

B_C BIRDING

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British Columbia Field Ornithologists

PO Box 45507,
Westside RPO,
Vancouver, B.C.,
V6S 2N5

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**PO Box 45507,
Westside RPO,
Vancouver, B.C.,
V6S 2N5**

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

PO Box 45507, Westside RPO, Vancouver, B.C., V6S 2N5

Annual Membership Dues:

Canadian General Membership	\$30
Canadian Junior Membership	\$20
U.S. & International Membership	\$35

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

Please send newsletter submissions to

Guy L. Monty (Editor, BC Birding)
#305 – 155 Cheney Street
Parksville, B.C. V9P 1P2
250-586-3838 or guylmonty@gmail.com

Deadline for 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
www.bcfo.ca**

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Kevin Bell *

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604-980-9085 / sonbel@shaw.ca

* Indicates an elected Director of the BCFO



Cover Story ~ Short-eared Owl

Just after the first snows of the year, on 28 November 2010, this Short-eared Owl was spotted by the Old Cariboo Highway near the Prince George Airport.

The bird had just been reported on the ncenbird email list, allowing Clive Keen to grab his Nikon D7000 and Sigma 150-500 mm lens, and head off on a successful search. 1/1500 sec at f6.3, 400 ISO, full 500 mm extension, handheld.



INTERNET SOURCES

BCFO

<http://www.bcfo.ca/>

BC Bird Alert

<http://bcbirdalert.blogspot.com/>

BC Breeding Bird Atlas

<http://www.birdatlas.bc.ca/english/index.jsp>

Biodiversity BC

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

Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies

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

Birding in British Columbia (General Information)

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

BIRDNET (Ornithological Council)

<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/>

Bird Source (Audubon & Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

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

eBird Canada

<http://www.ebird.org/content/ebird/>

Bird Studies Canada / Long Point Bird Observatory

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

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

[http://www/\[wrc/isgs/gpv/birds/](http://www/[wrc/isgs/gpv/birds/)

Point Reyes Bird Observatory

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

Rocky Point Bird Observatory

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

AOU Check-list of North American Birds, 7th Edition

<http://www.aou.org/checklist/index.php3>

Bird Wing Image Database

<http://www.pugetsound.edu/x5662.xml>

Michael Shephard's Bird Information Site

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

Mike Yip's Vancouver Island Bird Photos Site

<http://vancouverislandbirds.com/>

SORA: Searchable Ornithological Research Archive

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

ABA Rare Bird Blog

<http://birding.typepad.com/peeps/>

BC Interior Bird Chat Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bcintbird/>

Sunshine Coast Bird Chat Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sunshinecoastbirding/>

Vancouver and Lower Mainland Bird Chat Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bcvanbirds/>

Vancouver Island Bird Chat Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BCVIBIRDS/>

West Kootenay Bird Chat Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wkbirds/>



BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS NEEDS SUBMISSIONS

... of original manuscripts on wild birds in British

Columbia. This is the

journal of record for reporting rarities or range expansions, the general status of species, avian ecology and behaviour. We publish new observations on birds, or even a single bird. Suitable topics include distribution, abundance, extralimital occurrence or range expansion, reviews of status, banding, identification, plumage variation, moult, behaviour, feeding, breeding, habitat, ecological relationships, reviews, or history and biography of ornithology. Information for authors is available on the BCFO website at:

www.bcfo.ca/journal-author-invitation.php

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 **British Columbia 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 up to a \$1000 limit and within the financial strength of the organization will be considered, with any larger requests requiring approval at the AGM.
6. Applicants should obtain a copy of the grant policy and the application guidelines from a member of the executive before any submission.

President's Message

Moving Forward

As I reported in my last President's Message the BCFO Board agreed to moving forward on a number of issues, including those brought up in discussions at the Annual General Meeting in Revelstoke. To that end the Board held a Strategic Planning Meeting and Board Meeting on Saturday October 16 in Surrey where we put together a work plan, and assigned items and set deadlines. We focused on four topics which we felt we could deal with immediately:

1. the establishment of a BC Bird Records Committee;
2. setting up a series of four, two-day field trips for BCFO members during 2011 (Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, and the Central Interior of BC); see details inside in Upcoming Events
3. updating the BCFO Website; and
4. developing a plan for increasing BCFO membership.

Actions coming out of these four points are:

1. A motion was passed to re-strike the BCFO Birds Records Committee. Guy Monty will solicit, for approval by the BCFO Board, 7-9 members of the newly constituted committee. These nominations to be presented to the BCFO Board by December 2010, and the committee itself be struck by the end of January 2011. The President of BCFO will send letters to other organizations soliciting nominations to the committee and explaining its objectives.
2. George Clulow agreed to organize the four field trips in 2011, and to have details ready for the BC Birding Winter Newsletter. You will find them inside.
3. George Clulow will chair an ad-hoc committee to advise the Board on updating and upgrading the BCFO website.
4. While the above three actions will support increased membership of BCFO, further discussion will be needed at a future Board meeting before we can start a membership drive.

Planning is underway for the 2011 Annual General Meeting in Fort St John in early June. We are currently finalizing details for the meeting facilities, field trips, speakers and an extension trip. New this year will be a pre-conference birding opportunity as part of the two-day field trips described above.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, the members, for your support. If you have any other items or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or any member of the board.





Editor's Notes

Snow in the interior, rain and wind here on the coast, and a Christmas Bird Count schedule in a BCFO newsletter....it must be December and the end of 2010 already. Seems like yesterday we were wondering what kind of year 2010 would be, and now we are wondering where the year went. And what a year it was. A massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico,

horrible disasters in Haiti and Pakistan, continuing tough economic times for many of us, and a political situation at home that's bizarre even for BC! I for one am looking forward to 2011, and the possibility of a better year.

Here at BC Birding, we think a better year is indeed coming for the BCFO. Submissions are coming in much more regularly now (thank you to those who submitted things and we are waiting for something from the rest of you!), we are back on schedule with getting issues out on time, and we have a new volunteer in Larry Cowan, who has agreed to compile the Listers Corner article. All of this has us in a very positive frame of mind as we head into 2011. We hope you enjoy this issue of BC Birding, and if you have any comments on the newsletter, or anything else concerning the BCFO, please note that all of the contact information for the editors, BCFO officers, directors, and other special project coordinators is printed in each issue of BC Birding, and can be found on the BCFO website.

With very busy work schedules of late, Donna and I hope to be taking a bit of time off during the holidays, and maybe even getting a bit of birding time in. Hopefully, we will run into some of you in the field. At any rate, we wish all of you a happy and safe holiday season, and good health and good birds in 2011!

Guy and Donna Monty

See you in the field,
Guy and Donna Monty
Editors



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Compiled by Martin K. McNicholl and Wayne C. Weber



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/ornith/birdmeet.html.

EVENTS IN 2011:

February 1-3 -- GYRFALCONS & PTARMIGAN IN A CHANGING WORLD, Boise, Idaho. Contact: tpf@peregrinefund.org or Website: http://www.peregrinefund.org/gyr_conference/.

March 5 – April 25 – 21st Brant Wildlife Festival. Contact: The Nature Trust of BC -- Toll Free: 1 866 288 7878 or Email: Robin Rivers at rrivers@naturetrust.bc.ca. Website: brantfestival.bc.ca

March 9-13 -- 81st ANNUAL MEETING, COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ANNUAL MEETING, WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY & ANNUAL MEETING, SOCIETY OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS, Kearney, Nebraska. Contact: Mary Bomberger Brown, Rm. 304, Oliphant Hall, Univ. of Tulsa, 600 S. College Ave., Tulsa, OK 74104; phone (918) 631-2762; e-mail: mary-brown@utulsa.edu.

March 10 – 11 -- BCFO FIELD TRIP – Parksville, Vancouver Island. Contact: Guy Monty at 250-586-3838 or Email: guylmonty@gmail.com

March 13-16 2011, 34TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WATERBIRD SOCIETY & NORTH AMERICAN CRANE WORKING GROUP, Grand Island, Nebraska. Contact: Katharine C. Parsons, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, Box 1770, Manomet, MA 02345; phone (508) 224-6521; e-mail: katharinecparsons@gmail.com; websites: http://www.waterbirds.org/annual_meeting or www.nacwg.org/ OR Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, 6611 W. Whooping Crane Dr., Wood River, NE 68883; phone (308) 384-7209; Email: fschavez@whooping.org.

May 27 – 28 -- BCFO FIELD TRIP – Cheam Wetlands, Skagit Valley. Contact: Jude Grass at 604-538-8774 or Email: judegrass@shaw.ca

June 10 – 12, 2011 British Columbia Field Ornithologists AGM in Fort St. John. Details TBA.

July 26-29 2011, 129th STATED MEETING, AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, Jacksonville, Florida.

August 2011, ANNUAL MEETING, SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS, Moncton, New Brunswick. Contact: Marc-Andre' Villard, Dept. de Biologie, Universite de Moncton, Moncton, NB E1A 3E9; phone (506) 858-4334; Email: villarm@umoncton.ca.

November 12 -13 – BCFO FIELD TRIP – Fraser Delta. Contact: George Clulow at 604-438-7639 or Email: gclulow@shaw.ca

EVENTS IN 2012

August 14-18, 2012 5TH NORTH AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS, Vancouver, B.C. Contact: Kathy Martin, Dept. of Forest Sciences, 3041-2424 Main Mall, Univ. of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4; phone (604) 822-9695; e-mail: kmartin@interchange.ubc.ca.

Christmas Bird Count 2010

Count Name	Count Date	Compiler	Phone #	Email
Abbotsford-Mission	Mon Dec 27	Lynn M. Miller	604-826-3839	lynnmelvinmiller@hotmail.com
Apex-Hedley	Wed. Dec 15	Eva Durance	250-492-0158	edurance@vip.net.
Ashcroft-Cache Creek	Thur Dec 23	Karl Ricker		karlricker@shaw.ca
Bamfield		Anne Stewart	250-728-3469	astewart@bms.bc.ca
Big White	Tues Dec 29	Chris Charlesworth	250-718-0335	c_charlesworth23@hotmail.com
Blaeberry	cancelled	Doug Leighton		leighton@redshift.bc.ca
Bridesville		Doug Brown	250-495-6164	brown001@telus.net
Bridge Lake	Sat Dec 18	Wendy J Marshall	250-593-2327	gwmarshall@xplornet.com
Broughton Strait		Bob Waldon	250-974-2281	birdbook@cablerocket.com
Burns Lake-Francois Lake	Mon Dec 27	Judy Kleger	250-695-6585	jude@cyber-solutions.ca
Campbell River	Sun Jan 2	Luisa Richardson	250-923-9918	lu_rich@shaw.ca
Castlegar	Sun Dec 18	Peter J Mclver	250-365-1191	petermciver@hotmail.com
Cawston		Doug R Brown	250-495-6164	brown001@telus.net
Charlie Lake	no count 2010			
Chilliwack	Sat Dec 18	Denis Knopp	604-858-8141	bcwilddenis@uniserve.com
Comox	Sun Dec 19	Carol Muirhead	250-331-0511	carolalain@shaw.ca
Cortes Island	Sun Jan 2	Nancy Kendel	250-935-8508	cimas@twincomm.ca.
Cranbrook	Mon Dec 27	Greg Ross	250-489-2566	gsross@shaw.ca
Creston Valley	Mon Dec 27	Sharon Laughlin	250-428-7289	slscat@canyonlister.ca
D'Arcy-Birken	Thur Dec 16	Dan Cumming	604-452-3453	rdcumming@uniserve.com
Dawson Creek	Sun Jan 2	Mark Phinney	250-843-2318	badgreenbird@gmail.com
Deep Bay	Wed. Dec 15	Bill Stewart	250-338-1855	bmstewart@shaw.ca
Duncan	Sat Jan 1	Derrick Marven	250-748-8504	marven@shaw.ca
Fauquier		Ruth Bumpus	250-269-7481	
Fernie	Tues Dec. 14	Bob Livsey	250-423-6699	naturebob@telus.net
Fort St. James	Sat Dec 18	Joanne Vinnedge	250-996-7401	joanne.vinnedge@gov.bc.ca
Galiano-North Saltspring	Mon Dec 27	Michael F. Hoebel	250-539-2003	mhoebel@telus.net
Golden	Mon Dec 27	Ellen Zimmerman	250-348-2225	ellenzim@uniserve.com
Grand Forks		Jenny Coleshill	250-362-7474	
Greater Masset		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@mhtv.ca
Harrison River	Sat Dec 18	Denis Knopp	604-858-8141	bcwilddenis@uniserve.com
Hat Creek	Sun Dec 19	Heather Baines	250-256-4822	birdbaines@gmail.com;
Hecate Strait		Peter Hamel	250-626-3585	delkatla@mhtv.ca
Kamloops	Sun Jan 2	Rick Howie	250-578-7542	r.howie@shaw.ca
Kaslo	Thur Dec 30	Dirk T.R. Pidcock	250-353-7539	edensong@netidea.com.
Kelowna	Sat Dec 18	Chris Charlesworth	250-18-0335	c_charlesworth23@hotmail.com

Kimberley	Sun Jan 2	Greg Ross	250-489-2566	gsross@shaw.ca
Kingfisher	DNA	Jan Lacko	250-838-6882	ruralredcedar@aol.com
Kitimat	Wed. Dec 15	April MacLeod	250-632-3977	mac2aa@citywest.ca
Ladner	Mon Dec 27	Jude Grass	604-538-8774	judegrass@shaw.ca
Lake Country		Trevor H. Forder	250-870-6617	trevor.forder@gmail.com
Langara Island		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@island.net
Lardeau	Mon Dec 27	Gail Spitler	250-366-4601	spitler@kaslo.org
Lasqueti Island	DNA	Sheila M. Ray	250-333-8884	sray@bcsupernet.com
Lillooet	Mon Dec 27	Ian Routley	250-256-4062	ianrout@telus.net
Little River-Powell River Ferry	Thur Dec 30	Art Martell	250-334-2979	amartell@shaw.ca
Logan Lake	Wed Dec 22	Bert Parke	250-523-9935	
Lower Howe Sound		Loys Maingon	604-886-3854	maingon@uniserve.com
Mackenzie		David Lambie	250-997-4033	DLambie@telus.net
McBride	Sun Dec 19	Elsie Stanley	250-569-2596	stanleys@compositionsinwood.com
Merritt	Sun Jan 2	Alan Burger	250-378-2468	aburger@uvic.ca
Naden Harbour		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@island.net
Nakusp	Sun Jan 2	Gary Davidson	250-265-4456	gsd37@yahoo.ca
Nanaimo		Carlo Pavan	250-758-3765	crazy_birder@yahoo.com
Nanoose Bay	Fri Dec 17	Rhys K Harrison	250-248-5305	rhys Harrison@shaw.ca
Nelson	Tues Dec 29	Elaine Moore	250-352-2168	elmodass@telus.net
North Pine				
Oliver-Osoyoos		Doug Brown	250-495-6164	brown001@telus.net
Pacific Rim National Park				
Parksville-Qualicum Beach	Sun Dec 19	Sandra Gray	250-248-5565	saninerr@shaw.ca
Pemberton-Mt. Currie	Wed. Dec 15	Hugh Naylor	604-894-6402	HJNaylor@telus.net
Pender Harbour	Wed Dec 22	Tony R Greenfield	604-885-5539	tony@whiskeyjacknaturetours.com
Penticton	Sun Dec 19	Richard J Cannings	250-493-3393	dickcannings@shaw.ca
Pitt Meadows	Sun Jan 2	Larry Cowan	604-465-1402	lawrencecowan@shaw.ca
Port Alberni	Sun Jan 2	John A. McRuer	250-723-5436	smcruer@shaw.ca
Port Clements		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@mhtv.ca
Powell River	Sun Dec 19	Heather A. Harbord	604-485-5379	hharbord@shaw.ca
Prince George	Sun Dec 19	Cathy A. Antoniazzi	250-562-2845	canton1@telus.net
Prince Rupert		Robin Weber	250-624-2761	robinw@citytel.net
Princeton		Madelon A Schouten	250-295-7078	
Revelstoke	Sat Dec 18	Michael J L Morris	250-837-9354	michael.morris@telus.net
Rose Spit		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@mhtv.ca
Rossland-Warfield		Linda Szymkowiak		

Salmon Arm	Sun Dec 19	Ted Hillary	250-832-4755	thillary@sunwave.net
Sayward		Tobi Sanderson	250-282-3416	sayward.birds@crcn.net
Shuswap Lake P.P.	Thur Dec 16	Rick Howie	250-578-7542	r.howie@shaw.ca
Sidney-South Saltspring	Mon Dec 27	Karen Ferguson		siskin59@shaw.ca
Skidegate Inlet		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@mhtv.ca
Smithers		Rosamund Pojar	250-847-9429	
Soda Creek	Sun Dec 19	Phil Ranson	250-398-7110	ranson1@telus.net
Sooke	Sun Dec 26	Daniel Bryant	250-361-9049	jingming@uvic.ca
Southern Gulf Islands (Mayne Island)	Sat Dec 18	Michael Dunn	250-539-5745	mdunn@gulfisland.co
Southern Gulf Islands (Pender Island)	Sat Dec 18	Gerald B. McKeating	250-629-3840	geraldmckeating@shaw.ca
Southern Gulf Islands (Saturna)	Sat Dec 18	Ilka Olsen		aiolsen@telus.net
Squamish	Sat Dec 18	Grant Danielson	604-898-9420	myd123@telus.net
Stewart-Hyder	no count 2010	Ben Schonewille	867-668-5227	bschonewille@edynamics.com
Sunshine Coast	Sat Dec 18	Tony Greenfield	604-885-5539	tony@whiskeyjacknaturetours.com
Terrace	Sun Dec 19	Diane Weismiller	250-635-6984	dweismiller@telus.net
Tlell		Peter Hamel	250-626-5015	delkatla@mhtv.ca
Tofino		Michael Tilitzky	250-725-2529	
Trail-Beaver Valley	Sat Dec 18 TBC	Arnold By	250-368-3068	awby@shaw.ca
Valemount		Delores M Moore	250-566-4385	dmoore2@telus.net
Vancouver	Sun Dec 19	Danny Tyson	604-888-5907	dityson71@hotmail.com
Vanderhoof		Karen S Krushelnick	250-567-9579	karen.krushelnick@gov.bc.ca
Vaseux Lake	Tues Dec 28	Dick Cannings	250-493-3393	dickcannings@shaw.ca
Vernon	Sun Dec 19	Peter Blokker	250-545-8297	pfblokker@telus.net
Victoria	Sat Dec 18	Ann Nightingale	250-652-6450	motmot@shaw.ca
Whistler	Tues Dec 14	Karl Ricker		karlricker@shaw.ca
White Rock	Sun Jan 2	Viveka Ohman	604-531-3401	ohmanv@hotmail.com



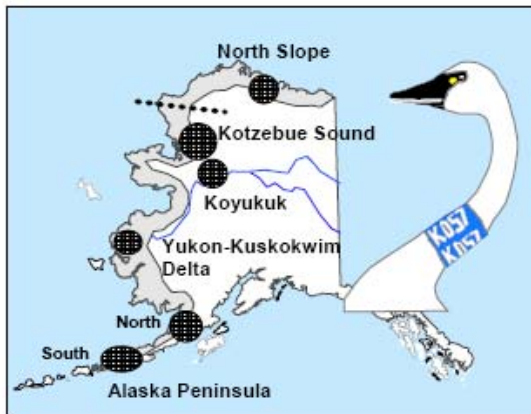
New BCFO members

Dannie Carsen
(Brentwood Bay)

Jessica Fields
(Arras)

Kenneth Walton
(Stratford, ON)

TUNDRA SWANS WITH BLUE NECK BANDS FROM ALASKA



TUNDRA SWANS WERE MARKED IN WESTERN AND NORTHERN ALASKA IN THE SUMMERS OF 2006-2010 WITH CODED NECK BANDS AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TIMING OF MIGRATION AND MOVEMENTS OF SWANS RELATIVE TO BREEDING AREA. NECK BANDS HAVE A FOUR-DIGIT CODE THAT BEGINS WITH A LETTER. CODES ARE READ FROM BOTTOM TO TOP. BANDS ARE BLUE WITH WHITE DIGITS, EXCEPT CODES T3##, WHICH ARE WHITE WITH BLACK DIGITS.

Marking Location	Codes	No. Collared			
		2006 - 2008	2009	2010	Total
Yukon Delta	K###	227 100	0	327	
Alaska Peninsula (North)	N###			52	52
Alaska Peninsula (North)	P###	148 105	51	304	
Alaska Peninsula (South)	T###	155 ---	101	256	
Koyukuk Drainage*	T213-228, U075-U120, U390-U399	66	---	---	66
North Slope	T172-212, 296-299 T3##	84 ---	---	84	
Kotzebue Sound	U###	390197	197	784	
Totals		1070	402	401	1873

* Collars with codes U075 – U120 have the letter separated from the numbers (oriented vertically)

In 2008, 50 swans were implanted with satellite transmitters, many of which are still functioning. Birds with transmitters were not collared, but have a black antenna exiting near the base of the tail. The movements of these swans can be followed at our web site:

http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/avian_influenza/TUSW/index.html

PLEASE REPORT ANY OBSERVATIONS TO YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION OFFICER, OR TO:

Craig Ely
Alaska Science Center
4210 University Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508
Phone: (907) 786-7182



EM: cely@usgs.gov

WE WILL PROVIDE ALL OBSERVERS WITH A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BANDED SWAN THEY OBSERVED.

Two-day Field Trips for Members

New for 2011: BC Field Ornithologists is offering a series of field trips, led by expert local leaders to outstanding, bird-rich areas of the Province.

Trips in Brief

Inaugural Offering 2011

Parksville

March 10-11, 2011

See the amazing concentration of gulls and sea ducks, grebes and loons that gather on Vancouver Island's East coast to feast on the bonanza of Pacific herring spawn.

Guy Monty – leader

gimonty@gmail.com

250 821 8888

Skagit Valley

May 27-28, 2011

Explore this hidden Shangri-la: more than 200 species of birds, and flora and fauna of both coastal, and dry interior ecosystems. Day 2 locations: Cheam Wetlands, Hope Airport, and other hotspots.

Jude Grass – leader

judegrass@shaw.ca

604 538 8774

Central BC

June 10-12, 2011

Enroute to this year's Fort St. John AGM take a couple of days birding at...

NOTE: Details of this pre-conference trip will follow with AGM details.

Leader TBA

xxxxxxxx@xxxx.xx

000 000 0000

Fraser Delta

November 12-13, 2011

See wintering raptors and vast numbers of waterbirds that use the delta in winter. Experience some of Canada's best winter birding right on Vancouver's doorstep. Gyr Falcon anyone?

George Clulow – leader

gclulow@shaw.ca

604 438 7639



Photo credits left to right: Mark Habdas – Dunlin, Virginia Rail, Red-tailed Hawk. Carlo Giovannella – gulls

How to participate

These two-day field trips are BCFO led, but participants make their own arrangements for accommodation, food, and travel. **Day 1:** am birding; pm birding, evening get together (see below). **Day 2:** am birding, pm optional birding. Carpooling for birding will be arranged on the morning of Day 1.

Cost per two-day event

Members: \$10.00 per person

Non-members: \$40.00* incl. BCFO membership

* Note: BCFO general memberships are family memberships



Register in advance

Important: Register at least two weeks in advance. Email or phone the trip leader, advising the names and numbers of participants. The leader will advise specifically when and where to meet.

If needed, additional leaders will be recruited to keep group sizes small.



The Social Side

At the end of Day 1, where possible, leaders will make arrangements for participants to meet for dinner at a nearby restaurant to recap the day, tally species seen, and confirm arrangements for Day 2.



Things to Think About

Invite a birding friend or two to join you, and build BCFO membership at the same time.

Get a group together from your local club and carpool to the event.

Dress for all conditions, and bring plenty of food and drink.

Make suggestions to BCFO Directors for 2012 destinations.



Herring Spawn Site Guide: Parksville-Qualicum Checklist Area

By Guy L. Monty

From late February through March each year, millions of Pacific Herring (*Clupea pallasii*) spawn in the waters along the east coast of Vancouver Island, from Ladysmith north to Comox. Both the huge concentrations of herring, and the thousands of tons of eggs they will lay, attract massive numbers of gulls, waterfowl, other diving birds and marine mammals. At the height of the spawn, the smell of herring, the cries of birds and the barking of sea lions can be detected miles inland, as the skies fill with gulls streaming into the area, often in numbers that are difficult to imagine. For some species, such as the Thayer's Gull, significant proportions of the world population will take advantage of the bounty to fuel their long migration to nesting areas thousands of miles away. For anyone, whether they have interest in natural history or not, the annual spawn is hard to ignore. For birders, it's impossible. There are times in mid-March when the waters off Qualicum Beach seem to be almost black with scoters and scaup, the sandy beaches from Parksville to Qualicum are alive with north bound Pacific black Brant, and not an inch of shoreline anywhere is free from throngs of gulls of a dozen or more species. Taken as a whole, the spectacle of so many birds all madly gobbling fish or roe is interesting enough, but the presence of such vast numbers of birds also sets the twitchers heart to racing with the thought of rare visitors from outside the region. While rarities such as King Eider, Little Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake are only found occasionally, other generally rare birds such as Iceland Gull, and Slaty-backed Gull are now reported annually, with multiple individuals being reported in some years.

Although the center of spawning activity is hard to predict, and can change drastically from year to year, in general, the entire shoreline of the Parksville-Qualicum Checklist area will produce excellent birding at some point during the annual spawning period. This article will attempt to give birders an idea of some of the better areas for birding during the spawn, starting at Rath Trevor Provincial Park, and moving NW through Parksville, French Creek, Qualicum Beach, and on towards Deep Bay. The list of areas given here is not exhaustive, and birders may find some areas which are not listed, to be quite good. Also, it should be mentioned that areas within the Nanaimo, and Comox Valley checklist areas, can also provide excellent birding during the spawns. There are also spawns of Pacific Herring in other parts of Vancouver Island and the mainland coast that are probably quite interesting too. In fact, some of the spawns along the west coast, which until now have been largely undiscovered by birders.

1) Rath Trevor Provincial Park: In years when the herring spawn close to the park, roe often drifts onto the sandy beaches, sometimes accumulating in meter wide strand lines, or covering the entire expanse of beach inches deep. Brant, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, and all of the expected divers, gull species, and shorebirds can be expected here in good numbers. Grey-bellied Brant, Little Gull, Iceland Gull, and Snowy Plover are some of the rarer birds that have been noted here during the spawn over the years. Shorebirds not normally expected in sandy areas, such as Surfbird and Rock Sandpiper, can sometimes be found on the sandy beach when the roe is present. Don't forget to check the cobble beaches west, around the corner from Brant Point, to the west of the main expanse of sand, as this area is often great for gulls and diving ducks, and a scenic walk along forested trails, regardless of what birds are in the area. To reach Rath Trevor take Hwy 19 north from Nanaimo. At about 25 kms north of Nanaimo, use Exit 46, which will take you onto Hwy 19A (The Old Island Hwy, or Coastal Route) towards Parksville. In about 600 meters, turn left at the signs for Rath Trevor.

2) San Pareil Beach: This residential area west of Rath Trevor provides a number of public access points to the beach. The best is generally the one furthest west, near the end of San Malo Crescent. This area is generally best for hosting massive rafts of sea ducks. It's also close to the mouth of the Englishman River, and estuary, so the diversity, as well as the number of birds present, is generally quite high. This can be a good area for Black

Scoters, and Yellow-billed Loon has been seen here numerous times. To reach this site, return to Hwy 19A and go right, towards Parksville. In 100 meters, turn right onto Plummer Rd, and follow it to its end. Here you can turn right onto Shorewood Dr, or left onto Mariner Way, both of which have several well marked public access points to the beach. The best is near the west end of Mariner way.

3) Parksville Community Park and Parksville Bay: Although this is a busy park in the center of Parksville, and often suffers from kite surfers, running kids, and off-leash dogs, it remains one of the best gull watching spots in the area during the spawn. Gulls often roost on the roof of the curling arena, in the fields of the park, and along the shores of the bay, in astounding numbers. Little Gull, Slaty-backed Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake, have all been seen here more than once, and Iceland and Glaucous Gull turn up here every year, sometimes with more than one at a time present. King Eider has also been seen here in large flocks of scoters. Brant often crowd the bay. It's best to bird this area early in the day, as more and more birds are disturbed away by increasingly heavy human traffic through the day. To reach this site, return to Hwy 19A and go right, crossing the bridge into Parksville. About 1.1 kms after crossing the bridge turn right at the stoplight, onto Corfield St. Follow Corfield down the hill and turn left into the Park at the signs. Drive out towards the bay and boardwalk, parking wherever is appropriate.

4) French Creek Marina: While this is a gem of a birding area year round, there are times during the spawn when it can be absolutely spectacular. For those wishing to do some bird photography, it might be the best spot in this whole area for capturing the action close up. There are three main areas to bird here. Upon entering the marina, one can turn to the right, and drive right to the end of the parking area. From here, you can park and bird the small bay on the inside of the jetty, or the open waters of the Salish Sea on the outside of the jetty. The bay is often very good for gulls, and quite often hosts an Iceland or Glaucous Gull, while the other side is good for deeper water birds like alcids, loons and grebes. All three cormorant species common to BC can be found here, and there is a convincing report of a Red-faced Cormorant from the late 90's. Moving further west, one can bird the mouth of French Creek, and the little bit of the French Creek estuary which has not been swallowed up by residential housing. The mouth of the creek serves as a major gull roost, and is well worth picking through for rarities. It's not uncommon to see 10 or more species of gulls from this spot. In fact, this area has been seems to be a bit of a vagrant trap, year round. Walking north, one can follow the jetty out past the mouth of the creek, and scope the offshore areas for deeper water birds. This area often hosts Black Oystercatchers, Black Turnstones, etc. Reaching this site requires returning to Hwy 19A, and turning right. In app. 5 kms turn right onto Lee Rd at the stoplight. If you cross the French Creek Bridge, you have gone about 100 meters too far. The French Creek Marina is at the northern end of Lee Rd.

5) Columbia Beach to Eagle Pt: Just west of French Creek, is a large residential area known as Columbia Beach, with cobble beaches, and a very good silty lagoon and gravel bar which stays dry in all but the highest tides. Anywhere along Columbia Beach can provide amazing flocks of sea ducks, Brant, and gulls, but the tidal lagoon known locally as the Admiral Tryon Pool, is often the best area for all of the above, plus large numbers of roosting gulls and shorebirds. King Eider, American Golden-Plover, Whimbrel, grey-bellied Brant, Iceland Gull, Vega type Herring Gull, and Slaty-backed Gull have all been seen here, and Glaucous Gull is almost always present. If the tide is right, one can walk west for about 2 kms on fairly sandy beach to Eagle Point, in Qualicum Beach. This is a good area for Brant, sea ducks, shorebirds, and the smaller gulls. Little Gulls has been seen in flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls here in the past. To get to Columbia Beach, return to Hwy 19A, and turn right. In about 200 meters, just after crossing the French Creek Bridge, turn right onto Columbia Dr. Follow it to its end at Admiral Tryon Blvd. Here you can go right, back towards the mouth of French Creek, or left towards the Admiral Tryon Pool. The pool is reached via a small, unmarked public path between a house and a cedar hedge, at the corner of Admiral Tryon Blvd and Dalmatian Dr. The beaches further west to Eagle Point can be reached by numerous public access points reached by returning to Hwy 19A, and turning right onto; Johnstone Rd, Yambury Rd, Eaglecrest Dr, etc.

6: The Qualicum Beach Brant viewing Stand: Although the long expanse of sandy beach along the Qualicum Beach foreshore can provide some good birding, it can also provide plenty of frustration with inconsiderate dog owners and rock throwing teenagers. We often skip this stretch, in favour of the Brant viewing stand, at the far west end of Qualicum Beach. Of all the area mentioned in this article, this one has produced some of the most spectacular aggregations of birds over the years. Although it has also had some great rarities, such as King Eider and Slaty-backed Gull, it's the numbers involved here which are often so impressive. This is a great spot for close up looks at Black Oystercatchers and Harlequin ducks as well. Scoping up and down the beach from the viewing stand is the best approach at this site. Reaching this site simply involves taking Hwy 19A west through Qualicum Beach, passing the public beach walkways, the Shady Rest Restaurant and Pub (highly recommended) and just 25 meters past Crescent Rd West, turn right into a gravel parking area adjacent to the beach, with a short wildlife viewing stand and interpretive sign.

7) The Little Qualicum Estuary: Using the public access points at either end of Surfside Drive can provide great views of massive numbers of gulls, sea ducks, Brant, and other marine birds when the fish are present, or roe has washed up here. This site has had reports of Slaty-backed Gull, Vega type herring Gulls, and often hosts Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. Brant are quite numerous here. To reach this site, return to Hwy 19A, turning right and continuing west for app. 800 meters to Kinkade Rd. Follow Kinkade to its end, turning left onto McFeely, and then on to Surfside Dr. There are public access points on either end of Surfside Dr, although the one at the west end is generally more interesting.

8) Qualicum Bay to Nile Creek: Moving further up-island, Qualicum Bay and the mouth of Nile Creek can offer some incredible numbers of birds, particularly in gulls and scoters. Harlequin Ducks can also occur here in large numbers. The mouth of Nile Creek is a proven gull roost and is always worth checking. To reach this site, return to Hwy 19A, and turn right. Continuing west for about 17 kms, you will pass through the small community of Qualicum Bay. You may wish to stop at a few of the areas where once can see the beach adjacent to the road anywhere along this stretch. Upon crossing the Nile Creek Bridge, you will need to turn right onto a small dirt road immediately after the end of the bridge. It takes some concentration not to miss this road, but if you do, just turn around at Nile Rd which is only about 100 meters further on.

9) Bowser: In most years, the earliest spawns in this area seem to occur in the waters off Bowser, with Bowser Rd often being a great site for birding. The earlier migrant gulls such as California and Thayer's Gulls often occur here in the tens of thousands, along with the barking of sea lions, the screaming of Bald Eagles, and in most years, the drone of motors and shouts of fishers as the gill net fleet seeks their yearly quote of roe. This is often a great site while the fish are actually spawning, but can go quiet shortly afterwards, unlike many of the other spots, which can be active for weeks after a spawn has taken place. Bowser is only about 2 kms past the Nile Creek Bridge, and is reached by returning to Hwy 19A and continuing west. Turning right onto Bowser Rd and parking at the north end of it, is a good place to access the beach here.

10) Deep Bay: At the far north-western end of the Parksville-Qualicum Checklist area, is the small community of Deep Bay. This is a great birding site year round, as well as being a particularly scenic area in general. During the height of the herring spawn, bird numbers and activity in this vicinity can be astounding. The public access areas at both ends and near the middle of Deep bay Drive provide the best access points for birding here, and one can walk the beaches in either direction to study concentrations of birds along the shore. At times, the beaches can be solid with gulls, over their entire length. King Eider, Slaty-backed Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake have all been reported here. Large flocks of diving ducks, and especially the three species of scoters, are commonly seen. At the far western end of the spit, Marbled Murrelets and Long-tailed Ducks often occur mere meters from shore, offering rare close-up views. To visit Deep Bay, take Hwy 19A west from Bowser, and continue a few kms up the road, turning right onto Gainsburg Rd, near the end of a long passing lane. Cross the railroad tracks and follow Gainsburg to its end at Burne Rd, where you will turn right. In less than a block, you can go either left or right onto Deep Bay Dr, exploring as you see fit. There are public access points in both directions.

Two British Columbia Rarities Visit the Okanagan Valley

Text by Jim Ginns with photos by Chris Charlesworth

On November 7, 2010 Don Cecile, having just seen the Rufous Hummingbird at Bob McKay's feeder in Oliver, stopped at the postage-stamp sized Inkaneep Provincial Park. Don's report does not include any superlatives or adjectives but I would say the sighting was exciting, remarkable and surprising because there chumming with the Black-capped Chickadees and Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets was a Northern Parula Warbler!

This sighting is of one of the "best" birds seen in British Columbia this year. Parulas live in the eastern half of the continent; they nest in Canada as far west as southeastern Manitoba. The Inkaneep Parula is the first sighting in the Okanagan and apparently one of very few ever sighted in British Columbia.



Parulas are one of the smaller of the warblers and their name means "little titmouse." Active birds they flit like Kinglets. But when seen in good light they are colorful with a blue head, back and wings. There are two white wing bars and the middle of the back has an olivaceous yellow patch. The throat and breast are yellow.

My success in chasing rare bird reports is not good and I presumed that by the time I got to Inkaneep the bird would be gone. So I did nothing! When the Parula was seen on November 8th and 9th I arrived at Inkaneep about 9:40 am on the 10th. It was a chilly, sunny day. Several birders were there, including Russell Cannings, Jess Findlay (Burnaby), Barry Lancaster (Canary Islands and Oliver), Jukka Jantunen (Yukon), and Peter Blokker (Vernon). In the woods there was a near absence of activity or noise. But several minutes later the Chickadees became quite vocal and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet called. The flock was on the move and it came toward us. My first glimpse in the mottled shadows was of a yellow breast and I thought Goldfinch but it was gone. The Parula flew across the lane and into the top of leafless elm. The view was great with the sun behind us. Ahh, a lifer! It was tough having to elbow all the birders out of the way and keep from getting hit in the head by some

humongous telephoto lens. But I saw it and only 12 minutes after arriving!! The Parula put on a show for a number of birders and was last seen on November 21.



Having just seen a lifer I did not expect any further birding highs until 2011 so did not suffer an adrenalin rush when on the 11th Scott Thomson saw what was reported on bcintbird as "an egret of some sort" at the mouth of Powers Creek, West Kelowna. At 7:30am on November 12th Chris Charlesworth saw the bird, a Little Blue Heron. First record for the Okanagan and 3rd for the province! This individual's white feathers, blue-grey bill with a black tip, and dull green legs tells us it a young bird.

In North America the Little Blue Heron breeds from Florida as far north as the New England and Illinois, and occasionally as far west as southern California. It winters on the Gulf Coast and on the Atlantic Coast north to New Jersey. The little blue heron is also found in the tropics.

I arrived 9:10 am not quite sure that I was at the right spot. In a couple of minutes Barry Lancaster and Jukka Jantunen pulled-in. In a few minutes we located the bird feeding the shallow waters of the delta. It was not much bigger than the gulls that were lounging about. Within 20 minutes 6 more birders had arrived.

For the next 12 days the bird roamed the Okanagan Lake waterfront from the south end of Whitworth Road to just north of Pritchard Creek. On November 20 (the last sighting) with quite a bit of ice along the lakeshore and several cms of snow on the ground, Russell Cannings reported "In its weakened state, I doubt it will survive the next couple nights."

The overnight low temperatures from the 21st to the 25th were between minus 8 and minus 16C in nearby rural Penticton. I looked for a couple of hours on the 23rd but did not see the Heron.

The appearance of these two birds in the Okanagan Valley may have been due to the strong southerly winds that had blown for several days before they were spotted.



British Columbia Bird Alert



<http://bcbirdalert.blogspot.com/>

**To report your sightings and audio/visual documentation
please keep in touch with Russell Cannings at russelcannings@shaw.ca –
or by the phone at 250-488-3200**

This blog was created to inform the public of notable bird reports around the province of British Columbia. I hope that both visiting and resident birders will find this site useful for keeping up-to-date in a region as large and diverse as BC. It is not my intention to pass judgment on the validity of these reports; only observer names, provided documentation, and travelling directions will be included. Obviously some discretion will be useful in order to determine what constitutes an appropriate report for this site, and so I would be happy to receive your critical feedback via email. ~ *Russell Cannings*

**Vancouver Island & Sunshine Coast * VANCOUVER & Lower Mainland * Central BC and North Coast
OKANAGAN and Southern Interior * Peace Region and Far North**



Assessing Fisheries Bycatch Impacts on Coastal Waterbirds in Boundary Bay

By Karen Barry, *Bird Studies Canada Program Officer*

This year, 2010, was marked by the amazing return of sockeye salmon to the Fraser River system, the likes of which we haven't seen in almost 100 years by some reports. As a result, there was a very active commercial seine and gill-net fishery in this area. In early August,

reports began to come in about marine bird carcasses washing ashore around Boundary Bay and Point Roberts. In response to these reports, staff from Bird Studies Canada (BSC), BSC Beached Bird Survey volunteers, staff from Environment Canada -Canadian Wildlife Service and independent local volunteers began conducting high frequency beach surveys to look for dead birds. The aim of this high sampling effort and heightened vigilance was to document the number of bird mortalities and to collect carcasses to determine the probable cause of death. Areas actively searched included Tsawwassen, Boundary Bay, White Rock and Point Roberts. With such a large area to survey, it was certainly challenging to cover it all on a daily basis but with the assistance of several volunteers, we managed to complete over 50 surveys in Boundary Bay -Point Roberts, representing over 93 km of survey effort!

Those type of beachcombing surveys are the foundation of Bird Studies Canada's Beached Bird monitoring program. This program first started in 1986 by Dr. Alan Burger at the University of Victoria, in response to the MV Nestucca spill off the Vancouver Island coast. The data collected during these early years provides the first baseline of information for waterbird mortality and oiling rates of seabirds on the BC Coast. After a five year hiatus, in 2002, Bird Studies Canada began coordinating the BC Beached Bird program, which relies on volunteers conducting monthly (or more) beach walks looking for seabird carcasses that have washed up after high tide.

Coastal waterbirds are excellent indicators of marine ecosystem health and can serve as an early detection system for oil spill events and changes in ocean conditions. For example, in an unprecedented mortality event during September - October 2009, over 6,000 Surf Scoter and hundreds of other waterbirds washed up on the beaches of Washington. This event was documented by our sister organization in the United States, COASST (Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team, www.coasst.org), who coordinates the Beached Bird Survey program along the US Pacific Northwest from Alaska to California. It was later determined that this mortality event was caused by an algal bloom of the dinoflagellate *Akashiwo sanguinea*.

Information collected from Beached Bird surveys also helps to understand local patterns in seabird mortality and identify which species are vulnerable to other events including fisheries by-catch. In the Pacific Northwest, high numbers of beached birds, or "wreck" events, have been linked to commercial gillnet fishery openings previously. A recent analysis of beached bird data has identified Boundary Bay as a hotspot for fisheries-associated stranding events (Hamel et al., 2009. *Marine Ornithology*, Volume 37, available at www.marineornithology.org). The good news is that the 2010 event in Boundary Bay -Point Roberts does not appear to be as large as some previously documented events, but it certainly represents a distinct re-surfacing of an issue that has not been as apparent in the past five to ten years. Between August 8 and September 22 2010, more than 100 dead birds were found in the Boundary Bay-Point Roberts area. The most common beached birds found in the Boundary Bay area were all dive-feeders, chiefly comprising Common Murre, Rhinoceros Auklet and Pigeon Guillemot.

Bird Studies Canada is collaborating with COASST and with the Environment Canada-Fisheries and Oceans Canada Seabird Bycatch Monitoring and Mitigation Project by collecting fresh and intact carcasses for further study. Forty-five carcasses collected from Boundary Bay area were submitted to the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands' Animal Health Centre for necropsy. The carcasses were examined by Dr. Vicki Bowes, an avian pathologist, to ascertain probable cause of death. In addition, muscle samples were sent to Fisheries and Ocean

Canada for genetic testing to determine birds' colony of origin; gastro-intestinal contents will be examined for prey identification and evidence of plastics ingestion; feathers were sent to Environment Canada's Pacific Environmental Science Centre as part of the 'Birds Oiled at Sea' monitoring project to test for exposure to oil. Post-mortem results for birds found in Boundary Bay during August-September 2010 confirmed that the majority (40 out of 45 birds) had drowned as a result of gillnet entanglement.

This is an excellent example of how Citizen Science efforts play a critical role in augmenting the work of other agencies in helping to document and understand conservation issues facing BC's waterbirds. Many thanks to all volunteers who assisted in this project and to those individuals involved in the Beached Bird Program throughout BC.



There is a great need for additional volunteers to participate in this program; if you are interested, please contact us at BCprograms@birdscanada.org or 1-877-349-2473.

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... local winter kill in one small area where birds may become concentrated as they congregate around food sources, could affect the breeding populations of a much larger region far away.



Sparrow-free swallows

By Neil K. Dawe



Last year we were fortunate to have a pair of Violet-green Swallows take up residence in one of our nest boxes that I had placed on the gable of a garden shed (Figure 1). This was the first pair to do so since we moved here some eleven years before.

Things appeared to be going well until I awoke one morning to find the nest box at an odd angle. Upon checking I found a bunch of feathers on the shed roof and the carcass of the female swallow; most of her breast had been eaten. Apparently, a raccoon had found the box and from the roof was able to reach inside and remove the female for a snack.

I checked the nest box contents and found four newly-hatched young inside so replaced the lid and put the box back. The male returned three or four times throughout the day landing on the box or at the entrance hole and checking inside but never entered. That was the last we saw of him and the young, of course, perished.

This year I cleaned out the nest box and placed it on a four-foot 2 x 2 fastened to the shed gable well above the roof. It was only a few days later and we had a male swallow checking the box inside and out. Soon, however, House Sparrows began to do the same thing. This went on for a day or two until I only saw sparrows at the nest box. Upon checking the box I found the carcass of a male Violet-green Swallow, likely trapped in the box and killed by a sparrow.

So I, again, cleaned out the box and moved it to a pergola by our deck hoping that our activity might deter the sparrows but not any swallows that might come by. Almost immediately, House Sparrows started carrying nesting materials to the box.

This was war! I went to the computer and Googled “house sparrow-free violet-green swallow box” and a number of items appeared (1.85 million of them in .12 seconds, to be exact). In one of these articles on managing House Sparrows I found reference to a video on how to make a House Sparrow-free nest box.

Since violet-greens were still in the area, I rushed to take down the nest box (again!), clean out the beginnings of the sparrow nest, and modify the box by adding a “1 x 4” inch plate with an oval hole that was 7/8 of an inch high by about 1 3/4 inches wide (the original nest box entrance hole was an inch and an eighth in diameter). The box was modified and replaced on the pergola within half an hour.

For the next two days the house sparrows persevered, trying to gain access and continue their nesting activities. At times I thought they were going to squeeze through the opening only to watch them fail. By the end of day two they had given up and on day three, a male violet-green had taken over the box (Figure 2) soon joined by a female.

We watched over the next few days as grasses and feathers were brought to the nest box. The female gained easy access but it was more of a struggle for the male, although he always got in. Incubation duties followed and in a couple of weeks, both were bringing food to the nest (Figure 3).

About halfway through the nestling stage the male disappeared. We have a Merlin nesting in our neighborhood and that may have been his fate. Whatever the cause, the female was left to fend for the young on her own, which she did (Figure 4). On the morning of 5 August, between 7:00 and 7:15, four young left the nest. A later check of the box revealed an infertile egg in the nest; four out of five ain't bad!

This nest box design absolutely “delivered as promised” and I encourage anyone with House Sparrows in their area to modify all their nest boxes accordingly.



Sparrow-free swallows

By Neil K. Dawe

Cont'd



Figure 1. Violet-green Swallows at nest box in Parkville, 21 May 2009. They had four young when a raccoon killed the female. The male subsequently abandoned the young.



Figure 2. Male Violet-green Swallow at modified nestbox, 15 June 2010.



Figure 3. Male Violet-green Swallow with food for young, 18 July 2010. He disappeared about a week later leaving the female to fend for the young on her own.



Figure 4. Female Violet-green Swallow feeding young, 2 August 2010. The four young fledged on the morning of August 5.



21st Annual BCFO Conference

June 10 through June 12, 2011

Fort St. John

Watch BCFO Website for details

www.bcfo.ca



An Iceland Adventure

By David Stirling

An agitated Common Redshank was an almost daily encounter on our 3,000 km trip around Iceland by rental car in June, 2010. Iceland is great for landscapes, geothermal activity, world-class waterfalls, and birds -- not many species, but multitudes. Small passerines species were scarce, but in June, Meadow Pipits, Redwings, Snow Buntings, Common Redpolls, White Wagtails, Wheatears and the Wren (Winter Wren, a potential split) were in full song. Fulmars were everywhere and there were Atlantic Puffins galore. Hundreds of Whooper Swans were heading to their moulting lagoon. Nesting Arctic Terns had to be counted by the hectare. The Harlequin Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye breed in Iceland, their only European venue, and so are special ticks for Old World birders. Newly harvested hay fields were stiff with Eurasian Oystercatchers, Black-tailed Godwits and Eurasian Golden Plover searching for homeless field mice and snails. Perhaps they had forsaken the beaches to shelter from the gale force wind.

The wind sometimes limited our activity, especially near seabird cliffs where a gust could have blown us off to join the wild fowl. On the other hand it was an experience, if one had never survived a hurricane. And there were some fascinating clouds forms churned up by updrafts and downdrafts along the shore cliffs.

Plant life was of the boreal-alpine variety — gentians, avens, buttercups and phlox. Of particular interest were the fields of dense, blooming lupines. I liked the stately, robust dandelions.

I wanted to experience Myvatn's (Midge Lake) infamous midge swarms, and to see the famous algae balls. The midges were barely noticeable (come back in August). I saw algae balls (marimo) only in captivity — in a hotel aquarium tank. I will have to do it again.

Much of Iceland is grand scenery, particularly the desolation kind. The remainder is a green and pleasant land. Accommodation is plentiful, ranging from bring your own sleeping bag, through B&B's and guest houses, to hotels. In the tourist season it is advisable to book ahead. Food is pretty traditional plus a few Iceland specialties such as cold smoked lamb. A unique eatery was the Cowshed Cafe where we watched the cows being milked while we tied into a memorable breakfast. For the impecunious birder-in-a-hurry there were lots of petrol stations-cum-fast food establishments selling sandwiches, hot dogs and hamburgers, even beer. Prices were high but not astronomical, thanks to the up-beat Canadian \$\$\$. Roads were good. Policemen were uncommon.



BCFO in Taiwan, March 18–31, 2010

At the invitation of the Changhua Wild Bird Society, our partner organization in Taiwan, five BCFO members traveled to that island country to attend the Opening Ceremonies of the Bagua Mountain Bird Fair on March 20 where we were welcomed as honoured guests. This was the second time that BCFO members have attended the annual Fair, which has been held on the 3rd weekend of March since 1991, hosted by the CHWBS. The Fair is the biggest event of the CHWBS's year, and celebrates the spring passage of the Gray-faced Buzzard, *Butastur indicus*, and other raptors. There was a time, long ago, when this raptor and all others were severely persecuted; but no more. After the formalities and two hours at the hawk watch station, we moved on and spent the next 11 days birding around the island with former BCFO member Simon Liao. We did well, finding 195 species, including all 15 endemics (*The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*) and many others that are considered endemic species by other authors.



Gray-faced Buzzard, *Butastur indicus*,
flying over Bagua Mountain,
Changhua, Taiwan.



Honoured guests at Bagua Mountain Bird Fair.
L to R: Simon Liao, Jo Ann MacKenzie, Roger Simms,
Peter Blokker, Yao Chung-te (Taiwan Endemic Species
Research Institute), Val George, Joyce Henderson.



Birding at Huisun Forest Station

For a Trip Report and bird list, please
go to the BCFO website
or contact Jo Ann MacKenzie
j.a.mackenzie@telus.net



BIRDING IN TAIWAN

TAIWAN for BCFO MEMBERS

2011, March 17-30: SPECIAL TOUR FOR BCFO MEMBERS. BCFO has been invited to Taiwan again. Visit the home area of BCFO's partner society in Changhua, and the popular Bagua Mountain Bird Fair. The rest of the tour will focus on endemic species, with excellent chances for all. The number of endemic species, 15 to 24, varies according to which world checklist you follow.

14 day tour, *FROM VANCOUVER*, INCLUDING AIR, \$4590 (sharing), \$5090 (single). Ask for a detailed itinerary.

GROUP SIZE: 1 – 10, with 2 leaders, Simon Liao and Jo Ann MacKenzie

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INTERNATIONAL TAIWAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION www.birdingintaiwan.org

Good birds, good food, good friends!