

BC BIRDING

Newsletter of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists

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Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan receiving first B.C.F.O. Award for Ornithology from Dr. Wayne C. Weber, while Martin K. McNicholl looks on.

First B.C. Field Ornithologists Award for Ornithology

During the fourth annual general meeting of the B.C. Field Ornithologists on 14 May 1994 in Kamloops, Wayne C. Weber moved that B.C.F.O. establish an annual award to recognize significant contributions to ornithology in B.C. (Esrason 1994). I seconded the motion, and after some discussion, it was adopted. However, other priorities prevented the board from implementing the award for several years. More recently, the project was revived and a selection committee of Sandra Kinsey (then President), myself and Wayne C. Weber (Chair) was appointed. Richard J. (Dick) Cannings replaced Sandra Kinsey after the end of her term as President.

Earlier this year the B.C.F.O. board agreed with the selection committee that the B.C.F.O. Award for Ornithology should "recognize an

please see BCFO Award, page 5



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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

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Box 615, Fort Langley, BC V1M 2R9
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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

Following the 118 species I tallied on the BCFO's South Cariboo (Big Bar Ranch) extension, my birding fell into the doldrums. However, with very little chasing about I did tally 111 species in June in the Okanagan Valley, including Merlin, Sora, Wilson's Phalarope, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Black-headed Grosbeak. A pair of the latter have visited the sunflower seed feeder in our garden for each of the past four years, sometimes bringing their young. Although the general area of the nest is well-known, the nest has not been found (so no nest record card for that species). Our bluebird nest boxes were a disappointment because for the second year in a row several were vandalized by a Black Bear just when they contained eggs or young of Western Bluebirds, Mountain Chickadees and House Wrens. Another box with four dead, nearly grown young WEBL may have been the result of a hawk catching at least one of the adults (part of a wing of a male was found nearby).

It is satisfying to hear that the new BIRDS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA checklist is popular. Remember BCFO is one of three partners that produced the list and that the previous list came-out about 10 years ago.

At the Directors' meeting in Lillooet the officers for 2007-08 were selected and they are listed on the inside cover of this issue. Briefly, it is the same gang that ran the show last year. I appreciate these birders agreeing to continue to serve BCFO since all of them have very busy schedules. Their wealth of experience and broad perspectives benefit the directors' sessions.

This year several applications were submitted under the BCFO Grants program. Two \$500 grants were awarded; one to Tyler Innes to support his field work on Vancouver Island

Sandhill Cranes and the second to the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory, a migration monitoring station run by the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, to support data recording and security. Les Gyug efficiently coordinated communications with applicants and the evaluation of the proposals.

The site and dates for the 2008 AGM are under negotiation. Three sites are being considered: Valemont, Salmon Arm and Creston.

Some changes have occurred in the operation of BCFO. Krista De Groot turned over the title of librarian and the library to Andy Buhler. Krista for several years has very efficiently run the library and, on behalf of all of us, I extend sincere thanks! The Buhlers have relinquished the job of Production Editors for our journal, *BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS*. Most of us probably look at the journal when it arrives and "say" something like "Very nice!" without knowing all the behind the scenes work that goes into producing each issue. Having been the Managing Editor (2000-2004) of another scientific journal (six 200 page issues a year) I can assure you that a lot of careful, meticulous effort is behind the copy that appears in the mail. Marilyn and Andy deserve a loud three cheers from the membership for the fine job they have done!! Neil Dawe has kindly agreed to handle the duties of the Production Manager.

At the Lillooet AGM, Peter Davidson and Dick Cannings of Bird Studies Canada introduced us to the *BRITISH COLUMBIA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS* project. You will be hearing a lot more about the project and how you can GET INVOLVED! Subsequently BCFO was invited to sit on the steering committee and Kevin Bell is our representative with Jude Grass

temporarily serving as alternate. If you would like to work on the planning and implementation of the Atlas as our alternate please contact Kevin or Jude.

A final comment, most of us have succumbed to a greater or lesser degree to the technology tsunami. But is technology ruining birding? CBC2 radio reported (September 10) that birders are placing cell phones along their owl survey routes. Then from the comfort of home dial each phone and play owl calls and listen over the phone for replies! There goes all the fun of standing out in the cold and rain or snow or sleet and trying to hear over the barking of the local canines that we aroused.

Jim Ginns, President



INTERNET SOURCES

BCFO

<http://www.bcfo.ca>

Alaska Bird Observatory

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

Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies

<http://www.wildlifebc.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

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

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

British Columbia Conservation Data Centre

Information on plants, animals and ecosystems at risk in British Columbia.

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cdc/>

eBird Canada

Online interactive program for storing, sharing, sorting and assembling bird sightings.

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

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

Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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

Rocky Point Bird Observatory

<http://www.islandnet.com/~rpbo/index.html>

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/>

BCFO RESEARCH GRANTS

BCFO encourages submissions of proposals for financial assistance for bird surveys and other ornithological research. It also wishes to foster greater connection between applicants and the society. Potential applicants are reminded that

1. requests for funding must be for planned, rather than completed, projects.
2. under normal circumstances, applicants should be, or be willing to become, members of BCFO.
3. projects and their results are to be reported in BCFO's journal, *BC Birds*.
4. in order for BCFO directors to give a timely response to project proposals, deadlines for submission are January 1 and July 1.
5. all reasonable requests will be considered within the limits of the society's financial strength.

BCFO NEW MEMBERS SINCE LAST ISSUE

Colin R. Campbell
Victoria

Marg Fowler
Courtenay

Mark Haldas
Vancouver

Lee Harding
Coquitlam

Eleanor Wright
Lillooet

Editor's Notes and Notions

On a recent visit to the UBC Herbarium Linda Jennings, the vascular plants Collection Manager, asked me if I knew of a Cowan, a McTaggart-Cowan, whose name marked a specimen sheet she was examining. I told her it must be Ian McTaggart-Cowan and mentioned the award which the BCFO presented to him and the article that Martin McNicholl had written for the occasion. I promised to send her the article. If I recall correctly the specimen sheet indicated that the plant had been collected in the 1950's in Scotland. I could provide no additional information about this collection; in my mind Dr. McTaggart-Cowan is so firmly entrenched in the British Columbia natural history landscape (*sensu lato*) that I had never considered a connection to Scotland, other than the obvious connection suggested by his surname. Now I'm curious.

In addition to the article on Dr. McTaggart-Cowan, Martin McNicholl provides his usual roundup of news and upcoming meetings and events. Ken Wright, Ian Routley and Jeff O'Kelly take us back to the field trips of the AGM in Lillooet and Neil Dawe provides an insightful and entertaining article on birding and relaxing in the South Pacific. Dick Cannings and Pete Davidson provide details of a bird atlas for BC and Don Cecile summarizes noteworthy spring sightings from around the province.

As noted by our President Jim Ginns, Andy and Marilyn Buhler have handed over the duties of producing our journal *BC Birds* to Neil Dawe. Andy and Marilyn have done a splendid job and have been instrumental in the success and persistence of the BCFO through their efforts on the journal and through editing this newsletter for so many years. This is a well deserved break although I see that Andy has taken on the task of looking after the BCFO library, which was no doubt left in excellent shape by the departing Krista DeGroot.

Phil Henderson, Editor



Ornithologists Award cont. from cover

individual who has made significant contributions over a long period of time to ornithology in British Columbia in any one or more of three areas:

1. Research on bird biology or ecology or detailed documentation of the avifauna of a portion of B.C.
2. Conservation of birds or bird habitats in B.C.
3. Public education about birds in B.C.”

In discussing possible candidates for the award, I commented that numerous people are well deserving of such an award on one or more of those grounds, but that one particular candidate, Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, should receive the inaugural award for the following reasons:

1. He is the only co-author of both of the two most recent (1947 and 1999-2001) scientifically authoritative treatises on the birds of British Columbia.
2. He qualifies as an award recipient on ALL three grounds.
3. He not only qualifies in all three categories, but has contributed substantially to all three at B.C., Canadian and World levels.

The other members of the awards committee and subsequently the B.C.F.O. board agreed with this nomination.

Ian McTaggart-Cowan's initial research was primarily on systematics and distribution, as exemplified by his publication with James A. Munro of his first treatise on British Columbia's birds, by several similar works on avifauna or avifauna and mammals in Alberta and B.C., including works on Kootenay National Park, the Peace River area, the Queen Charlotte Islands

and Mount Revelstoke National Park and by his naming of a distinct race of the White-tailed Ptarmigan. He was also co-author with Charles J. Guiguet of a 1965 treatise on the mammals of British Columbia, considered “the most outstanding provincial handbook on mammals” in Canada over two decades after publication (Smith 1981).

Although known to birders as a distinguished ornithologist, Dr. Cowan's interests and expertise are much broader, and his 1936 PhD thesis from the University of California at Berkeley was on deer, not birds. He is considered an authority on birds, mammals and malacology. His research interests expanded from systematics and distribution more towards behaviour and ecology. While he continued to author or co-author papers and notes on bird distribution and taxonomy, others in his seven decades of contributions appeared on anatomy, brood mixing, disease, foods, out-of-season occurrences, parasites and population dynamics in waterfowl, gallinaceous birds, shorebirds, owls and finches. The Society of Canadian Zoologists formally recognized his contributions by bestowing its Fry Medal on him in 1976, he is one of the recipients of the Alberta Society of Professional Biologists' J. Dewey Soper Awards for significant contributions to biology and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists bestowed its 1998 Doris Huestis Speirs Award for lifetime contributions to Canadian ornithology on him during their annual general meeting in Vancouver.

Dr. Cowan's research has not been confined to “academic” or “pure science” topics, but has also been directed at solving conservation problems by applying scientific findings to them. According to Bill

Turner of the Land Conservancy of B.C., Bert Brink and Ian McTaggart-Cowan are the two living pioneers of this approach in B.C. (Knox 2007). McTaggart-Cowan has served in numerous advisory roles in mitigating the effects of several major “development” projects and managing national parks in Canada and elsewhere, and is credited with influencing the abolishment of the bounty system, first in B.C., and ultimately in Canada generally and with the shift in government agencies to apply ecological principles to hunting and trapping regulations. He also played a significant role in persuading government departments to hire trained biologists for wildlife management positions and in the establishment and work of The Land Conservancy of B.C. and of The Nature Trust of B.C. In 1970, he was selected by the Wildlife Society for its Leopold Medal for “his leading role in promoting the application of ecological knowledge to the management of biological resources.” At the World level, he served as a Vice-President of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. He has served on the boards of numerous local, provincial, national and international naturalist and conservation organizations and was the eighth person to be profiled in the prestigious international scientific journal *Biological Conservation*. Recently, the University of Victoria established the Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan Professorship in Biodiversity Conservation and Ecological Restoration to continue his pioneering efforts.

Just as Dr. Cowan's interests in birds and other wildlife were kindled and mentored by such notable naturalists as Hamilton M. Laing, Tom McCabe, J. A. Munro and Kenneth Racey



(eventually his father-in-law) and his PhD supervisor, the legendary Dr. Joseph Grinnell, Dr. Cowan in turn served as a distinguished mentor or “primary influence” (e.g. Mitchell 2005) to about 100 graduate students, several of whom have had outstanding careers in government institutions, museums and universities. His formal educational endeavours included teaching at the university level (University of British Columbia), where he also served as a department head (zoology) and dean (graduate studies). After “retirement,” he served as Chancellor at the University of Victoria. The citation for his 1970 Leopold Award referred to him “as a pioneer in wildlife management education.” He also contributed substantially to “public” education in his first post-graduate position at the B.C. Provincial Museum for five years and through extensive public lecturing in person and on television (another of his pioneering efforts). He was described as a “mesmerizing speaker,” with people sitting in the aisles to listen to him (Valastin 2005).

In addition to the awards already mentioned, his many contributions to conservation, ecology, mammalogy, natural history and ornithology through formal and public education and through scientific study have been recognized through several honorary positions (such as Honorary President of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists), honorary doctorates from several universities, numerous awards (including being named an Officer of the Orders of British Columbia and Canada and recipient of Canadian Centennial and Queen Elizabeth Jubilee medals), inclusion in several encyclopedias and biographical dictionaries and being named an honorary life member of several organizations. At least three additional scholarships and one building bear his name.

This inaugural award to Dr. Cowan was announced by B.C.F.O. President Jim Ginns during the banquet of the 17th annual general meeting in Lillooet on 26 May 2007. Dr. Neil K. Dawe accepted the plaque on Dr. Cowan’s behalf (Ginns 2007). On 8 July 2007, committee chair Wayne C. Weber, B.C.F.O. Treasurer Andrew C. Stewart and I visited Dr. Cowan in Victoria to present the award formally (Figure 1) during a very pleasant visit during which his geologist son-in-law, Mikkel Schau, served refreshments.

A more detailed biographical account with more details on his research and other contributions, a more complete list of previous awards and honours and a list of his ornithological publications will be submitted to *B.C. Birds*. I would welcome anecdotes from readers of field outings with him or indications of how his lectures and/or writings influenced their careers.

B.C.F.O. members are also invited to nominate candidates for future awards to the chair of the selection committee, Dr. Wayne C. Weber. All nominations will be considered by the committee and if your nominee is not chosen one year, it will be retained for consideration in the following years.

Martin K. McNicholl

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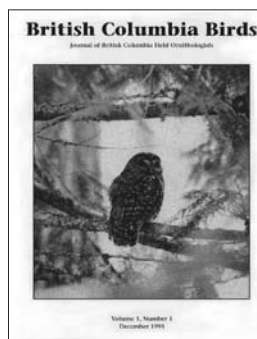
Questionnaire to Elective Members and Fellows of American Ornithologists' Union for AOU Centennial filled out by Ian McTaggart-Cowan and sent to M. K. McNicholl as member of AOU Committee on Biography in 1983.

BACK ISSUES OF BCFO NEWSLETTERS AND JOURNALS AVAILABLE

If you are missing past issues of BC Birding or British Columbia Birds you can purchase most volumes by contacting the people listed below. Back issues of the journal British Columbia Birds can be acquired for \$5.00/ea or the BC Birding newsletter for \$2.00/ea (prices include postage) from the following people.

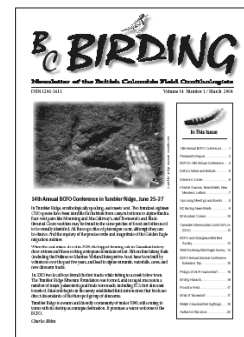
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For newsletters contact:

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All journal back issues are currently available, except for Volume 8 of British Columbia Birds which is out of print. Please pre-pay your order by cheque or money order made out to BC Field Ornithologists.

Journal Articles On-line All feature articles and notes published in Volumes 1 – 13 of British Columbia Birds are available from our website www.bcfo.ca. Articles can be down-loaded individually as PDF files using Adobe Reader, version 5 or greater.

Upcoming Meetings & Events

compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

The following meetings and other events are those that take place in B.C. and immediately adjacent areas or that potentially include information on birds that occur in B.C. Information on additional meetings are listed in the bimonthly Ornithological Newsletter and, for readers with inter-net access, on BIRDNET at www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/BIRDMEET.html.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| October 4-7 2007 | PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP SPECIAL CONFERENCE, Lukang, Taiwan. Contact details not yet published; Inter-net details: http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/ and http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/downloads/PSG_1stannouncement_SIM2007.pdf . |
| October 11-14 2007 | B.C. NATURE (FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS) FALL GENERAL MEETING & CONFERENCE, Harrison Hot Springs. Contact: Heather Larstone, 4483 Wilson Rd., Yarrow, B.C. V2R 5C5; no phone number published; e-mail: heddy@telus.net . |
| October 11-14 2007 | WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING, Petaluma and Point Reyes National Seashore, CA. Contact: Diana Humple, PRBO Conservation Science, Box 1157, Bolinas, CA 94924-1127; no phone number published; e-mail: dhumple@prbo.org . |
| October 30-
3 November 2007 | 31ST ANNUAL MEETING, WATERBIRD SOCIETY, Barcelona, Spain. Contact: Xavier Ruiz, Dept. de Biologia Animal, Universitat de Barcelona, Avda. Diagonal 645, 08028, Barcelona, Spain; phone number not yet published; e-mail: fruibz@ub.edu . |
| October 31-
4 November 2007 | WORLD OWL CONFERENCE, Groningen, The Netherlands. Contact details not yet published. Inter-net details: http://www.worldowlconference.com . |
| February 13-16 2008 | 4TH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT CONFERENCE, McAllen, Texas. Contact: Terry Rich, 5815 Peachtree St., Boise, ID 83703-3125; phone (208) 378-5347; e-mail: terry_rich@fws.gov . |
| March 4-7 2008 | 12TH BIENNIAL ALASKA BIRD CONFERENCE, Fairbanks, Alaska. Contact: Nancy DeWitt, Alaska Bird Observatory, Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK 99708; phone (907) 451-7059; e-mail: ndewitt@alaskabird.org . |
| April 18-20 2008 | 2008 ANNUAL MEETING, WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY & ASSOCIATION OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS, Mobile, Alabama. Contact: Frank Moore, Dept. of Biol. Sciences, Univ. of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Dr., Box 5018, Hattiesburg, MS 39406; phone (601) 266-4748; e-mail: Frank.Moore@usm.edu . |
| May 12-15 2008 | CONFERENCE ON SPENT LEAD AMMUNITION: IMPLICATIONS FOR WILDLIFE AND HUMANS, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho. Contact [no individual named]: The Peregrine Fund, 5668 West Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, ID; phone (208) 362-3716. |
| May 29-31 2008 | B.C. NATURE SPRING 2008 CONFERENCE, Penticton, B.C. Contact details not yet published. |
| August 1-8 2008 | NATURE CANADA CONFERENCE, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Contact details not yet published. |
| August 6-9 2008 | 126th STATED MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING & SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS ANNUAL MEETING, Portland, Oregon. Contact information not yet announced. |



- September 22-28 2008 RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Missoula, Montana. Contact: Kate Davis, Raptors of the Rockies, Box 250, Florence, MT 59833; phone (406) 829-6436; e-mail: raptors@montana.com.
- November 10-14 2008 THIRD NORTH AMERICAN SEA DUCK CONFERENCE, Quebec, Que. Contact: Michel Robert [address not yet published]; phone (418) 649-8071; e-mail: michel.robert@ec-gc.ca.
- September 29- RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Pitlochry,
- October 4 2009 Scotland. Contact: Ruth Tingay [address and phone number not yet published], e-mail: dimlylit100@hotmail.com.

Thanks to Jo Ann MacKenzie for contributing to this issue of this compilation.

B.C. Birding News Briefs

Compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

Arnold Code—After losing Brenda Code on 5 December 2006 [see B.C. Birding 17(1):14, 2007], Langley Field Naturalists lost her father, Arnold, on 15 June 2007 (e-mail from Annabel Griffiths to LFN members 15 June 2007). As noted by Phil Henderson (Langley Field Naturalists Newsletter June 2007:4), Arnold was a passionate naturalist and photographer. He served on the board of LFN for several years, led field trips and showed slides of birds, plants and other natural history subjects during most “member’s nights.”

Birders Honoured—Most of the recipients of 2007 Vancouver Natural History Society volunteer awards are at least casual birders. Two are B.C.F.O. members who attend annual meetings frequently. Larry Cowan was given a Kay Beamish Award for Nature Recognition for his many years of leading birding field trips and his decade of managing the Vancouver Rare Bird Alert. He is also a former chair of the club’s Birding Section. Viveka Ohman received a Garibaldi Service Award for her many years of leading field trips, as well as service to the board and to the birding and marine biology sections. Many birders also know her as coordinator of the White Rock Christmas Bird Count—based on J. McCall. 2007. Vancouver Naturalist 9(2):6-7.

Education at Reifel—A recent grant from Wild Birds Unlimited sponsors 500 Greater Vancouver school children to join the education program of the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary this fall -based on Anonymous. 2007. Marshnotes 2007:11.



LILLOOET BCFO AGM FIELD TRIP REPORTS

The BCFO held its 17th Annual AGM May 25-27, 2007 in the community of Lillooet. It was hosted by the Lillooet Naturalists Society and the Lillooet Friendship Centre and Miyazaki Heritage House kindly provided suitable venues for the indoor portion of the weekend.

This is the first BCFO meeting to occur in southwestern British Columbia's Fraser Canyon. Lillooet lies on the eastern edge of the Coast Range Mountains (some reaching nearly 3000 m) which form a dramatic backdrop to this picturesque landscape.

These mountains sponge most of the moisture from Pacific storm systems leaving Lillooet in a powerful rainshadow zone. Here a rich blend of birds with dry interior and coastal affinities awaits the naturalist.

Over the weekend seven field trips to four different areas were lead by six enthusiastic field trip leaders (Olivia Flynn-Gomez, Maria Mascher, Kim North, Jeff O'Kelly, Ian Routley, Ken Wright). Sixty-five keen participants were in attendance.

Curlew Field - Tom Cole Road

The Curlew Field-Tom Cole Road field trip covered the benches along Highway 99 on the east side of the Fraser River between Lillooet and Pavilion as well as the adjacent steep Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-Fir slopes. Our first stop afforded a dramatic view over of the Bridge River confluence where a pair of Common Mergansers were swimming. We then drove a short ways up the highway to a ten-year old burn. Here we found Calliope Hummingbirds, Lazuli Buntings, Nashville Warblers, Spotted Towhees and an assortment of other birds that thrive in regenerative habitats. The next stop was at the Tom Cole Road turnoff where Dick Cannings and company

sighted a Eurasian Collared-Dove in the heavy sagebrush. Several stops were made as we climbed the steep gravel road through mature Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-Fir. We were treated to Western Tanagers, Mountain Chickadees, and a pair of Chukars. A White-breasted Nuthatch, a rather uncommon bird in the Lillooet area, flew in to the imitation of a pygmy-owl. Many Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers and Dark-eyed Juncos were in attendance.

Eventually we found ourselves surrounded in a carpet of blooming yellow Arrowleaf Balsamroot in an old burn on the slopes of the Clear Range. Several of us were treated to a good view of Red-naped Sapsucker and Clark's Nutcracker. The highlight for most was Dusky Grouse, a recent taxonomic split from Blue Grouse. On the Sunday outing, a male in full display (see photo last issue) was most cooperative and allowed the entire group fine views of this dramatic breeding ritual. We drove on as far as the snow would allow and added Hermit Thrush to the roster before descending back to the dry benchlands below.

We spent the remainder of this field trip at an area locally known as "Curlew Field". Luckily, it lived up to its name and everyone either heard or had reasonable looks at a Long-billed Curlew as it flew around proclaiming its territory. The Rock Wren and White-throated Swifts that traditionally inhabit this area were not so cooperative, however. As a consolation, we were rewarded by a Clay-coloured Sparrow—first record for the Lillooet area—that was singing away in a dry gully. Several people had good views of this scarce dry-country sparrow. Western Meadowlarks and Vesper Sparrows sang away during our visit. A big Black Bear ambled down the road towards us as we slowly drove along the field only realizing our existence at about 100 m away!

The weather was most cooperative on Saturday with mainly overcast skies and light winds. Sunday's field trip began in similar fashion but ended in a heavy shower, giving us a good soaking—not exactly rainshadow conditions!



Ken Wright



Fountain Valley

Fountain Valley was, as always, very productive for birds. After sharing a common area with the folk heading on to Tom Cole we began our ascent along Fountain Valley road. The first stop, locally referred to as Veery corner, didn't disappoint, although there were more vireos and Cedar Waxwings.

The next stop was not a planned stop, but as a Gray Catbird sat out in plain view, oblivious to the large group of birders clustering around, it was included. It put in a similar performance for the group the second day along with a Say's phoebe.

Further up the road we stopped on an overlook that provides excellent mixed riparian habitat for Western Tanagers, Cassin's and Warbling vireos and warblers. We had good looks at Western Tanagers, as well as Nashville, MacGillivray's and Townsend's warblers. The Townsend's was a lifer for a few folk on the second day. Both Hammond's and Dusky flycatchers sang in tandem the first day and a Barred Owl announced his presence although he didn't make an appearance.

The three lakes in the valley provided a fair sampling of waterfowl. The



Ken Wright

Horned grebe was seen at Chilhil Lake along with lots of comical male Ruddy Ducks. Cinquefoil Lake, the last lake in the valley is in transition since the removal of its old 1940's earthen damn. With a more constant water level, Common Cattail has become more plentiful and provides improved habitat for Common Yellowthroat, Sora and Virginia Rail. All three species were seen or heard over the two days.

Red-breasted Sapsucker is extremely rare in our area. However, one had been seen at the far end of Cinquefoil Lake and it was hoped it would appear during the field trips. It kindly complied on the first day. However

on the second day, my birding skills were called into question after I had convinced the group to trudge through the pouring rain to the site and a Red-naped Sapsucker appeared. Fortunately it was closely followed by the Red-breasted, and with a little sleuthing by the group we discovered its nest hole. As far as we know this is the first attempted breeding record for our area.

Our total number of species was 79 on day one and 78 on day two. Despite the poorer weather the second day the birds still showed up. Although we didn't add any new species to the Lillooet checklist it was still had an enjoyable morning birding despite the rain on the second day.

Seton River - Cayoosh Creek

The Seton-Cayoosh corridor field trip was only conducted on Saturday, May 26. We began our outing at Seton Lake where a Common Loon was spotted quite close to the shore. Nearby a pair of Mountain Bluebirds were active, frequently perching on electrical wires overhead. Shortly after our arrival a Gray Catbird began singing and soon flew into a shrub with sparse vegetation where it afforded excellent views as it continued singing. The cheery song of White-



Ken Wright

crowned Sparrows provided a steady background to our stay at Seton Lake.

Our next stop was the trail which leads to the Cayoosh Creek waterfall. Here we began our viewing with a cluster of Harlequin Ducks on the Seton hydro canal. Our main objective on this stop was to find Black-throated Gray Warblers and we were soon amply rewarded by a chase involving three individuals. Their display was fairly lengthy and mostly conducted at or just above eye level providing everyone with excellent views, and without causing the usual cases of "Warbler Neck" that follow when viewing this species. Through the rest of the walk we heard and saw Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Nashville and MacGillivray's warblers. Hammond's Flycatchers were frequently heard and occasionally seen. As our elevation rose from the riparian forest into conifers, we heard the ethereal song of Swainson's Thrushes. One "obstacle" to birding by ear on this portion of the trip was the constant calling of Evening Grosbeaks. What seemed like thousands of these birds had moved into the area a couple of weeks earlier and they could be seen or heard almost anywhere there were trees.

We next proceeded to the Seton River upper spawning channels. This stop did not yield any new species, but it was a chance for a welcome snack and some group photos. While snacking, we enjoyed observing Mountain Goats on the cliffs across the river, a Black Bear walking along the railroad tracks and a Yellow-bellied Marmot perched on a rock near the river's edge.

Our final stop of the morning was the lower spawning channels on Seton River. By this time, the sky had clouded over and a brisk breeze had come up which diminished the amount of song we could hear. Nevertheless, it was fascinating as always to observe the individual variations in song from the many Song Sparrows who breed in this spot. We only saw about 40 species on the field trip but felt quite satisfied and particularly happy with the display from the Black-throated Gray Warblers.

Texas Creek Road

This field trip took place on both days of the weekend but I can only report on the Sunday trip as I was on the Seton-Cayoosh corridor trip the previous day. The Texas Creek Road field trip was conducted (with

Species List: AGM Field Trips

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Cinnamon Teal
Northern Shoveler
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Lesser Scaup
Harlequin Duck
Barrow's Goldeneye
Common Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Chukar
Ruffed Grouse
Dusky Grouse
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Golden Eagle
American Kestrel
Merlin
Virginia Rail
Sora
American Coot
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Long-billed Curlew
Wilson's Snipe
Eurasian Collared Dove
Mourning Dove
Barred Owl
Common Nighthawk
Vaux's Swift
Calliope Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Lewis's Woodpecker
Red-naped Sapsucker
Red-breasted Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Western Wood-Pewee
Hammond's Flycatcher
Dusky Flycatcher
Say's Phoebe
Western Kingbird
Eastern Kingbird
Cassin's Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Steller's Jay
Clark's Nutcracker



Ken Wright



Black-billed Magpie
 American Crow
 Common Raven
 Tree Swallow
 Violet-green Swallow
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 Bank Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Mountain Chickadee
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Pygmy Nuthatch
 Marsh Wren
 Golden-crowned Kinglet
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Townsend's Solitaire
 Veery
 Swainson's Thrush
 Hermit Thrush
 American Robin
 Varied Thrush
 Mountain Bluebird
 Gray Catbird
 European Starling
 Cedar Waxwing
 Orange-crowned Warbler
 Nashville Warbler
 Yellow Warbler
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Black-throated Gray Warbler
 Townsend's Warbler
 MacGillivray's Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Wilson's Warbler
 Yellow-breasted Chat
 Western Tanager
 Spotted Towhee
 Chipping Sparrow
 Clay-coloured Sparrow
 Vesper Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Golden-crowned Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Black-headed Grosbeak
 Lazuli Bunting
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Western Meadowlark
 Yellow-headed Blackbird
 Brewer's Blackbird
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Bullock's Oriole
 Cassin's Finch
 House Finch
 Pine Siskin
 Evening Grosbeak
 House Sparrow

Total Species: 124

permission of course) mostly on a private property where fields of grass, sagebrush and Common Rabbit-Bush cover an uneven terrain with low rises and shallow depressions. The depressions have enough water to make small ponds in the spring and there is also an artificial pond with large quantities of cattails. We began with the artificial pond which yielded several species of ducks including Ruddy and Ring-necked. The Red-winged Blackbirds were singing and calling constantly, nearly obscuring the song of a Yellow-headed Blackbird in a dense clump of reeds on the far side of the pond. All six of our area's swallow species put in appearances. At this point, two members of our party returned to where we had parked as one of them was on a motorized scooter and the uneven terrain was proving to be a serious obstacle. There they patiently waited for 2-1/2 hours while the rest of us made a wide loop around the property. As we were to discover, they proved that good things come to those who wait.

The "target" bird on this expedition was a Yellow-breasted Chat which had been heard and seen the day before. For those of us from Lillooet, this was particularly exciting as it was our first record of this bird in the area. Our investigation of the area where it had been seen proved fruitless, but along the way we saw many American Kestrels, as well as a Merlin and we were serenaded by the frequent songs of Western Meadowlarks.

We finally emerged on the road a few hundred yards from where we were parked and gradually made our way back to the cars, only to discover that the two members of our party who had been waiting so patiently had been enjoying the song and occasional views of a Yellow-breasted Chat for about half an hour. We ended up spending at least half an hour standing right where we had parked trying to get a

good look at the Chat. Occasionally we heard it sing, but it was concealed in a dense thicket and only a couple of members of the party got good looks at it. The rest of us only had brief glimpses of its silhouette as it flitted about in the thicket. Eventually, increasing rain forced us to end our trip but not before having seen or heard some 70 species between us.

Combining all field trips and a few other casual observations produced an impressive total of 124 species (see preceding inset and last issue for more details)! Three new species were added to the Lillooet checklist (Eurasian Collared-Dove, Yellow-breasted Chat, Clay-coloured Sparrow) raising the total to 234 species.

We would like to extend a big word of thanks to Vivian Birch Jones (Lillooet Naturalist Society) for taking on the BCFO meetings and making it happen! We would also like to give special thanks to the BCFO for giving a generous contribution of \$500.00 to the Lillooet Naturalists Society. Also, we are very happy that the BCFO adopted the position statement on the steady state economy while in Lillooet. On behalf of the Lillooet Naturalists Society, we are very happy to have hosted the BCFO in Lillooet! It is our hope that you will consider visiting Lillooet again in the near future.

Ken Wright, Ian Routley and Jeff O'Kelly

Some birds of the South Pacific



Rarotonga, Cook Islands, looking south. Avarua, the National Capital of the Cook Island lies landward of the cruise ship.

Some 3400 km northeast of New Zealand lies the Cook Islands, a cluster of 15 volcanic islands and coral atolls isolated in the South Pacific.

My wife, Renate and I had the good fortune of visiting two of the islands in April 2006, shortly after I had retired from the Canadian Wildlife Service. Being a group of small islands and atolls, the avifauna of the Cook Islands is somewhat depauperate with only 50 species (LePage 2007). Before we left, I had determined that with luck, and based on the time of year, we might be able to get 21 species (including three endemics) on the two islands we'd planned to visit. So birds are obviously not the only reason to go there.

After a 12 h flight from Los Angeles, with a brief stopover at Papaete, Fiji (where we got our first look at a Common Mynah, *Acridotheres tristis*), Rarotonga, the largest of the Cook Islands, appeared through the clouds.

Rarotonga lies roughly the same distance south of the equator as Hawaii does north. It is the emergent summit of a Pliocene-Pleistocene volcanic

complex, 32 km in circumference, covering an area of 67 km², built by effusive and pyroclastic eruptions (Thompson et al. 1998). Its steep, mountains are clothed in a thick carpet of forest and fernland ranging from disturbed forest at the lower elevations through to the cloud forest above 400 m. Most of the development on Rarotonga is confined to the island's perimeter and extends only about a kilometre inland. An extensive coral reef with its attendant, exquisitely-turquoise, tropical fish-filled lagoon surrounds much of the island.

We landed at Avarua, a city of around 10,000 people on the north side of the island. We had rented a private beach cottage and on our way to Avaavaroa, on the south side of the island, we glimpsed our first Cook Island birds Common Mynas and Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*) both introduced and common in the developed areas and beaches of the island. Feral populations of the Red Junglefowl were also present in the mountain forests of the island.

Once we settled in to what would be our home for the next week, we moved out to the front deck, and under Coconut Palms (*Cocos nucifera*) swaying in the trade winds, we sipped wine, searched the lagoon for birds, and listened to the roar of the surf as it pounded the coral reef some 600 metres offshore; birding at its best.

A Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*) worked its way along the beach feeding on ghost crabs (likely *Ocypode laevis*), while White Terns (*Gygis alba*) flew overhead, occasionally landing in the large Pacific Ironwood trees (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) that were intermingled amongst the palms along the shore. Both birds are ubiquitous along the Rarotongan coast. The tern was often found inland as well, where many nested along with White-tailed Tropicbirds (*Phaethon lepturus*) that we glimpsed from considerable distance.

Over the next few days we were awakened regularly each morning by crowing junglefowls. We found the dark phase of the Reef Heron (*Egretta*





Neil Dawe

The Common Mynah, a common, introduced species on the Cook Islands.

sacra), a fairly common species, feeding intertidally, flying out to the reef, or striding the beaches. Pacific Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*) loafed at one of the few estuaries on the island, and we glimpsed a Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Udynamis taitensis*) amongst the thick Red Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosasinensis*) shrubs that frequent the shoreline. This was the only time we saw this secretive species although we heard it occasionally. The cuckoo breeds in New Zealand and migrates, in what has been called perhaps the most remarkable overwater migration of any land bird (Lack 1959), to spend the southern winter in the tropical and

sub-tropical Pacific. By the end of the first week, we had amassed a grand total of seven species!

We also spent time visiting the shops and markets of Avarua as the larger city had significantly lower food prices than the smaller, local shops in Avaavaroa. Avarua was situated almost directly on the

other side of the island from our cottage and took about a half hour to get there on either the clockwise or anti-clockwise buses that travel the Ara Tapu or main road that follows the island perimeter.

At the start of our second week on the Cook Islands, we flew to Aitutaki, about an hour's flight north of Rarotonga. Aitutaki is an "almost atoll" consisting of a small group of volcanic and coral motus or islets ringing a large and magnificent lagoon formed when much of the central volcanic mountain dropped into the sea. What remains is not much more than a large hill on the large island. Much of the big island has been developed although there

are still areas richly draped in tropical vegetation. Fifteen smaller motus, lie around the lagoon perimeter, and one, Honeymoon Island, supports a Red-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) colony.

On Aitutaki, another beach cottage on the west coast of the island was our home. Again, mynas were common but the island also had some species that didn't occur on Rarotonga, which we hoped to get. Aitutaki is one of the few islands in the Cook group to support the white phase of the Reef Heron and after renting a scooter and cruising the few roads that follow the shore, it didn't take us long to find one. Even there, however, the dark phase was still the more common of the two.

The next morning we walked along the coral-sand beach and saw more Reef Herons, tattlers, and some new species, including a number of Brown (*Anous stolidus*) and Black noddies (*Anous minutus*) the latter of which we were not likely to get on Rarotonga. Another early morning hike took us to Maunga Pu, the highest point on the island at 124 m, passing large land crabs and a myriad of skinks along the way. The view of the lagoon and motus was spectacular. On our way down we got a good look at three Blue Lorikeets (*Vini peruviana*), White-tailed Tropicbirds, more mynahs, and a plover. On the Cook Islands, the lorikeet is only found on Aitutaki, likely arriving as a caged bird from French Polynesia in the 1800s (McCormack 1997).

On our last full day on Aitutaki, we chartered a cruise of the lagoon and motus, which took about 20 of us out to snorkel amongst amazing displays of reef fish. Wrasse, Moorish Idols (*Zanclus cornutus*), Threadfin Butterflyfish (*Chaetodon auriga*), Picasso Triggerfish (*Rhinecanthus aculeatus*), and Yellowstripe Goatfish (*Mulloidichthys flavolineatus*),



Neil Dawe

The Reef Heron is only common on three islands of the southern Cook Islands group, including Rarotonga and Aitutaki.



Neil Dawe



Neil Dawe

Red-tailed Tropicbird incubating (left) and with young (right) on Honeymoon Island, Aitutaki.

among many others, swam with us face to mask. Occasionally, as we swam up to a reef, a huge Moray Eel (*Gymnbothorax* spp.) would appear suddenly from within the coral crevasses; it's a startling experience and, as we discovered, very difficult to apply brakes underwater! Giant clams (*Tridacna gigas*), some nearly a metre across, were fairly common in the lagoon. They were introduced to Aitutaki from Australia in the 1990s.

We made our way to Honeymoon Island and the colony of nesting Red-tailed Tropicbirds. During our walkabout of the island, Renate and I found many nests containing adults and young of varying ages. Nests were slight depressions in the coral sand under Pemphis shrubs (*Pemphis acidula*), which formed the majority of the vegetation on the island. The adult birds seemed unperturbed and had obviously acclimatized fairly well to the daily visits by the tour companies; we didn't notice one bird leaving the nest as a result of our disturbance. The remainder of the tour brought us more noddys and our first Great Frigatebirds (*Fregata minor*). By the time we had left Aitutaki our species list totaled 13 birds!

Back at Rarotonga, we spent the rest of our stay at a small resort on the north

side of the island at Muri Lagoon, the only lagoon on the island with motus. Over the next two weeks we wandered the white coral sand beaches, shopped the Saturday markets at Avaroa for fresh food, snorkeled and kayaked the lagoons, sampled the tasty Polynesian foods, and drove many of the back roads searching for more birds but, alas, we found no new species.

The day before we were to fly out, we decided to try and get the endangered and endemic Rarotonga Monarch (*Pomarea dimidiata*), a small flycatcher confined to three forested valleys on the island. Once among the rarest birds in the world, its population in 1983 was estimated at 35-50 individuals. Effective conservation measures brought the population up to 259 in 2002. Some birds were translocated to Atiu, another of the Cook Islands, over the period 2001-2003, and in 2004 the estimated combined population was 289-300 individuals although a series of 5 cyclones in 2005 may have reduced the population (Birdlife International 2007).

Threats to this flycatcher included clearance of the forest through economic development; invasive plants and animals, especially the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*); and its vulnerability to the impacts of cyclones. Its nesting

behaviour also plays a role in that it only lays 2 eggs and incubation begins with the first egg resulting in asynchronous hatching and usually the survival of only one young.

As a result of intensive conservation measures, life expectancy for males has increased from around 5 years to at least 15 years; life expectancy for females improved from just over 2 years to nearly 13 years.

We called to arrange a tour of the Takitumu Conservation Area, created by three island families to secure and protect the flycatcher habitat. Unfortunately, the conservation area manager was busy with funeral arrangements, but when he learned I was a biologist from Canada he suggested we visit the conservation area on our own and gave us directions as to where we would likely find the flycatcher.

Early the next morning we boarded the "clockwise bus," which took us near the conservation area. Walking from the road up the hillside through extensive orange groves, we finally came to the conservation area "track," and its lush tropical forest of flowering trees, vines, and giant ferns. We continued making our way up to the flycatcher location. Once there, I



started a climb into flycatcher habitat. Renate was some 30 metres behind me and within a minute called out, “I think I have it!” I slowly made my way back down the trail hoping I wouldn’t scare the bird and there amongst the shrubs we got our first glimpse of the Rarotonga Monarch. This particular individual was banded on its left leg, blue over white. It stayed long enough for me to get some photos and then flew off.

On our way back down through the conservation area, we also found the endemic Rarotonga Starling (*Aplonis cinerascens*) and the Pacific Pigeon (*Ducula pacifica*)—a perfect finish to the day and our month on the islands.

The Cook Islands are still one of the few places on earth where you can walk for kilometres on white coral-sand beaches that line turquoise lagoons and, perhaps, run into one or two other people (at least in April). The slow pace of the islands, interesting natural history, friendly peoples, exquisite beauty, excellent foods, and a different culture including “the best of the Polynesian dancers,” make the Cook Islands a wonderful place to visit. The 16 avian species we tallied were simply the “icing.”

Neil K. Dawe



Neil Dawe

The secretive Rarotonga Starling, a vulnerable endemic of Rarotonga.

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Neil Dawe

A Pacific Pigeon roosting in an Albizia tree (*Falcataria moluccana*) in the Takitumu Conservation Area.



Neil Dawe

The endangered Rarotonga Monarch, a Cook Islands endemic and once among the rarest birds in the world.

Bird Atlassing arrives in British Columbia

Bird atlassing is a global phenomenon that is widely acknowledged to be an invaluable and extremely cost-effective resource for conservation planning and management. Atlas projects provide snapshots of the distribution and abundance of biodiversity in a geographic region. They are designed to be repeated at regular intervals and differ from faunal and floral summaries (e.g. the *Birds of British Columbia*) by providing a simple, standard framework for making comparisons of patterns of occurrence, density, and population change. Atlases have many practical conservation applications; the two Ontario breeding bird atlases (1985 and 2005) are used extensively by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada for assessing species status. They also bring networks of naturalists and birdwatchers together to achieve a clearly defined goal.

At the core of the atlassing concept is public volunteerism. Atlassing provides a major opportunity for the public to contribute to conservation planning. Birds are one of the best-known faunal groups, and birding is one of the most rapidly increasing pastimes in North America, so it is no surprise that breeding bird atlases lead the way in terms of the sheer number of atlas projects either ongoing or completed. In Canada, breeding bird atlases already exist in six provinces, and the time is ripe for BC to conduct its first, and lead the way for future atlases across the country. The BC Breeding Bird Atlas, spearheaded by Bird Studies Canada, is being developed as a conservation partnership between several NGOs (including BC Nature/BC Field Ornithologists), federal and provincial governments, and the private sector. A Steering Committee comprising equal

representation of project partners, and a series of sub-committees (e.g. volunteer management, technical, fund-raising) are being formed to guide the project, and oversee two salaried staff, an Atlas Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator.

The plan for data collection is to divide the province into 10-km grid squares based on the Universal Transverse Mercator grid system. The overall goal, over the next 5 years (2008-2012), is to obtain complete coverage of most 10-km squares in southern British Columbia and a selection of one or more squares from each 100 x 100 km block in remote regions. Volunteers, known as Atlassers, typically take responsibility for covering one or more 10-km squares, but can send in data from anywhere in the province. Regional coordinators will take responsibility for organising coverage of atlas squares in each of approximately 40 BC Atlas regions - areas of the province that largely correspond to existing naturalist/birding community catchments.

We anticipate that the project will generate as many as one million individual records, through three primary methods. The first and most basic atlas technique consists of searching 10-km squares for breeding evidence, dividing your search time (a minimum of 20 hours) in proportion to the habitats within the square. For example, singing birds in their breeding habitat in their breeding season are recorded as "possible" breeders; pairs of birds, agitated or displaying birds are "probable" breeders; and nests, distraction displays or fledged young are recorded as "confirmed" breeding. These data provide information on the distribution of birds across the province, but are less useful for

estimating relative abundance and do not contain details of nest locations.

The second sampling method will be designed to estimate the relative abundance of bird species in different squares to provide a much clearer picture of where populations of each species are concentrated. Pilot studies, resulting data analysis and volunteer feedback, resulted in point counts being chosen as the means of collecting abundance data. This will not be required for all atlassers, but will be encouraged for experienced birders, provided they can identify most birds in their area by song.

The third sampling method will involve collecting more precise documentation of breeding sites of significant species and colonial species. Participants will be encouraged to fill out nest record cards with detailed information for any nests they find. However, particular emphasis will be placed on species that are either provincially or regionally rare, as well as species such as Great Blue Herons and Bank Swallows that nest in colonies.

The data from all of these sampling methods will be submitted to the atlas organizers, either on computer scannable data forms or through interactive web pages. Data will be extensively checked for possible errors, and quickly made available for display and download through a state-of-the-art system of interactive web pages. A dedicated BC Breeding Bird Atlas website is under construction, and should be ready for Atlassers to register over the winter. Details will be posted in the next newsletter. Participants, organizers and interested members of the public will be able to view results as soon as they are ready each year (with regular updates through the season), to track the progress of the atlas, to



identify gaps in coverage, or to obtain preliminary answers to questions about the current distribution and abundance of British Columbia's birds. Other monitoring programs, such as Nocturnal Owl Surveys and nest records from WiTS will feed directly into the Atlas, and Atlas data will be linked to other relevant programs, such as Important Bird Areas. The emphasis is very much on maximising data-flow and data-sharing, using the latest web and database technologies developed for this very purpose.

So, don't plan on going anywhere for the next five summers! Spend time getting to know your own home patch even better, and taking the opportunity to explore parts of British Columbia you've always wanted to visit but haven't yet got to. Plus, it is a great chance to get friends out enjoying nature with you, build on our naturalist community and inspire the next generation of birdwatchers.

Dick Cannings and Pete Davidson,
Bird Studies Canada



Samantha Brett and Julia Cannings nestbox checking

British Columbia Bird Sightings: Spring 2007

March was cool, wet and often windy throughout. April dried out and warmed up a bit, but the weather never really showed promise of the summer to come until the last 10 days of May when hotter, dry weather prevailed. With wet and windy conditions prevailing, a good variety of interior birds were found along the coast with the outer coast in particular capturing many vagrants.

†: field notes submitted; m.obs.: many observers; ph.: photographed.

Geese through Shorebirds

Ross's Geese are very rare in the southern interior but this spring were found at a number of locations: on the early side, a single was in Kamloops 18 Mar (*fide* RH); another was between Penticton and Summerland 21 Mar – 4 Apr (ph. LN et. al.); a single was in Quesnel 25 Mar (*fide* PR); a single in Nakusp 19 Apr (GSD); and one was seen in a flock of Canada's over Okanagan Falls 21 Apr (CC); and most remarkable was the report of a flock of 18 near Vernon 3 May (ph. Simone Runyan). An astonishing number of Trumpeter Swans was seen in a field near Vanderhoof where **900** were counted 24 Mar (CA) nearly doubling the previous high count for the interior. Rare along the coast, Common Teal were found in Mar with singles: in Courtenay 1 Mar (RHi); Maplewood 3–16 Mar (RL); and in Victoria 13 Mar (MB). The only Tufted Duck reported was of a single male seen from the Iona south jetty 31 Mar (MKM). Casual in the region a 2nd summer male **Steller's Eider** was found near Gordon's Beach, s. Vancouver Island, 26 May (ph. RTo, LH) which furnished the 8th regional record. **Arctic Loons** have long been thought to be occasionally frequenting coastal waters and there are now five reports spanning the past eight years. This spring, an alternate adult was well described with both Pacific and Common Loons nearby for comparison and distant photos were taken near Gordon's Beach, s. Vancouver Island 20 May (ph. RTo, LH).

The Kootenays experienced a good migration of Red-necked Grebes with a large aggregation of 58 birds on Arrow Lake, Nakusp 19 Apr (GSD). Very rare on the coast, a Clark's Grebe was at Jordan River 15 Apr (ph. RTo, LH et. al.). American White Pelicans arrived early on Williams Lake with a single there 24 Mar (ph. CA) and a single spent several weeks on Quamichan Lake, confirmed 12–14 May (*fide* DM) for a first local record. A tantalizing description of a possible **Masked Booby** was received, having been seen briefly in overflight in Parksville 23 May (†RT, NR); there are no confirmed records for the province. Very rare along the coast, particularly in spring, a Swainson's Hawk was seen heading north over Martindale Flats, Victoria 11 May (CSa). A Richardson's Merlin, the prairie form, was seen at Okanagan Lake PP near Summerland 21 April (RyT). Adding to the

few sightings of the past decade in the central interior, a **Whooping Crane** was described from the north shore of Francois Lake as it flew at a height of 50m heading west 16 May (†KW).

Black-necked Stilts made their near-annual pilgrimage into the s. interior with: 12 in the Kootenays at Wasa 7 Apr (JM); 5 at T'Kumlups Pond, Kamloops 9–30 Apr (PH, DW, RH) where they were successful nesters two years ago; 7 on Robert Lake, Kelowna 29 Apr (RC); and 5 n. of Osoyoos 9 May (MB) and the last of the spring numbered 2 at Osoyoos L. 16 May (CC et. al.). Rare spring transients in the Kootenays, American Avocets numbered 8 at Elizabeth L., Cranbrook 22 Apr (GR) and 1 at Burton 15 May (GSD). Greater Yellowlegs continue to push the early arrival envelope with a record-setting arrival in Tofino 14 Mar (AD, RC) and by the usual average arrival date, 26 birds were present 30 Mar (AD, RC). A single Spotted Sandpiper was record-early in Oliver, s. Okanagan 6 Apr (DB). Whimbrel are rare in the interior yet two were found this spring with one at Roundup Lake in the Cariboo 12 May (ph. PR); and one on the Stump Lake Ranch near Kamloops 14 May (RH). Long-billed Curlews, a grassland species of concern, were found in very good numbers in the c. interior with 23 near Vanderhoof 18 Apr (SL); and 26 near Shelly 16 Apr (SL). Very rare in the interior, a Marbled Godwit was at Cranbrook 12 May (KY). Rare along the coast, a Ruff was at Reifel 10 May (JI) and another was at Grice Bay, Tofino 22–23 Apr (†JR, MC).

Gulls through Thrashers

As gull numbers increased in the central interior this spring, two rarities were picked out of the flocks in Prince George: a Glaucous-winged Gull was at Cottonwood Island Park 18 Apr (NH et. al.); and a Glaucous Gull was there 19 Apr (NH et. al.) both furnished 2nd records for the local checklist area. Among the thousands of gulls feeding on herring roe, an adult Slaty-backed Gull was located in Qualicum Bay, mid Vancouver Island 13–15 Mar (AM, RS, JS). Very rarely seen from shore, a basic plumaged Thick-billed Murre was off Gordon's Beach 20 May (LH, †RTo). Also rather cooperative from shore were single Horned Puffins: off Amphitrite Point, Ucluelet 15–25 Mar (MT,



AF); off Botanical Beach, Port Renfrew 27 May (†RTo, LH); and off the southern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands 22 May (BW, RB). Eurasian Collared-Doves continue their expansion in the southern interior and along the south coast. The most significant sighting this season came from Carmanah Point Lightstation, a well known vagrant trap on the west coast of Vancouver Island 16 May (JE). Casual in the province, a male Costa's Hummingbird was heard singing and seen performing territorial flights at Jordan River on the sw. coast of Vancouver Island 7 Apr (ph. RTo). Another hummingbird rarity was also found at Jordan River, a male Calliope Hummingbird, normally destined for the dry southern interior and it too was a one-day wonder 15 Apr (†RTo). Other interior birds found along the coast include: a Say's Phoebe in Sooke 24 Mar (RTo) and another was at Maplewood 6 Apr (MW); Western Kingbirds on Mt. Douglas, Victoria 21 Apr (MMG) and in Duncan 2 May (DM).

Very rare in the province a Loggerhead Shrike was near Knutsford 21 May (ph. GG). Very rare in the w. Kootenays, except the extreme south, a Black-billed Magpie was at Kaslo 27 Mar (DP). Sage Thrashers are very sparsely scattered in the sage brush of the extreme southern interior yet remarkably, two were found on the coast: one was in North Vancouver 5 Apr (RL) and another was at the Nanaimo River Estuary 14–15 Apr (ph. GLM et. al.). The latter furnished a 5th record for Vancouver Island with all previous records occurring in May.

Warblers through Finches

Previously accidental but now annual over the past six years, a Northern Parula was found singing in s. Surrey 30 May (†CG, ph. PC et. al.) falling well within the usual late May early Jun window for eastern passerines. A Chestnut-sided Warbler, however, did not follow the rules of vagrancy by arriving extremely early in Jordan River 1 May (RTo). A Cape May Warbler was a very good find at Tumbler Ridge 26 May (GLM, BSc). Very rare in the region, a male Hermit Warbler was found within a flock of Townsend's Warblers at Jordan River 21 Apr (†RTo) and even more shocking was the discovery of a pair of Hermit Warblers in Sooke Mountain Park 12 May (†RTo, CI). Very rare in the Lower Mainland, a Black and White Warbler was found scaling the local Alder and Cottonwoods at Maplewood 21 May (RL). A Brewer's Sparrow was a good find at Wilson Creek, Sunshine Coast 22–23 Apr (AS). Casual in the province, Black-throated Sparrows were found: along the Grant Narrows Nature Trail, Pitt Lake 17–26 May (m.obs. ph. LJ, KL); and at Chopaka Customs w. of Osoyoos 24 May (JG). Casual in the province and well out of habitat and range, a Sage Sparrow was at Iona Island

14 Mar (†TP) 75 metres away from previous Iona sighting. This species had not been recorded in the province since Apr 2000. The only report of Harris's Sparrow came from Alaksen National Wildlife Refuge 24 May (PD).

Black-headed Grosbeaks rarely stray north into the Cariboo but one such male was found singing near Milburn Lake 11 May (*fide* PR). Lazuli Buntings were again recorded on the coast in small numbers, the most out of place was a female seen at Carmanah Point Lightstation 25 May (JE) and a male near Long Beach 26 May (GB). Astonishingly early (especially considering the latitude), a male and two female Bobolinks were well described visiting a feeder in Quesnel 11–12 May (VW). The only report of Common Grackle away from the Peace R. area involved a single in Tofino 25 May (AD) at the exact location one was discovered last year. The Bullock's Oriole that overwintered just n. of Qualicum Beach returned to the feeder after a 54-day absence 21 Mar–19 Apr (CB). Very rare in the southern interior, a pair of Purple Finches were on Anarchist Mountain 26 May (JG, RS). A diligent observer picked out a Hoary Redpoll from a flock of 400 Commons in Prince George 31 Mar (SL) and a pair at a feeder in the same area 1 Apr (ph. NH et. al.). After a long absence, Pine Siskins returned to the Kootenays in mid-Apr (GSD) and in the Okanagan 24 Mar (DGC). Accidental in the province, a 'green-backed' male Lesser Goldfinch was well described from Lardeau 6 May (MJ). There are only four confirmed records of this species, the most recent from Princeton May 1999.

Compiled by Donald G. Cecile

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Authors in this Issue

Dick Cannings

Dick Cannings was born and raised in the Okanagan, in a family keenly interested in natural history. This early involvement in birds, bugs and plants led him to a university education in zoology, including a BSc degree from the University of British Columbia and a MSc from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Dick was Curator of the Cowan Vertebrate Museum at the University of British Columbia and now works half-time for Bird Studies Canada, coordinating eBird Canada, Canadian Christmas Bird Counts and the British Columbia-Yukon Owl Survey. He has written a number of books and is also the bird co-chair of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Neil K. Dawe

Neil K. Dawe, Registered Professional Biologist, retired (2006) from the Canadian Wildlife Service after 31 years in civil service. He is a co-author of the four-volume work, *The Birds of British Columbia*, three children's books including *The Bird Book*, and over 50 other publications. Dawe is a founder of the Brant Wildlife Festival and a founding Director of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Foundation and The Qualicum Institute, a society for ecological, social, and economic sustainability. In 2001, he was honoured with the Ian McTaggart-Cowan Award of Excellence in Biology from the Association of Professional Biologists of British Columbia.

Jeff O'Kelly

Jeff O'Kelly studied piano and voice at the University of British Columbia and was a member of the Vancouver Opera Chorus for 17 seasons before retiring to Lillooet, British Columbia in 2006. He also worked as music consultant for *Whole Notes*, a TV series about classical music (cable channel BRAVO). Jeff is the host of a weekday morning show ("Snooze Button") on Radio Lillooet (CHLS—100.5 FM), a founding member of the Lillooet Naturalist Society and an avid birder.

Martin K. McNicholl

Martin, a member of B.C.F.O's Award for Ornithology Committee, helped draft the terms of reference of the Loran L. Goulden Memorial Award initially of the Edmonton Natural History Club (later transferred to the Federation of Alberta Naturalists) and of the Janette Dean Award of the Ontario Bird Banding Association and chaired the selection committees for the first few recipients of each. He also served on the selection committee for the 1994 Doris H. Speirs Award selection committee of the Society of Canadian Ornithology (awarded to Anthony J. Erskine, one of Cowan's illustrious graduate students).

Ian Routley

I'm a Rural GP who has practised in Lillooet for the past 19 years. I've been interested in birding since my mother dragged me out as a 6 year old on Vancouver Island (I grew up in Nanaimo) for birding walks with Neil Bourne. Meeting Ken Wright in late 1999 was really the event that started me on a more serious level of birding - record keeping and more "accurate" observations. When I first met Ken he asked if I had any Pygmy Nuthatches around our area. I very confidently told him no! When we later sat down to watch hours of video of my feeders (he is one of the few friends who actually likes to do that), the first bird I showed him was a Pygmy Nuthatch! He never lets me forget that and I know he feels compelled to check all of my more uncommon records because of it. When I'm not working I'm hiking, travelling and taking pictures. I'm not really a lister though. I just love to watch birds.

Ken Wright

Ken has enjoyed watching birds since early childhood and remembers various species seen on his very first birdwatching trip to the Sunshine Coast at age 8. He now is a freelance consultant involved in bird, lichen



From The Spectator, London; Courtesy CanWest News Service.



BIRDS OF PANAMA

8-20th January 2008

WHISKEYJACK NATURE TOURS

Panama is one of the most famous birding destinations in the world with 950+ species in an area one twelfth the size of British Columbia. There are legendary birding destinations such as Pipeline Road & Achiotte Road (both of which we visit).

This fully escorted tour, with leader Dr. Rand Rudland, is based at the Canopy Tower Ec lodge in Soberania National Park, and in El Valle de Anton at the magical Canopy Lodge located in an extinct caldera and designed by birders for birders. Local guides such as Tino & Alexis can "whistle in" most of the local species.

315 species of birds were seen/heard on this tour in 2006, plus 21 species of mammals. Blue Morpho butterflies abound and the Helicopter Damselfly is an amazing sight. Some of the bird species seen included Agami Heron, Crested Guan, Great Tinamou, White Hawk, Bat Falcon, Mottled & Spectacled Owls, Keel-billed Toucan, Great Jacamar, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Tody Motmot, Rufous-crested Coquette, Streak-chested Antpitta, White-headed Wren, Blue Cotinga, Golden-headed Tanager, Shining Honeycreeper & many more.

For mammal enthusiasts Howler & White-faced Capuchin Monkeys, Three-toed Sloth, Agouti, Coati, Kinkajou & Anteater are likely.



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available

COST: From Panama City \$4290CAD (sharing)

Single Rooms - limited availability \$4100CAD

GROUP SIZE: Maximum 8 guests

MEALS: all included

FULLY ESCORTED: Leader - Dr. Rand Rudland

CONTACT: Whiskeyjack Nature Tours

P.O. Box 319, Sechelt, BC, V0N 3A0

Phone: 604-885-5539

Fax: 604-885-2904

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(All photos by R. Rudland, Panama 2005)



Taiwan Tit
紙浮藤 / 王城文

Collared Bush Robin, Formosan Whistling-Thrush, Steere's Liocichla, Taiwan Barwing, White-eared Sibia, Taiwan Yuhina, Yellow Tit, Flamecrest, Formosan Magpie, White-whiskered Laughingthrush, Swinhoe's and Mikado

Pheasants are 12 of Taiwan's 15 generally recognized endemics. There are over 60 endemic sub-species such as *Black-browed [Taiwan] Barbet* and *[Taiwan] Hwamei*. Other birds include *Malayan Night-Heron*, *Pheasant-tailed Jacana* and *Collared Finchbill*. *Fairy Pitta* is present only during the breeding season. In May, visit Lanyu Island with 6 bird specialties of its own, including an endemic subspecies of *Ryukyu Scops-Owl*. The globally threatened *Black-faced Spoonbill* winters in the Tsengwen Estuary.

Want to see one of the rarest birds in the world? *Chinese Crested Tern*, *Thalasseus bernsteini* nests in very small numbers in the tern reserve in the Matsu Archipelago.

NEXT TRIPS:

2007: November 5–18: Endemics, Black-faced Spoonbill

2008: May 5–18: Endemics, Fairy Pitta, Lanyu Island

July 18–20: Matsu; Chinese Crested Tern; **July 21–26:** Extension; endemics

Nov. 4–16: Endemics, Black-faced Spoonbill

Price: 14 days: From Vancouver: CAD\$5100 (sharing); CAD\$5600 (single)

13 days: From Taipei, Taiwan: CAD\$4000 (sharing); CAD\$4500 (single)

July, 8 days: Contact us for details and price

Early Booking Discount: Register at least 60 days before tour start date; get 5% off tour price.

Group Size: 1–10, with 2 leaders, Simon Liao and Jo Ann MacKenzie

Private tours can be arranged.

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