



# BC BIRDING

Newsletter of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists

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Janice Arndt

## Observations at a Cassin's Vireo Nest: evidence for dedicated Dads.

It may seem hard to believe that there are still gaps in our knowledge of basic life history traits for some of our common species. Peruse the Birds of North America (BNA) account for Cassin's Vireo (Goguen and Curson 2002) and you may notice, as I did, that phrases such as "no information", "no reports" and "little information" appear surprisingly often under a variety of subject headings. The lack of information on this species is summed up at the end of the account: "Almost all aspects of this species' natural history could benefit from additional study... breeding behaviour remain[s] poorly studied... behavioural study is particularly warranted."

This dearth of facts may reflect the taxonomic history of the species, which until recently was considered to be just a western subspecies of the widespread Solitary Vireo. Perhaps researchers felt the western birds weren't worth studying because the life history of the Solitary Vireo was already well known from eastern populations. It also appears



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please see Vireo, page 12

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*BC Birding*, ISSN 1206-1611, is published four times a year by British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO), P.O. Box 8059 Victoria, B.C. 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.

BCFO 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.

Since November, 2003, BCFO has maintained an official partnership with the Changhwa Wild Bird Society, Changhwa, Taiwan.

## Membership Dues

*Please send membership requests, or requests for further information, to*

Membership  
British Columbia Field Ornithologists  
P.O. Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7

### Membership Dues:

Individual memberships .....	\$25.00
Library subscriptions.....	\$25.00
Junior memberships (age under 18).....	\$18.00
U.S. and foreign memberships.....	\$25.00 (\$US)

Memberships are for the calendar year.

## Newsletter Submissions

Send material for publication in any format to the editor. Submissions may include bird finding information for our "Site Guide" series and any articles about birding experiences, preferably but not necessarily in British Columbia. A brief biographical sketch (5--100 words) should accompany the article if the editor does not have a recent version or you wish to change it.

*Please send newsletter submissions to*

Phil Henderson (Editor, BC Birding)  
Box 615, Fort Langley, BC V1M 2R9  
604-888-1571 / strix@uniserve.com

*Deadline for the receipt of material for publication is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the March, June, September, and December issues.*

## Advertising

Advertising rates are available upon request.

## BCFO Website

<http://www.bcfo.ca>



## President's Report

I have been volunteering for many years now.

I started some years after I finished university. I had been "retired" in the initial round of cutbacks affecting the forest industry in 1982. A friend's adult, "hippy" son asked what I was doing with my time. I was keeping busy running, swimming, and other assorted "physical exercise" activities as well as the usual day-to-day activities like meals and housekeeping. But I wasn't giving back to my community the way my friend's son thought I should be.

As a result, I volunteered for, among other things, the Northern BC Winter Games, Festival of the Arts, and my local naturalist club. Most of my volunteering has been with the naturalists, locally, provincially and nationally. As a naturalist, I started participating in land use processes in 1991 with another "retirement." By then, we all knew biodiversity was important. I offered my knowledge of natural history and my viewpoint to help formulate plans with goals and targets industry and government could work toward.

I was learning the whole time.

I'm still learning.

This fall, taking on the responsibility of president of the BC Field Ornithologists has made me realize, and appreciate, the scope of the incredible, selfless contributions of volunteers. Every little bit adds up to a vibrant organization. Where would the BCFO be if we didn't have someone offering their time to sit on the Board, organizing an Annual Conference, putting together the newsletter and journal, or producing a column? It saddened me to read Ken Morgan's column in the last issue of BC Birding. I'm sorry he's culminating his tenure

on such a note. But with it comes the opportunity for introspective assessment. For my part, if I have ever been so hard on anyone to elicit such a strong response, please accept my apologies.

Even though I only have a "good idea" of what my own life list is, I agree with Ken, that *Bird Listers' Corner* does have a place in our newsletter. So, I am pleased to report a volunteer has stepped forward. I hope you can work out a set of guidelines both compiler and lister can live with.

Thank you, Ken, for your contributions to the BCFO organization.

On a more positive note, the Future Directions workshop was deemed a success. We had fun. The day started off with a short birding trip in the morning. In the afternoon, five members joined seven directors to brainstorm and discuss the aims and goals of the BCFO. Lots of ideas came forth to supplement our successes to date. Look for a summary of the workshop elsewhere in this newsletter [p. 8]. We'll put on a similar workshop again in two or three years. Plan on participating!

In order to make our Annual Conference more available to students and those busy with field work (like me), we are planning on having this year's conference in late August on Vancouver Island. I'm looking forward to birding a new area with people who know all the "good spots." For those of you familiar with the area, I hope you come out and share your knowledge and passion for the region. It's amazing how recharged one gets looking at your own "backyard" through the eyes of a guest!

I encourage members to voice their opinions and thoughts. Write a

*Letter to the Editor* or contact a board member.

Happy birding everyone! It's Christmas Bird Count season!

Oh, in case you are wondering, my house isn't quite as clean as it used to be back Before Volunteering.

**Sandra Kinsey**, President



## British Columbia Field Ornithologists Fifteenth Annual Conference

**August 26-28, 2005**

Events and Field trips will be posted in the March newsletter. There will also be a field trip extension after the conference, with a pelagic trip out of Ucluelet or Tofino as a possibility. If you can't wait until the March issue, please contact Wayne Diakow, BCFO Director, at [wdiakow@shaw.ca](mailto:wdiakow@shaw.ca)

### **British Columbia Birds**

#### Notes and papers.

Our technical journal is badly in need of significant birding observations. Publication is being held up. The Directors and editor have started a program to contact potential authors, but meanwhile, your notes on rare birds and similar subjects are welcome. Please contact friends who have things that should be recorded, reviews of a species, etc. This is the best place to get these observations recorded for the future.

If in doubt, contact the editor. He can also provide instructions on format. His contact points are given near the front of this newsletter and in the membership directory.

#### Book reviews

If you would like to review books that come in to the journal, please let the editor know the topics that interest you. Sometimes we also get recordings. You get to keep the book or CD.

The journal could also make use of black and white drawings or photos to liven up the cover and pages.

**John Sprague**, editor vol. 13+

### **Request for digital images of BC Birds**

Do you have a good digital image of a BC Bird? The BCFO is encouraging members to submit digital photographs that can be used on our website. We can't compensate you for the use of your image but we will acknowledge the photographer. We can also reduce the resolution of your digital photo to discourage people from copying it off of our website. Please submit your image, along with a suggested caption, the image date, & location to

[andy.stewart@shaw.ca](mailto:andy.stewart@shaw.ca)

### **Internet Sources**

#### **BCFO**

<http://www.bcfo.ca>

#### **Alaska Bird Observatory**

<http://www.alaskabird.org/>

#### **Bird Studies Canada / Long Point Bird Observatory**

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/bscmain.html>

#### **Birding in British Columbia**

General interest information including bulletin board, checklists, rare bird alerts, book reviews, etc.

<http://www.birding.bc.ca/>

#### **BIRDNET**

Site of the Ornithological Council.  
<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/>

#### **Bird Source**

Audobon's and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's interactive bird information site, featuring "eBird"

<http://www.birdsource.com/>

#### **Patuxent Wildlife Research Center**

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/birds/>

#### **Point Reyes Bird Observatory**

<http://www.prbo.org/cms/index.php>

#### **The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, Seventh Edition**

<http://www.aou.org/aou/birdlist.html>

#### **The Condor**

Online editions from 1899-2000. All articles available as DjVu's and PDF's.

<http://elibrary.unm.edu/condor/>

#### **The Wilson Bulletin**

Online editions from 1899-1999. All articles available as DjVu's and PDF's.

<http://elibrary.unm.edu/wilson/>





## Editor's Notes and Notions

I start off this column with an apology. Last week I cut off Andy Stepniewski's biographical sketch. I have included the complete version in this issue. If you're looking for an article by Andy in this issue you won't find it, but look no further than the last issue and issues preceding it for more details of birds in different areas of BC from his 2002 trip.

Mr. Alex Beer of CanWest Global, who own the Canadian rights to London's *The Spectator*, has kindly granted *BC Birding* permission to continue to use *The Spectator* cartoons through 2005. While this is not an ornithological publication (<http://www.spectator.co.uk/>) it covers a broad range of subjects and may be the greatest magazine in the English language. I will choose ornithologically-oriented cartoons (anything with a bird!) and others which may only have some vague or obtuse association with birds and birders. Hopefully they will appeal to the readers of *BC Birding*.

The BCFO is fortunate that Wayne Weber has volunteered to resume *Bird-lister's Corner*. Wayne held this position for BCFO in the past and looks forward to once again fulfilling this important position. You will find a form with this mail-out for completion by any BCFO member interested in the formal and friendly-competitive listing of their observations. Wayne's discussion of his proposed listing methodology is presented on page 9.

In this issue we have the first *President's Corner* from our new official President, Sandra Kinsey of Prince George, and also Sandra's report on the Future Directions Workshop held in Naramata in October; a *Director's Corner* from Tony Greenfield, who also provides information on his new position as Field Trip Coordinator; Martin McNicholl's listings of upcoming meetings and events and news briefs; an interesting article by Janice Arndt on the nesting behaviour of Cassin's Vireo which

begins this newsletter; Bryan Gate's summary of the BCFO extension trip after the Tumbler Ridge AGM, which I neglected to include in the September issue (see that issue for the species' list); June Ryder's introduction to the geology of the Peace area (an interesting companion piece to the extension trip); a report on BCFO's annual pelagic trip by Bryan Gates; and an accompanying species list compiled by Jo Ann MacKenzie; two new interesting installations of Gary Davidson's ornithological adventures way down under; and a compilation of Christmas Bird Count dates and contacts completed by Marilyn and Andy Buhler (with contributions from many BCFO members). Thanks to all of you.

One item I haven't seen for some time in this publication is a *Site Guide* to interesting birding areas in the province. Marilyn and Andy Buhler published quite a number of site guides during their tenure as Editors, but surely there are other interesting birding areas that members would like to share. Please contact me if you would like to produce a *Site Guide* for a future edition.

Winter is upon us and so to is the season of Christmas Bird Counts. I look forward to exploring a section of the Langley area (for the White Rock count circle), and accompanying Glenn Ryder on his route up Sumas Mountain. This is especially rewarding as it is conducted entirely on foot and in an isolated area with interesting potential finds. It's always a pleasure accompanying Glenn because he knows the area and its native denizens better than anyone, and he has an unfailingly generous, principled, and selfless naturalist heart.

For those packing a Thermos to warm and invigorate the birding spirit, I'm wondering just what it is you put in them. On the Langley route I haven't bothered with a Thermos the last couple of years because of our proximity to coffee shops. However, I have to pack

lunch and refreshments up Sumas or on other winter outings and usually end up filling a Thermos with coffee and a shot of milk. I have no particular rules and often try different tea concoctions such as green tea, Chai Tea (with milk) and other herbal teas in pursuit of that perfect cold weather drink. I have a few bags of Coca tea from Peru that I used to take in the afternoon as an alternative to coffee. I have been saving them for something. Perhaps CBC's are that something. It might be just the solution to fatigue from a day of traipsing through the bush in the wet and cold. I could "bird" the whole day and night then jog home afterwards.

I have been giving serious thought to a hot version of my Father-in-Law's wonderful and potent Jamaican sorrel concoction, usually consumed at Christmas with ice in the warmth of a home. A hot version may be well-suited to the rigours of the trail, and to a break beneath the drooping branches of a huge Western Redcedar. I will report to you the results of my choices and my objective assessment of their merits.

How about you? What are your favourite liquid refreshments on a cold winter outing? Please let me know and I will publish your ideas. This may seem trifling but it isn't. To fully appreciate the natural environment and all of its creatures, one must be comfortable; one must not be distracted by cold and misery. I'm thinking that such a list may be the first step in producing a new Government RISC document (Resource Inventory Standards Committee: <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/risc/standards.htm>): *Standard Liquids for Consumption During Cold Weather Sampling* (Henderson 2005). (I'd give everyone full credit and happily conduct field trials. I will seek Government funding immediately.)

Stay warm. Good birding. Merry Christmas.

**Phil Henderson**, Editor



## Director's Corner

The directors held a conference call on September 7, 2004. It was reported that BCFO membership is 260, the highest on record. It was agreed to hold a Visioning Retreat at Naramata on October 16th and 17th with all BCFO members encouraged to attend. Krista de Groot continues as the BCFO Librarian. The proposed BCFO Barn Owl Project, spearheaded by Andy Stewart, has received \$4800 from the Conservation Assistance Fund. Other funding sources are being searched.

A board meeting was held on October 17th at Naramata, the day after the visioning retreat.

At that meeting it was decided that the 2005 BCFO AGM would be held on eastern Vancouver Island (subject to input from local organisers)

in late August. The August date is partly to accommodate students and the fieldwork commitments of professional field ornithologists in the June period. August is also a preferred month for shorebirds and pelagic birds on the West Coast. A proposed Extension trip after the AGM would be to the Pacific Rim National Park area, and would include an offshore pelagic boat trip.

The board agreed to work toward a 2006 AGM in the Okanagan in late June or early July 2006.

It was decided that the BCFO investigate a field trip to the Queen Charlotte Islands.

It was decided that members be offered the option of receiving *BC Birding* electronically, while maintaining

the paper version. BCFO has moved our website to our own domain [www.bcfo.ca](http://www.bcfo.ca) at a cost of *ca.* \$200 p/a and Kevin Slagboom will continue as webmaster. There are plans to post PDF versions of past *BC Birds* on the website.

Funding requests were approved for \$1,000 for a hummingbird monitoring project by Cam Finlay, and for \$500 for Amelie Rousseau's migration monitoring and banding project on the Sunshine Coast. Both require a report suitable for the journal.

Wayne Weber has volunteered to supersede Ken Morgan as compiler of *Bird Listers' Corner*. Wayne will also serve on a 3-member Awards Committee to be established shortly.

**Tony Greenfield**, Director

## Field Trips

At the BCFO Future Directions Workshop in Naramata on October 16, 2004 one major area of debate was the place of field trips in the services offered to members. It goes without saying that field trips are important to birders. Over the years BCFO has 1) organised a slate of field trips around the AGM, 2) run 3-day extensions after the AGM, 3) organised pelagic tours and 4) organized owling trips. These offerings have received enthusiastic support from members. The deliberations at the Future Directions Workshop indicated that there was potential for BCFO to expand its field trip offerings, with benefit to both the membership and to the strength (including financial) of BCFO.

The following points were raised :

- More field trips could attract and encourage new members.
  - Could be species oriented as in past
  - Or weekend in an area such as
- Vancouver Island, the Okanagan, the North
  - Would need a field trip coordinator
  - Proposed we do field trips in the coming year as a start in the right direction
  - A possible model might be to involve a local club to organise the weekend
  - We could ask for a request for proposals from members who have tour companies to organise trips for our members
  - Pelagic trips could be held more often, either back-to-back (Saturday-Sunday) or on separate weekends
  - Could consider other ports such as Tofino, Ucluelet or Bamfield
  - There is an interest in doing further pelagics and field trips with other organisations
  - Liability a concern. We have delegated this to boat operators for

pelagic trips; AGM trips are covered on an individual basis.

Subsequent to the discussion, Director Tony Greenfield volunteered to act as Field Trip Coordinator. As the coordinator, Tony is now requesting input from members as to destinations of interest. Possibilities include the Okanagan in May, Sunshine Coast in winter (for rocky shorebirds), Chilliwack, Lillooet in spring, Comox in winter, Snowy Owls in Delta, Hoary Redpolls in Dease Lake, etc.

Tony is already investigating a long proposed tour to the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Please contact Tony with your ideas at [greenfieldtony@hotmail.com](mailto:greenfieldtony@hotmail.com) or 604-885-5539.

**Tony Greenfield**, Field Trip Coordinator



## Membership Notes

1. Address mailing labels will now have your membership expiry date printed on them as follows EXP: Dec 2005
2. Membership is based on a calendar year and expires in December.
3. The March issue of BC Birding will be sent to members who have not renewed but their name will be removed before the June issue if they have not renewed.
4. New members who join after October will have their membership expire the following December (ie. the membership is for 15 months).
5. There is a time lag between when your cheque for renewal is received

in Victoria and when I receive that information in Nelson, so there may be times when your expiry date is incorrect. This is mostly true if your cheque is sent just prior to a mailout.

6. Three renewal notices are sent out - the first with the September issue, the second with the December and the third with the March issue.

7. Please feel free to contact me either by phone (250-354-1685) or email (rwege@telus.net) if you have any concerns or questions regarding your membership. I'd be happy to answer!

*Rita Wege*

## BCFO New Members since June 2004

John Cartwright  
James Clowater  
Charles Helm  
Ted Hillary  
Leslie Anne Johnston  
Steve Knight  
Jason Osterhold  
Patricia Perkins  
Roger M. Simms

## Bird Sightings

Interesting bird sightings can be sent to following sub-regional editors who will compile and submit the information to Don Cecile (dcecile@telus.net) for his interesting *BC Bird Sightings* column in this publication.

Jack Bowling	Prince George area	jbinpg@shaw.ca
Gary Davidson	Kootenays	gsd37@telus.net
Adrian Dorst	Tofino-Ucluelet	adorst@island.net
Phil Ranson	Cariboo	philr@pacificcoast.net
Guy Monty	central Vancouver Island	glmonty@poecile.com
Mark Phinney	Peace R. area	badgreenbird@pris.bc.ca

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

### Re.: "Bird Listers' Corner"

Ken, I want to thank you for the dedicated job that you did with this difficult part of the BCFO system. I never questioned your "no phone-in" policy; it was never an issue. I have to agree with you that, to allow phone-in reports plays into the hands of the tardy reporters and it is you who are inconvenienced, not the caller. Those who do not want to play by the rules can always opt out of the system, but that is too easy. Maybe one of the objectors will take over and experience first hand the difficulty of pleasing one and all. I appreciate the learning curve that you experienced as I am not sure I would want to have a similar experience!

Best wishes in your future endeavours.

*Laurie Rockwell*



## Summary of Future Directions Workshop

Saturday, October 16, 2004

Naramata, BC

Is the BC Field Ornithologists going in the right direction? This workshop decided we were.

Glen Moores had suggested three topics be discussed when he proposed this meeting, arising out of a survey of attendees of the 2003 AGM in Radium Hot Springs:

1. Honoraria/Grants
2. Journal
3. Conference

The participants of today's workshop added seven more topics:

4. General BCFO activities
5. Scientific meeting
6. Newsletter
7. Field Trips/Pelagic Trips
8. Annual Award
9. Proposed activities
10. Bird Records

Under Ian Robertson's able guidance, discussions started out with current activities. The newsletter is the best product members get from our organization. It is well done and has room for evolution. The two field trips per year have been popular. Tony has written up an article with more details on field trips. Look for it elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Annual Conferences have been going well. In the past we have been fortunate to have Ev Miyasaki and Hank Vanderpol keen and skilled to organize the conferences. Discussion ensued on the 2005 conference: where, when, coordinator, letting members know as soon as possible.

We could coordinate other meetings and conferences in partnership with other groups, perhaps on specific topics like Species at Risk or specific habitats under threat. We could host a scientific meeting during the winter

with workshops but no field trips and not every year. We could help out with the Young Naturalists.

The BCFO is in the wonderful position of having enough money to give modest grants and honoraria. However, we need to develop our guidelines further, and make a more structured system. We'll publicize. How do we calculate how much we have to offer each year? We want the focus on field ornithology rather than habitat. Recipients of grants should be members and there should be some contribution to the journal or the newsletter.

The journal has suffered delays. Getting articles is a challenge. One participant promised to submit an article early in the new year. A journal promotion meeting is planned. A number of libraries are interested in our journal if it is on the Internet; a workshop participant volunteered to convert previous journals into PDF files for posting on the BCFO website.

Proposed activities suggested for the future could be a Breeding Bird Atlas for all of BC, perhaps in cooperation with other organizations; and a bird-finding guide for BC.

Workshop participants were reminded of a special resolution passed at an Annual Conference directing the board to create a BCFO achievement award. The board has discussed this in ensuing years. The award would not necessarily go to a BCFO member. A workshop participant volunteered to find at least three members for an award committee.

I'm sure many of you are eager to find out the results of the discussions

on bird records. Well, there's nothing really to report. The workshop was not long enough to delve into this topic today.

In summary, all these new tasks need manpower; and we'll need to make a priority list. There's something for everyone to get involved in. The workshop was deemed successful. The membership will be given more notice next time.

*Sandra Kinsey*





## BIRD LISTER'S CORNER

After learning of Ken Morgan's resignation as BCFO Listing Editor, I volunteered to take over these duties. Ken, your eight years of service in compiling the listing statistics and in preparing the annual summary of listing totals are greatly appreciated. Not all BCFO members keep lists of species seen for various areas, and of those who do, not all of us want to make those totals public. However, for those of us who do, it's fun to compare lists with others, and to see who has the leading lists for various areas. The publication of listing totals in *BC Birding* continues to have the support of the BCFO Directors, and I will be happy to carry on this tradition.

At the same time, I am making some changes in the list of areas for which lists may be submitted. Over the last few years, Ken has added categories for World lists, ABA (American Birding Association) Area lists, Alberta lists, Washington State lists, and North Pacific Pelagic Waters lists. We are retaining all these categories. However, Ken dropped listing categories for National and Provincial Parks. I am reviving these categories, and we will see how much interest there is in reporting lists for these areas.

The majority viewpoint seems to be that Crested Mynas should be countable — never mind what the American Birding Association says — and they may be counted on any lists submitted here.

My philosophy on listing totals is perhaps a bit different from Ken's. In general, for local checklist areas, I do not see the point of publishing totals of less than 50% of the species known from the area. In many such areas, it is possible to find 50% of the known species, or close to that number, in a single day, and the effort involved in reaching 50% is not great. However, I would like to include many more areas than the 17 areas for which totals could be submitted last year. If possible, I would like to include any area for which even one person has a significant list to submit. However, this may be subject to space restrictions in *BC Birding*, and the

policies of "Bird-Listers' Corner" will be subject to continuing discussions among the Listing Editor, Newsletter Editor, and the BCFO Directors.

Feedback is most welcome. If you have any comments, criticisms, suggestions, etc., please send them to me at [contopus@telus.net](mailto:contopus@telus.net), or at 51-6712 Baker Road, Delta, BC V4E 2V3. I will try to be responsive to members' wishes, and you can expect some changes in listing areas, and in listing thresholds, in the future.

**Wayne C. Weber**, Listing Editor



## Upcoming Meetings and Events

Compiled by *Martin K. McNicholl*

- Jan. 19-23 2005 WATERBIRD SOCIETY & PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP JOINT MEETING, Portland, OR.  
Contact: Katie O'Reilly, Dept. Biol., Univ. Portland, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd., Portland, OR 97203, U.S.A.; phone (503) 943-7146; e-mail oreilly@up.edu.
- Feb. 22-25 2005 SOCIETY FOR NORTHWESTERN VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY ANNUAL MEETING WITH OREGON CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY, Corvallis, OR. No mail or phone contact details announced; webpage: [www.snvb.org.snvb05meet.html](http://www.snvb.org.snvb05meet.html).
- May 12-15 2005 FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, SALMON ARM, B.C. Contact information not yet announced, but program outlined in B.C. Nat. 42(3):33, 2004.
- 2005 123<sup>RD</sup> STATED MEETING OF AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, Univ. of California-Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, Calif. Dates & contact details not yet announced.
- 2005 SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGY ANNUAL MEETING, Halifax, N.S. Dates & contact information details not yet announced.
- March? 2006 SOCIETY FOR NORTHWESTERN VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY ANNUAL MEETING, Olympia, Wash. Dates, exact location & contact details not yet announced.
- Aug. 13-19 2006 24<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS, Hamburg, Germany. Contact: IOC 2006, Institute of Avian Research, An der Vogelwarte 21, 26386, Wilhelmshaven, Germany.
- Oct. 2006 4<sup>TH</sup> NORTH AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS, Veracruz, Mexico. Exact dates & contact details not yet announced.



*From The Spectator, London; Courtesy CanWest News Service.*



## B.C. Birding News Briefs

Compiled by *Martin K. McNicholl*

**Bird Name Correction** -The sharp eyes of *Discovery* editor Marian Coope caught a spelling error in the genus name of Spoon-billed (formerly Spoonbill) Sandpiper in my report of the latest American Ornithologists' Union check-list supplement *B.C. Birding* 14(3):11, 2004. The name is *Eurynorhynchus* not *Eurynorthynchus*. The error was a typo of mine, not the A.O.U. Check-list Committee's.

**New Lower Mainland Checklists** -The Vancouver Natural History Society has published a new seasonal checklist of 399 bird species documented to July 2004 as having occurred in Vancouver and surrounding areas, with an additional list of 18 species that have been reported there, but not yet verified. Published at the same time was an updated seasonal checklist of the birds of one of the best birding sites in the lower mainland - Iona Island, where 316 species are considered as having been documented. Both lists were compiled by Rick Toochin and are available from VNHS at Box 3021, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3X5 or purchased at birders' nights, the Reifel Bird Sanctuary Giftshop or Wild Birds Unlimited in Vancouver and North Vancouver.

**Wildlife Afield** -The newest journal covering wildlife in B.C. is *Wildlife Afield*, launched in October 2004 (dated January-June 2004). Most of the contents of the first issue are ornithological, with a feature paper on Barn Owl food habits by Linda M. Van Damme and Mark Nyhof, notes on breeding records of Upland Sandpiper by R. Wayne Campbell and Dusky Flycatcher by Doug Brown, a distribution note on Rock Wrens by Editor Michael I. Preston, a note by R. Wayne Campbell on the unsuccessful introduction of California Quails to the Queen Charlotte Islands, five biographical notes and several other features. Membership details are available from the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, Box 6218, Vancouver, B.C. V8P 5L5.

**Cowan Profiled** -The latest in the biographical profile series published in *Discovery* 33(1):10-15, 2004 is Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, co-author of two treatises on the birds of British Columbia, author of numerous publications on birds and other wildlife in Alberta and B.C., supervisor of many ecologically-oriented graduate students and well deserved recipient of several awards.



that nests of Cassin's Vireo are not easily found by birders, despite the relative commonness of the species in appropriate habitat types; for example, no nests were reported to the BC Nest Records Scheme in 2003 (Campbell *et al.* 2004).

Whatever the reason for the information gaps, when I discovered a nest near my home last spring, I saw an opportunity to learn something about Cassin's Vireos. The nest I found was fairly low and very poorly concealed, making viewing easy. When I first located the nest on May 31 an adult was incubating four vireo eggs. On June 2 there were two adult vireos in the area, which I assumed were the adult male and female. The male sang overhead while the female incubated, but after several minutes the male arrived at the nest and assumed the role of incubating.

According to the BNA account, the fact that both parents incubate the eggs was already established for Cassin's Vireo. However, details on parental care of young apparently were not published as of 2002. BNA reported that "no information" was available on either brooding or feeding of young by this species, but states that "in closely related Plumbeous and Blue-headed vireos [each formerly lumped with Cassin's as Solitary Vireo], both parents feed young." In other words, although it was assumed that Cassin's Vireo behaves similarly to other vireos, whether or not both the male and female contribute to brooding and feeding young was not yet confirmed.

On June 3 the nest contained one egg and three newly-hatched chicks. An adult was brooding the nestlings when I first arrived to watch the nest, and soon a second adult showed up with an insect to feed to the young. The second adult then settled down into the nest. Fifteen minutes later the first

adult re-appeared, fed a chick, and resumed brooding. My conclusions based on these observations: both male and female Cassin's Vireos are involved in parental care following hatching and each contributes to brooding and feeding the young. I continued to watch the nest throughout the rearing period until the four young reached fledging age and left the nest on June 16.

Now, I doubt that my observations will ever be quoted in the literature. This was not a rigorous study involving a large data set or colour-banded individuals. But it is gratifying to observe a species which has not

received a great deal of attention, and to gain, first-hand, knowledge which can't be found in the literature.

### Janice Arndt

Campbell, R.W., M.I. Preston and L.M. Van Damme. 2004. British Columbia Nest Record Scheme 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Report - 2003 Nesting Season. Centre for Wildlife Studies Report No. 2.

Goguen, C.B. and D.R. Curson. 2002. Cassin's Vireo (*Vireo cassinii*). In *The Birds of North America*, no. 615 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc.



"Oh look, a woodcutter's cottage."

*From The Spectator, London; Courtesy CanWest News Service.*







Dannie Carlsen

## BCFO Extension 2004 - Moberly Lake, B.C.

This year's BCFO's Annual Conference and Extension were both held within a transition zone habitat. Perhaps this was more by chance than design, but Tumbler Ridge and Moberly Lake both lie exactly on the boundary between the Sub-Boreal Interior Ecoprovince to the west and the Boreal Plains Ecoprovince to the east. More specifically, we were exploring the eastern foothills of the Central Rocky Mountains and the western extreme of the Alberta Plateau (Campbell *et al.*, Birds of British Columbia, Vol. I, 1990). To most of us, though, it was simply the semi-wilderness of the south Peace region.

Arctic air settles here in winter, but relatively mild and dry air flows over the Rockies in summer. We were in luck; very warm air throughout the first two days of the extension, and cooling, intermittent showers and sunshine for the latter two days. Aspen parklands dominate, with white spruce developing in well-drained mature forests, and black spruce in wet bogs. The bird life is diverse, interesting and "eastern".

Here is a summary of the Extension:

**DAY 1** - Sunday, June 27: Afternoon arrival at Camp Emile on the north shore of Moberly Lake in two groups. Stops between Tumbler Ridge and Chetwynd failed to produce Trumpeter Swans reported south of Chetwynd a few days earlier, but for one vehicle at least, a magnificent Gray Wolf edging out onto the roadside more than made up for that miss. Copious snacks upon arrival at camp, followed just hours later — and after a refreshing swim in the lake — by a big dinner catered by Val, Kim and Kayla of Simply Perfect Catering of Chetwynd. They heard the realities of how birders invariably fail to meet set meal times. They understood. Great cooperation!

Eastern Phoebes nesting at the entrance to the camp's church and Violet-green Swallows in the dormitory eaves. An evening stroll along the lake fringe for nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and good looks at Lincoln's Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows and American Redstarts. Our only Bonaparte's Gulls, our first Bald Eagle and a surprise Osprey were distant images out over the lake.

It was perhaps best that we had planned only two nights at Camp Emile. Dormitory sleeping arrangements, a shower with only hot-hot water (an engineer must have done the plumbing), and mattresses with more plastic coating than springs could lead to sleep deprivation. But the food? Excellent!

**DAY 2** - Monday June 28: Daylight comes early in a northern June. By 03:30, Common Loon and White-throated Sparrow calling. By 05:00, breakfast. We eyed thunderclouds moving in from the southeast. Moberly Lake Provincial Park our early morning destination. Where the Moberly River leaves the lake (east end), Northern Waterthrushes and Magnolia Warblers sang, and Cedar Waxwings fed. A female Common Goldeneye with downy young, American Wigeons, Mallards and a Belted Kingfisher were on the lake. The plight of butterflies became all too clear. Obviously there were large numbers of butterflies in the Peace this year. Thus, large numbers of road-killed butterflies. Accumulated along a concrete barrier at the bridge





were dozens of dead Western Tiger Swallowtails and other species. How many butterflies are killed by traffic in North America each year?

Gray Jay, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo found along the road to the park, but a stakeout Bay-breasted Warbler was silent. In the park, we ducked under spruces and poplars to keep dry, but finally had good looks at Black-throated Green, Tennessee and Yellow-rumped warblers, Warbling Vireos and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. A Common Merganser over the lake, and American Crows dwarfed by the Common Raven they were harassing on the sandy beach.

Maps show Boucher Lake with road access and marshland nearby, about 20 km north of Moberly Lake. So we decided to explore it....three times we tried this day...but good birding, a mock pygmy owl whistle, and a very bad road stymied us. Our first try, as skies cleared in the morning, turned up an immaculate male Northern Harrier, Savannah and Clay-colored sparrows on fence posts, Tree and Barn swallows, Black-billed Magpie, Common Yellowthroat and Alder Flycatcher. A bedraggled passerine, purportedly drowned in a roadside water trough (do we trust Ron on this?), made for a

good ID challenge - Lincoln's Sparrow! Lunch and a snooze at the camp, then our second try for Boucher - this time into more mature mixed spruce, cottonwood and aspen forests, some clearcuts. Dense undergrowth in places suggested good Canada Warbler habitat, but no response to tapes. American Kestrels, a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers and a Black-and-white Warbler (heard) were added, as were Pine Siskins. Some heard a distant Barred Owl responding to vocal imitations...or was it a cow? The pygmy owl "saxophone" brought in a mob of Red-breasted Nuthatches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, a pair of Western Tanagers, Magnolia Warbler and more Gray Jays, a juvenile of which almost took the instrument out of the musician's mouth. An agitated robin, heard through the car window ("...always keep your window open..."), prompted a stop on the way back down. A large raptor took off through trees, unidentified. Great luck! It soared briefly over the road, some tail and wing feathers missing. Confusing at first, but Northern Goshawk was the consensus.

Back to camp - excellent chicken dinner. Then seven stalwarts set out for Boucher once again...this time with owls in mind. Habitat looked good for Great Gray and possibly Boreal owls, but Ovenbird, Hermit Thrush, and our

only Common Nighthawks were the most we could dig up. In bed before midnight.

**DAY 3** - Tuesday, June 28: Del Rio, the flat, wet, lowland lying between the Pine River and the Moberly River southeast of Fort St. John was next. Access is difficult at any time; downright nasty after a rain. We set out for Del Rio both after and during a rain! Smart! Top three inches of road surface were that slippery, sticky, gooey, oozing gumbo for which the Peace is famous. (See June Ryder's geological summary attached). Mark Phinney led the way. Driving was dicey even in the three 4X4s that we had; more than dicey in the 2-wheel drive van. Who has ever seen a front-wheel drive vehicle struggling along while the rear wheels are not turning...skidding like a sleigh...gumbo packed into the wheel wells so tightly that the wheels seized. Out with the shovel. All out to push.

#### Most Memorable Experiences?

*"Noticing that the left rear wheel well of the van...was completely full of mud."* Fran Gundry

*"Shoveling the mud from the wheel well in order to proceed."* Mike McGrenere

But it was worth it. A young bull moose watched the lead vehicles, then slipped into the scrub forest. Two elk ran ahead of us for a while. We stopped beside a huge marsh - the highlight of the Extension. Out of the vehicles and into the boot-sucking mud, adding half a kilo to our weight with each step. Mark pointed out a prime Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow singing from a low shrub...a life bird for many. Then Mark's slogging led to prolonged, scope looks at LeConte's Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow...more life 'ticks'. Also here, Fox Sparrow, Wilson's Snipe, Black Tern, Black-and-white Warbler and Brown-headed Cowbird. Slog on to another section of the same bog. Mark heard a diagnostic "tick-tick-tat-tick" ahead and invited everyone willing to wash the mud off their boots...and knees...to



Dannie Carsen

June Ryder and Mark Phinney assess the mud situation.



follow him. Those who did were rewarded, not with a sighting, but with a close and confirming “hearing” of a Yellow Rail, perhaps as close as 3 metres from our wet feet. But no one saw it.

*“Plunging through the swamp and hearing the Yellow Rail very close; and at the same time listening to all the other birds.”* Peter Blokker

*“Slogging through the marsh to hear the Yellow Rail; and the LeConte’s experience.”* Nettie Overhoff

*“Wading through the marsh to hear the “tick-tick” of the Yellow Rail.”* June Ryder

*“I plan on getting a refund for my new hiking boots...would you believe they leak, and the water was only a foot deep!”* Lloyd Esralson

More slipping’ and slidin’ in the vehicles before reaching another marsh, this one harbouring drowned and decadent trees. A Olive-sided Flycatcher’s “quick, THREE beers”; Solitary Sandpipers flying in; a troop of Common Grackles a pleasant surprise; Baltimore Orioles chasing a Red-tail; and our target Rusty Blackbird represented by a single fledgling. Also here, House Wren, Bufflehead, Northern Waterthrush and Sora.

*“Watching the incredible activity in the last marsh at Del Rio. Best of all were the exquisite waterthrushes that tilted their tails in unison as we left.”* Dannie Carsen

The sun shone and the road dried a bit...but just a bit. The exit from Del Rio would be marginally easier. One more stop, though...to search for a nesting pair of Broad-winged Hawks found just 2 days earlier by Laird Law and Sandra Kinsey. Into the mature aspen/cottonwood we streamed, to see an adult flying over, and a nest. But this looked like an old nest...no activity. Humming and hawing as everyone wandered around looking up. “I’ve got it...it’s over here.” Sure enough, the new, active nest was found, with an adult incubating. Any Broad-winged Hawk seen in BC is noteworthy; an active nest is worth a publication. This was a BC first for almost everyone.

*“The Broad-winged Hawk pair, flying and on the nest.”* Kris Andrews

A final lunch at Camp Emile and a convoy through Hudson Hope, across the Peace River at the Peace Canyon (Site One) Dam and east down the wide valley. Realization that the magnificence we were driving through could some day be under water; the “on-the-shelf” Site C dam near Fort St. John would flood this part of the Peace. A “tradition” that began in the Blaeberry Valley at last year’s Extension continued. At a stop high above the river, June Ryder explained and pointed out the geological history of the Peace River region and eastern foothills. (See following article.)

Still missing the expected water birds. A stop at DU’s Watson Marsh east of Fort St. John helped: American Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, Ruddy Duck and Blue-winged Teal. American Kestrels in nest box. Soft beds, warm showers and a big buffet dinner at Fort St. John should have ended our day, but nine of us wanted to add a Ruby-throated Hummingbird to our BC list. Other BCFO members had signed in at the Bergh residence in Taylor as “successful”. But a mess of Calliope hummers was the best we could do.

*“The beautiful scenery by Tumbler Ridge, the Del Rio marshes and all the birds I have seen.”* Dieter Overhoff

**DAY 4 - Wednesday, June 30:** One car wash with a lot of Del Rio mud clogging its drains early this morning. A continental breakfast and off to Beatton Provincial Park on nearby Charlie Lake. Hard work in a light breeze, but found Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Yellow Warbler on an eye-level nest, Least Flycatcher, more Ovenbirds, and Western Wood-Pewees. Hard finds were Blue-headed Vireo and a very difficult Black-and-white Warbler. Through the playing field and up the path leading to a mature spruce stand: Purple Finch, Hermit Thrush, a singing Tennessee Warbler filling the scope, a family of American Three-toed Woodpeckers (note the name change) and Western

Tanagers. Cape-May and Bay-breasted warblers here earlier were heard briefly by Jack Bowling’s directional microphone, but were unresponsive to tapes.

*“Seeing that Yellow Warbler on her nest.”* Karin Arkinstall

Lunch at the lakeside - perfect way to end our trip. Thirty or so male White-winged Scoters were back from their nesting potholes, as were a few scaups (species?). Barrow’s Goldeneye, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, California Gull and our only Blue Jay were also here.

Back to the hotel to pack and go our separate ways. A very enjoyable birding experience, with 18 fine people tallying 120 species of birds, 9 species of mammals, and adding another dollop of knowledge about our exceptional province. The best bird? Mixed opinions on this one: Yellow Rail, Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow, LeConte’s Sparrow, and Broad-winged Hawk. You choose.

*“Surviving the gumbo at Del Rio.”* John Whittaker

Special thanks to Dannie Carsen, Sandra Kinsey, Mark Phinney and Tony Greenfield for planning the Extension. To Jack Bowling for driving a vehicle and for taking the lead with his “big-ears” microphone and keen knowledge of the region. To Dannie Carsen and Bryan Gates for driving. To Val, Kim and Kayla for the food. To Ron Walker (the Plumber’s Helper) for adjusting the thermostat. And to all who participated, searched, listened, pointed out, shared, cheered...and snored. And didn’t complain a bit.

*“Observing the excitement generated by a lifer.”* Bob Morford

*“Early morning with bird songs all around, beautiful flowers and grasses and trees - the whole nature experience.”* Lesley Robertson

*“The fact that we can explore this province, get ourselves into trouble, and laugh about it.”*

**Bryan Gates**





## Down to Basics . . . Geology of the Peace

From the roadside (Hwy 29) viewpoint on a hill a few kilometres northeast of Hudson Hope, we could see all the chief features of the physical landscape of the Peace River valley. We were within the Great Plains physiographic region (here known as the Alberta Plateau), but to the SW, up the Peace River valley, we could see the hilly terrain of the Rocky Mountain Foothills. (Moberly Lake is on the boundary (transition zone) between the Foothills and the Plains.) The Peace River and its tributaries are deeply entrenched into the Alberta Plateau. From our viewpoint, the Alberta Plateau was visible as the level skyline above the steep sideslopes of the Peace River valley. (Of course, we had become very familiar with the plateau the day before when we drove to the Del Rio area.) In some places at lower levels, we could see black Cretaceous shales exposed in cuts close to river level. (These are mined for coal in Alberta.) These shales consist of fine-grained sediments laid down in a shallow body of water that covered much of the Great Plains about 70 million years ago.

Thick, cream-coloured materials that lie on top of and contrast sharply with the dark shale were visible in many steep riverbanks and road cuts. These are sediments (not yet rocks) deposited during the great glaciations of the past 2 million years. Most of them likely date from the most recent ice age, about 25 000 to 12 000 years ago. During this interval, the vast Laurentide Ice Sheet (which covered northeastern and north central North America) expanded into the Peace area from the east, while the Cordilleran Ice Sheet (which extended from the Rocky Mountain Foothills to the Pacific Ocean) expanded into this area from the west. The two ice masses probably coalesced for much of the above time interval, although the actual boundary between them shifted back and forth, much as football scrimmages

move up and down the field. The sites of Fort St. John and Dawson Creek, for example, were covered by southwestward-flowing Laurentide Ice, while Cordilleran Ice flowed eastward across the RM Foothills (including Tumbler Ridge) and down the Peace River valley as far as Hudson Hope. Glacial till (a compact mixture of sand, silt, clay and gravel) accumulated beneath the ice sheets, in many places resting on top of older glacial materials.

Toward the end of the last glaciation, as the ice began to melt, a gap between the two ice sheets opened up along the eastern side of the Foothills. But downstream (eastward) drainage through the Peace lowland was still blocked by the receding Laurentide ice, resulting in the formation of a large glacial (ice-dammed) lake. (Coincidentally, this first ice dam was located very close to the location of the present day WAC Bennett Dam.) As the Laurentide Ice Sheet continued to shrink, the ice-edge melted back eastward, and so the ice dam migrated eastward and Glacial Lake Peace expanded into the Great Plains. Glacier-fed streams flowing into the lake carried large quantities of sand, silt and clay (glacier flour), which settled onto the lake floor. At one stage, the plateau surface in the Del Rio area was flooded by Glacial Lake Peace. (Clayey glacial lake sediments are likely responsible for the gumbo that we got to know so well.) By the time the ice dam melted, fine-grained sediments were more than 150 m thick in low-lying parts of the Peace area.

Since the end of the last glaciation, the Peace River and its major tributaries, such as the Pine and Beatton rivers, have cut down into the glacial sediments and, in places, into the underlying shales. This process formed the steep-sided canyons and trench-like valleys that now dissect this part of the Alberta Plateau.

Both shales and glacial sediments are inherently weak, especially when or where they are wet, and so landslides are common on the steep slopes above the rivers. We noticed several places where repairs to Highway 29 were necessary due to slope movement.

River terraces and alluvial flats formed by relatively recent river action are extensive at low levels within the Peace River trench. These support agriculture in areas that will be flooded if a dam is built at Site C. Completion of the Bennett Dam in 1967 has resulted in significant changes in the ecology of the large gravel bars downstream in the Peace River. Reduced flood levels have allowed deltas to form at the mouths of the larger tributaries, thereby locally raising the bed of the main river. At the same time, mid-channel bars have become colonized by denser and taller vegetation — willow, aspen, and in some cases, spruce and pine — because plant succession is no longer set back by flooding. Lower water levels have also resulted in an explosion of the bank beaver population because their lodges and young are less frequently destroyed by floods.

A frequently asked question: Is Tumbler Ridge (Mt Spieker, etc.) in the Rocky Mountains?

Tumbler Ridge (town) lies in the transition zone between the Rocky Mountain Foothills and the Alberta Plateau (which is part of the Great Plains). High points such as Mt. Spieker, Bullmoose and Quintette Mtns are part of the Foothills. From summits such as Mt Spieker, we could see the higher, snowy summits of the main ranges of the Rocky Mtns about 50 km to the SW, toward Monkman Park. The Foothills are generally lower than the Mountains, less rugged with flatter summits, and have less complex geological structures.

**June Ryder**



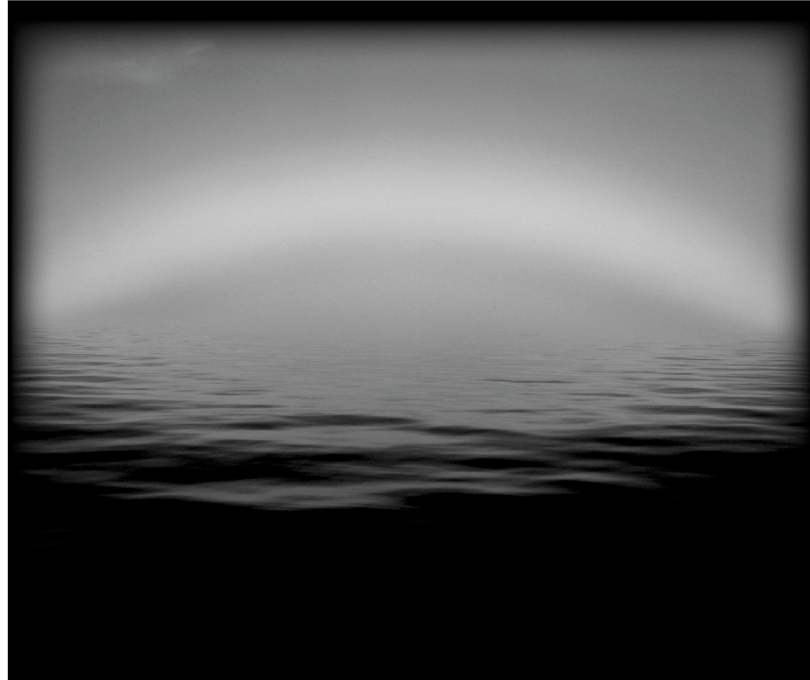
## Pelagic 2004 - Waves without Wind

For the fourth consecutive year, I was pleased to be able to organize a BCFO pelagic birding trip off the north end of Vancouver Island. The seabirds off our coast are always a big attraction, both to our members and to others alike.

Especially sought after are the foreign birds - those out of nests in the Southern Hemisphere. They enjoy our summer while their nesting islands are experiencing winter.

After a congenial night in Port McNeill on the northeast coast of Vancouver Island, thirty-two of us set off into the calm fog early on September 18, 2004, heading northwest toward the northern tip of the Island. The fog was no problem for Bill Mackay, skipper of Naiad Explorer. He had seen these conditions many times before. With his computerized navigation systems he could take us to our planned destination. But would the calm weather last? And what were the latent sea conditions out on the open water? Pelagic birding is always a gamble. The weather often wins. It occurs to me that there are two options: hop onboard the flat and steady platform of an "aircraft carrier", or try to ride out the rolling surf in a fast tour boat. We again chose the latter, if for no other reason than Canada has no aircraft carriers.

The fog lifted as we broke away from Hope Island into the open ocean. We had already recorded misty sightings of Sooty Shearwaters, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels and Red-necked Phalaropes, and had seen a few of the expected gulls and sea ducks. Also encountered early were Rhinoceros Auklets and three species of loons - Red-throated, Pacific and Common. Once clear of the last islets, the ocean rollers coming in from Japan caught us. Skipper Bill was determined, though, so we continued due west toward Triangle Island, the last outpost off northern Vancouver Island. Triangle is an internationally



Sandra Eadie

recognized seabird-nesting site, reserved for conservation.

Although the swells were 3 to 4 metres, the wind remained calm, so we were able to approach and search through flocks of birds resting and feeding on the surface. More Sooty Shearwaters - hundreds, in fact! Attempts to find a few Short-tailed Shearwaters among them failed. The two species are extremely difficult to separate unless in hand. Some of our group did see a passing Pink-footed Shearwater, a Buller's Shearwater, a Tufted Puffin and a Cassin's Auklet, but all of these expected birds were in conspicuously low numbers. Three Leach's Storm-Petrels were a good find, as were 4 Pomarine Jaegers. Surprising misses were Parasitic Jaeger and Northern Fulmar.

The weatherman was our downfall. Upon hearing the marine forecast calling for outflow winds to 30 knots, Captain Bill had to make a decision. We were already 16 nautical miles offshore, and the westerly swells continued. With the forecast easterly

outflow, we would be bucking the confusion of a gale colliding with the swells all the way back. We turned south, re-encountered the fog, and hugged the shoreline back to the east, picking up a few more gulls, alcids and our 3 cormorant species on the way. We made for the sheltered waters of Queen Charlotte Strait.

On this day, marine mammals were even more exciting to us than the seabirds. Close to shore, a lone Minke Whale surfaced twice, but as is typical of this 30-foot baleen species, it sounded, not to be seen again. Minkes move in odd directions underwater, and rarely remain at the surface for more than a breath or two. On the outer rocks of Hope Island was a large colony of Northern (Steller's) Sea Lions, noisy and piled on top of one another as usual.

From the bridge the Captain and I spotted an object on the water ahead. It looked somewhat like a Sea Otter. Just as we talked ourselves into calling it driftwood, it raised its head. "Sea Otter at 12 o'clock"! Most on board got to see





it, if only for a few seconds. Personally, I was thrilled. After being part of a government team that reintroduced Sea Otters to coastal British Columbia in 1972, this was my first sighting of a wild Sea Otter in the province. They are doing well. Perhaps 3000 now thrive along our rugged outside coast.

Once back inside among the islets protecting the strait, we enjoyed hot soup and sandwiches while recording small flocks of Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Surf and White-winged scoters, and Red-breasted and Hooded mergansers. Shorebirds seen included Black Oystercatcher and Sanderling. Later, in the fog, a misty flight of Black-bellied Plovers approached our boat - lost, and looking for a place to rest.

More marine mammals! Humpback whales put on a display of “fluking-up” as they made their “terminal dives”. And Bill had another surprise for us. In contact with the captain of the Port Hardy Pilot boat, Bill was advised to turn hard to port. A line of dark,

roiling water appeared. It was the wake of a massive pod of Pacific White-sided Dolphins. What a thrill! These sleek mammals streaked toward our boat as if it were magnetic. Leaping high around us and riding our bow and stern wakes, they stayed with us for about an hour. How many were there? Estimates ranged from 100 to 500. Adrift with our twin diesel engines shut down, our hydrophone picked up their high frequency squeals and ticks. For most of us, these “Lags”, as they are called (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*), were judged the “bird” of the day.

All vessels at sea are alert to anyone in difficulty. A Coast Guard message came through that a small boat was lost in the fog in our general area. We had lots of eyes to assist. As we birded back toward Port McNeill, we listened for responses to our ship’s horn. No heroes today. The fog thinned just long enough for the lost soul to see the Poultney Point Lighthouse. He

headed home, as did we.

We tallied our sightings back on shore. Fifty-two species of birds from dock to dock, some of which were seen by only a few individuals. Such is always the case. Sooty Shearwaters dominated, along with Common Murres and the scoters. And we saw 6 species of marine mammals, many of which were “lifers” for those among our group.

Mother Nature held us back from our Triangle Island destination, but the waters around the north end of Vancouver Island never fail to produce excitement and birding satisfaction.

Will we go again next year? That will depend on the decision by the Board of Directors on where and when the Annual Conference and Extension will be held. Stay tuned.

**Bryan R. Gates**



*clockwise: Pacific White-sided Dolphin's, Sandra Eadie, Dannie Carsen*





## BCFO Pelagic Trip Species List

September 18, 2004 / 08:00 to 17:00 hours

Sea swell and strong NE winds prevented reaching Triangle Island. Fog at start, then sun, then fog.

Left Port McNeil, Vancouver Island for open ocean and Triangle Island, but only reached 6 nautical miles east of Cape Scott. Turned back for Cook Bank, stopping at the 60 fathom mark.

The M. V. "Naia Explorer" is operated by Mackay Whale Watching.

Bird Species	Number	Bird Species	Number	Mammal Species	Number
Red-throated Loon .....	2	Mew Gull.....	30	Northern Sea Lion .....	1000
Pacific Loon .....	30	Ring-billed Gull .....	—	Harbour Seal .....	8
Common Loon .....	3	California Gull .....	200	Humpback Whale .....	1
Horned Grebe.....	1	Herring Gull .....	12	Killer Whale .....	—
Red-necked Grebe .....	3	Thayer's Gull .....	1	Grey Whale .....	—
Black-footed Albatross.....	—	Western Gull.....	1	Minke Whale.....	1
Northern Fulmar .....	—	Glaucous-winged Gull .....	100	Dall's Porpoise.....	—
Pink-footed Shearwater.....	1	Sabine's Gull .....	—	Pacific White-sided Dolphin.....	500
Buller's Shearwater .....	1	Black-legged Kittiwake .....	10	Sea Otter .....	1 (nr. Echo Is.)
Sooty Shearwater.....	2000	Arctic Tern.....	—		
Short-tailed Shearwater.....	—	Common Murre.....	2000		
Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel .....	25	Pigeon Guillemot .....	10		
Leach's Storm-Petrel .....	4	Marbled Murrelet .....	—		
Brandt's Cormorant .....	5	Ancient Murrelet .....	—		
Double-crested Cormorant .....	3	Cassin's Auklet .....	1		
Pelagic Cormorant.....	25	Rhinoceros Auklet .....	150		
Great Blue Heron .....	1 (harbour)	Tufted Puffin .....	1		
Canada Goose .....	6	Anna's Hummingbird .....			
American Widgeon .....	8 (harbour)	.....	1 (MacKay residence)		
Northern Pintail.....	2 (harbour)	Belted Kingfisher .....	1 (dock)		
Harlequin Duck.....	1	Steller's Jay .....	1 (dock)		
Surf Scoter .....	400	Northwestern Crow.....	20 (harbour)		
White-winged Scoter .....	200	Common Raven .....	2		
Hooded Merganser.....	2 (harbour)	Savannah Sparrow.....	1		
Common Merganser.....	2	Song Sparrow.....	1 (dock)		
Red-breasted Merganser .....	2				
Bald Eagle .....	2				
Merlin.....	1				
Black-bellied Plover .....	9				
Black Oystercatcher .....	5				
Sanderling .....	3				
Red-necked Phalarope.....	30				
Red Phalarope .....	—				
South Polar Skua .....	—				
Pomarine Jaeger .....	4				
Parasitic Jaeger.....	—				

"—" denotes species not observed



## Birds of Tasmania - 5

Having been in Australia a few times before, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what to expect here. There is one thing, though, that has really surprised me. Unlike many parts of Australia, Tasmania has a definite winter season. This part I knew, and I also knew that some of the birds even migrate north for the winter. But somebody forgot to tell the plants and the trees about this winter thing! The winter is certainly not extreme, we had only a few light frosts. But is this mild enough for roses to bloom in the garden? And why do some of the trees “choose” to bloom in the middle of winter? Although some of the insect eating birds left for the winter, the nectar eating ones did not. There are always trees in bloom somewhere. And those birds that did migrate away, were not gone long. By the end of August, which would be equivalent to the end of February in the northern hemisphere, all the migrants were back! And many of the resident birds were already fledging young.

For three weeks in August, I had a birding friend from Vernon visiting me. Since this was his first trip to Australia, everything was new. For his first weekend I had planned a route that would maximise his chances of getting the twelve endemic species - those that can be found nowhere else in the world. Not only did we get all twelve endemics, but we tallied a total of about 80 species, well over half of the total number I've seen myself in six months here! On his last weekend, we were running out of things to look for, but we had one last quest on our agenda. About two hours south of Hobart is a region where Superb Lyrebirds can be found. In the same general area there are Southern Emu-wrens, Beautiful Firetails and Ground Parrots. The trip started brilliantly! Half way there we saw a

white bird sitting in the top of a tree. “Cockatoo?” Chris said. I was not so sure and immediately stopped the car. The bird was a Grey Goshawk. Grey Goshawks come in two colour types: grey, and pure white. This bird was pure white. Can you imagine anything more spectacular than a pure white goshawk? The bird sat quietly on top of his tree as we assembled scopes and cameras and took our time admiring it. The day was already a success and we hadn't arrived at our destination yet!

Upon arriving at the lyrebird location, we stepped out of the car and were immediately greeted by a male lyrebird singing in the forest. Superb Lyrebirds are amongst the best bird mimics in the world. Not only can they flawlessly copy other bird songs from the forest, but can also copy a host of non-bird sounds. They have been recorded imitating such things as cameras, car alarms, and sirens. It took us only a few minutes to locate one, and we saw three or four more within the next 30 minutes.

The other targets on our day's list would not prove to be so cooperative! The emu-wren and the Ground Parrot are grass and heath birds. Walking in this habitat turned out to be a real test of endurance. The grass was very thick and we were constantly walking on top of a dense layer of vegetation, which was certainly not providing a firm footing. Maintaining balance was a constant struggle. And from time to time, your foot would find a gap in the vegetation and plunge into the ankle-deep water below! Sometimes birding really is hard work! We found no emu-wrens at all. We played hide-and-seek with a very shy Beautiful Firetail for a while, getting only glimpses as it flew away from its latest hiding spot deep in the vegetation. We heard a Ground

Parrot, but did not see it.

Despite these misses, the day was a success, and a great way to spend Chris's last day in Tasmania. From here, he went to Queensland, where a whole new batch of birds were waiting for him!

**Gary Davidson**

*Editor's Note:*

*For images of the birds mentioned in Gary's articles, please visit the Australian Bird Image Database at <http://www.aviceda.org/abid/>*

*Additional information on Australian birds and their distributions can be found at the Atlas of Australian Birds site: <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/atlas/index.html>*



## Birds of Tasmania - 6

In early September we had a two-week school holiday. Marie and I hopped in the campervan and headed up the east coast of Tasmania. While it was a holiday, not specifically a birding trip, we still saw lots of birds. We saw 10 species that I had not previously seen in Tasmania. This included one which I had never seen in Australia before, and one which I had never seen anywhere before.

The new bird, the “lifer”, was a Blue-winged Parrot. There are 55 species in the parrot-cockatoo family in Australia, 12 of which are found in Tasmania. After adding Blue-winged Parrot to the list, there is now just one I haven’t seen: the rare and endangered Orange-bellied Parrot. There is a vigorous breeding and protection effort underway to help save this species. The program operates in the remote south-western part of the state. There is no road access to the area at all. If you want to go there you have three choices: a five-day walk, a private boat, or a chartered plane.

The Blue-winged Parrot is not particularly spectacular when compared to some of the more colourful parrots of Australia. It is primarily green with blue patches in the wings. We were quite fortunate to see two of them beside the road as we travelled along. They even remained on the fence while we stopped the vehicle and readied the binoculars.

The Great Skua is an ocean-going bird that is not often seen from land. We were walking along one of the northern beaches during a northerly gale! Not a particularly pleasant walk, but the strong wind obviously pushed the skua in toward the land. It made one pass along the beach and was gone. I have seen this species only once before in my life and that was under similar circumstances, but half

way round the world from here! Again we were walking along a beach in a strong wind, but that was on the west coast of Scotland.

One other very satisfying sighting during our trip was a Little Grassbird. This is by no means a rare bird, just very difficult to see. It is a small bird that lives in tall marsh grasses ... and that’s where it stays! Hearing them sing is easy, but actually laying eyes on them is another matter. There song is a simple three note whistle. I wondered if I could imitate it. The sound I produced didn’t sound all that good to me, but it must have sounded just fine to the grassbird! Every time I whistled, the bird moved to another perch and whistled back. Although I never saw it move, I could tell it was moving closer. So we continued our duet until he was so close I could almost touch him, but I couldn’t see him! I whistled again and this time I saw him move, but it was just a blur as he darted from one concealed perch to another. After a few more efforts on my part, I think he dropped his guard and realised I was not a threat to his territory. He was no longer responding to my pathetic whistles. But just when we were ready to give up, he popped up on an exposed bit of grass and started to preen his feathers! He was no more than three metres away and we watched in silent delight as he sat there for two or three minutes before disappearing back into the marsh. Just one of those special moments that come to patient birders from time to time!

One of the other highlights of the trip had nothing to do with birds. We were driving along a quiet dirt road at about 8:30 one morning when a smallish animal appeared on the side of the road. At first I thought it was a feral cat (Australia has a real problem with

cats!) But then I realised that it was a quoll. Quolls are cat-like creatures that prey on small mammals and birds. They are strictly nocturnal and very wary. Many people have never seen one in the wild. This one was not in a hurry and we had a chance to get binoculars on it and enjoy the rare moment. When we return from Tasmania, we will be returning with many great memories!

**Gary Davidson**



## B.C. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DETAILS, 2004/05

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 the organizer(s) name and contact information plus the scheduled date. This information also appears on the BCFO website courtesy of webmaster, Kevin Slagboom.

A DNA indicates that the contact information is valid but Date was Not Available at press time. Data were accurate as known to the editor on 17 November 2004. Check with the area organizers for any late-breaking changes.

Locality	Date	Organizer(s)	Tel. / E-mail
Abbotsford / Mission	1 Jan 2005	Lynn Miller	604-826-3839 lynnmelvinmiller@hotmail.com or Lynn.Miller@twu.ca
Bamfield	4 Jan 2005	Anne Stewart	250-728-3469 (h) / 250-728-3301 (w)
Broughton Strait	18 Dec 2004	Bob Waldon	250-974-2281 / birdbook@island.net
Campbell River	2 Jan 2005	Ed Silkins	250-286-1495 / esilkens@oberon.ark.com
Cawston	30 Dec 2004	Doug Brown	250-495-6164 / douglasbrown01@yahoo.ca
Chilliwack	18 Dec 2004	Denis Knopp	604-858-5141 / bcwild@uniserve.com
Comox Valley	19 Dec 2004	Art Morgan	canbirdinbc@aol.com
Cranbrook	26 Dec 2004	Greg Ross	250-489-2566 / gross@shaw.ca
Creston	27 Dec 2004	Sheila Reynolds	250-866-5453 / sheilar@kootenay.com
D'arcy / Devine	16 Dec 2004	Dan Cummings	604-452-3453
Dawson Creek	2 Jan 2005	Mark Phinney	Mark.Phinney@lpcorp.com
Deep Bay	28 Dec 2004	Barbara Sedgewick	250-335-0064
Duncan	1 Jan 2005	Derrick Marven	250-748-8504 / marven007ca@yahoo.ca
Fauquier	DNA	Ruth Bumpus	250-269-7481
Fort St. James	2 Jan 2005	Joanne Vinnedge	250-996-7401
Golden	27 Dec 2004	Ellen Zimmerman	250-348-2225
Harrison River	28 Dec 2004	Denis Knopp	604-858-5141 / bcwild@uniserve.com
Kamloops	19 Dec 2004	Rick Howie	250-578-7542 / rhowie@shaw.ca
Kelowna	18 Dec 2004	Chris Charlesworth	250-718-0335 c_charlesworth@avocettours.com
Kimberley	2 Jan 2005	Greg Ross	250-489-2566 / gross@shaw.ca
Kitimat	18 Dec 2004	April MacLeod	250-632-3977
Ladner	27 Dec 2004	Jude Grass	604-219-2043 / jgrass1@telus.net
Lake Country**	2 Jan 2005	Trevor Forder	250-765-4082
Lake Windermere District	26 Dec 2004	Larry Halverson	250-342-3305
Langley (part of White Rock count circle)	2 Jan 2005	Keith Robertson	604-856-6849 / amarl@telus.net
Lardeau	27 Dec 2004	Gail Spitler	250-366-4601 / spitler@direct.ca
Lillooet	26 Dec 2004	Ian Routley	250-256-4062 / ianrout@telus.net
Little River Ferry	30 Dec 2004	Guy L. Monty	250-248-8881 / glmonty@poecile.com
Masset	DNA	Peter Hamel	250-626-5015
Mackenzie	18 Dec 2004	David Lambie	250-997-4033 / dwl787@yahoo.com
Mayne Island	18 Dec 2004	Doreen Tamboline	250-539-2730
McBride	19 Dec 2004	Elaine	250-569-2643
Nanaimo	26 Dec 2004	Guy L. Monty	250-248-8881 / glmonty@poecile.com
Nanoose Bay Lantzville	15 Dec 2004	Guy L. Monty	250-248-8881 / glmonty@poecile.com
Nelson	18 Dec 2004	Rita Wege	250-354-1685 / rwege@telus.net
Oliver/Osoyoos	2 Jan 2005	Doug Brown	250-495-6164 / douglasbrown01@yahoo.ca
Parksville/Qualicum	19 Dec 2004	Sandra Gray	250-248-5565 / saninerr@shaw.ca
Pemberton	15 Dec 2004	Hugh Naylor	604-894-6402
Pender Harbour	22 Dec 2004	Tony Greenfield	604-885-5539 / greenfieldtony@hotmail.com
Pender Islands	18 Dec 2004	Mary Roddick	250-629-3308
Penticton	19 Dec 2004	Dick Cannings	250-496-4019 / dickcannings@shaw.ca
Pitt Meadows - Maple Ridge	2 Jan 2005	Kees Vandenberg	604-463-8743
Port Alberni	2 Jan 2005	Sandy McRuer	250-723-5436



Locality	Date	Organizer(s)	Tel. / E-mail
Port Clements	DNA	Peter Hamel	250-626-5015
Prince George	19 Dec 2004	Cathy Antoniazzi	250-562-2845
Prince Rupert	DNA	Robin Weber	250-627-1129
Princeton	3 Jan 2005	Madelon Schouten	250-295-7078
Quesnel	2 Jan 2005	Adrian Leather	ade016@quesnelbc.com
Revelstoke	18 Dec 2004	George Winingder	250-837-3655
Rose Spit	DNA	Peter Hamel	250-626-5015
Salmon Arm	19 Dec 2004	Frank Kime	250-835-8537
Saltspring Island	19 Dec 2004	Marian Porter	250-653-2043 / marianporter@comcast.net
Saturna Island	18 Dec 2004	Harvey Janszen	250-539-5150
Shuswap Lake Park	16 Dec 2004	Rick Howie	250-578-7542 / rhowie@shaw.ca
Skidegate Inlet	DNA	Peter Hamel	250-626-5015
Smithers	2 Jan 2005	Jane Hoek	250-846-9231 / hoekjh@bulkley.net
Sooke	27 Dec 2004	Jack McLeod	250-642-5369 / jmmjem@shaw.ca
Squamish	19 Dec 2004	Marcia Danielson	604-898-9420 / myd123@telus.net
Sunshine Coast	18 Dec 2004	Tony Greenfield	604-885-5539 / greenfieldtony@hotmail.com
Terrace	26 Dec 2004	Diane Weismiller	250-635-6984
Vancouver	19 Dec 2004	Adrian Grant Duff	604-263-7957
Vaseux Lake	27 Dec 2004	Dick Cannings	250-496-4019 / dickcannings@shaw.ca
Vernon	19 Dec 2004	Phil Gehlen	250-542-8053 / philip_gehlen@telus.net
Victoria	18 Dec 2004	Ann Nightingale	250-652-6450 / motmot@shaw.ca
West Vancouver / Bowen Island	28 Dec 2004	Loys Maingon	maingon@uniserve.com
Whistler	14 Dec 2004	Karl Richer	604-938-1107
White Rock	2 Jan 2005	Ian Robertson	604-530-1080 / res@quik.com
Williams Lake	19 Dec 2004	Phil Ranson	250-398-7110 / philr@pacificcoast.net
<b>Notes:</b>			
Interior Swan-and-Eagle Count	16 Jan 2005	Rick Howie	250-578-7542 / rhowie@shaw.ca
WASHINGTON STATE BORDER AREAS			
For additional count areas check the Washington Ornithological Society web site ( <a href="http://www.wos.org">http://www.wos.org</a> )			
<b>Locality</b>			
Bellingham	19 Dec 2004	Joe Meche	360-738-0641 / joemeche@aol.com
North Cascades	18 Dec 2004	Bob Kuntz	360-856-5700x368(w) robert_kuntz@nps.gov
Padilla Bay	2 Jan 2005	Steve Aslanian	360-435-9493 / aslanian@whidbey.net
Port Angeles Ferry	19 Dec 2004	Scott Atkinson	206-406-2306 (cell) scottratkinson@hotmail.com
(Port Angeles to Victoria)			
San Juan Islands Archipelago	19 Dec 2004	Barb Jensen	360-378-3068 / skylark@rockisland.com
Seattle	26 Dec 2004	Seattle Audubon	206-523-8243x8 cbc2004@seattleaudubon.org
Sequim-Dungeness	20 Dec 2004	Bob Boekelheide	360-681-4076 / bboek@olympus.net
Tacoma / Pierce Co.	18 Dec 2004	Faye McAdams	253-942-9233 / zest4parus@hotmail.com
** The Lake Country Count covers the region between Vernon and Kelowna. the count will include Woods Lake, most of Kalamalka Lake, Beaver Lake Road, the community of Carr's Landing and Okanagan Center, as well as a large portion of Okanagan Lake and the Westside Road area, including Fintry Provincial Park.			

The Bamfield Christmas Bird Count will be held Tuesday, January 4. The epicentre of the circle is the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre and we would like to encourage people to come out to Bamfield for the count. Bamfield has a very small population and few birders so we really need help. Birders could stay at the Centre if they are participating in the count. We will meet at the south dock at 8:00 for the morning's activities which will be on the water on various vessels. Some vessels will be working on the wave sheltered, inlets and some will be heading out to more wave exposed areas. We will meet back at the centre at lunch and then head out for on-land counts in the afternoon. The count circle extends out the west coast trail to Pachena Point and includes Poett Nook, part of the Sarita Estuary, and the Cape Beale headlands including Keeha Beach. People staying on-site usually get together for a potluck dinner and the real keeners head off owling in the evening. We really encourage people to come out for this worthwhile count on the edge of the open Pacific Ocean. Please see our web-site [www.bms.bc.ca](http://www.bms.bc.ca) for more information.

Anne Stewart





## Authors in this Issue

### Janice Arndt

Janice began observing nature and watching birds as a child; one of her earliest bird memories is sitting on a home-made swing in her grandfather's barn and singing to the barn swallows as they flew in and out feeding their young. Janice earned a BSc from the University of Guelph in 1991 and has worked for the Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program, the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. In summer, she guides occasional bird walks for visitors to Kokanee Creek Provincial Park. She also monitors osprey and eagle nests on Kootenay Lake (see *BC Birding* Vol. 14, No. 1).

### Gary Davidson

Gary Davidson, Nakusp's resident birder and pre-eminent British Columbia birder has taken a teaching position in Hobart, Tasmania where he and his wife Marie will live for a year. Gary has contributed bird records from throughout BC. Before moving to Nakusp he explored the Fort Nelson area and co-authored an important paper on the birds of the Fort Nelson area with Tony Erskine in 1976. His contributions in Nakusp and beyond have significantly added to our knowledge of the birds of BC. [Editor]

### Bryan Gates

As a Past President of BCFO, Bryan Gates continues with efforts to increase membership and encourage conservation of our wildlife resources. He organizes and leads tours, including our annual pelagic birding trip off the north coast of Vancouver island. He is a Registered Professional Biologist, now retired from work with the province of BC, but continues to consult. For 15 years he has led birding and natural history tours to such places as Baja California, Central America, Southern Africa, Alaska, Washington, Arizona, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Newfoundland. In January 2005 he will make his third journey to Africa, this time leading a group from Victoria, his home town.

### Tony Greenfield

Tony Greenfield has been recording birds on the Sunshine Coast since 1971. He was a founding member of BCFO and served as President from 1996 to 1999. He was re-elected to the executive last year and values the opportunity of being involved in the future direction of BCFO.

### Jo Ann MacKenzie

Jo Ann's interest in creatures of the wild began in very early childhood in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A. At about age 2, she tried to persuade a neighborhood squirrel to eat walnuts from a spoon. Some 30 years later, her interest focused on birds. She became active in the birding section of the Toronto Field Naturalists and the Ontario Bird Banding Association. Jo Ann and husband Hue moved to the Vancouver area in 1983, and were soon leading field trips for the Vancouver Natural History Society and the White Rock and Surrey Naturalists. They were founding members of BCFO in 1991. Jo Ann was elected to the Board of Directors in 1999, serving as Secretary for 3 years, and President for 1 year, retiring in June, 2003.

### June Ryder

June Ryder is a professional geoscientist who, for the past 30 years, has worked as a consultant, researcher and teacher of geomorphology and geology -- despite a life-long interest in birds and other aspects of natural history. Now semi-retired, she is finally able to spend much of her time enjoying birding trips and volunteering for conservation work (including several bird surveys) with organizations such as the Vancouver Natural History Society and Bird Studies Canada.

### Andy Stepniewski

A recent recruit to BCFO from near Yakima Washinton, Andy, a self-professed avid naturalist, was actually born and educated in Canada. After graduation from UBC he was the Parks Naturalist for some years at Garibaldi and Mount Robson Parks.

## More Extension Trip Photos . . .



June Ryder



Broad-winged Hawk nest

