dilute it with water after it is brewed.

The correct grind size is important, too, he said. And what is the correct grind? It's slightly finer than what you find in that two-pound can from the market. Experiment, said Mr. Matlin, or buy a package of ground Song Bird coffee and keep a sample for comparison when you grind your own beans.

Water temperature is another factor. "The water in those plastic Mr. Coffees is always too cool," he said. The problem is the plastic reservoir; the water cannot be heated enough.

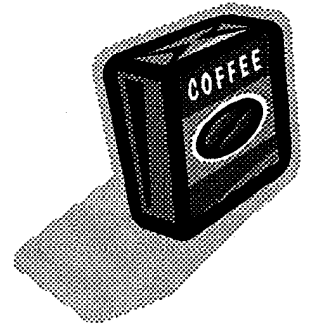
"You need water between 196 and 200 degrees," he said. "In a kettle, just before the boil, when the water bubbles take the shape of fish eyes, then the water is the right temperature."

Mr. Matlin pointed out that ground coffee goes stale more quickly than do coffee beans. He suggests you keep beans in the refrigerator, sealed tightly in a Mason jar with that rubber ring under the lid. Don't put your beans in the freezer.

While this is a step you might choose to omit on a fast schedule created to get you to work on time, he suggests letting the ground coffee warm to room temperature before brewing. This helps keep the water hot enough to avoid the under-extracted/weak problem. Have you seen that little dime-sized valve doohickey on the side of some bean packages? Do you know why it's there?

When you roast coffee beans, they produce carbon dioxide, Mr. Matlin said. If you bagged or canned that coffee immediately, kaboom, the container explodes. Coffee, beans or ground, has to sit until the gas dissipates. The trouble is, it begins to go stale immediately.


The little valve, an Italian invention, according to Mr. Matlin, allows the CO₂ to migrate out of the bean bag, which means the roaster can package it immediately upon roasting, a freshness plus.



"If there is no valve on that bag, forget it," he said. "You're buying stale coffee."

And what if you buy beans in bulk? "You have to know the traffic at the store," he said. "How often is the coffee replenished?"

In review: New coffee freshly bagged (sans explosion). The fine grind. The leisurely warm-up. The perfectly laid bed. Fish eyes in your water.

This is how your mom made coffee, right? 

[Jim Williams, editor of *Minnesota Birding*, works for the American Birding Association and Birding. This second article has been reproduced from *Minnesota Birding*, newsletter of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union and is used here with permission.]

BCFO Members Take Note of Parking Changes

Many of our members have become aware of the excellent birding to be had along the north shore of Boundary Bay in Delta municipality. Access to the dike road, where people can walk for miles parallel to the bay, has been possible at 64th, 72nd, 88th, 96th, 104th and 112th Streets with limited parking available at most. The popularity of this area for walking, cycling, jogging, dog-walking and other activities has been growing rapidly. This has led to problems for the local farmers moving their equipment to their working fields with the result that there have been disputes of a serious nature.

To alleviate the problem the Delta Council has eliminated parking on all except 64th and 72nd Streets. This decision was published in the Vancouver Sun on Friday May 5th. It was not indicated when the restrictions will take effect. For Birders this means that access will be more difficult even at approved locations because there will be lots of competition for the limited amount of parking which is available. It also means a round trip walk of about 20 kilometers to the best shorebirding areas east of 112th street.

The other option is to have a friend drop you off at one street and pick you up at an agreed time elsewhere. Out-of-town members should make enquiries before making plans to bird the area. As always anyone going there will find that the best time to go is on a rising tide when the birds are gradually forced to move closer to the shore.

I will look forward to seeing everyone at the annual meeting in August.

Cheers Hue MacKenzie

Lower Mainland Site Guides

Over the last nine years we have published a few Site Guides to areas around Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Out-of-town visitors to this August's Annual General Meeting may like to review some of these Guides as a way to supplement their birding enjoyment before or after the meeting. We hope that Vancouver and Lower Mainland members will either update some of these guides or will be willing to send us some Site Guides to other interesting and birdy places.

Site Guide: Blackie Spit, Surrey BC 1(2):12-15, 1991

Site Guide: Lighthouse Park, West Vancouver BC 3(3):9-11, 1993

Site Notes: Good Birding on Bus #351 5(2):12-13, 1995

Site Guide: Colony Farm Regional Park, Coquitlam / Port Coquitlam BC 6(2):5-10, 1996

Site Guide: Maplewood Flats Conservation Area, North Vancouver BC 8(1):9-11, 1998

Site Notes: A Stroll Around the Knoll, Surrey BC 8(2):14-16, 1998

Site Guide: The Squamish Estuary, Squamish BC 9(1):16-19 1999

Nearby areas you might also wish to check out:

Site Guide: Cowichan Bay and Duncan BC 1(4):10-11, 1992

Site Guide: Island View Beach, Saanich BC 2(3/4):20-23, 1992

Site Guide: Lower Sunshine Coast BC 2(3/4):24-29, 1992

Site Guide: Martindale Valley, Southern Vancouver Island BC 4(3):10-13, 1994

Site Guide: Whistler / Pemberton area BC 4(4):12-15, 1994

Site Guide: Esquimalt Lagoon, Victoria BC 9(3):10-12, 1999



DRAFT SCHEDULE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BC FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 11, 2000

7:00 - 9:00 pm **REGISTRATION** - Ruth Blair Lounge, UBC Conference Centre,
off Westbrook Mall

8:00 - 9:00 pm **SOCIAL HOUR** - Ruth Blair Lounge

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12, 2000

(NOTE: breakfast on your own. University food services / restaurant locations provided at registration desk.)

9:00 - 11:00 am **TECHNICAL SESSION (am)** - Isabel MacInnes Lounge, UBC Conference Centre

BC Waterbird Survey.....Stephanie Hazlitt, Bird Studies Canada
Life after the Birds of B.C..... R. Wayne Campbell, BC Environment
BC Nocturnal Owl SurveyDick Cannings, Bird Studies Canada
Boreal Owls in the West Kootenays.....Stephen Bennett, Mirkwood Environmental

11:00 - 11:45 am **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

11:45 - 12:30 pm **LUNCH.** Provided at the UBC Conference Centre (Isabel MacInnes Lounge)

12:30 - 2:15 pm **TECHNICAL SESSION (pm)** - Isabel MacInnes Lounge

Habitat Selection in Wintering Dunlin.....Pippa Shepherd, Simon Fraser University
Harlequin Ducks and the Georgia Basin.... ..Fred Cooke, Simon Fraser University

2:15 - 7:00 pm **AFTERNOON FIELDTRIPS** - depart from in front of the UBC Conference Centre

7:00 - 8:00 pm **SOCIAL HOUR** - Sage Bistro, University Centre

8:00 - 10:00 pm **BANQUET**
GUEST SPEAKER: DENNIS PAULSON

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 2000

(NOTE: breakfast on your own. University food services / restaurant locations provided at registration desk.)

7:00 - 12:00 **MORNING FIELD TRIPS**

12:00 **AGM Adjournment** 

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 for further information.