

B_C BIRDING

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

BCFO objectives include: fostering cooperation between amateur and professional ornithologists, promoting cooperative bird surveys and research projects, and supporting conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve birds and their habitats.

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

Membership Dues

Please send requests, or requests for further information, to:

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

Annual Membership Dues

General Membership (Canada)	\$30.
Junior Membership (Canada)	\$20.
U.S. and International Membership	\$35.

NewsMagazine Submissions

Send material to the Editor at jmryder@telus.net (MS Word format preferred but not essential) or mail to BCFO at above address. Submissions may include articles about birding experiences, casual observations about bird behaviour, site guides, photos, and other topics of interest to birders, preferably, but not necessarily, in British Columbia.

The deadline for receipt of material is the 15th of the month preceding the March, June, September and December issues.

Advertising Rates

Full page: \$125 per issue or \$112.50 each for 4 or more issues
Half page: \$75 per issue or \$67.50 each for 4 or more issues
Quarter page: \$40 per issue or \$36 each for 4 or more issues

BCFO Website: <http://bcfo.ca/>

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COVER STORY

Eagle & Rainbow

Photographer: Alistair Fraser

Four days ago, I spotted a rather large Rainbow Trout which had washed ashore. I wasn't the only one who noticed it. Over the next few days, it was scavenged by a crow, a raven, a sub-adult Bald Eagle and an adult Bald Eagle. Whenever the carcass was contested, the adult bald won. But, when it wasn't around, others would sneak in and have lunch.

A crow was the first to start nibbling at the rainbow. The sub-adult Bald Eagle eyed it hungrily from above, but was unable to snack while the adult was feasting. Early this morning, the adult bald moved the fish a bit offshore to a floating log and finished it off. (Kootenay Lake, May 18, 2014)

(See the sub-adult Bald Eagle on p.4)

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, and avian ecology and behavior. 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 submission of proposals for financial assistance for bird surveys and other ornithological research. It also wishes to foster greater connections 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 making a submission.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If it's too cold, just think of spring birding.

With Christmas and Christmas Bird Counts just around the corner, it's probably an excellent time of year to think of spring birding in order to warm a birder's bones as we head out into the wintry landscapes around the province. And Spring 2015 looks to be shaping up as a bonanza of spring birding when we will visit the South Okanagan for our AGM, and when pre and post- conference trips will take us both north and south to sample some of the richest birding on the continent. See the announcement in this issue of our newsmagazine. Please plan to join us May 29, 30, and 31, 2015, in Oliver.

In my last President's Message I promised a member survey to give feedback to your board, but our preference of an electronic one on the website is a little more difficult to set up than I first thought. Stay tuned.

However, in the same message to members I did promise that renewals and new memberships would be made easier through an on-line payment option. This is up and running now, and I encourage all members who haven't done so to renew via that option. To the large number of you that have already done so, Thank You. Both Treasurer Mike and Membership Secretary Larry love the new system; it's easier for them, and we're sure it's easier for you too. Payments can be made via PayPal or credit card. A PayPal account is not needed.

Our annual Christmas Bird Count page is up and running on our website as one service we provide to birders throughout the province. Please check that the information for your local counts is correct, and let us know if it isn't.

The BCFO Bird Records Committee has just published its Review List, which you'll also find on the website – another service we provide to the province's birders. Check it out, and dig out those old records you've been waiting to send in for a while. The system is all set up and ready for you.

Of course, feel completely free to get out there to find new birds for the province and new records of rare birds too. But I don't really have to tell you that, do I? The Bird Records Committee is ready to review both old and new records, and I'm pleased to report that the submissions are starting to come in rapidly.

Enjoy your Christmas Bird Counts, and enjoy the Season with friends and family.

Very best wishes from your Board, and Happy New Year.

George Clulow, President

*Photo: Alistair Fraser.
This is the sub-adult
Bald Eagle referred to
in Cover Story, p.3*



EDITOR'S NOTES

Another December issue with winter looming ahead and CBCs imminent, but as George notes, spring is beginning to glimmer in the distance. To speed up the dark winter evenings, why not sit down and write something for *BC Birding*? We are always looking for articles, long or short (and you will notice that this issue is rather thin).

In particular, we invite members to send in photos. We are hoping to put together set up a "library" of images that would be suitable for the first and last pages of the newsletter ('the bookends'), but we also need photos for inside pages to fill spaces between articles.

BCFO is also requesting members to submit applications for research grants (including bird surveys). See details on p.3). See also our journal *BC Birds*, 2014 p.20 for an example of a project funded by BCFO.

Inserted into this issue for members who receive hard copy newsletters are forms for 'Listers' Corner' and some membership renewal notices (for a few members, not for everyone). Electronic members can download Lister's Corner forms from our website.

My thanks to all contributors to this issue for articles and images, especially Ted Hillary, Ben Keen, Len Jellicoe, Alistair Fraser and Alan Burger.

Since this is the final issue of the year, special thanks to all who have contributed regularly to our NewsMagazine over the past 12 months (or more): Martin McNicholl for birding news, Wayne Weber for upcoming events, Clive Keen for Reflective Birders, Jenny Hards for her cartoons, Michael Church for summaries of current bird research, Chris Charlesworth for forwarding the BC rare bird reports that he writes for the ABA, George Clulow for not only his President's reports but for numerous other write-ups related to AGM, two-day field trips, Young Birders etc., and Carlo Giovannella, Bill Merilees, David Stirling, Mark Habdas for photo editing, and Jude Grass for proof-reading.

Best wishes to everyone for the holiday season, enjoy the CBCs, take care when travelling!

June Ryder
Editor

The British Columbia Young Birder Award 2015 Call for Nominations

In 2014, BCFO inaugurated the BC Young Birder Award to welcome talented young birders into the birding community and recognise their accomplishments, contributions, and engagement with birds and birding in the province. To be selected for a Young Birder Award, recipients must be 16 or under and meet all of the following criteria:

- Exceptional observational and birding skills well beyond the 'novice' level
- Significant contribution to activities in the birding community such as: posting to list-serves; entering data to eBird; participating in local surveys, counts, and field trips
- Sponsored, nominated and seconded by a BCFO member who has direct knowledge of the candidate

The BCFO is seeking nominations for our next round of 'Young Birder' awards. Our first awardees (see Newsletter for March 2014, p15) are carrying on in impressive fashion, and we expect there are more like them out there

Send nominations to:

BC Young Birder Award, BC Field Ornithologists
PO Box 45507, Westside RPO,
Vancouver, B.C., V6S 2N5



THE CRESTED MYNAH RETURNS..... TO YOUR LIST!

From the American Birding Association, October 2014:

The ABA's newly reconstituted Recording Standards and Ethics Committee has made a number of decisions that might affect your lists. Notable among those decisions is one that affects species that were once on the official ABA Checklist but have since been removed.

The Crested Myna, formerly an established exotic in the Vancouver, British Columbia area, is a prime example of these affected species, whose numbers may grow to include Budgerigar, Red-whiskered Bulbul, or Spot-breasted Oriole in the future. If you saw a Crested Myna before it was removed from the main body of the ABA checklist, you can once again include it in the list totals you submit to ABA. That's only one of the changes made and birders who want more insight into the decision-making process that resulted in these changes at the ABA Blog.

Photo by Terence Lai



B.C. BIRDING NEWS BRIEFS

Compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

Wild Bird Trust of B.C.

The Wild Bird Trust of B.C. recently transferred The McFadden Creek Nature Centre (including B.C.'s former largest Fannin's Great Blue Heronry) on Salt Spring Island, to the Islands Nature Trust; completed work on their Osprey Point Trail, and are preparing to open their Corrigan Nature House at Maplewood Flats in North Vancouver, as well as continuing with ongoing nature education, recreation and research projects. A new four-page seasonal checklist by B. Hawkes, Q. Brown and D. Killby of the birds identified at the Maplewood site is inserted in their fall 2014 newsletter. Their 2014 "big sit" in June produced a record 54 species, and other articles cover donations; antiparasitic effects of some chemicals on birds; berries; Bald Eagles; and raccoons –based on articles by P. M. Banning-Lover, Q. Brown, A. Grass, J. Grass, B. Hawkes, D. Killby and D. Stewart in *Wild Bird Trust of B.C. Wingspan fall 2014* with front and back cover photos of Wood Ducks by J. Lowman.

Wandering Birds

The band on an emaciated Rock Pigeon found at Comox, B.C. on 10 May 2013 revealed that it was a racing pigeon released in Japan 28 days earlier. Colour and alphanumeric bands on Caspian Terns observed and photographed by Richard Swanston at a small colony in Richmond, B.C. on 11 June 2013 showed that they had been banded as chicks 335 km. away in Oregon. Birds banded at Mackenzie, B.C.'s Mugaha Marsh include a Yellow-rumped Warbler banded on 4 September 2011 and recovered 247 days later on 8 May 2013 about 2200 km. away in Colorado, and a Purple Finch banded on 8 May 2011 and found dead about 1660 km. southeast near Wasagamung, Manitoba on 14 May 2013- based on R.W. Campbell. 2013. *Wildlife Afield* 10:66-67

ROBERT (BOB) MCKAY

November 20, 1949 – October 22, 2014

By Jim Ginns, with contributions from Dick Cannings, Larry Cowan, and Donna Heard.



Bob grew up on the family farm near Dugald, Manitoba and spent the first 48 years of his life in that province. In 1971 Christine and Bob were married and they raised daughters Melanie and Karen. Vacation times were spent camping and birding; Bob often referred to a common bird in Manitoba slang as a 'dirt bird.' In 1997 Bob took early retirement from Canadian National Railway and soon after he and Chris moved to Oliver, British Columbia.

Bob was active in retirement. He volunteered or joined a number of groups and activities in addition to his strictly birding interests. For example, the BC Seniors Games, Kiwanis Club, the Valley Congregational Church, hockey, curling, the South Okanagan Naturalists Club (SONC) and the Oliver-Osoyoos Naturalists.

Bob joined the BC Field Ornithologists in 2010 and became a regular contributor to "Lister's Corner." He was very much involved with the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory (both through volunteering for the daily census and arranging an annual grant from Oliver Kiwanis). He also did the Oliver Breeding Bird Survey annually and biked Baillie Birdathons. He volunteered with the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC in 2010 and 2011, the first two years of the reintroduction program here in the south Okanagan; he helped with the spring releases and then with field monitoring during the rest of the season. During the 5 years of data collection for the BC Breeding Bird Atlas, he contributed 1088 records.

Christmas Bird Counts were a must for Bob. One year on the Apex-Hedley CBC we had parked near a thicket with a small creek gurgling over the rocks and ice. Otherwise it was pretty quiet until Bob came crashing out of the bush with camera high overhead and a big smile. He had come upon a puffed-up Dipper and got photos of it with frozen droplets on its feathers. His bird photos were greatly admired in the Okanagan and he was generous in making them available for a variety of causes, including SONC's popular booklet *The Okanagan Valley Birding Trail* and bird interpretive signs that are in Penticton at Okanagan Lake Park, Lakeside Resort's walkway, and Penticton Golf & Country Club's course.

SOUTH OKANAGAN AGM

Birding in BC's Most Diverse Region

BCFO Annual General Meeting --- May 29th to 31st, 2015

With over 190 species of breeding birds, the South Okanagan Valley is a must venue for birders from BC, Canada, and further afield. It's a surprise to realize that the last time we held our AGM here was 1999. Well, it's time to go back.

Not only birds, but spectacular scenery too awaits delegates – from low-elevation deserts and grasslands, through rich wetlands and riparian thickets, to lakes, high crags and cliffs, and mid-elevation forests.

With such a diversity of habitats there are many birds to see here, and many special birds among them. Southern species that reach the northern edge of their ranges in the South Okanagan are just one attraction among a fantastic array of birds. We'll set things up to see as many as we can.



GC



MH

Among other beauties we'll be looking for will be: *Great Gray Owl, Common Poorwill, White-throated Swift, Williamson's Sapsucker, Lewis's Woodpecker, Black-chinned and Calliope hummingbirds, Gray Flycatcher, Boreal Chickadee, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Western and Mountain bluebirds, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bobolink, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow.*

Our centre of operations will be the town of **Oliver**, a perfect location from which to explore the region. The Oliver Community Hall will be our base of operations where meals and meetings

will be held. Delegates will book their own accommodation in the area. Through the Oliver Tourism Association we have requested special conference rates at all local accommodation. Mention the BCFO AGM when enquiring to see what is on offer at the locations that interest you. To find a full listing of accommodation in the area go to the OTA website. [<http://www.winecapitalofcanada.com/stay/>](http://www.winecapitalofcanada.com/stay/)



MH

A pre-conference, Two-day Field Trip for Members will be hosted by the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club and be led by Les Gyug. Participants will be guided to hotspots around Kelowna on Wednesday, May 27th. On Thursday, May 28th a number of different routes will be offered through Okanagan Mountain Park as part of the park's annual bird count.

The post-conference Extension Trip will be to Eastern Washington for even more fabulous birding. Planning is currently underway – Leader TBA.

As usual we will be offering a full suite of morning field trips during the conference itself. *Locations will include special permission access areas in the Kilpoola Lake grasslands and on Anarchist Mountain.* With such a wealth of birding in the area, choices will be hard to make.

See you in Oliver in May for some fabulous birding, and maybe a glass of wine too.

Full details and registration forms will be available in the New Year.



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Compiled by Wayne C. Weber

The following meetings and other events are those that take place in BC and immediately adjacent areas or that potentially include information on birds that occur in BC. Information on additional meetings is listed in the bimonthly *Ornithological Newsletter* at www.birdmeetings.org and on the BIRDNET website at <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/ornith/birdmeet.html>.

For most meetings, festivals and other events, the website is the main source of information, and registration can often be accomplished online as well. Wherever information can be obtained through a phone number or e-mail address, we have included these as well. If no contact information is listed, it can be assumed that none was provided by the organization, at least not on the date when this listing was compiled. It is usually not necessary to contact a particular individual, except for scientific meetings when one is interested in making a presentation. Names and contact information for individuals are listed whenever they are available.

EVENTS IN 2014:

Nov.15-Dec.7-- 18TH ANNUAL FRASER VALLEY BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL, Harrison Mills, BC. For information, check the festival website at <http://fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca>, send an email to info@fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca, phone 604-826-7361, or write the Mission Chamber of Commerce, 34033 Lougheed Highway, Mission, BC V2V 5X8.

Dec.14 to Jan. 5-- CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS. For information on dates of counts and contact information for count organizers, check the BCFO website in November and December, or check the December issue of BC BIRDING.

EVENTS IN 2015:

Jan. 1-31-- 28TH ANNUAL BRACKENDALE EAGLE FESTIVAL, BRACKENDALE, BC. For information, check the website at <http://www.brackendaleartgallery.com/Calendar.html>, phone 604-898-3333, or email the Brackendale Art Gallery at info@brackendaleartgallery.com.

Feb. 14-17-- The GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and Bird Studies Canada. For information and to participate, check the GBBC website at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc-title=Great/howto.html>.

Feb. 18-21-- 42ND ANNUAL MEETING, PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP, San Jose Airport Garden Hotel, San Jose, CA. For further information, check the society's website at <http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/index.php?f=meeting&t=Annual Meeting&s=1>

Feb. 24-27-- SOCIETY FOR NORTHWESTERN VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY annual meeting, Portland, Oregon. This meeting is a joint meeting with the NW Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. For information and to register, visit the SNVB website at <http://thesnvb.org/annual-meeting-2015>.

Mar. 6-April 15-- BRANT WILDLIFE FESTIVAL, Qualicum, BC. For information, phone Robin Rivers at 1-866-288-7878 (in Greater Vancouver, 604-924-9771), e-mail rivers@naturetrust.bc.ca, or check the festival website at <http://brantfestival.bc.ca>.

Mar. 13-15-- 13TH ANNUAL WINGS OVER WATER BIRDING FESTIVAL, Blaine, WA. For information, phone the Blaine Visitor Information Center at 1-800-624-3555, send an e-mail to dharger@cityofblaine.com, or check the website at <http://www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com>.

Mar. 27-29-- 18TH ANNUAL OTHELLO SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL, Othello, WA. For information, check the festival website at <http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org>, or contact the Grant County Conservation District at 1107 South Juniper Way, Moses Lake, WA 98837 (phone 509-765-9618).

Apr. 8-14-- OLYMPIC BIRDFEST, Sequim, WA. For information, check the festival website at <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org>, send an email to info@olympicbirdfest.org, or contact the Dungeness River Audubon Center (phone, 360-681-4076; snail mail to 2151 West Hendrickson Road, Sequim, WA 98382).

May 1-3-- GRAYS HARBOR SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL, Aberdeen, WA. For information, contact the festival office at PO Box 470, Montesano, WA 98563 (phone 360-289-5048) or check the website at <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com>

May 4-10-- WINGS OVER THE ROCKIES FESTIVAL (19th annual), Invermere, BC. For information, contact the Pynelogs Cultural Centre, PO Box 2633, Invermere, BC V0A 1K0, phone 1-855-342-2473, e-mail info@wingsovertherockies.org, or check the website at <http://www.wingsovertherockies.org>.

May 7-10-- BC NATURE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Salt Spring Island, BC, hosted by the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club. For information and to register, check the BC Nature website at <http://www.bcnature.ca/agm-2015-salt-spring-island>, or phone Betty Davison at the BC Nature office (phone 604-985-3057); e-mail manager@bcnature.ca.

May 14-18-- MEADOWLARK NATURE FESTIVAL, Penticton, BC. For information, contact the Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Alliance, 113-437 Martin Street, Penticton, BC V2A 5L1 (phone 250-492-4422), or check the website at <http://www.meadowlarkfestival.bc.ca>.

May 14-17-- LEAVENWORTH SPRING BIRD FEST, Leavenworth, WA. For information, email info@leavenworthspringbirdfest.com or check the festival website at <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com>

May 29-31-- BC FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Oliver, BC. Details will soon be posted on the BCFO website and will be sent to all BCFO members.

June 10-14-- WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS ANNUAL MEETING, Billings, Montana. For details, check the WFO webpage at <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org>.

June 10-14-- ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SOCIETY, 52ND ANNUAL MEETING, Anchorage, Alaska. For further information and to register, visit the conference website at <http://abs2015.org>.

June 17-21-- AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION BIRDING RALLY, Spearfish, South Dakota (in the Black Hills). For further information and to register for the event, visit the ABA website at <http://events.aba.org/aba-birding-rally-spearfish-south-dakota/#more-1576>.

July 15-18-- Joint meeting of the WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ASSOCIATION OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS, and SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. For further information, check the conference website at <http://personalpress.acadiu.ca/ornithmeet2015>.

July 28-31-- 133RD STATED MEETING, AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, and 85TH ANNUAL MEETING, COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK. Full conference website not available yet; check the BIRDNET website at <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/ornith/birdmeet.html>, which will have a link to the AOU/Cooper meeting website as soon as the latter is up and running.

Aug. 11-15-- 39TH ANNUAL MEETING, THE WATERBIRD SOCIETY, Bar Harbor, Maine. For information, check the society website at <http://www.waterbirds.org>.

Aug. 21-24-- WASHINGTON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Ocean Shores, WA. No details on the Society website yet, but check the website at <http://www.wos.org> closer to the conference date.

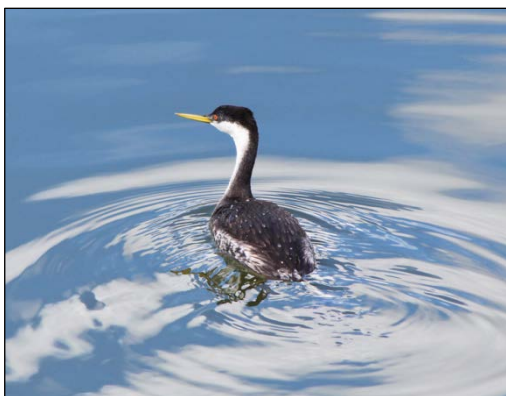
Oct. 17-21-- 22ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY, Winnipeg, Manitoba. For further information and to register, visit the conference website at <http://wildlife.org/22nd-annual-conference-of-the-wildlife-society>.

Nov. 4-8-- RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Sacramento, California, hosted by the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. For further details, visit the society website at <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org>.

REPORT OF THE BCFO TWO-DAY FIELD TRIP SALMON ARM BAY, AUGUST 30-31, 2014

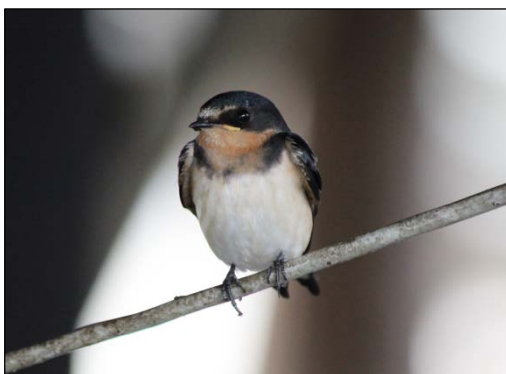
Ted Hillary – text & Ben Keen - photos

A BCFO field trip was held around the Salmon Arm Bay on August 30 and 31, 2014 led by Ted Hillary and Geoff Styles. The nine participants from Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island enjoyed a wealth of birds and assorted wildlife under almost ideal viewing conditions. The Salmon Arm Bay is well known for its fall migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Although nothing overly spectacular was found, the Bay lived up to its expectations. A total of 98 species was seen and all participants, expressing happiness at the results, were able to tick at least one species from their want lists.



Western Grebe

The first morning was spent almost entirely on the wharf, looking at and identifying waterfowl, gulls and shorebirds. Seen were 18 species of waterfowl including a Ruddy Duck and a couple of Canvasbacks. One of the 150 Western Grebes swimming in the Bay provided close up photo opportunities as it fed alongside the wharf. Among the five varieties of gulls seen, one was a juvenile Franklin's Gull, a rarity for the area. Just in time to be counted four Common Terns flew over.



Young Barn Swallow

We were treated to 15 species of shorebirds. These included two Wilson's Phalarope and forty Red-necked Phalarope. Special sightings for many were the two Semipalmated Plovers, the 90 Baird's Sandpipers, the eight Stilt Sandpipers, and the 30 Semipalmated Sandpipers, most of which were fairly close by for good viewing.



River Otters

At the end of the wharf were over 700 swallows of six species. There were over 90 Northern Rough-winged Swallows and at least 440 Barn Swallows flying and feeding, and coming to rest on boats parked in the marina, making counting easy. At the marina a family of river otters entertained us with their antics as they lounged about the boardwalk. A couple of young ospreys, left behind by their parents to fend for themselves, sat on pilings having a hearty meal of fish.



Osprey

After lunch we birded in Peter Jannink Nature Park. Overhead were Vaux's Swifts and Black Swifts, flying and feeding in darkening skies. On the mudflats a Peregrine Falcon chased shorebirds, caught one and proceeded to devour it. A variety of warblers and sparrows were seen in the Nature Park. Nearby Ring-

necked Pheasants regularly called out, much to the delight of some of the coastal participants who seldom hear or see them.

A quick walk was then made along the trail east of the wharf. A couple of American Kestrels, a red eyed Vireo and a Gray Catbird were some of the smaller birds seen. Two American white pelicans spiralled up and up in all their majesty, catching the thermals, finally flying south out of sight. A late afternoon thunder storm ended the birding for the day. In the evening the group enjoyed a Thai meal.



Salmon Arm Bay – Wharf Area

On the second day we walked east of the wharf, around Christmas Island, and to the end of the trail, a

distance of approximately 5 kilometres. On the previous day we had spent much of our time looking at shorebirds. This day we scoped the Bay for waterfowl. After much looking we finally found a Clark's Grebe, a must on most peoples' want lists and a lifer for some.

Along the trail a late Veery put in a brief appearance, as did an equally late Black-headed Grosbeak. On Christmas Island approximately 150 swallows of four species were flying and feeding. Amongst them was a strange white bird, appearing somewhat out of place with the swallows, which turned out to be a leucostic violet-green swallow. Among the 12 Audubon Yellow-rumped Warblers was a Myrtle Warbler, seldom seen in this area.

Outside of the birding around the Salmon Arm Bay, several of the participants made an early morning drive to Geoff's place, just east of Salmon Arm. They were awarded with excellent views of a resident Great Gray Owl sitting in the back of his property.

The 2014 BCFO field trip to the Salmon Arm Bay was a resounding success for all participants. Everyone was treated to a variety of shorebirds and many other bird species not always easily seen in such close proximity to each other. Many were able to make a few ticks in their want lists, and all enjoyed the company of other birders and benefited from the knowledge and experiences which they brought.

SPECIES LIST AUGUST 30 AND 31, 2014 (98 species)

Common Loon	Turkey Vulture	Mew Gull	Veery
Pied-billed Grebe	Osprey	Ring-billed Gull	American Robin
Horned Grebe	Bald Eagle	Herring Gull	Gray Catbird
Red-necked Grebe	Red-tailed Hawk	Common Tern	European Starling
Western Grebe	American Kestrel	Rock Pigeon	Cedar Waxwing
Clark's Grebe	Merlin	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Orange-crowned Warbler
American White Pelican	Peregrine Falcon	Black Swift	Yellow Warbler
Great Blue Heron	American Coot	Vaux's Swift	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Canada Goose	Semipalmated Plover	Belted Kingfisher	MacGillivray's Warbler
Wood Duck	Killdeer	Northern Flicker	Common Yellowthroat
Gadwall	Spotted Sandpiper	Pileated Woodpecker	Wilson's Warbler
American Wigeon	Greater Yellowlegs	Willow Flycatcher	Spotted Towhee
Mallard	Lesser Yellowlegs	Warbling Vireo	Savannah Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Sanderling	Red-eyed Vireo	Song Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Black-billed Magpie	Lincoln's Sparrow
Northern Pintail	Least Sandpiper	American Crow	Western Tanager
Green-winged Teal	Baird's Sandpiper	Common Raven	Black-headed Grosbeak
Canvasback	Pectoral Sandpiper	Tree Swallow	Red-winged Blackbird
Redhead	Stilt Sandpiper	Violet-green Swallow	Brewer's Blackbird
Lesser Scaup	Long-billed Dowitcher	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Bufflehead	Wilson's Snipe	Bank Swallow	House Finch
Hooded Merganser	Wilson's Phalarope	Barn Swallow	American Goldfinch
Common Merganser	Red-necked Phalarope	Cliff Swallow	House Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Bonaparte's Gull	Black-capped Chickadee	
Ring-necked Pheasant	Franklin's Gull	Marsh Wren	

The Reflective Birder #10

Those Little Brown Jobs

Clive Keen

Sparrows. I bet that word sent your heart racing. Not. Sparrows are a bit like those shadowy family members locked in the attic in Victorian novels. Nobody really wants to talk about them. And yet in North America we have 29 species entitled "sparrow" and another 16 "allies". With such a rich variety, you'd think we'd have sparrow enthusiasts aplenty. Sure, they are hard to ID, but so are raptors and shorebirds, and their fans are legion. So, what exactly have sparrows done to offend us?

Clearly the people in charge of naming birds had a gentleman's agreement: the term "sparrow" was to be reserved for small birds short on visual panache. The evidence is clear. Juncos are just as much sparrows as the *Melospiza*, but they are visually distinctive, so that was enough to earn them a reprieve from the S-label. Similarly with towhees, longspurs, and the far-north buntings: all are visually distinctive, so all achieved elevation. Only the ho-hum of the family would be demeaned with something as redolent of tedium as "sparrow".

Over a couple of decades reading the popular birding magazines, I can only remember one sparrow being named consistently with real affection: the Lincoln's Sparrow. You can see both why this bird was condemned to sparrowdom, and why it has nevertheless retained some admirers. Most people seeing a Lincoln's Sparrow wouldn't bother to give it a second look. It seems a typical LBJ. Small. Brown. Lurks. Thus, "sparrow." It takes a dedicated birder to *really* look and appreciate their subtle, understated, charm.

Now there are in fact some sparrows with real visual distinction. Harris's, Golden-crowned and White-throated, for instance, can all put on a decent show – but only at certain times of the year. Much of the time, they sink back into anonymity. If the labels had been handed out at the right time of year, they'd no doubt have been called *buntings*: that's how the Lark Bunting escaped the put-down, though for much of the year it is a quintessential LBJ.

Sparrows, it seems, have to be happy with their status as a lister's bird. A dedicated lister will spend days driving to Michigan and then wandering through tick-infested fields to get a sighting of a Henslow's Sparrow, though it can most charitably be described as "OK." The most interesting thing about the Henslow, let's face it, is that its song is about a

nanosecond long. I did my duty, along with a group of another dozen birders, to find a Henslow, and when we succeeded, the celebrations passed by unnoticed. It was a lifer for all us, and only three members of the group had found small insects on their bodies, but the absence of high-fives was in clear evidence. Somebody had to be talked long and hard into doing a lifer dance, and even then it lacked conviction.

So, the sparrows aren't exactly Charismatic Micro Fauna, but a lifer is still a lifer, and there's lots on offer with the Emberizae, so there must be another reason for sparrow-apathy. My guess is that appreciation is muted because of the uneasy feeling that many of our sparrow IDs are just plain wrong.

I've ticked quite a few species of sparrows, but nearly always with a restive conscience. The grassland sparrows never give a decent view, so one's ID can be dodgy at best, and half of all sparrows are so similar to others that even given a good sighting, doubts about the ID are hard to shake. And let's face it, sparrows can be *really* hard. I once lucked out by going on a trip with the absolute cream of birding in my area – every member of the ten-person party was better than the others. And yet we spot a sparrow, get excellent long views of it, and can come to no agreement about its identity. I'd have ticked Clay-coloured, with a sort-of confidence, had I been on my own, but one of my honoured colleagues felt sure that it was a Swamp Sparrow, and another gave his vote to Brewer's. The rest shrugged their shoulders. In the end, nobody seemed to care all that much.

But I bet the birds don't mind in the least. When you're a nice-sized packed of protein for any wandering hawk, it's not a bad thing to be inconspicuous. You wouldn't expect such small things to be long-lived, and yet a banded White-Throated Sparrow was found to be 14 years 11 months old, and a House Sparrow, an even more impressive 15 years 9 months. Anonymity, as Facebook users occasionally discover when they apply for a job, has its virtues.

NOTE: This is one of 55 articles in the second edition of the eBook *Birding: a Flock of Irreverent Essays*, available from Amazon, at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00K09F1JQ>, and can be read on a Kindle or on any computer by downloading a free app from Amazon.

DECEIVING THE CHOOKS

David Stirling

BC Birding, Vol 24, #3, p.24, *Deceptive Deception*, caused me to hark back to 1936 or there about, to a Blue Jay - domestic chicken episode on an Alberta homestead.

In September before the grain was threshed I scattered out a wheat sheaf or two for our free-run chickens' breakfast. One morning while having my breakfast, I heard the unmistakable cry of a Red-tailed Hawk (the "Chicken Hawk"). I abandoned my bacon and eggs and rushed out to see the chooks high-tailing for the safety of the coop while our large pugnacious rooster, running around in ever diminishing circles, was shouting a loud challenge, "katooik, katooik", "take cover, I'll put the spurs to that blank, blank" (use your own words). That is what it sounded like to me. In fowl language it was certainly foul language. (OK I just couldn't resist it.)

Well, to get on with it. There wasn't a hawk in sight but there was a company of Blue Jays in the cottonwoods. One or more gave the red-tail cry. The rooster having demonstrated his protective bravery joined the hens. The Blue Jays darted down. Each bird picked up an ear of wheat and flew off.



This ruse was repeated on several mornings, but eventually the chickens showed only a slight alarm pause in their feeding before continuing their pecking and squabbling.

(SOME) CROWS LOVE (SOME) CUCKOOS

It is well known that cuckoos – which are brood parasites – harm the reproductive success of their brood hosts either by evicting the host's eggs from the nest or by having their chick outcompete the host's chicks for food and attention. Well, not always, it seems. The European Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Clamator glandarius*) lays its own eggs in the nests of Magpies (*Pica pica*) and Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone corone*), but it's chicks do not evict host eggs. The magpies nevertheless suffer reduced reproductive success but the crows apparently do not. This probably is the result of the fact that the larger crow chicks can hold their own with the cuckoo in the nest. What is more, it turns out that there are even advantages to having a cuckoo around.

Investigators in Spain observed 741 crows' nests over 16 years and carried out manipulative experiments in which they deliberately removed or introduced a cuckoo chick from one nest to another. They then



Greater Spotted Cuckoo

Alex Mascarell, *The Internet Bird Collection*

recorded the reproductive success of the crows. It turned out that, in the long run, parasitized and non-parasitized nests had a similar probability of successfully hatching crow chicks. But, after that, the probability for at least one of the crow chicks to reach the fledgling stage was substantially higher in the parasitized nests. The transfer experiments confirmed this result. Nests from which a cuckoo chick was removed were less successful than ones with a cuckoo on board; nests into which a cuckoo was introduced were more successful than ones with no cuckoo. Control experiments in which a crow chick was transferred showed no differentiation in breeding success, so the manipulation of the birds was not, of itself, the reason for the observed differences.

What is going on? It turns out that the cuckoo chicks, when threatened or grabbed by a predator (or ornithologist!) emit a vile secretion that strongly discourages the miscreant. It's a witches' brew of acids, indoles, phenols and sulphur compounds (think of the effect of hydrogen sulphide on humans). Everyone in the nest benefits from this experience. The researchers confirmed the effect by smearing food morsels with the secretion and experimentally presenting it to three principal predators of the crows' nests (mammals, in the form of feral cats; other corvids; and raptors). The predators almost unanimously refused the treated food (but gratefully gobbled up untreated samples).

So here we have a case of mutually beneficial brood parasitism. Like most things in nature, the phenomenon of brood parasitism is more varied and complex than the superficial storyline would have us believe.

Canestrari, D. + 5 others*. 2014. *From parasitism to mutualism: unexpected interactions between a cuckoo and its host.* *Science* 343: 1350-1352.

Summary by M. Church

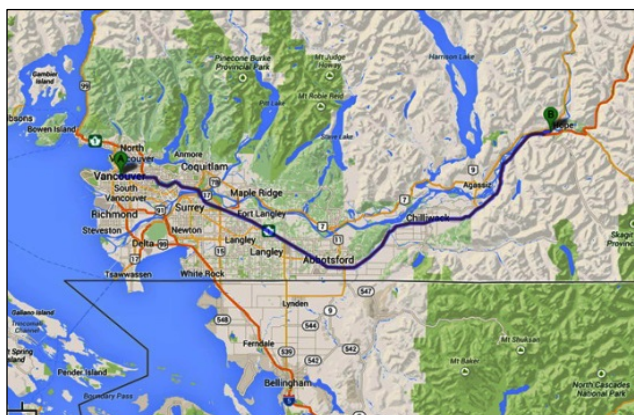
Birding at Hope Airport

Len Jellicoe

It is a fair drive for most residents of the Lower Mainland and as such, the Hope Airport doesn't get a lot of scrutiny by birders. However, those that make the effort are often well rewarded. Birds migrating up and down the mountain canyons of the Coast Cascades find the wide open fields and hedgerows of the Hope Airport a welcome rest stop. Some southbound birds encounter a "fork in the road" further north and make a decision to either head toward the Okanagan or take the Fraser Canyon. Those that take the Canyon are not going to see many open grassy spaces until they funnel into Hope. These birds may spend a few days on the deciduous hedges and grass runways to rest and replenish energy reserves before continuing on. East of the airport is the sewage treatment plant for the town of Hope. Here one will find a variety of waterfowl depending on the time of year. The best way to bird the area is to park your vehicle and walk the perimeter of the airfield. Then drive a mile over to the sewage lagoons. In the next column are some uncommon birds for the Fraser Valley that one might find at the airport:

Swainson's Hawk -- May-June
Hammond's and Dusky flycatchers -- May
Horned Lark -- September
Mountain Bluebird -- March-May
American Pipit -- April and September
Lapland Longspur -- September-October
Nashville Warbler -- April-May
Clay-colored Sparrow -- September
Brewer's Sparrow -- May and September
Western Meadowlark -- sporadic

Here are some of the rarities that have been found here: Hoary Redpoll, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lewis's Woodpecker, and in September 2014, an Upland Sandpiper



To get there: Approximately 6 kilometers west of Hope on Highway One look for exit 165 or Flood Hope Rd. There is a Husky service station on the corner. Airport signs will also direct you there. Floods Road is another 800 meters where you will turn left to come to Old Yale Old Yale Road. Turn right and the airport is only 300 meters away.

Birding at the Hope Airport can be a "hit and miss" endeavor, but if you get a "hit", it can be big



Upland Sandpiper
by
Len Jellicoe

HUMMERS HAVE A SWEET TOOTH

What? Birds don't have teeth! But they do have a sense of taste. Taste is acquired through membranes in the taste buds that are situated on the tongue and in the back of the mouth. There are five taste sensations: sweet, sour, bitter, salt, and umami (savory). Sweet, bitter and umami are mediated by G-protein receptors in taste bud cells. Birds, it seems (along with many carnivores), have lost the gene that activates the sense of sweetness – birds don't do candy. So how to explain hummingbirds, who go for sweet nectar (like the 4:1 water-sugar solution in your hummingbird feeder).

A group of researchers has found that hummingbirds have re-acquired a sweet taste by a gain-of-function mutation of the umami taste receptor (a G-protein receptor similar to the sweetness receptor). They also found that the sweetness receptor remains present and active in reptiles, the closest animal group to birds (remember, birds are dinosaurs), so the loss of this receptor in birds must have happened early in their evolution. They also confirmed that the hummers' nearest avian relatives, the swifts, do not possess a sweetness taste receptor, nor do chickens, who are about as omnivorous as birds get. So the re-acquisition of a 'sweet tooth' must have happened after their origin but still early in hummingbirds' evolution around 50 million years ago.

From these circumstances the researchers make the inference that this 'sweet mutation' was critical in allowing hummingbirds to acquire a unique (among birds) and ubiquitous food resource (plant nectar) that has allowed them to speciate and spread

geographically to an astonishing degree (see 'Hummer history'; June, 2014). Charles Darwin observed that "Real taste . . . must be acquired by certain foods being habitual – hence become hereditary". He seems, as usual, to have been spot on.

But where fruit-eating birds sit in this evolutionary nexus remains unknown.



Baldwin, M.W. + 7 others. 2014. Evolution of sweet taste perception in hummingbirds by transformation of the ancestral umami receptor. *Science* 345: 929-933. (highly technical article, fortunately summarized by:

Jiang, P. and Beauchamp, G.K. 2014. Sensing nectar's sweetness. *Science* 345: 878-9.)

Summary by M.Church

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING,

DARWIN'S FINCH STYLE

An introduced nest parasite (the larvae of *Philornis downsi*, a fruit-eating fly discovered only in the 1990s and apparently without a common name) is reducing reproductive success of Darwin's finches, following its accidental introduction to the Galapagos Islands. This is a severe problem for the threatened Mangrove Finch (*Camarhynchus heliobates*) and the Medium Tree Finch (*C. pauper*). The flies lay their eggs in the birds' nests and the larvae suck blood from nestlings and brooding females.

Researchers noticed that the finches were fond of collecting cotton fibres from local clotheslines to line their nests. So, in an attempt to control the problem, they set up a series of stations with wire containers filled with cotton treated with 1% permethrin (an insecticide) in hopes that the birds would take the material to their nests where it would, in effect, fumigate the nest. They found that if the station was within 20 m of a nest, the birds would use the cotton. Being good scientists they also set up 'control' stations where the cotton was treated with water.

Success! They found cotton in 22 of 26 monitored nests, 13 with treated cotton and 9 with water-doused cotton. Four species of finches used the cotton. The treated cotton reduced larval incidence by half (from about 30 to about 15 individuals, determined by taking apart the nest after the finches had left). Of eight nests with more than 1 gram of cotton, seven had no fly larvae at all, while six of the control nests had no fledgling at all. In an ancillary experiment (arranged so as not to disturb the nests cotton-lined by the birds) the researchers tallied breeding success in 37 further nests, 20 of which they sprayed with 1% permethrin solution. The treated nests experienced 83% fledgling success (50 of 60 nestlings) while the 'control' nests (sprayed with water) had only 54% (29 of 54) success. Plainly, nest fumigation helps breeding success and, given the necessary resources, birds will take care of the matter themselves.

(The authors claim that this is the first study to demonstrate the effectiveness of self-fumigation against parasites, but we know better: see 'Even smokers have their uses' [*BC Birding*, June, 2013], in which urban House Sparrows and House Finches were shown to use cigarette butts to discourage parasites, the active ingredient being nicotine.)

Knutie, S.A., McNew, S.M., Bartlow, A.W., Vargas, D.A. and Clayton, D.H. 2014. Darwin's finches combat introduced nest parasites with fumigated cotton. *Current Biology* 24(9): R355-6. Published online. Summary by M.Church

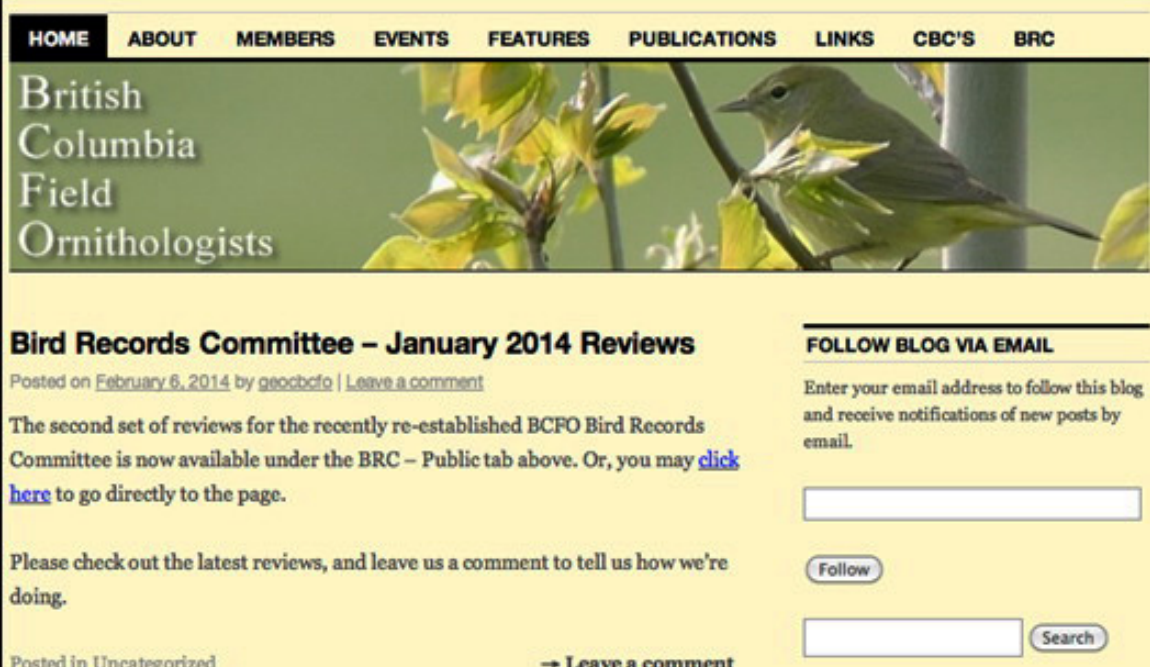
Did You Know?

... that keeping up to date with BCFO is incredibly easy?

We're constantly posting interesting and important information on our website, and you can get instant notification of when we do via email. Whether it's about our Featured Photographers, Provincial Bird Records Committee decisions, or various other announcements about bird-related matters, you'll know as right away.

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Below is how the home page of our website looks like when you get there. Just fill in your email address in the box indicated, click the **Follow** button, and Voilá! Done! Every time we post something new, you'll know about it.



The screenshot shows the BCFO website home page. At the top is a navigation bar with links: HOME, ABOUT, MEMBERS, EVENTS, FEATURES, PUBLICATIONS, LINKS, CBC'S, and BRC. Below the navigation bar is a banner image of a green bird perched on a branch with yellow leaves. The text 'British Columbia Field Ornithologists' is overlaid on the left side of the banner. Below the banner is a post titled 'Bird Records Committee - January 2014 Reviews'. The post text says: 'Posted on February 6, 2014 by geocbcfo | [Leave a comment](#). The second set of reviews for the recently re-established BCFO Bird Records Committee is now available under the BRC - Public tab above. Or, you may [click here](#) to go directly to the page. Please check out the latest reviews, and leave us a comment to tell us how we're doing.' At the bottom of the post, it says 'Posted in Uncategorized' and '→ Leave a comment'. To the right of the post is a section titled 'FOLLOW BLOG VIA EMAIL'. It contains the text: 'Enter your email address to follow this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.' Below this text is an email input field, a 'Follow' button, another email input field, and a 'Search' button.

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WHAT TO CONSERVE?

The current, human-driven, global species extinction crisis has prompted much strategic thinking about the most effective way to apply inadequate resources to obtain the maximum conservation benefit. Emphasis has usually been placed either upon threatened and endangered species (a species-specific approach) or upon areas of greatest species richness (an areally-based approach). On the whole, the latter is more easily countenanced since it both directly identifies an areal basis for conservation actions and it promises to maximize the overall benefit in terms of species conserved. So one ends up with the concept of so-called 'conservation hot spots'.

An interesting variation on this theme has been introduced by a group of conservation biologists. They point out that an important element of biodiversity is 'evolutionary distinctness' – how unique, or different from all other species – is a particular animal. The effect is measured in terms of time since a species diverged from its root ancestor. Perhaps it is no surprise that the greatest incidence of such evolutionary distinctness turns up in landscapes that have been geologically most stable, and climatologically relatively stable, for the longest period of time – places where there has been the longest sustained opportunity for undisturbed evolutionary stasis. North Africa, Australia – surprising because arid – much of South America and some major

islands, including Madagascar and New Guinea stand out. The leading countries on this measure are Australia, Indonesia, Brazil, Papua New Guinea, and Madagascar. When imperiled status is also taken into account, New Zealand and the Philippines join the top set, while Papua New Guinea and Madagascar leave it.

What about North America and, specifically, Canada?. The continent ranks relatively low, perhaps a consequence of repeated glacial disturbance in recent Earth history that has correspondingly produced a proliferation of speciation (see 'Avian diversity through space and time': BCB March 2013, p.18). Evolutionary distinctness is a less prominent feature of our avifauna and so we do not stand out on this measure.

Jetz, W. + 5 others. 2014. Global distribution and conservation of evolutionary distinctness in birds. *Current Biology* 24: 919-930.
Summary by M. Church

The Dodo, an example of an evolutionary distinct bird, lived on the island of Mauritius but has not been seen since 1662. It had one close relative, which is also extinct. Its closest living relative is the Nicobar Pigeon of SE Asia. . Ed.



The Steve Cannings Award for BC Ornithology

In 2007, B.C.F.O. presented its first award for contributions to B.C. ornithology, now named *the Steve Cannings Award for B.C. Ornithology*, to Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan. Recent recipients are Glenn Ryder (2012), Fred C.Zwicker (2013), and Martin K. McNicholl (2014).

The award recognizes contributions over a long period of time to ornithology in B.C. in one or more of the following three categories: (1) research on bird biology and/or ecology, or detailed documentation of the avifauna of a portion of B.C.; (2) conservation of birds and/or bird habitats in B.C.; (3) public education about birds in B.C. The award is to be announced annually and, if possible, presented to the recipient during the banquet at the B.C.F.O. annual meeting.

We request nominations from any BCFO member for candidates for future Steve Cannings Awards. Nominations should include at least a brief statement as to why the nominator(s) believe that the nominee is deserving of the award. Nominations should be sent in writing to Dr. Wayne C. Weber, Chair of the Steve Cannings Award Committee, either by mail to 51-6712 Baker Rd., Delta, B.C. V4E 2V3, or by e-mail to contopus@telus.net.

Each year, the award recipient is recommended by a three-person Awards Committee (currently Richard J. Cannings, Martin K. McNicholl and Wayne C. Weber) and approved by the BCFO board. All nominees not chosen in a given year will be considered automatically in future years without requiring another nomination, but updates or expansions to previous nominations are welcome. All nominations for the award will be gratefully received.

CROPS CLOBBER BIRDS

It is widely known that land clearance for agriculture reduces the diversity of bird life in the countryside. Now researchers working in Costa Rica have discovered a more subtle effect – agricultural ecosystems discriminate against species with deep evolutionary roots (i.e., species that have been around for a long time). Such birds are more apt to be extirpated from the changed landscape. Furthermore, these birds typically have fewer close relatives that have survived to the present day so the loss of these relatively ancient species reduces overall biological diversity more than if extirpations were entirely random.

Researchers identified three landscape types: forest reserves, diversified agricultural landscapes, and intensive monocultures. For 12 years, they regularly surveyed (dry and rainy seasons) 44 transects in four regions and two biomes, the variety of sites being intended to eliminate effects of specific locations. They made more than 118,000 observations and detected 487 species. They found that the average number of species detected in a forest transect was 60; the number declined to 30 in intensive agricultural landscape, but declined very little in diversified agricultural systems. Similarly, evolutionary history reached 2 billion years depth in forest sites (for more on 'evolutionary depth' see 'Avian diversity through space and time; March, 2013), not much less in diversified agriculture, but only 1 billion years in intensive agriculture. However, 'phylogenetic distance' amongst species (i.e., degree of relatedness) declined (meaning relatedness increased) in diversified agriculture almost to the level of intensive agriculture.

What do these observations mean? On the face of it, recently evolved species (that therefore remain relatively closely related to other recently evolved

species) are more apt to survive in intensive agricultural landscapes than more ancient birds with fewer remaining relatives. Why would that be? It helps a bit to know that the agricultural survivors are biased toward smaller seed-eating species and aerial insectivores (swallows), while the forests harbour the larger birds, especially fruit and nut eaters. The researchers offer two hypotheses. One is that the extensive savannas of the tropics that developed during the cold spells of the geologically recent ice ages (last two million years) have resulted in birds adapted to grasslands and fields enjoying a period of enhanced speciation that fits them to take advantage of agricultural landscapes. A related hypothesis is that these recently evolved field birds remain sufficiently adaptable in behaviour to be able to take advantage of the constantly disturbed agricultural landscape. Another aspect of this issue perhaps is that ancient species are more apt to have become habitat specialists, and that specialization would favour the formerly pervasive forest environment. But why do the forests favour larger birds? The answer to that question may be related in a complex way to metabolic requirements and food sources but a simple point is that large birds require more complex habitat to provide adequate cover.

One interesting consequence of this research is the realization that diversified agriculture can retain a substantial portion of original avian diversity in a landscape. In a world increasingly concerned with the production of adequate food supplies, this may provide our best hope to reconcile food production with the preservation of bird and animal wildlife. It does not, however, favour the preservation of evolutionary depth.

Frishkoff, L.O. and 7 others. 2014. Loss of avian phylogenetic diversity in Neotropical agricultural systems. Science 345: 1343-1346. Summary by M. Church

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COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Invasive species can upset native ecosystems. Consequently, invasive species management seeks to eliminate the invader as quickly as practically possible. But this strategy may negatively impact native species as well if they have learned to take advantage of the invader. An instructive case arises in San Francisco Bay, California, where an invasive species of cordgrass, *Spartina alterniflora*, has rapidly outcompeted the native *Spartina foliosa*. A vigorous program of uprooting the invader was initiated. But after some time a sharp decline in the numbers of threatened California Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris obsoletus*) was noted. The rail nests in cordgrass and perceived no difference between the native and the invader. Since the native grass recovered only slowly after removal of the invader, the eradication campaign amounted to a program to deprive the rail of its nesting habitat.



Clapper Rail

Wikipedia

Researchers constructed a mathematical model of the situation and learned that a two-stage approach is best. This involves initially removing the invader to the level of the minimum habitat required by the birds, and then scheduling subsequent removals at a rate to match the rate of re-establishment of native cordgrass

until it reaches the stage at which it is usable by them. The program will require a decade or more to complete, compared to a few years if bird habitat is disregarded, and will be somewhat more expensive as the result. (So one can, in effect, place a value on Clapper Rails).

This is an example of a common problem, one that is not always as amenable to analysis as this one was since the precise nature of the interaction between native and invasive species often is not well understood. In the southwestern United States, attempts to eradicate invasive tamarisk from along rivers was suspended after it was discovered that the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is using the trees as preferred nest sites. (The trees also transpire large quantities of scarce water.)

In parts of our own region we have similar problems. Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus ameniacus*) grows in British Columbia west of the Cascades. Its vigorous growth along hedgerows and field edges often overwhelms native plants, and its sharp prickles make it particularly undesirable. Hence there are frequent efforts to remove it. But it is excellent cover for smaller passerines, who eat the berries and dried fruit (seeds) and find protection within the tangled growth, especially in winter. So its removal often entails collateral damage if you are, say, a House Finch. The bottom line is that, in Nature, single-purposed management efforts are often counterproductive because they cut across multiple interrelations and mutual benefits in the field, even when dealing with undesirable invaders.

Lampert, A. , Hastings, A., Grosholz, E.D., Jardne, S.L. and Sanchirico, J.N. 2014. Optimal approaches for balancing species eradication and endangered species management. *Science* 344: 1028-1031.

Commentary by Buckley, Y.M. and Han, Y. 2014. Managing the side effects of invasion control. *Ibid.* 975-976.

Summary by M. Church

BCFO members invited to Texas.....!

From: <laredobirdingfestival@rgisc.org **Subject:** 2015 Laredo Birding Festival

Dear Mr. Clulow, We cordially invite you and the members of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists to attend our **2015 Laredo Birding Festival**, scheduled for **February 4-7**. We have a terrific line-up of events and trips that feature the best of our birding hotspots and scenic South Texas ranches Don't miss the opportunity to spot our prized bird, the White-Collared Seedeater, and hundreds of other avian beauties that nest throughout our unique river eco-system.

For more information and details on the 2015 event, visit us at <<http://www.laredobirdingfestival.com>> Questions? Please call us at (956) 718-1063 or email us at laredobirdingfestival@rgisc.org.

Thank you so much, Gail

RARE BIRD REPORT FALL 2013

August 1 – 30 November

British Columbia

After a scorching July, August was closer to normal for both temperature and precipitation. September was a bit more unsettled the first half of the month, but still saw some warm days. That changed just around the equinox with the first of the autumn storms making its way in from the Gulf of Alaska to start the new calendar season. Things settled down through October but the lower pressures to the south started drawing down the colder Arctic Air into NE BC and by the third week, winter was established in the far northeastern corner. A month later, the cold air had made its way south to cover the northern half of the Region and it continued to slink southward to cover all but the southern third of the province by the end of the period. Some impressive rainfall totals were recorded on the outer coast during November.

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

The rarest of the regularly occurring geese in BC, an adult Ross's Goose was at the mouth of the Salmon River in Salmon Arm 26 Sep (Don Cecile). Rare, but almost annual in the Okanagan Valley, a female Long-tailed Duck was noted at the mouth of Power's Creek in West Kelowna 3 Nov (Scott Thomson). During a pelagic trip off Tofino on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, three Laysan Albatross were seen 11 Sep (Artie Ahier, et al). Laysan Albatross are probably not all that rare off BC's coast, but there are very few pelagic trips in the province so sightings are relatively uncommon. Seen from a whale watching boat, Canada's first **Blue-footed Booby** was photographed near Stubbs Island, north of Telegraph Cove 24 Sep (Kyle Howard, et al). This sighting coincided with an unprecedented invasion of the

species into California. In keeping with the booby trend, an adult female **Brown Booby** was seen resting on a commercial fishing vessel in the Hecate Strait of NW BC, on 23 and 24 of Aug (Steve Fitzpatrick, Steven Roais, et al).



This adult female Brown Booby resting on a fishing vessel in Hecate Strait was photographed 23 Aug (Steve Fitzpatrick).

Most likely the same adult female was again seen fishing alongside a cruise ship approximately 20 nautical miles west of the southern tip of Nootka Island 4 Sep (Mike and Sharon Tootchin). It is possible, but seems a little unlikely that another adult female seen riding a fishing vessel near Ucluelet on southern Vancouver Island 12 Nov, was the same bird (Robbie Heggelund). Great Egret sightings were few this fall, with just one noted at Pitt Marsh in Pitt Meadows 4 to 25 Oct (fide Chris MacDonald, mob). A mass of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels numbering approximately 10,000 birds were seen near Triangle Island 5 Aug (Paul Lehman, et al). While this is an abundant nesting species on BC's offshore islands, numbers like that are not often encountered. BC's second photographed **Great Shearwater** was seen 111 km NNW of Triangle Island 5 Aug (Paul Lehman, et al), while the province's third photographed Great Shearwater was in Hecate Strait of NW BC, 5 Sep (Jared Towers). The observer saw two more Great Shearwaters on the following day, but was unable to obtain photos of them. Just south of Golden, in the Columbia River Valley, a



Great Shearwater - Several recent records in BC include this bird photographed 11 NNW of Triangle Island, 5 August, by Owen Schmidt.

Ferruginous Hawk was seen and photographed along Hwy 95, 11 Aug (Carleen Irmen). While this species is an uncommon breeding bird in Washington and Idaho just to the south, Ferruginous Hawks are rarely seen in BC.



Carleen Irmen found and photographed this Ferruginous Hawk in the Columbia River Valley near Golden 11 August.

Over the past decade or so, Black-necked Stilts have tried and have successfully nested in BC several times. An adult and two juvenile Black-necked Stilts were seen at Bridal Lake, in the subalpine along Hwy 3, between Castlegar and Creston, 10 Sep (Gary Breault). Where these stilts nested in the province is anybody's guess. At Brydon Lagoon in Langley, 8 Black-necked Stilts were seen 11 Sep (Doug Cooper). This is not only a large number of stilts for a 'coastal' location, but it is also an unusual time of year, with most reports of birds in these kinds of numbers coming in May and June rather than the Fall. For Vancouver birders, a single Black-necked Stilt was at the beach in White Rock from 9 to 15 Oct (Peter Zadorozny and Floyd Cherak, m.ob). Upland

Sandpipers are rare migrants through the southern interior of BC, so the sighting of one at Christmas Island in Salmon Arm, 1 Aug was noteworthy (Ted Hillary). Another Upland Sandpiper, also in Salmon Arm, was seen from the Peter Jannink Nature Park 3 Sep (Ted Hillary). A Ruddy Turnstone, also a rare migrant through BC's interior, was at the north end of Osoyoos Lake in the Okanagan 6 to 9 Aug (Ryan Johnston, m.ob). An adult Red-necked Stint was a fantastic find at the foot of 104th St in Surrey on Boundary Bay 4 & 5 Aug (John Chandler, m.ob). BC hasn't had a confirmed sighting of a **Curlew Sandpiper** in a long time, so an immature photographed near Sandspit on Haida Gwaii, 28 Sep was a great find (Andrew Keaveney). White Sharp-tailed Sandpiper sightings in coastal locations in BC are no big surprise in the Fall, their appearance in the interior of the province is always exciting. A juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was seen at the mouth of the Little River on Shuswap Lake 24 Sep (Allan Dupilka). A rare migrant anywhere in the province, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper was a nice surprise on a sandbar in Salmon Arm, off the Peter Jannink Nature Park 16 Aug (Ted Hillary). On the Lower Mainland, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at Boundary Bay near the foot of 104th St, and presumably the same bird remained from 30 Aug to 2 Sep (Wayne Diakow, Brent Daikow, m.ob). At the same location presumably a different Buff-breasted Sandpiper appeared on 14 Sep (John Chandler, et al). While sightings of Ruff have become almost annual along the coast, their appearance in the interior is very noteworthy. A Reeve was at Pantage Lake in the Cariboo, 18 Aug (Rod Sargent and Adrian Leather). Interestingly the same observers also found a juv. Ruff/Reeve at the same location 13 Sep (Rod Sargent and Adrian Leather). Sabine's Gulls are rare migrants on lakes in the interior of the province in the fall so their occurrence is always noteworthy.

A juvenile Sabine's Gull was at the mouth of the Salmon River in Salmon Arm 4 Sep (Don Cecile). In the Okanagan, a Sabine's Gull was seen from the mouth of Mission Ck on Okanagan Lake, 9 Sep (Scott Thomson). Franklin's Gulls are common only in the N.E. corner of BC, although they are annual at many other locations in the province. This fall sightings of Franklin's Gulls came in from Robert Lake in Kelowna, the Salmon Arm foreshore, the mouth of Mission Ck in Kelowna, Burton on Arrow Lake in the West Kootenay and at the Iona South Jetty in Richmond. The Okanagan, BC's hotbed of Lesser Black-backed Gull sightings, produced an adult of that species on Okanagan Lake in Penticton 26 and 27 Oct (Richard Cannings, et al). Very rare on lakes through the interior of the province, an immature Arctic Tern was on Okanagan Lake in Kelowna, at the mouth of Mission Creek, 17 Sep (Ryan Tomlinson). An adult and begging juvenile Caspian Tern were at Robert Lk in Kelowna 4 Sep (Chris Charlesworth, Ryan Tomlinson). Perhaps these birds had nested at Salmon Arm, as there are no other known nesting sites in the interior of BC. A dark morph Parasitic Jaeger was at the mouth of the Salmon River in Salmon Arm 3 Sep (Ted Hillary). Another bird, or perhaps the same one, was seen in the same area 8 Sep (Allan Dupilka). A juvenile Parasitic Jaeger was seen at Rotary Beach on Okanagan Lake in Kelowna 6 Sep (Ryan Tomlinson). At the mouth of Mission Creek, the next day 7 Sep, an adult Parasitic Jaeger was found (Ryan Tomlinson, et al). This bird was seen again 8 Sep, but never after that. BC's first **Dovekie** was photographed near Campania Island, east of Sandspit on Haida Gwaii, 21 Aug (Luke Halpin and Megan Willie). In other Bering Sea alcids sightings, an adult **Crested Auklet** was found by observers on a whale-watching boat near Cleland Island 30 Jul and again 1 Aug (Orin Lawson, et al). Yet another adult Crested Auklet was

photographed 100 meters south of Discovery Island in the Victoria area 8 Sep (Mike Sheehan). These made up for BC's fourth and fifth records of Crested Auklet.

DOVES TO BUNTINGS

An **Oriental Turtle-Dove** was seen on Stubbs Island, off Tofino, 26 and 27 Sep (Adrian Dorst). Poor, but identifiable photographs of the dove were taken to verify the sighting which becomes the province's 3rd record of Oriental Turtle-Dove. The Okanagan's fifth Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found at the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory, 16 Oct (Chris Siddle, et al). In Pitt Meadows, where Lewis's Woodpeckers haven't been common since a major decline in the 1940's due to logging, the sighting of one 5 Sep was exciting (David Schutz). A **Great Crested Flycatcher**, just BC's third, was at Island 22 Regional Park in Chilliwack 29 Oct to 1 Nov (Gord Gadsden, et al). A first for the Prince George area, an Ash-throated Flycatcher was found along the Nechako River 2 and 3 Nov (Nancy Krueger, et al). Tropical Kingbirds, while rare visitors to BC's West Coast, always gets birders adrenaline running when they appear. One was around Swan Lake in Victoria 4 to 8 Oct (Chris Saunders, m.ob). Another Tropical Kingbird was at Wickaninnish Beach in Pacific Rim National Park, Vancouver Island 6 Oct (Guy Monty, et al). On Denny Island, near Bella Bella on BC's Central Coast, a Tropical Kingbird was photographed 23 Oct (Sharon Storr).



The biggest surprise of the fall was this Yellow-green Vireo photographed in Stanley Park, Vancouver, 18 September (Gary Thoburn).

Canada's second ever **Yellow-green Vireo** was nearly overlooked in Vancouver's Stanley Park. The bird was photographed 18 Sep and was not noticed and confirmed to be a Yellow-green until the observer, Gary Thoburn, got home and went over his pictures. Canada's only other record of Yellow-green Vireo is of a specimen taken in Quebec in 1883. A Brown Thrasher was found at Long Beach on Vancouver Island's West Coast, 17 Oct (Adrian Dorst). It was an excellent fall for Red-throated Pipits at coastal locations in British Columbia. At the Rocky Point Bird Observatory on Southern Vancouver Island, a **Red-throated Pipit** called as it flew past 25 Sep (Ian Cruickshank). On Haida Gwaii at the Sandspit Airport, two Red-throated Pipits were found 27 Sep (Andrew Keaveney). In dune grasses just east of the Dixon Entrance Golf Course near Masset on Haida Gwaii, a Red-throated Pipit was seen 29 Sep (Andrew Keaveney, Margo Hearne, Peter Hamel). Again at Vancouver Island's Rocky Point Bird Observatory, a Red-throated Pipit was seen and heard 9 Oct (Ian Cruickshank). Finally, a classic Red-throated Pipit was found and photographed at Sandspit on Haida Gwaii, 12 Oct (Andrew Keaveney). An adult basic male Smith's Longspur was seen by many at Boundary Bay between 104th and 96th streets, 15 to 18 Sep (Mike and Sharon Tootchin, Kevin Louth). On Vancouver Island, a Chestnut-collared Longspur was a star attraction at Cattle Point in

Victoria, 24 and 25 Sep Aziza Cooper, m.ob). Rare in the Okanagan in migration, single first fall Tennessee Warblers were at Mill Creek in Kelowna, near Scandia Golf & Games, 30 Aug (Chris Charlesworth) and at Goose Lake in Vernon 5 Sep (Chris Siddle). A hatch-year female Chestnut-sided Warbler landed on a boat dozens of kilometres offshore from Ucluelet on Vancouver Island, 15 Sep (Russell Cannings, m.ob). In Kelowna, a first fall Magnolia Warbler was found along Mission Creek near Casorso Road, 29 Sep (Ryan Tomlinson, et al). While more regular on the coast, Palm Warbler sightings in the Southern Interior are noteworthy. A Palm Warbler was seen and later banded at the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory, 14 Oct (Doug Brown). BC's eighth Prairie Warbler was seen and photographed in the Columbia Valley in Revelstoke with a mixed flock of migrant warblers 23 Aug (Devon Anderson, et al).



BC's eighth Prairie Warbler was seen in Revelstoke 23 August (James Bradley).

A Dickcissel along Swanwick Road in Metchosin near Victoria, was seen 2 Oct and not again (Ian

Cruikshank, et al). A male Indigo Bunting was observed at Tunkwa Lake in the Merritt area, 6 Aug (Ryan Cathers). A Brewer's Sparrow, rare in the Vancouver area, was seen at the Tsawwassen Ferry Jetty 9 Sep (David Baker). At the Iona Sewage Ponds, a Clay-colored Sparrow was seen by many 23 to 25 Sep (Brent Daikow, m.ob). While Swamp Sparrow sightings are not all that exciting anymore in southern BC, there was an early record at the mouth of the Salmon River of a single Swamp Sparrow 18 Sep (Don Cecile). Most of these wintering and migrating Swamp Sparrows don't show up until later September or October. An immature Harris's Sparrow was at Munson's Pond, in Kelowna, a classic spot for this rare visitor, in the Okanagan Valley, 28 Oct (Gwynneth Wilson). On Haida Gwaii, a Bobolink found in vegetation close to the beach in Skidegate, provided a first for the island chain 11 Oct (Andrew Keaveney, Sandra Kinsey and Laird Law). Surprisingly rare in most parts of BC's southern interior, a male Common Grackle attended a feeder in Knutsford near Kamloops, 12 to 14 Nov (Glenn Dreger). A female type Hooded Oriole was at Jordan River on Vancouver Island's southern tip, 22 Sep (Jeremy Kimm). Photographed near Tofino was an Orchard Oriole, 12 Oct (Adrian Dorst).

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COVER STORY: OSPREY

Photographer: Alan Burger

On November 12, with the temperature below -12C and Nicola Lake partly frozen over, I was out testing a new camera (Canon 7D MkII). The stretch of Nicola River just below the Nicola Lake weir is usually a good winter spot for waterfowl and dippers, and so it was on this chilly day. But I was very surprised to see an Osprey sitting on a cottonwood overlooking the shallow river. As I watched it plunged down and caught a large fish. As it flew by I managed to get this shot - the fish is barely visible in the photo. According to Rick Howie, keeper of birding records for the Kamloops-Merritt region, this bird was at least a month later than previous fall records for Osprey. The pale-tipped dorsal feathers indicate a juvenile bird - with obvious fishing skills but perhaps a defective compass.

