

BC BIRDING

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Rathrevor/Nanose Peninsula Outing of 28 August 2005

A demonstration of the remarkable vocal repertoire of Common Ravens provided a good commencement to all the 28 August 2005 B.C.F.O. field trips even before we reached the assembly point. Those of us (Phil Henderson, Anré and Tristan McIntosh, Elizabeth Portman and me) waiting to go on the Rathrevor Provincial Park/Nanose Peninsula excursion were tipped off on what to expect when a participant on the previous day's version told us how lucky we were to be led by John Brighton, a notion we were all inclined to endorse long before the end of the outing. Our only significant miss of the day was at our first stop –at a restaurant usually frequented by House Sparrows. As John explained that this abundant colonizer was scarce in Parksville, they failed to materialize unless a couple of birds glimpsed briefly by Elizabeth were this species. A few White-crowned Sparrows were behind the restaurant, however, raising our day's total to five species by the time we left Parksville.

please see Rathrevor, page 8

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A subscription to this quarterly is a benefit of membership in the society. Members will also receive a copy of the annual journal, *British Columbia Birds*. Membership in BCFO is open to anyone interested in the study and enjoyment of wild birds in British Columbia.

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
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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

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Deadline for the receipt of material for publication is the 15th 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've just arrived home from the 15th Annual BCFO Conference in Parksville. Despite some initial anxiety Saturday morning, I had a very pleasant weekend. A nice weekend. It was good to see old friends again. And it was good to make new friends, an easy thing to do as we all had something in common: our passion for birding.

The weather was good. The venue was good. The people were friendly. The speakers were excellent. Let's not forget the food! And the birds were good too. We didn't see big numbers of each species, but some of the individuals were down right cooperative. On Saturday, I kept hearing "species is shy/sneaky/rarely comes up for a view" while this individual posed for us in clear view. One such species I wanted to indulge in while on Vancouver Island was the reclusive Bewick's Wren. I indulged. I must have heard at least six different vocalizations (a big interest of mine). More than one individual stayed up on some dead branches for ages, showing off. You'll have to read the summaries from each of the field trips and the Extension to see what specials were seen on the weekend. I don't want to steal the authors' thunder.

Speaking of vocalizations, I found this year's presentations all the more interesting, fascinating and stimulating because of the recordings played. Tania Tripp had us identifying individual owls by pitch and song type. John Neville enthralled us with his recordings while showing some stunning landscapes along the Dempster highway.

As with every AGM we say goodbye to familiar faces on the Board and welcome new faces. Ian Robertson has served the maximum of six consecutive years on the Board of

Directors. Thank you for all you have done for the BCFO. And to new directors, Brian Self and Kevin Bell, welcome. For the directors in mid-term, John Vooys, Jim Ginns, Wayne Diakow and Dick Cannings, also welcome. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year. Regretfully, it will be the last year I'll be able to work with all of you. I am starting my sixth year on the Board. I will have then served the maximum of six consecutive years on the Board. If you are interested or have any questions about being a director please contact me or any member of the Board.

Annual General Meeting time is a chance to review the past year. Much has been accomplished. Three issues of the journal, *BC Birds*, have been published. The newsletter, *BC Birding*, has gone out each quarter. We held a workshop on the future direction of the BCFO. Our web page is up-to-date with much material now accessible digitally. The Vancouver Island Barn Owl Inventory Project is successfully documenting Barn Owl sightings on Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands. On the advocacy front, a letter to the BC Minister of Environment convinced the ministry to discontinue their practice of charging bird banders for their provincial bird capture permits.

This year, two grants were awarded for bird research and the dissemination of the results via our journal. We hope to make grants such as these an annual thing. Talk to a director or check an issue of the newsletter for more information.

Although many of these items came to fruition in the past year, it was not without a lot of work in the preceding years.

And last but not least, the last few

Board meetings have been taken up with planning the Annual Conference and Extension. Putting this event on is no small task, but many hands make light work. All Board members get involved as well as retired Board members. Of special note I would like to thank Roger Simms and the Arrowsmith Naturalists for hosting, Wayne Diakow for coordinating, Ian Robertson for arranging the speakers and catering and co-leading the Extension, Andy Stewart for processing registrations, Rita Wege for tracking memberships and name tags; and Tony Greenfield for organizing and co-leading the Extension.

Next year's Annual Conference will also be timed so teachers, students, and bird surveyors can attend. The birding group in Kelowna has agreed to be our hosts. We are looking at mid-July. The Board has been assured the birding will still be good. I know it is still good around Prince George.

In closing, I hope you are enjoying the fall migration. Don't forget to share your enjoyment of wild birds with a non-birder. Encourage your birding friends to become a member of BCFO. And don't forget, our – your – publications are eager to receive notes on your interesting observations.

Sandra Kinsey, President



Letters to the Editor

We hope all the attendees of this year's AGC had a great time as usual. We always found that BCFO gatherings were Absolutely Great Conferences. However, this year life got in our way and, for the first time ever, we missed one. Soooo... if the McKenzies made it to this year's meeting they will be the holders of the "attendee of every BCFO AGC" award. Until last year the Buhlers and Hue were co-holders of that record. Although we were not physically at the gathering we were with you all in spirit. By the time you read this note two more volumes of British Columbia Birds (V. 12 and 13) should have reached your mail boxes. Despite the near simultaneous receipt of drafts for two volumes, one from each editor, and the fact that it has taken the printers here two weeks to do what the printers in Victoria usually accomplished in three days, both issues have been formatted, proofed, and mailed. We think they both look great but then we're biased. Bill Heybroek's artworks were just excellent and very much appreciated. Many thanks must go to Martin McNicholl for his diligence in editing volumes 4 to 12 of British Columbia Birds. And a welcome now to John Sprague as he has taken up the reins with volume 13. Enjoy -- and remember to send John lots of material so that we can complete at least another two volumes in this next year. Don't forget that Phil needs submissions too and with all those AGC memories so recently experienced you should jot some lines for BC Birding!

Good birding

Andy and Marilyn Buhler



"Ahhh. Done my back. Darn mating ritual."

From The Spectator, London; Courtesy CanWest News Service.

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/checklist/index.php3>

SORA: Searchable Ornithological Research Archive

Search and retrieve online publications from The Auk (1884-1999), The Condor (1899-2000), Journal of Field Ornithology (1930-1999), North American Bird Bander (1976-2000), Pacific Coast Avifauna (1900-1974), Studies in Avian Biology (1978-1999), Wilson Bulletin (1889-1999). All articles are available as DjVu's and PDF's.

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



Editor's Notes and Notions

I was very pleased the other day to see a flock of 50 or more American Pipits foraging in fields along a dyke east of Fort Langley. I even approached within two meters of one individual before it took flight. This was my third encounter with this species this year. The first was of an individual near Trophy Mountain in Wells Gray Park at the end of July, the second on the sunny shores of Savary Island in mid August. American Pipits are one of my favourite birds (I suspect I'm not alone in having numerous favourite birds) probably because of nostalgic-romantic notions of my first encounter during my formative years (a terrible phrase; formation should never cease: do we just mould into impregnable and unalterable fortresses of stubbornness and ignorance?) near Fort Nelson. A nearby fencepost-sitting Cooper's Hawk eyed these pipit proceedings hungrily but flew off, only then revealing itself as we rode by on our bicycles.

This fine day also brought two interesting incidences of raptor abuse. When viewed through binoculars, the two dots in the sky turned out to be a Red-tailed Hawk and a Common Raven. The raven followed the hawk's soaring circles and quickly adjusted when the hawk made sudden turns. Occasionally the hawk flipped as if to expose its talons to this pesteriferous shadow, but the shadow persisted, silent and without physical interference. Finally, the hawk stooped for cover in distant trees. The raven, pleased with having accomplished its goal, called loudly then flew off in the opposite direction, doubtless seeking a kindred ear for its tale of bravery, and relishing the accompanying adulation.

More trouble for raptors. At the front end of a flock of 40 rapidly flying Brewer's Blackbirds was a Merlin trying its best with tight turns, rapid dips and rises, to evade the mob. Most blackbirds broke away from the group but nine remained to torment the

Merlin as it flew low over the fields and out of sight. If I knew nothing of Merlins and Brewer's Blackbirds I would have assumed the blackbirds were the predators, the Merlin the prey.

The Annual General Conference in Parksville at the end of August was an interesting and entertaining production. It kicked off Friday night with a social hour interspersed with presentations on birds of Taiwan (Jo Ann MacKenzie and Simon Liao) and birds of the Dempster Highway by John Neville and his wife Heather. It was nice to meet people I'd only heard of or communicated with through E-mails, and to see familiar faces such as fellow Langley Field Naturalists Ian Robertson, Martin McNicholl and Roy Yates.

Early the next morning participants took part in the numerous field trips in the area. I joined birder extraordinaire Guy Monty as he lead us to various in the Nanaimo area and rounded up a good number of birds, although we were skunked, other than a few fleeting vocalizations, at the always reliable Anna's Hummingbird hang out. The California Quail made for a pleasant distraction. There are no guarantees in this pursuit.

The afternoon was filled with interesting talks on a diverse range of subjects: Brant migration by Terri Martin from Quadra Island; the relationship between salmon nutrient cycling and songbirds in riparian forests by Katie Christie of the University of Victoria; regional variations in the territorial calls of Western Screech-owls by Tania Tripp of Madrone consultants in Duncan; and avian biodiversity and economic growth: a fundamental conflict, a discussion of steady state economics by Neil K. Dawe of the Qualicum Institute in Qualicum Beach.

Dr. Peter Arcese of the University of British Columbia's Department of

Forest Science was the keynote speaker at the evening's banquet. He presented a stimulating discussion on faunal change in the Southern Gulf Islands, with an emphasis on Song Sparrows.

The following morning I joined leader John Brighton's group on a trip to Rath Trevor Beach, Nanoose Bay and other stops along the way including agricultural fields and an interesting wetland. This was a rewarding and enjoyable outing with a respectable number of birds. Martin McNicholl provides a report of this trip elsewhere this issue.

Bill Ginns presents an account of another AGC outing to the Englishman River. Tony Greenfield provides details of the extension trip which was well attended. More AGC information will be presented in the December issue, which will be out in time as this is crucial to provide Christmas Bird Count dates.

Kyle Elliot has written a *Site Guide* for the Harrison Bay area, one of the few guides that highlights birds in winter. For those with a hankering to travel, John Vooys has contributed his interesting account of an Alaskan voyage.

Brief biographies are presented for the four newly elected board members (Kevin Bell, Tony Greenfield, Brian Self, and Andy Stewart) and there are other items to enjoy.

If you have items of interests such as notes, observations, pictures, stories, etc, send them along.

Then get outside.

Phil Henderson, Editor



**British Columbia Field Ornithologists
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures
For the year ended December 31, 2004
(Unaudited)**

	2004	2003
Revenue		
Membership	6,275	6,929
Conference extension	5,590	9,420
Conference fees	6,613	3,805
Donation income	1,164	-
Donations off set expenses	4,589	4,515
Field Trips	79	315
Advertising	-	75
Interest	843	849
Miscellaneous income	10	6
	<u>25,162</u>	<u>25,915</u>
Expenditures		
Conferences extension	5,601	5,666
Conference facilities	2,819	3,108
Printing	1,683	1,604
Postage	1,644	2,053
Donations	2,510	1,880
Travel	4,622	4,574
Journals	40	-
Stationery	86	105
Miscellaneous	-	-
Future Printing of Journal	800	1,163
Bank charges	-	97
Insurance	500	-
Web site	552	-
Memberships	15	-
Owl project	809	-
Meetings	200	-
	<u>21,879</u>	<u>20,250</u>
Surplus (deficit) for the year	<u>\$ 3,283</u>	<u>\$ 5,664</u>

**Balance Sheet
December 31, 2004**

	2004	2003
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash in banks	47,418	40,565
GST Receivable	635	679
Total Assets	<u>\$ 48,053</u>	<u>\$ 41,244</u>
Liabilities and Members' Equity		
Current liabilities		
Deferred revenue	1,722	2,626
Accounts payable	-	473
Prepaid memberships	1,025	700
Deferred contributions (Owl project)	3,779	-
Future payable	4,822	4,022
	<u>11,348</u>	<u>7,821</u>
Members' Equity		
Balance, beginning of the year	33,423	27,758
Net earnings for the year	3,283	5,664
Balance, end of the year	36,705	33,423
Liabilities and Members' Equity Total	<u>\$ 48,053</u>	<u>\$ 41,244</u>



Directors Nominated at the 2005 BCFO Annual General Conference, Parksville

Kevin Bell, North Vancouver

Employment:

25 years with the District of North Vancouver Parks Department; 15 years as manager of Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre; 10 years as manager of Natural Parkland

Responsibilities included:

Organizing volunteer groups to do shrub-tree planting projects, site garbage clean up, monitoring streams and creeks for fish numbers, habitat restoration projects, school ground habitat planting projects, trail maintenance projects.

Providing guided educational nature walks, researching and planning displays on environmental topics, assessing trees for wildlife and hazards, creek erosion assessments, site habitat restoration planning and implementation.

Volunteer History:

Twenty five years active involvement with Vancouver Natural History Society; Bird Studies Canada; Wild Bird Trust of B.C.; Canadian Wildlife Service; North Shore Streamkeepers; North Shore Black Bear Network.

Activities on an ongoing basis include:

Breeding Bird Surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, Raptor Bird Surveys, Monthly Bird Site Surveys, Water Bird Surveys, Plant Species Inventories and Site Habitat Assessments, Black Bear Education Monitoring and Management, Operation of Wildlife Plant Nursery at Maplewood Conservation Area, North Vancouver, Co-ordination of Volunteers for planting projects and Salt Marsh Restoration and Protection projects at Maplewood Conservation Area, Monitoring of Purple Martin Colony, including building and replacement of nest boxes, banding young birds, coordination of volunteers and conducting seasonal bird counts.

Tony Greenfield, Sechelt

Tony was a founding member of BCFO and served as president 1996-2000. He is presently a director of BCFO, is the BCFO Field Trip Coordinator, and has attended 14 of the 15 AGM's to date.

He has been a birder on the Sunshine Coast since 1971, authored the local checklist, writes a birding column in the Coast Reporter,

and is president of the Sunshine Coast Natural History Society. Tony is the owner of Whiskeyjack Nature Tours, and guides tours in BC, Yukon and the western USA.

Favourite BC bird, Mountain Bluebird. Most wanted, White-headed Woodpecker.

Brian G. Self, Vancouver

I have lived in B. C. since 1966 and have been a birder all of that time. Prior to that I was aware of the birds in Britain but rarely went looking for them. A chance encounter with a Flicker at 10 feet on Mt. Seymour changed all that, and now retired, I do little else but bird. I have been a director of the Vancouver Natural History Society, leader of its Birding Section and have always had a keen interest in data recording and the organisation of data.

I helped write the original constitution of the BCFO and was a director in its early years, dropped my membership for a few years

whilst we travelled and have now completed the circle it seems. One of the areas that I would like to see addressed as a director would be to have the organisation form a Provincial Records Committee and produce a Provincial checklist. I think we could also offer annual workshops on a variety of ornithological topics, making them available to non-members and using this as a tool to attract new membership.

Andy Stewart, Victoria

Andy Stewart is a professional wildlife biologist and works for the BC Conservation Data Centre, Ministry of Environment in Victoria. Among his hobbies include bird banding for which he holds a master banding permit. His passions include all of the birds of prey though much of his energies are focused on the study

of Cooper's Hawks in the Greater Victoria area. He is also a co-author of the final volume of the Birds of British Columbia. Andy is currently a BCFO director and has been a member of this society since 1996.



Rathtrevor (continued from page 1)

Our trip consisted of several short drives through rural and sub-urban areas, interspersed with a couple of brief stops to overlook sites known to be frequented by specific, target species, and a few longer visits to a variety of habitats. John's first attempt to add American Kestrel to Elizabeth's life list failed, but produced a nice mixture of other species, including a couple of Tree Swallows among a concentration of Barn Swallows, our first Belted Kingfisher of the day, a fairly vociferous Pileated Woodpecker and our only Brewer's Blackbird. Elizabeth had to wait until nearly the end of our field trip to add the kestrel to her list—our 52nd and last species, at the other end of his territory.

A walk through Rathtrevor Provincial Park provided us with a nice mixture of forest and shoreline habitat, each adding a few species to our list. A bit of forest/grass "edge" habitat was frequented by a sparrow ensemble (Spotted Towhees and Song, Golden-crowned and White-crowned sparrows), while Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Bewick's and Winter wrens and a Golden-crowned Kinglet foraged in nearby woods. Canada Geese, Mallards and Glaucous-winged Gulls were the only abundant water birds, but we did manage to see small numbers of others (Pelagic Cormorant, Northern Pintail, Harlequin Duck, Surf Scoters, Killdeer, Black Oystercatcher, Western Sandpiper, Bonaparte's and Mew gulls and Pigeon Guillemot) at Rathtrevor and/or at a site overlooking the shore along the Nanoose Peninsula.

A drive from one headland past a golf course produced Mute Swans, a species that I did not realize had become established on Vancouver Island. Another swan on a Beaver pond gave us a longer, more detailed look while undergoing a prolonged preen,

decorating the pond with numerous feathers. Our lingering attention to this bird was apparently too much for a couple of Wilson's Snipes that suddenly sprang into the air in front of us to produce our most significant sighting of the day in the opinion of our leader. A nearby snag was visited by both a Cassin's Vireo and a Purple Finch, while the walk down and back up was highlighted with a couple of flocks of Red Crossbills "chiff-chiffing" overhead and a couple of Cedar Waxwings. A Downy Woodpecker welcomed us back to the vehicles.

Our final walk was through fields into the Nanoose Estuary. A tangled jumble of grasses, reeds and other grassland and marsh plants produced several Common Yellowthroats and Savannah

Sparrows. The yellowthroats were the only warblers that we saw all day, although I heard an Orange-crowned singing in a hedgerow as we drove to a headland.

Although we had no outstanding highlights, John Brighton led us on a very enjoyable jaunt through a nice mix of habitats that host a mix of species. As I don't see Turkey Vultures, Band-tailed Pigeons or Chestnut-backed Chickadees very often in my usual lower mainland haunts, seeing as many of them as we did was a treat for me, as was getting a better look at an area that I have passed through many times.

Martin K. McNicholl



Phil Henderson



Bird Species Identified on 28 August 2005 Rathrevor Beach/Nanoose Pensinsula B.C.F.O. Field Trip

Leader: John Brighton

Other Participants: Phil Henderson, Anré & Tristan McIntosh, Martin K. McNicholl, Elizabeth Portman

Note: The species name and check-list order are those currently recognized by the American Ornithologists' Union. The order differs somewhat from the check-list distributed at the meeting, an order that has been used on Christmas bird counts for two or three years. This order is presumably under consideration by the A.O.U., but has not yet been adopted.

Pelagic Cormorant	Common Raven
Great Blue Heron	Purple Martin
Turkey Vulture	Tree Swallow
Canada Goos	Barn Swallow
Mute Swan	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Mallard	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Northern Pintail	Bewick's Wren
Harlequin Duck	Winter Wren
Surf Scoter	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Bald Eagle	American Robin
Red-tailed Hawk	European Starling
American Kestrel	Cedar Waxwing
Killdeer	Orange-crowned Warbler
Black Oystercatcher	Common Yellowthroat
Western Sandpiper	Spotted Towhee
Wilson's Snipe	Savannah Sparrow
Bonaparte's Gull	Song Sparrow
Mew Gull	White-crowned Sparrow
Glaucous-winged Gull	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Pigeon Guillemot	Brewer's Blackbird
Band-tailed Pigeon	Purple Finch
Belted Kingfisher	House Finch
Downy Woodpecker	Red Crossbill
Northern Flicker	Pine Siskin
Pileated Woodpecker	American Goldfinch
Cassin's Vireo	
Northwestern Crow	- 52 species



Birding the Englishman River Estuary

At 6:30 am on August 27, during the Parksville AGM, Roger Simms of the Arrowsmith Naturalists led the group along trails through Western Redcedar/Bigleaf Maple forest along the river and out onto the braided delta. Although the tide was out, shorebird activity was sparse. Guy Monty had seen 100 species a few days before.

It was during a vivid discussion of the types of shorebirds feeding that a Merlin swooped in and set all aflight. It made several passes, the last being within 30 m of our noses - a better look can only be dreamed of! As we were leaving the boardwalk a rather weak call caused several of us to stop and search the sky. A few more spaced-out cries directed attention to a rather large sandpiper with a distinctly down-curved bill; the Whimbrel flew right over our heads. Moving away from the water we hit a hot-spot with Hutton's Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow. Other highlights from the 54 species we recorded included the new Cackling Goose, Osprey, Semipalmated Plover, Pectoral Sandpiper and Marbled Murrelet.

Jim Ginns



Jim Ginns

Jo Ann MacKenzie



Jo Ann MacKenzie



BCFO Extension Tour, West Coast Vancouver Island, 29-31st August 2005

Seventeen people participated in the Extension Tour to the west coast of Vancouver Island after the AGM in Parksville. The tour was based in Port Alberni and our destinations included a 7 hour pelagic birding trip from Bamfield, birding the Tofino-Ucluelet and Pacific Rim National Park area, and a visit to the Shoemaker Bay area at the head of Alberni Inlet in Port Alberni.

Due to the size of the group and the fact that the capacity of the Bamfield boat is 12 persons, the group split into two separate groups for the first two days. One group took the pelagic trip while the other group drove to Tofino. Destinations were reversed on the second day.

The 29th August pelagic trip had excellent weather, but the birds were relatively scarce. Even so, this outing recorded Fork-tailed Storm Petrel, Parasitic Jaeger and Rhinoceros Auklet, in addition to the species seen on the following day. The 30th August group had to contend with rainy weather, but otherwise conditions were good for pelagic birding. This party had the good fortune to encounter a factory trawler fishing for hake and from a distance it was obvious that it was attended, as usual, by many birds. In fact, there were 500-1000 birds of mixed species, mostly Northern Fulmars, Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters and California Gulls. Other species present were Sabine's Gull (4), a juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake, Red-necked Phalaropes and a single Western Gull. The highlight though was the Black-footed Albatrosses (estimate 30+). At one point 10 of these great birds were observed sitting together on the water in a tight ball. Albatrosses are always impressive; sitting on the water they appear as giants, but when they spread

their wings to take flight their true enormity becomes apparent, a 747 of a bird among the 737's. Their gliding flight on stiff, 2 metre wings is also inspirational. The birding party spent about an hour following the hake boat observing all of these birds at close range.

The two pelagic outings were an opportunity for participants to experience the open Pacific Ocean and to observe pelagic birds never seen from land. In addition we observed Pacific White-sided Dolphins cutting through the water, cetaceans spouting, and Northern (Steller's) and California Sea Lions lounging on rocky headlands. And finally, no-one got seasick!

The two groups visiting the Tofino-Ucluelet-Pacific Rim National Park area on consecutive days chose differing locations and strategies to find the birds. The West Coast at this time period hosts a good variety of marine birds, shorebirds and passerines. Locations visited included Amphritrite Point in Ucluelet, the Wickanninish area, Tofino golf course, Chesterman Beach, Tofino Harbour and the Tofino mudflats. Fourteen species of shorebirds were observed, including notably, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. On 29th August Chesterman Beach was alive with shorebirds including the Buff-breasted, and about 50 Semipalmated Plovers. The following day it was devoid of birds. Amphritrite Point yielded Heerman's Gulls and 2 Caspian Terns, while the Tofino golf course hosted a mixed flock of migrating warblers of 7 species.

On 31st August both groups finally got to bird together at Shoemaker Bay in Port Alberni. Shoemaker Bay is the area at the head of Alberni Inlet and is a complex area with a wide variety of

habitats including marshland, sewage lagoons, the Somass River, disturbed areas with Scotch broom and even some forest. In 3 hours the group counted about 60 species of ducks, raptors, Virginia Rail, shorebirds, woodpeckers and passerines.

The Extension concluded with a visit to the Nanaimo River estuary where we added species such as Greater Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitcher.

A total of 106 species were recorded on the Extension, offering an insight into the incredible diversity of BC's birds from Bushtit and Brown Creeper to Black-footed Albatross and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Additionally, the 17 participants had an opportunity to visit some new birding locations, to learn from each other, and to make some new friends.

Tony Greenfield

Extension Participants

Leaders:

Tony Greenfield, Ian Robertson

Participants::

Kevin Bell, Dawn Beynon, Peter Blokker, George Clulow, Doug Cooper, Eva Froese, Val George, Jen King, Glenda MacPherson, Eve Neale, Gwen Nichol, Marian Porter, June Ryder, Vicky Scott, Ron Walker.



Species Seen, BCFO Extension

Loons

Pacific Loon
Common Loon

Grebes

Red-necked Grebe
Western Grebe

Albatrosses

Black-footed Albatross

Shearwaters and Petrels

Northern Fulmar
Pink-footed Shearwater
Sooty Shearwater

Storm-petrels

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel

Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant
Brandt's Cormorant
Pelagic Cormorant

Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns

Great Blue Heron

Ducks, Geese and Swans

Canada Goose
American Wigeon
Green-winged Teal
Mallard
Northern Pintail
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Harlequin Duck
Surf Scoter
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser

New World Vultures

Turkey Vulture
OSPREE
Osprey

Hawks, Eagles and Kites

Bald Eagle
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk

Falcons and Caracaras

Merlin

Rails, Gallinules and Coots

Virginia Rail

Oystercatchers

Black Oystercatcher

Plovers and Lapwings

Black-bellied Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Killdeer

Sandpipers

Long-billed Dowitcher
Whimbrel
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Spotted Sandpiper
Wandering Tattler
Black Turnstone
Surfbird
Sanderling
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Red-necked Phalarope

Jaegers And Skuas

Parasitic Jaeger

Gulls

Heermann's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
California Gull
Glaucous-winged Gull
Western Gull
Sabine's Gull
Black-legged Kittiwake

Terns

Caspian Tern

Auks, Murres And Puffins

Common Murre
Marbled Murrelet
Rhinoceros Auklet

Pigeons And Doves

Rock Pigeon
Band-tailed Pigeon

Hummingbirds

Rufous Hummingbird

Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher

Woodpeckers

Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker

Tyrant Flycatchers

Olive-sided Flycatcher
Pacific-slope Flycatcher
SWALLOWS
Barn Swallow

Kinglets

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Waxwings

Cedar Waxwing

Wrens

Bewick's Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren

Thrushes

American Robin

Long-tailed Tits

Bushtit

Chickadees and Tits

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Nuthatches

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Creepers

Brown Creeper

Crows and Jays

Steller's Jay
Northwestern Crow
Common Raven

Starlings

European Starling

Vireos and Allies

Warbling Vireo

Finches, Siskins, Crossbills

House Finch
Red Crossbill
American Goldfinch

Wood Warblers

Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Townsend's Warbler
MacGillivray's Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler

Tanagers and Allies

Western Tanager

Sparrows, Towhees, Juncos

Spotted Towhee
Savannah Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow

Blackbirds, Orioles, Grackles, Etc.

Red-winged Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird

----- STATISTICS -----

Species seen (all dates, all places): 106





Eva Froese, Ron Walker, Kevin Bell, George Clulow, Ian Robertson, June Ryder, Doug Cooper

Vicky Scott



Doug Cooper, Ian Robertson, Ron Walker, June Ryder, Kevin Bell, George Clulow

Vicky Scott

BCFO NEW MEMBERS SINCE LAST ISSUE

Sheila Ablitt, Surrey, BC
 Kevin Bell, North Vancouver, BC
 Katie Christie, West Vancouver Bc
 Jen King, Tatla Lake, BC
 Kathryn McIntosh, White Rock, BC
 Liz Osborn, Smithers, BC
 Elizabeth Portman, Victoria, BC
 Keith Rush, West Vancouver, BC
 Rick Tootchin, Surrey, BC
 Nikole Varlis-Love, Saltspring Island, BC
 Bruce Webb, New Westminster, BC



"You've got Bird flu."

From The Spectator, London; Courtesy CanWest News Service.



Upcoming Meetings & Events

compiled by *Martin K. McNicholl*

- Sept. 9-12 2005 WASHINGTON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING, Bellingham, Washington. Contact details unknown; check WOS website at www.wos.org. contributed by Wayne C. Weber.
- Sept. 24 2005 1ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, BIODIVERSITY CENTRE FOR WILDLIFE STUDIES, George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Delta, B.C. Contact: B.C.W.S., Box 32128, 3651 Shelbourne St., Victoria, B.C. V8P 5S2; phone (250) 477-0465; e-mail editor@wildlifebc.org.
- Sept. 28-Oct. 1 2005 WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS 30TH ANNUAL MEETING, Santa Maria, Calif. Contact: Catherine Waters; phone (562) 869-6718; e-mail cpannellwaters@yahoo.com.
- Sept. 29-Oct. 2 2005 WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION 78TH ANNUAL MEETING, Camarillo, Calif. Contact: Walter H. Sakai, Life Sciences Dept., Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405-1628; phone (310) 434-4702; e-mail sakai_walter@smc.edu.
- Sept. 29-Oct. 2 2005 FEDERATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA NATURALISTS FALL GENERAL MEETING, Lillooet, B.C. Contact: Lillooet Naturalist Society, Box 1065, Lillooet, B.C.; Vivian Birch-Jones, phone (250) 256-4062; e-mail vivianbj@telus.net OR Glenda Newstad, phone (250) 256-7549; e-mail gnewstad@hotmail.com.
- October 6-11 2005 2005 ANNUAL CONFERENCE, WADER STUDY GROUP, Knoackadoon Head, Ireland. Contact: Leslie J. Lewis, 2 The Youghals, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, Ireland; phone 00353 23 36730 OR 00353 86 6091476; e-mail limosa@eircom.net.
- October 12-16 2005 RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING, Green Bay, Wisconsin. Contact: Dan Varland, Rayonier, 3033 Ingram St., Hoquiam, WI 98550; phone (360) 538-4582; e-mail daniel.varland@rayonier.com.
- October 13-16 2005 29TH ANNUAL MEETING, WATERBIRD SOCIETY, Jekyll Island, Georgia. Contact: Billy Brooks phone (904) 232-2580 extension 104; e-mail Billy_brooks@fws.gov OR Peter C. Frederick, 14324 SW 79 St., Archer, FL 32618; phone (352) 846-0565; e-mail Pcf@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu.
- October 20-22 2005 20TH TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY CONFERENCE, Council Bluffs, Iowa. Contact: Madeleine Linck phone (763) 694-7851; e-mail ttss@threeriversparkdistrict.org.
- October 20-22 2005 SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS ANNUAL MEETING, Halifax, N. S. Contact: Andrew Boyne, 45 Alderney Dr., 16th Floor, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 2N6; phone (902) 426-1900; e-mail Andrew.Boyne@ec.gc.ca OR Marty Leonard, phone (902) 494-2158; e-mail mleonard@dal.ca.
- November 7-11 2005 SECOND NORTH AMERICAN SEA DUCK CONFERENCE, Annapolis, Maryland. No mail or phone contact yet announced; e-mail: SeaDuckConf@usgs.gov.
- November 24-27 2005 WATERBIRD SOCIETY SPECIAL MEETING ON AVIAN DISEASE & THE MIGRATION OF BIRDS, Tainan, Taiwan. Contact: Dr. Robert W. Butler, 824 Ladner St., New Westminster, B.C. V3L 4W4; phone (604) 940-4672; e-mail rob.butler@ec.gc.ca.
- November 2005 THE SEABIRD GROUP 2005 ANNUAL MEETING, Kingussie, Scotland. Exact date and contact details not yet announced.
- February 15-19 2006 33rd ANNUAL MEETING, PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP, Girdwood, Alaska. Contact details not yet announced.
- March 2006? SOCIETY FOR NORTHWESTERN VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY ANNUAL MEETING, Olympia, Washington. Dates, exact location and contact details not yet announced.
- August 13-19 2006 24TH INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS, Hamburg, Germany. Contact: IOC 2006, Institute of Avian Research, An der Volgelwarte 21, 26386, Wilhelmshaven, Germany.



- August 23-26 2006 4th NORTH AMERICAN DUCK SYMPOSIUM AND WORKSHOP, Bismarck, North Dakota. Contact: Mike Johnson, phone (701) 328-6319; e-mail mjohnson@state.nd.us.
- September 1-3 2006 9th SEABIRD GROUP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, location and contact details not yet announced.
- October 3-7 2006 4TH NORTH AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS –JOINT MEETING OF AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, ASSOCIATION OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS, COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION, SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS, WATERBIRD SOCIETY & WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WITH MEXICAN HOSTS, Veracruz, Mexico. Additional ornithological societies may also participate. Contact: Charles M. Francis, National Wildlife Research Centre, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0H3; phone (613) 998-0332; e-mail charles.frankis@ec.gc.ca OR Jose Luis Cantara e-mail jlalcant@colpos.mx.

B.C. BIRDING NEWS BRIEFS

Compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

Coope, Jordison & Ryder Awarded –During the 2005 annual general meeting of the Vancouver Natural History Society, two B.C.F.O. members, Marian Coope and June Ryder, were given two of the society's most prestigious awards. Marian was awarded the Kaye and Charles Ney Award for editing the society's journal, *Discovery*, for contributing to various aspects of VNHS camps, for work in Jericho Park and for contributions as a board member. The Davidson Award for Conservation went to June for her leadership in several conservation initiatives, as well as for serving as a liason between the society's birding and conservation sections. One of five Garibaldi Awards for service to VNHS was also primarily for ornithological contributions –to Wandering Tattler Editor Laura Jordison, a member of both the Birding and Marine Biology Section committees and active participant in bird surveys. –based on J. McCall. 2005. *Vancouver Nat.* 7(2):14-15.

Cannings, Nevilles Receive Federation Awards –A highlight of the spring 2005 annual general meeting of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists in Salmon Arm was the bestowing of a regional volunteer award on B.C.F.O. members Heather and John Neville for Heather's contributions in the West Kootenays and John's many recordings of bird songs. B.C.F.O. director Richard (Dick) Cannings and his twin brother, Syd, received an even more prestigious Outstanding Naturalist award for their many publications, radio and television appearances, professional curatorial and field endeavours and participation in the work of several naturalist organizations. –based on J. Best. 2005. *B.C. Nat.* 43(2):8.

Munro Proposal Fulfilled After 83 Years –On 16 April 2005, a group of North Okanagan Naturalist Clubmembers, in cahoots with Ducks Unlimited and the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary succeeded in acquiring land at the south-east corner of the Okanagan's Swan Lake for a bird sanctuary first proposed by James Alexander Munro in 1922. –based on K. Bartholomew. 2005. *B.C. Nat.* 43(2):10. Munro was Chief Migratory Birds Officer for the four western Canadian provinces from 1920 until 1934 and for B.C. alone from 1934 to 1949.

Professorship Honours McTaggart-Cowan –A new Professorship in Biodiversity Conservation and Ecological Restoration has been established by the University of Victoria in honour of Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, co-author of both the most recent (1990-2001) four-volume treatise on British Columbia birds and its 1947 predecessor, as well as numerous other papers and notes on Alberta and B.C. birds and other wildlife. –based on J. McCall. 2005. *B.C. Nat.* 43(2):16.



Apparent Steller's Eider Decline –Birdlife International's latest assessment of the population health of the world's birds indicates that 1,212 species are threatened with extinction, a number that grows to exactly 2,000 if "Near-Threatened" species are included. One of B.C.'s "casual" species, Steller's Eider, was "uplisted" from Least Concern to Vulnerable because of "marked declines" between 1992 and 2004 in Alaska. This classification is considered provisional, however, as the possibility exists that the apparent decline reflects an eastward shift in the population of breeding birds. –based on Anonymous. 2005. *World Birdwatch* 27(2):10-11.

New Alpha Species Codes –The Institute for Bird Populations has proposed new four and six letter codes for North and "Middle" American species and subspecies, based on the 2003 and 2004 changes to species names adopted by the American Ornithologists' Union. These are the codes that will be used in the institute's MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) program and will probably be adopted by North American banding authorities. However, they may differ somewhat from those adopted by the Breeding Bird Survey and/or provincial authorities. The full list of changes is published in P. Pyle and D. F. DeSante. 2005. *North Amer. Bird Bander* 30:70-72. New codes for English names of species on the B.C. list are:

Cackling Goose	CACG	Canada Goose	CANG
Lesser Sand-Plover	LSAP	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	SBSA
Rock Pigeon	ROPI	American Three-toed Woodpecker	ATTW
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	YEWG		

Sealy Receives Speirs Award –The 2004 Doris Huestis Speirs Award for Outstanding Contributions to Canadian Ornithology was given to Dr. Spencer G. Sealy of the University of Manitoba. Although Spencer and his students have studied a wide range of topics on a wide variety of birds, his best known studies have been on alcids in Alaska and the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii) and on Brown-headed Cowbirds in Manitoba. He was the founding President of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and one of the founders of the Pacific Seabird Group. Spencer is also the current editor of *The Auk*, the journal of the American Ornithologists' Union. He has served B.C.F.O. by refereeing a journal manuscript and has had at least one manuscript in preparation for submission to *B.C. Birds* for several years. –based partly on Anonymous. *Picoides* 18(2):17-18, 2005.

James N. M. Smith –The 12 August 2005 issue of *Bird Studies Canada's* e-mail "newsletter" brought the sad news that U.B.C.'s Dr. James N. M. Smith died on 18 July 2005. They noted that Jamie had been on their council since 2003 and that he was best known for his long-term research on Song Sparrows, but he also conducted significant research on Brown-headed Cowbirds and other species. His research earned him Canada's most prestigious ornithological research award, the Doris Huestis Speirs Award of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists, in 2000 (K. Martin/A. J. Erskine. 2000. *Picoides* 13(2):22) and North America's most distinguished award for ornithological research, the Brewster Memorial Award, in 2002 (Anonymous. 2002. *Ornithol. Newsletter* 151: 1; Anonymous. 2003. *Auk* 120:231-232). For a photograph of Jamie at work, see p. 43 of "The birds of British Columbia" volume 1 by R. W. Campbell et al. (1990).

Jamie's prowess as a teacher was also recognized in the citation for the Speirs Award and by his being awarded the Kay Beamish Award of the Vancouver Natural History Society in 2003 (J. McCall. 2003. *Vancouver Nat.* 5(2):4-5). My own first encounter with him was in the home of my Ph.D. thesis supervisor, Fred C. Zwickel, on 19 October 1978, the evening before my Ph.D. thesis defense. As external examiner, Jamie offered perceptive comments and questions while simultaneously putting this student's mind at ease, an ability that must have been appreciated by his own students. I hope that a full account of his life and research, with lists of his publications and students will appear in a future issue of *B.C. Birds*.



SITE GUIDE: HARRISON BAY IN WINTER

When most people want to see Bald Eagle concentrations, they head to Squamish or perhaps Skagit. However, even though Squamish seems to get most of the press when it comes to eagles, equally amazing spectacles occur at Harrison Bay. Although the Harrison River count never beats the Squamish count, the Squamish count covers close to 100 km of river while most of the eagles at Harrison are concentrated at one site. For example, on one day in December of 2002, I counted over 1500 eagles while standing in one spot, a truly impressive sight!

The purpose of this Site Guide is to describe a few of the better birding locations around Harrison Bay in the winter. I will be highlighting the eagle-viewing possibilities.

Nicomen Slough. At Dewdney, the highway crosses Nicomen Slough. There is a dyke so that most of Nicomen Slough can be easily accessed on foot, but the best region for waterfowl is at the east end of the slough, by the Deroche bridge. From late November to March, the slough under the Deroche bridge is one of the best locations in the Lower Mainland to view Ring-necked Duck. Ten to upwards of 40 (my personal high is 47) can be viewed at one time from the bridge. Other waterfowl are also common, including Hooded Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Lesser and Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Trumpeter Swan and numerous dabblers. While driving along the highway or walking along the dyke, look out for raptors. I have seen both Gyrfalcon and Northern Goshawk while walking this dyke. Here and elsewhere, check out soaring eagles for Golden Eagles. Although immature Bald Eagles can be extremely variable, immature Golden Eagles are easily distinguished by the white band at the base of the tail and white patch at the base of the primaries. The dyke also affords closeup views of Bald Eagles, which often feast on salmon carcasses or roost in trees just a short distance away.

Harrison Bay. Shortly past Lake Errock, there is a small convenience store and trailer park from where the Scowlitz Indian Reserve shoreline can be scanned. Using a scope, I have picked up Redhead amongst the hundreds of Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-breasted and Common Merganser, Bufflehead and Greater and Lesser Scaup that congregate in the bay during October and November. Red-breasted Sapsucker frequents the trailer park. Continuing along Hwy 7, scan the shoreline for more eagles and waterfowl. I have counted over 150 Trumpeter Swans along this shoreline. A Bewick's Swan has been among them in past years. Just after Harrison Bay townsite, the highway crosses over the Harrison River. At the bridge, park the car on the shoulder and set up the scope to scan Chehalis Flats (the muddy flats visible across the bay to the north of the bridge). This is the best location to view large numbers of Bald Eagles. There are usually hundreds of Bald Eagles present, but a scope is essential. Wilson's Snipe hang out in the long grass on either side of the bridge.

Kilby Provincial Park. Just after the bridge there is a turn off to Kilby Provincial Park. The park itself affords decent views of Harrison Bay and the large number of waterfowl and eagles that use the bay. A Bald Eagle's nest can be seen by walking a few hundred metres south along the dyke. The hedgerows along the dyke can be quite good for sparrows, including crowned sparrows. I have seen Harris', White-throated and American Tree Sparrows here, in the late fall. There is also a wharf here. The best way to view the eagles at Chehalis Flats is by boat. From a canoe or power boat, eagles and other waterfowl (including the 60-100 Trumpeter Swans that are regularly in Harrison Bay) can be easily approached and photographed. They are familiar with the fishing boats that go up



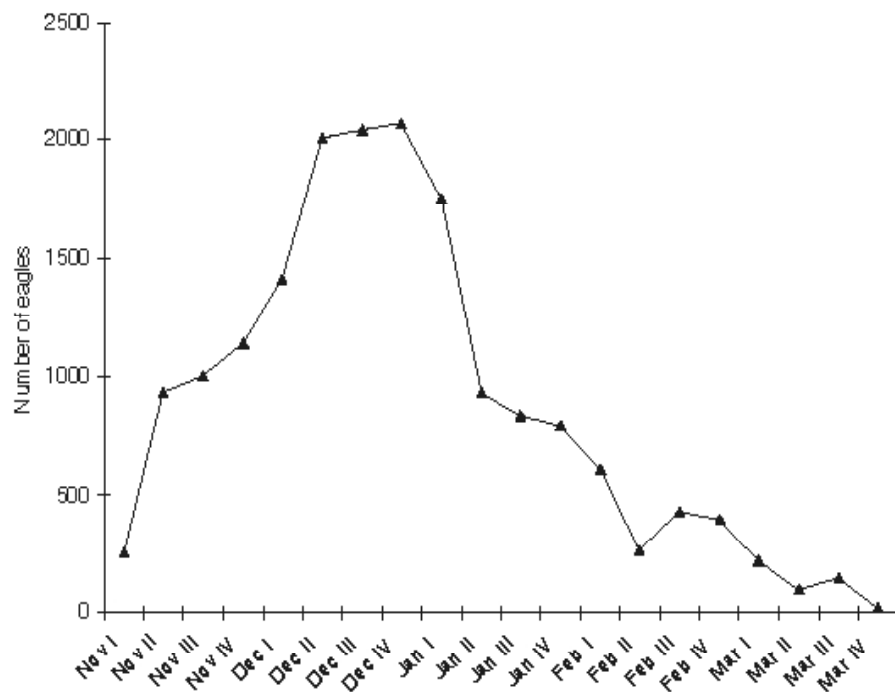
and down the river and therefore are quite tame. This also allows birders to access the many gravel bars farther up river. The Flats are an excellent location to practice aging subadult Bald Eagles; it is now routine to confidently classify them into 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th winter individuals. Both Sibley's and David Hancock's book (see Bibliography) give good illustrations or photographs, but the best source by far is William Clark's article in *Birding* (see Bibliography). Harrison Bay is quite shallow, so it is best to hug the eastern shore of the bay. Make sure to travel upstream; the Harrison River merges with the Fraser downstream, and this area can be quite dangerous for the inexperienced.

Morris Valley Road and Rowley's Golf Course. Another good route is along the Morris Valley Road (take the exit from Hwy 7 at Harrison Mills, just before the bridge). There are often dozens of eagles in the conifers at the Rowena "Sandpiper" Golf Course, and the manager is usually receptive to birders asking to walk around the golf course, as long as they stay on the trails and respect the golfers. Here, and at the adjacent housing development (make sure to respect private property and ask permission first), as well as at the Wildlife Management Area a little further down the road, are the closest vantage points to view the Chehalis Flats and the hundreds of eagles that visit the flats. The river walk at the Chehalis Hatchery can also be rewarding. Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Sapsucker and other usual forest birds can be easily seen. American Dipper can be virtually guaranteed at the Chehalis Hatchery outflow. It can be approached within a few feet and easily photographed. To reach the river follow the signs saying "River" after parking at the hatchery.

Tips on eagle-viewing. The number of eagles present at salmon streams varies greatly from year to year. The count is largely determined by the escapement (number of salmon that return to breed) and water levels. For example, 2004-2005 was a very wet year with low escapement on the Harrison, and on the eight occasions I visited that year, I never saw more than a few hundred birds. Weather in Alaska is also an important factor; in warm years, fewer birds leave Alaska or they leave much later. Also, since eagles will switch between the Skagit, Harrison and Squamish River on a daily basis, the number of salmon at other streams is also important—peak years at the Skagit coincide with low years at the Harrison and Squamish. For those interested in seeing the eagle spectacles, I've put together a graph below showing the average number of eagles I have seen at Harrison. Eagle numbers at both Squamish and Harrison peak throughout the month of December; those at the Skagit peak a little later. Generally, the best time of day to view eagles is before 11:00am, as foraging rates drop off after that time. There is a large body of literature on eagle behaviour at salmon-spawning streams which is well worth reading; I have included a few in the Bibliography below. David Hancock's book is particularly relevant to BC.

Kyle Elliott





Number of Bald Eagles counted by boat at the Harrison River averaged over 1996-97, 1997-98 and 2002-03. Generally, about one-half are visible without a boat. Many of the 1996-97 and 1997-98 counts were done by Wayne Gardner.

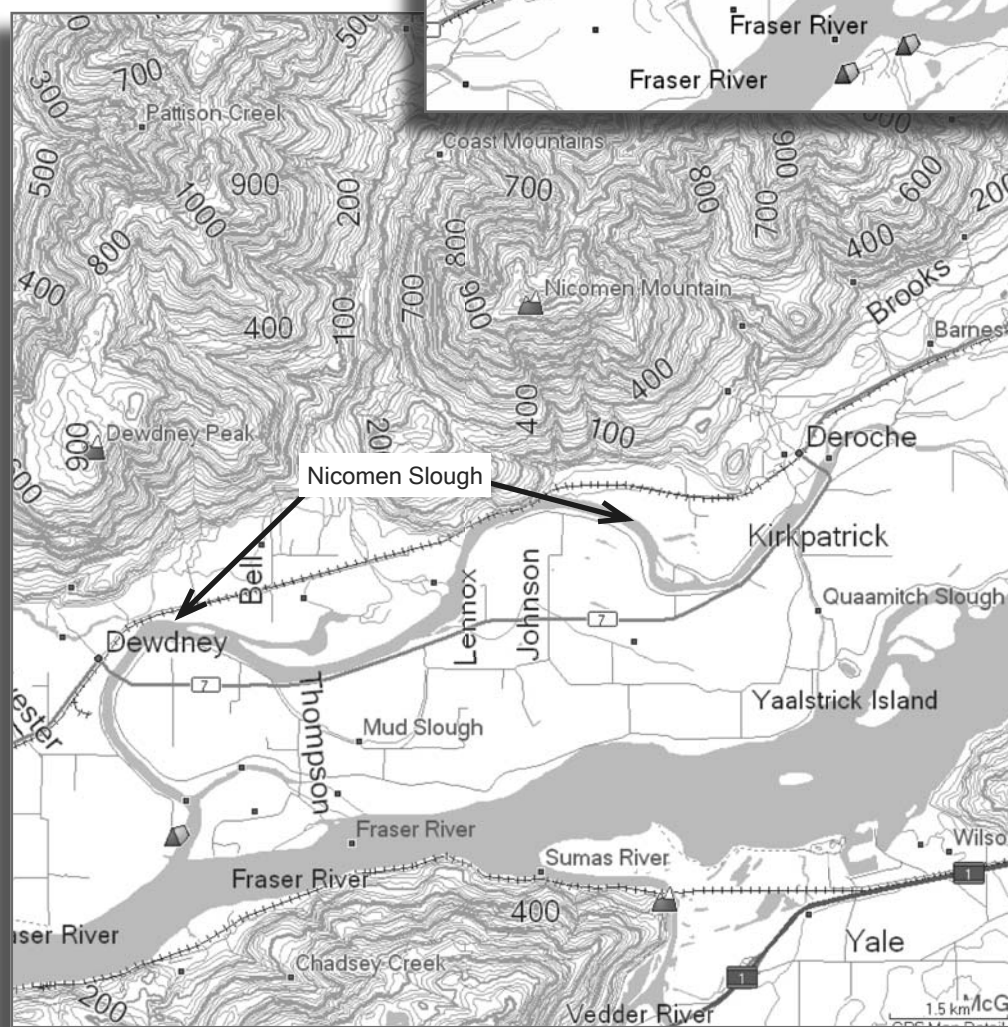
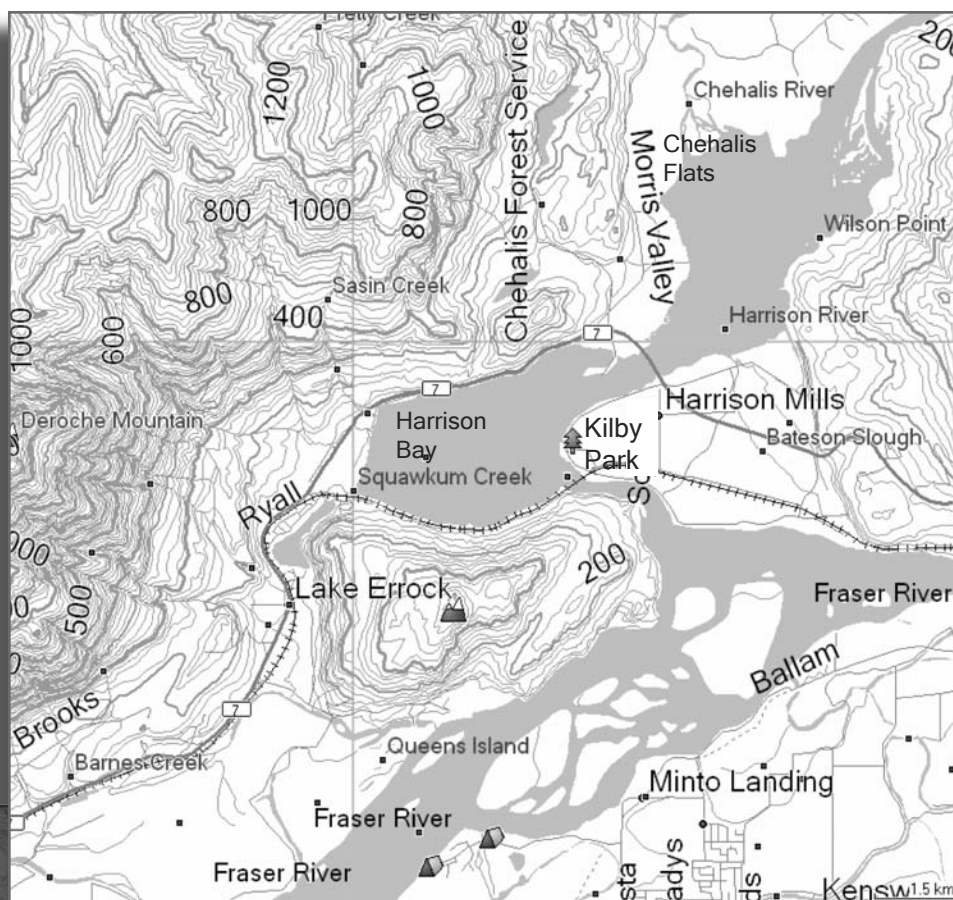
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Kyle Elliott



SITE GUIDE MAP:
Harrison Bay, East
Section



SITE GUIDE MAP:
Harrison Bay, West
Section



Birding The Boonies: Searching for Alaskan Specialties

It was a trip of a lifetime. Imagine the opportunity of finding several species of auklets, eiders, jaegers and wagtails? How about Eurasian strays? From May 23 to June 4, 2005, I had the privilege of doing just that in the Bering Sea region of Alaska.

I had dreamt of doing such a trip but it was financially out of the question until I received a small inheritance from my father. After checking out various options offered by birding tour companies, I chose to go with a small Alaskan based company, Wilderness Birding Adventures. It was offering two American Birding Association endorsed tours which could be taken one after the other. The first one was birding St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs (May 23-25) with return to Anchorage and then leaving two days later to bird Gambell and Nome (May 27- June 4).

On arriving in Anchorage on May 22, I checked into my hotel and then birded a nearby city park. Might as well start on an Alaska list! I managed to pick up a few birds, including a Common Redpoll, thus reminding me that I was now truly in the north. I also discovered a Hairy Woodpecker nest which was a hive of activity. However, the biggest surprise was running into a huge Moose in the park! Apparently this is not that unusual in Anchorage. That evening I met our guide, Aaron Lang, and the rest of our Pribilof group. Besides our Alaskan guide, we were three Americans (one each from Florida, Kansas, and Nebraska), and three Canadians, me from Abbotsford and Dorothy Copp and Brian Stech from Vancouver. It was neat to finally meet Dorothy and Brian, for up to that point I had only had some phone and email contact with them.

ST. Paul Island in the Pribilofs

Next morning we flew with a small plane (Peninsula Air) to St. Paul Island, 300 miles off the Alaska coast in the Bering Sea, arriving late afternoon. The only town on the island, also called St. Paul, is populated by some 500 Aleut Natives. All activity on the island is run by an Aleut owned corporation (TDX). Lodging is in their hotel, travel around the island is in their mini busses and guiding is by their employees (one was Gavin Bieber, who also guides for Wings Tours). As a result we had two experienced leaders on all our outings.

It was cold and windy when we landed. The first birds we saw were several Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches. These are the Bering Sea subspecies (*umbrina*) and are about 15% larger than the ones we find in BC. Having seen rosy-finches on rocky outcrops in BC mountains, it was unusual to see them fly onto airport buildings and rusty equipment. On a small pond by the runway a Eurasian Green-winged (Common) Teal was found. All this before getting our luggage!

We were driven to our lodging but on the way we stopped to scope a salt water lagoon near the town and there we found what was my first lifer of the trip, a pair of King Eiders. How appropriate since we were headed for The King Eider Hotel! The facility was very basic, small rooms, washrooms down the hall, but comfortable. My room had a sign warning us to keep our windows closed at night to keep the abundant feral cats and/or Arctic Foxes out! In the next few days we did see lots of Arctic Foxes as well as other mammals: seals, sea lions and a herd of some 500 reindeer.

Dinner was at a mess hall type of cafeteria at the airport. It was interesting to meet Brian Self of

Vancouver there. He had come with another birding tour company.

Since that far north it is daylight for basically 24 hours, after dinner we still had lots of time to bird. There was a report that Wood Sandpipers and a Common Snipe, Eurasian strays, had been seen recently near a small lake, so we went to look for them. After trudging through wetland around the lake only the sandpiper was found (a new ABA bird for all of us). We then went to another part of the island where another Eurasian stray, a Common Greenshank, had been reported a day earlier. This too we were able to find after a short search (again a new ABA bird for all).

A late evening trip to some sea cliffs gave us an amazing array of nesting birds: cormorants (Pelagic and Red-faced), murres (Common and Thick-billed), puffins (Tufted and Horned), kittiwakes (Black and Red-legged), auklets (Least, Parakeet and Crested) as well as Northern Fulmar. We also saw two Short-tailed Shearwater coursing by further out at sea. The fulmar, the Pelagic Cormorant, the Black-legged Kittiwake, the Common Murre and Tufted Puffin I had seen before. Even the Crested Auklet was not a lifer since I'd seen the one which showed up at the south end of Vancouver Island in October 2003. I thought it was marvellous to have eight new lifers in one evening. Was this a sign of things to come for the rest of our time on St. Paul? As it turned out this was not the case since the weather turned stormy. In fact it was a good thing we visited the sea cliff that evening because the winds were so bad from then on that cliff nesting birds stayed out at sea rather than attempt to land on the cliffs.

It had been windy when we arrived



and between 30-40 degrees F. The winds increased as the days progressed. It also began to rain. The last day the wind was up to 50 miles per hour. Sadly, it was from the wrong direction to bring in Eurasian strays. We needed a West wind but what we had was a North-east wind.

Stormy and foggy weather is not all that unusual on St. Paul and we were told that when it is really sunny, the elementary school shuts down so the children can enjoy a "Sun Day" to play outside!

Our second day on St. Paul was unpleasant but we kept on birding. The most common birds were Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, Rock Sandpiper and Red-necked Phalarope. Although common, it was wonderful to see them in their breeding plumage. One highlight was finding a Steller's Eider in a flock of scaup and scoters. This was my second lifer eider. I had all four on my wish list. Another Eurasian stray was found that day, a Brambling, which was new for most of the group. I had been fortunate to see a Brambling at a North Vancouver feeder in 2001.

Most passerines that show up on St. Paul stay in sheltered valleys out of the wind. There are no trees for shelter, and tundra vegetation is very short. What "trees" there are, various willow species, grow less than a foot tall. It was funny to be shown the "St. Paul Island National Forest."

This was a small group of evergreens planted by members of the US Coast Guard. However in over a decade the three or four trees that survived had hardly grown taller than when planted.

We ended up having to stay on the island an extra day because the plane which was to take us back to Anchorage could not land due to the 50 mile an hour wind. The next morning a special flight was arranged but this plane almost did not land

either (it took three tries before setting down). Needless to say that, even though we were happy that we finally had a flight out, we were nervous about the takeoff.

Although the weather had been mostly awful we did manage to see 51 species, of which 10 were lifers for me.

Gambell and Environs, St. Lawrence Island

Our next trip (on May 27) was to Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, in the Bering Sea, 37 miles from Siberia. We flew from Anchorage by Alaska Airlines to Nome. On the way we stopped in Kotzebue north of the Arctic circle. We weren't allowed off the plane so some of us birded off the ramp (saw 6 species, including Short-eared Owl). At Nome we had to transfer to a small plane (Frontier Air) for our flight to Gambell, 70 miles off the Alaska coast. We had some time to kill before our flight so we birded near the Nome airport. We picked up 29 species including a lifer for me (Eastern Yellow Wagtail). Hoary Redpolls were common.

When we arrived in Gambell we were met with a second guide for our group, James Huntingdon. He has extensive experience in Alaska. He is mentioned as a guide on the island of Attu in the fascinating book about three birders who attempt to break the ABA big year record, *The Big Year*.

The weather was similar to that on St. Pauls but not as windy and without the pelting rain. We moved into a Yupik Eskimo's home situated near the sea, so handy for the sea watch which we did each evening and morning. On a couple of clear days the mountains of Siberia were visible. Besides the hours spent at the sea watch, checking out the thousands of birds flying by constantly, you spend most of the rest of the time scouring either the Bone Yards (ancient middens which the modern

Eskimos dig into looking for fossilized bones and ivory which they use for carving), or the Boat Yard (grassy slopes along the sea where Yupik boats are stored and whale skulls and bones lie scattered around). You also hike south from the town along the base of Mount Sevuokuk to explore its rocky slopes and then head toward extensive wetlands.

The Yupik of St. Lawrence Island are more closely related to Eskimos in Siberia than to those in the rest of North America. About 300 live in Gambell. Besides being skilled hunters and fishers/sealers/whalers, many of them are also skilled artists. Each evening a number of them came to our house to show and sell their art work: dolls, masks, and especially carving of whales, seals and birds. The carvings are made of ivory or fossilized whale bone. Beautiful work and not unreasonably priced. The native people are not very forceful sales people and sometimes their methods were humorous. One man, when asked how much he wanted for a carving said, "Oh, I'll take anything between 50 and 80 dollars!"

The Yupik travel around on ATVs. There are no roads in town and there are no other vehicles. Such would be useless anyway, for other than in the bone yards, the whole area around the town consist of pea gravel which when walked on makes you feel like you are negotiating a bed of marbles. One birding tour company does use ATVs but since they are noisy and stinky the company we were with basically hoofed it.

It was neat to run into Roger Foxall and his son Andrew at Gambell. I have done a few bird chases with Roger (the Crested Auklet off Vancouver Island and the Redwing in Olympia, Washington). He had told me he wanted to take his son to pick up some Alaskan specialties and rarities, so it



was great to overlap with them for a couple of days.

On our group's first morning sea watch I added the following lifers: Emperor Goose, Common Eider (number three!) and Black Guillemot. On the evening sea watch we saw all the loon species: Red-throated, Pacific, Common, Yellow-billed and Arctic (a lifer), and both guillemots, the Black one a lifer. The next day we saw all three jaegers, and I could also add Dovekie to my ABA list. At Gambell we again found Yellow Wagtails but also a White Wagtail. It had been reported the morning of the day we arrived, but it took another day of searching before those in our group found it. Ironically, on our last full day at Gambell I located the place where it was building a nest (in the eaves of an old school building). Apparently, White Wagtails love old buildings and rusting equipment.

I enjoyed seeing the many non-specialties as well which were all in breeding plumage, unlike what I normally see in "winter garb" at Crescent Beach in Surrey, Boundary Bay and Reifel in Delta, and at Iona Island. At Gambell the Red Phalaropes and Dunlin were stunning, as were an American Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit.

Birders are not allowed to climb up Mount Sevuokuk since it is sacred to the Yupik for they "bury" their dead on its slopes. In reality, since you cannot dig into the permafrost and rock, the dead are simply put on the mountain in wooded coffins which over time break open, leaving the corpses exposed to the elements and wild creatures. We were allowed to scope the cliffs for auklet species and this is where we found the Dovekie. Also as we hiked along its base we found one of the Alaska specialties, a Northern Wheatear. Due to the North and North-east winds, the island

rarities tended to be North American birds. We found Varied and Swainson's Thrushes (remember there are no trees!). Another group found a Barn Swallow, and on our last day, a Violet-green Swallow showed up, which I believe was a first record for Gambell!

One Eurasian stray did show up in one of the bone yards, and after much tracking it was clearly identified as an Eurasian Skylark, a new ABA bird for the American birders in our group, including our guide! We Lower Mainland BC folks had of course seen the ones in Victoria, although this was a different subspecies. Scouring the bone yard also turned up another specialty, a Bluethroat, a bird we would see again north of Nome.

On one of our bone yard searches, a tour member fell into one of the diggings and sprained his leg. On a subsequent day's hike he did not go far before heading back to our lodgings. On the way an Eskimo gave him a lift on his ATV. When the Yupik realized he had a birder on board, he pointed to three Snow Geese flying overhead and told him, "See those three Snow Geese flying by? I know a call which will bring them down to us." He proceeded to make this call and the Geese landed right in front of them, to the birder's surprise and joy. However, a greater surprise was in store when the Eskimo pulled out a gun and shot all three Geese. It is understandable that the natives live off the land but this was quite a shock for our birder.

A couple of days later this Eskimo came round to our lodging to show and sell some of his art work. We engaged him in conversation as we did with all the others that came round thus hoping to learn more about their culture. I believe it was Brian Stech who asked him to demonstrate this call to us. After he did, we asked him to tell us where he had learned it.

We told him that we assumed it had been handed down from one of his ancestors. He then laughed and said, "Oh, no, I did not get it from my ancestors, I learned it from an outdoor program on TV." So much for ancient culture!

On our departure day, as we were packing up, the word came that a Red-throated Pipit had shown up in the bone yard near the airport. Boy did we hustle to get down there and try to see it before our plane arrived. Most of us ran across town, if you can call slipping and tripping on marbles, running. We joined another birding tour group and after two sweeps across the bone yard, we all got killer looks at this Alaskan specialty. I thus ended up with another 10 lifers from in and around Gambell.

Nome on the Seward Peninsula

Our next and last leg was three days of birding around Nome. When we arrived we were joined by another guide, Nan Eagleson. She told us of a recent report for Red-necked Stint in Safety Lagoon and of a Spectacled Eider in Norton Sound, both east of Nome. Never to put off a chance for rare birds, we dropped our stuff at our lodgings (large apartment rooms), left supper till later, and set out to find them. On the way I saw several lifer Aleutian Terns. We did find the stint and the eider. This meant I now had seen all four eider species as I had hoped. Not bad, three lifers the first evening in Nome! Back in town for supper I met Roger Foxall in the restaurant. He and his son had left Gambell a day or so earlier. I found out then that it was he who had discovered the Spectacled Eider!

After a good night's rest, we set out early for a target bird only found breeding north of Nome, the Bristle-thighed Curlew. It meant a 72 mile drive north along the Kougarok (Taylor) Road into the mountains. We



did not bird on the way there, for the intention was to make sure we had the curlew and then bird on the way back. In the area of what is called the Coffee Dome, we had to trudge uphill over tussock tundra to the top where the curlews nest. We heard them before we saw them. In fact we saw Whimbrels and Bar-tailed Godwits, which also nest in the area, before we saw our first curlew. We finally found four of them. Up over the hill we also located a Rock Ptarmigan which was a lifer for a number of people and we had great shows of two male Bluethroats "battling" it out for territory.

We did bird on the way back and picked up a number of passerines to add to our Alaska list. We also managed to find a couple of Northern Wheatears, for those who had missed it on Gambell. While scouring a rocky hillside for the wheatears we came across a dozen or so Musk Oxen, an added treat.

The area around Nome is badly scarred from the days of gold dredging. However, these scars have filled in with water and are now great bird breeding areas for shore birds and ducks. There is also more riparian habitat than on St. Paul or at Gambell.

On our last day we headed west of Nome in order to explore that area. We found lots of shorebirds, sandpipers and plovers, all in breeding plumage. We also explored every riparian area for Arctic Warbler which I wanted to add to my list. We had little hope since we had been told that finding them this early in the year was unlikely. However, a couple of hours before we needed to fly out of Nome, we found two early arrival Arctic Warblers. At Nome I thus got six more lifers.

All in all, my Alaskan adventure gave me a total of 150 state birds of which 26 were lifers for me.

John Vooys

BCFO AGC Conference Photographs



Guy Monty (background, spotting scope) directs the troops at the AGC Nanaimo outing.



Ian Robertson, George Clulow, Martin McNicholl, Sandra Kinsey, Jo Ann MacKenzie, Simon Liao, Eva Froese





Sandra Kinsey and Ian Robertson

Jo Ann MacKenzie



Sandra Kinsey and Dannie Carsen

Jo Ann MacKenzie



Peter Arcese and family (centre and left foreground).

Jo Ann MacKenzie





Marianne Ainley



Sandra Kinsey, Simon Liao and Jo Ann MacKenzie



Post banquet photo: partial group of participants.



Authors in this Issue

Kyle Elliot

Kyle became a birder when he first saw hundreds of thousands of broad-winged hawks kettling over Hawk Cliff in Ontario at age six. Since then, his interest in raptors has taken him to find bateleur eagles in South Africa, stay at a harpy eagle rehacking site in Panama and radio-track bearded screech-owls in Mexico. However, his favourite raptor-watching site is still Harrison Bay.

Jim Ginns

Jim is a director of the S. Okanagan Naturalists' Club, leads a birding group on Thursday mornings, and is a volunteer at the annual Meadowlark Festival.

Tony Greenfield

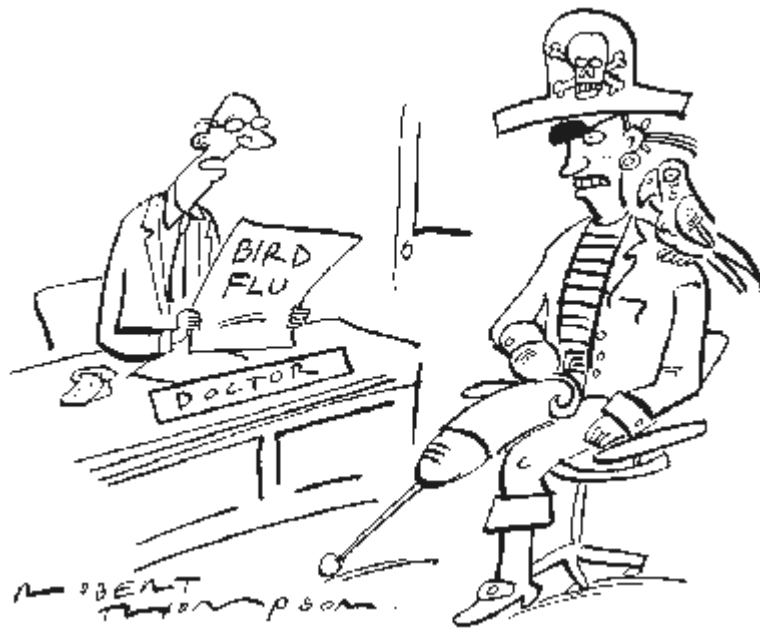
Tony Greenfield has been recording birds on the Sunshine Coast since 1971. He was a founder member of BCFO and served as President 1996-99. He was re-elected to the executive last year and values the opportunity of being involved in the future direction of BCFO.

Martin McNicholl

Martin K. McNicholl's first exposure to Vancouver Island birds was in 1962, when as a 16-year old new driver, he helped his father drive from Victoria to Campbell River to visit relatives, adding such species as Northwestern Crow to his life list en route. He came to know the island, and its birds somewhat better during the early 1970s, when he undertook studies of Blue Grouse near Courtenay for his Ph.D., and has participated in subsequent studies in the vicinity of Cobble Hill and in the Nimpkish Valley. He served on the B.C.F.O. board from 1994 until 2000.

John Vooy's

John birded for many years in his teens and early twenties. He started birding again in 2000 when he got involved in Project Feeder Watch. He is attempting to see as many ABA birds as possible, and besides Alaska, he (along with his non-birding wife) has done his own birding trips to Ontario, Manitoba, Florida and California. For the last 26 years he has worked as a Bible College professor in Abbotsford.



'Bad news, I'm afraid you're carrying it.'

From The Spectator, London; Courtesy CanWest News Service.



Birding in TAIWAN

To Portuguese sailors in the 16th century, it was *Ilha Formosa*, "Beautiful Island," because of its forested beauty. Taiwan still has beautiful forested mountains. Taiwan could also be called a "land of smiles", because of its friendly people.



Collared Bush Robin, Formosan Whistling-Thrush, Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, Yellow Tit, Flamecrest, Formosan Magpie, White-whiskered Laughingthrush, and the elegant **Swinhoe's** and **Mikado Pheasants** are some of Taiwan's 15 endemics. There are also many endemic sub-species such as Black-browed Barbet and [Taiwan] Hwamei. Other birds include Malayan Night-Heron, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Collared Finchbill, and Black-browed Barbet. On our November trips, we see the globally threatened **Black-faced Spoonbill**. **Fairy Pitta** is present only during the breeding season.

Taiwan is a safe country, with good infrastructure, a strong conservation movement, classic mountain scenery, friendly people, wonderful food, and much to offer visitors.

Come with us to enjoy the birds and culture of Taiwan!



NEXT TRIPS:

2005: November 7–16

2006: May 1–13; for Fairy Pitta and Lanyu Island

November 6–18



2005 TRIP COST: From Vancouver, BC, Canada: CAD \$3800 (sharing); CAD \$4300 (single).
From Taipei, Taiwan: CAD \$2700 (sharing); CAD \$3200 (single).
2006 TRIP COST: From Vancouver, BC, Canada: CAD \$4900 (sharing); CAD \$5400 (single).
From Taipei, Taiwan: CAD \$3800 (sharing); CAD \$4300 (single).

GROUP SIZE: 10 participants, with 2 leaders, Simon Liao and Ten-Di Wu.

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