

BC BIRDING

Newsmagazine of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists

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Spring is nearly upon us, and the Snow Geese know it. Photo by Bob Steventon at the Reifel Sanctuary.

Publisher

BC Birding is published four times a year by the British Columbia Field Ornithologists, PO Box 45111, Dunbar, Vancouver BC V6S 2M8.

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*.

About the BCFO

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.

Membership

See the website (<http://bcfo.ca>) for details, or write to the BCFO address given above under "Publisher."

Annual Membership Dues

General Membership (Canada): \$30

Junior Membership (Canada): \$20

U.S. and International Membership: \$35

Newsmagazine Submissions

To submit material to this publication, contact the Editor by email (clive_keen@hotmail.com) or by mail at 10790 Grassland Road, Prince George, BC V2K 5E8.

Submissions may include articles about birding experiences, casual observations about bird behaviour, site guides, photographs, and other topics of broad interest to birders, preferably, but not necessarily, in British Columbia. Deadlines are:

- March edition: February 15
- June edition: May 15
- September edition: August 15
- December edition: November 15

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Quarter page: \$40 per issue or \$36 each for 4 or more issues

BCFO members are welcome to include classified ads, of up to 25 words, at no cost.

Photo right: A leucistic Bald Eagle photographed by Janice Melendez. See also page 28.

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President: Mike McGrenere, Victoria, 250-658-8624, mi8624@telus.net

Vice President: Larry Cowan, Pitt Meadows, 604-465-1402, lawrencecowan@shaw.ca

Secretary: Marian Porter, Salt Spring Island, 250-653-2043, quetzal2@telus.net

Treasurer: Mike Fung, Vancouver, 604-266-0238, mike.mikefung@gmail.com

Other Directors

Jude Grass, Surrey, 604-538-8774, judegrass@shaw.ca

Clive Keen, Prince George, 250-963-9520, clive_keen@hotmail.com

Adrian Leather, Quesnel, 250-249-5561, q-birds@xplornet.com

Art Martell, 250-334-2979, Courtenay, amartell@shaw.ca

Monica Nugent, New Westminster, 604-220-8816, monica_nugent@telus.net

Ex Officio

Immediate Past President: George Clulow, Burnaby, 604-438-7639, gclulow@shaw.ca

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IMPORTANT DATES

TUMBLER RIDGE CONFERENCE & AGM 2017

REGISTRATION

April 2

Registration opens for Conference & AGM, and post-conference trip.

EVENT DATES

June 7 – 8

Pre-conference Quesnel area two-day trip (see page 10)

June 9 – 11

Tumbler Ridge Conference & AGM

June 11 – 14

Post-conference Peace area Extension Trip (see page 9)

CLOSING DEADLINES

May 27

Registration for the Pre-conference Quesnel area two-day trip.

May 31

Registration for Tumbler Ridge conference and AGM

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President's Message

During the heavy snowfalls experienced in early February in the Victoria area, it was interesting to look at the bird tracks left in the snow around our bird feeders. We have a lot of Dark-eyed Juncos, both White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows as well as Song and Fox Sparrows that feed on the seed that falls on the ground. These tracks are only apparent with the fresh snow.

As part of the 2017 Conference/AGM in Tumbler Ridge in June, you will have the opportunity to observe bird and dinosaur tracks left behind 100 million years ago. The Friday evening social will be held at the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery where participants will be able to observe the many artifacts housed in the Gallery as well as a full-scale re-creation of a dinosaur track environment. Palaeontologists from the Palaeontology Research Centre will be in attendance to take conference attendees "backstage" to the collections area.

You will also have the opportunity to view dinosaur tracks in the field,

along with the resident birds, if you choose to go on the Flatbed/Wolverine field trip. This is the area where dinosaur footprints were first discovered in 2000. If there is sufficient interest, members of the Museum Foundation are prepared to lead a dusk trip to the Wolverine River trackway to observe the footprints using low-angled lanterns which highlight the footprints.

Complete information on the Tumbler Ridge Conference & AGM is available in this issue on pages 3, 7, 8 and 9 and on the BCFO website.

We are offering field trips both before and after the Tumbler Ridge conference: pre-conference field trips will take place in the Quesnel area as part of the BCFO's Two-Day Field Trip program. For those wishing to continue birding after the conference, we are again offering two extension trips, but this year they will be simultaneous trips going to similar areas in the Peace region. The sign-up date for the trips is provided in this issue on page 3, and you are encouraged to sign up early to avoid missing out on these wonderful birding opportunities.

Tumbler Ridge will be a destination again in 2018. George Clulow is arranging field trips within BC for the 2018 International Ornithological Congress to be held in Vancouver. The

Tumbler Ridge trip will be in August and will be quite different than our June event. Although some of the field trips will be to the same locations, in June we will be observing birds in their breeding season when they are singing on territory. The August IOC trip will be at the start of migration when the birds will be making their contact and flight calls.

Both Larry Cowan and Mike Fung will be stepping off the BCFO board at the AGM after having served as board members for six consecutive years, the maximum allowed under our bylaws. This will open up two vacancies on the board, and we will be looking to fill these vacancies from the membership, which was just under 300 members at the end of 2016. If you would like to become a board member to assist with the operation of the society, please contact any board member to indicate your interest or to enquire about what might be involved.

Mike McGrenere, President

Below: It is good to see another healthy flock of new BCFO members—see page 5 for details of total membership at the end of 2016. CNK photo.

Welcome New Members

Gabrielle Aubertin -
Prince George

Stephen Ellis -
Courtenay

Michael Force -
Lake Country



Joyce Fraser - Kelowna

Laura Gretzinger - Victoria

Eric Habisch - Vancouver

Alexis Harrington - Sechelt

Pat Huet - Creston

Calypso Kenney - Vancouver

Jackie McGill - Comox

Taylor McLean - Baltimore
MD, USA

Dave Palsat - Kelowna

John F. Peetsma - Pender
Island

Notes

Thank You

Donations, 2016

In 2016, BCFO received nineteen charitable donations totalling \$6,840.89. Your Board of Directors wishes to thank heartily all the donors for their thoughtful contributions. Many are repeat donors over the years. In order of the date of receipt, they are:

- Gwynneth Wilson (two donations)
- Maria Mascher
- Marian Coope
- Paul Tennant (two donations)
- Lyn de Vaal (non member)
- Mrs. Atzema (non member)
- Stephen Partington
- Fred Bushell
- David Schutz
- Paul Chytk
- Nancy Krueger
- Neil Bourne
- Kathy Ellwood
- Carol Ann Botel
- Dorothy Copp
- Fred Simpson
- Ana Simeon

Stephen Partington's donation was a most generous \$5,000.

The two non-member donors made their donations in memory of a spouse/friend who was interested in birding. Some of the donations were made on our bcfo.ca blog through CanadaHelps, which issues an official receipt on our behalf.

All donations now go into a special Education and Conservation account that supports research and other grants, our Awards programs and the Young Birders program.

Membership Report

Membership Coordinator Larry Cowan reports that, as of December 31, 2016, BCFO had a total of 304 members. This consisted of 273 regular members, four honorary members, fifteen Young Bird-er Award winner members, six complimentary memberships (AGM trip lead-

ers) and six institutional members. There were thirty-five new members in 2016 with twenty-nine not renewing from 2015.

Membership by region:

- Vancouver, Coast & Mountains: 41%
- Vancouver Island: 26%
- Thompson, Okanagan: 14%
- Northern BC: 5%
- Kootenay, Rockies: 6%
- Cariboo, Chilcotin, Coast: 4%

Plus small numbers from the U.S., Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Finland.

IO Congress 2018

Planning for this major international event ("the world's biggest birding gig," according to one of our members) continues apace. At the time of writing, information was available on the IO Congress website for three tours sponsored and led by BCFO. Details of a mid-congress tour, *North Shore Mountains* (August 24, 2018) can be found at:

www.iocongress2018.com/congress-tours

Two longer tours, *Tumbler Ridge Birds and Dinosaurs*, and *Birding the Cascades Tour* are described at:

www.iocongress2018.com/pre-post-tours

These tours are likely to take place August 27–30, 2018.

Bird Record Committee

The results of Round 14 of The BCFO Bird Record Committee have been posted on the website. They include confirmation of the first Canadian record of an Oriental Greenfinch. Details of BRC decisions are published in the BCFO journal *British Columbia Birds*.

AOU No More

We'll have to remember in future to refer to the AOS, not the AOU. Last December the American Ornithologists' Union merged with the Cooper Orni-

thological Society to become the American Ornithological Society.

The Birdiest Places in BC in Winter

For those birders thinking of moving house, the Christmas Bird Count gives a remarkably good indication of the birdiest BC winter locations. This year's tally of best sites, extracted from reports on the BCFO website, is as follows. Note that some numbers include count week, others do not, and some numbers are based on preliminary reports, so this is not an "official" table.

Victoria	139 species
Ladner	135
Vancouver	121
Nanaimo	117
Duncan	112
Parksville	112
Comox	108
Oliver	105
Pender Island	103
Kelowna	98
Chilliwack	97
Penticton	96
Sunshine Coast	90
Vaseaux Lake	90

Northern areas, of course, reported substantially lower numbers. It is interesting, though, that northerly Skidegate Inlet counted 72 species – much higher than inland locations at that latitude. See page 18 for detailed reports on the Haida Gwaii CBCs.

Below: A Cuban Tody, photographed by Jerry McFetridge in November 2016.



Vancouver Bird Week 2017

The fifth Vancouver Bird Week takes place this year May 6–13, with the theme *Birds at the Shore*.

Bird Week is a week-long series of events to celebrate Vancouver's birds and will include bird-related workshops, walks, talks, exhibitions and lectures across Vancouver, all free.

On the event's website, Chair Rob Butler writes: "Vancouver is fortunate to be on the doorstep of Canada's premier birding hotspot and the abundance of birds was cause to celebrate. Bird Week is our way of helping everyone become more aware of birds around the city." He issues a challenge to members to spot 150 species in Vancouver – a suitable goal for Canada's 150th birthday.

During Bird Week there will also be a vote to name the Vancouver Bird – a species to be adopted permanently as symbolic of the city. This is part of the City's Bird Strategy, which "will work to create conditions for native birds to thrive in Vancouver."

You can read more about Bird Week at www.vancouverbirdweek.ca.

BC Bird of the Year

Kevin Neill's *BC Bird of the Year* contest yielded a clear winner for 2016: the Siberian Accentor, which received 41% of the votes. The only serious competitor was the Lucy's Warbler, at 24%. All other entries were far behind. The paltry number of votes for Red-flanked Bluetail, White-cheeked Starling, Redwing and Purple Sandpiper show that there is a very thin line between Most Desired Bird and Dirt Bird. But then, the Editor's Le Conte's Sparrow didn't even receive a mention, honourable or otherwise.

Favourite & Wacky Bird Names

Carlo Giovanella sent in some favourite names from the species encountered on a tour of Vietnam and Cambodia:

- Bengal Florican
- Hair-crested Drongo
- Lesser Adjutant
- Puff-throated Babbler



Above: "What is this?" was the reaction of Wendy Coomber when she saw and photographed this bird at her feeder at Cache Creek in February 2017. Harris's Sparrows would be a shock at anyone's feeder.

- Neglected Nuthatch
- Zitting Cisticola
- Little Spiderhunter

He wonders: does the Adjutant get only the most menial tasks? Does the Babbler spew nonsense because its throat is swollen? Does the Nuthatch get less than its due? Does the Cisticola have a complexion problem? Does the Spiderhunter seek out the smallest spiders?

However, great though the above may be, the leader in the Wackiest Bird Names Category has to be an entry by Andy Buhler. On page 21 of this publication he refers to the *Superciliaried*

Hemispingus, which even beats *Snethlage's Tody Tyrant* for over-the-top flamboyance. Can you beat it? Send in your own suggestions, or just your favourites, to the editor.

Robert Wayne Nelson

Long-time BCFO member, falconer and raptor aficionado Dr Wayne Nelson passed away on February 15. An obituary can be found at:

www.burgarfuneralhome.com/fh/obituaries/obituary.cfm?o_id=4115232&fh_id=11434

Regional Reporters Still Wanted

BC Birding remains in need of regional reporters. Significant events throughout the province are being missed too regularly.

People administering a listserv, or who regularly contribute to a local listserv, would be in an ideal position to become regional reporters. The task could be as simple as forwarding interesting posts, photographs, etc., to the Editor, or alternatively a section of the news magazine could be devoted to a more complete coverage of local news summarized by the regional reporter.

The magazine would also benefit from additional regular "feature" contributors. The options are many: equipment reviews, website reviews, media reviews, and cartoons, to mention just a few possibilities.

If you can assist with the further development of this newsmagazine, contact the Editor at clive_keen@hotmail.com or the Associate Editor at virginiaainbc@gmail.com.

BCFO 27th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, June 9 – 11, 2017, Tumbler Ridge, BC**Registration Form**

Name(s):

Address:

Phone: Email:

Conference Registration:

Attendance is limited to BCFO members and accompanying spouses/family members. Non-members may join BCFO at the same time as they register for the Conference.*

Full conference fee includes: Friday night Meet & Greet, Saturday & Sunday breakfasts, lunches and Saturday evening Banquet plus all field trips and talks.

_____ @ \$170 /person = \$ _____

Social events ONLY (Meet & Greet, and Banquet)

_____ @ \$75 /person = \$ _____

*Membership fee for non-members`

(see BCFO website for membership details)

_____ @ \$30.00 – single/family = \$ _____

Total registration fee(s) for the Conference =

\$ _____

Will you be attending the Friday evening reception: Yes No

Do you have any dietary requirements: Yes Requirement

Waiver

All registrants for the conference and extension trip are required to complete the WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND RELEASE OF CLAIMS form. Forms will be made available at the AGM at the time of registering for the field trips.

Participation in the AGM is **not possible** without payment of applicable fee(s) by the registration date.

All fees are payable upon submission of this registration form. Please make cheque or money order payable to **BC Field Ornithologists**. If registering by mail, send your registration and payment to BC Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 45111, Dunbar, Vancouver, B.C. V6S 2M8

Please submit AGM registrations by May 31, 2017

Conference Speakers

Lisa Buckley is the Curator & Collections Manager of the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre, a grassroots research facility dedicated to the protection and education of British Columbia's fossil vertebrate heritage, and is a vocal advocate for responsible management of fossil heritage. Highlights of this work include research on dinosaur tracks and traces of the Six Peaks Dinosaur Track Site, British Columbia's first dinosaur bonebed, and the world's first tyrannosaur trackways.

Lisa's research focus is the track record of Early Cretaceous shorebirds and wading birds. Part of this work is

using the tracks and traces of modern shorebirds and wading birds to get as much information as possible about fossil bird species and behaviour.

Lisa is active on social media, with a Twitter account (@Lisavipes) and a blog called "Strange Woman Standing in Mud, Looking at Birds" at <http://birdsinmud.blogspot.ca>.

Charles Helm was a family physician in Tumbler Ridge from 1992-2017. He immigrated to Canada from South Africa in 1986. He is the author of five books on the Tumbler Ridge area, two

on the history of the northern Rockies, and one on dinosaurs for kids. He has been an active explorer in the Wolverine Nordic and Mountain Society, helping to design, build and maintain 100 km of hiking trails. His palaeontological interests, expressed through the Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation, have led to numerous fossil discoveries and scientific articles. He was instrumental in the successful proposal that led to the creation of the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark (one of 120 in the world and one of two in North America). He has been an avid birder since childhood.

BCFO 27th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, June 9 – 11, 2017, Tumbler Ridge, BC

Schedule of Events

Registration and Social: 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm, Friday, June 9, Dinosaur Discovery Gallery, 255 Murray Drive, Tumbler Ridge (north of the Trend Mountain Hotel off MacKenzie Way).

- Pick up your conference package, socialize with fellow birders (appetizers & cash bar) and confirm your trip selections.
- View the palaeontology exhibits and enjoy the fossil avian tracks that have been discovered in the region. You will also have the opportunity to be escorted by palaeontologists through the usually inaccessible collections of the Peace Region Palaeontology Research Centre.
- A quiz on Peace Region bird songs, hosted by Mark Phinney, will round out the evening.

Saturday & Sunday, June 10 & 11: Events will be at the Trend Mountain Hotel and Conference Centre, 375 Southgate Street.

Breakfast: 5:15 to 5:45 am, prior to field trips (both days).

Conference Field Trips: 6:00 am departures both days from the parking lot of the Trend Mountain Hotel

Trip 1 - Brassey Creek Road. Leader: Mark Phinney

Trip 2 - Mt. Spieker. Leader: Nigel Matthews

Trip 3 - Bullmoose Marshes / Gwillim Lake Provincial Park. Leader: TBA

Trip 4 - Flatbed Creek and Wolverine River dinosaur tracks/Quality Falls. Leader: TBA

Trip 5 - Shipyard-Titanic trail via sewage ponds (to be confirmed). Leader: TBA

Trip 6 - Kinuseo Falls and Irene Lake (to be confirmed). Leader: TBA

Trip 7 - Wolverine River dinosaur tracks (dusk trip). Leader: Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation

Lunch: 12:00 to 1:00 pm (both days)

Afternoon Keynote: 1:00 to 2:00 pm, Saturday; Lisa Buckley, "Tracking Birds Through the Ages: Studying the Early Cretaceous Bird Tracks of Western Canada."

Annual General Meeting: 2:00 to 3:15 pm, Saturday.

Social Hour Cash Bar: 5:00 to 6:30 pm, Saturday.

Banquet: 6:30 to 7:30 pm, Saturday.

Banquet Keynote Speaker: 7:30 to 9:00 pm; Dr. Charles Helm, "What Makes the Tumbler Ridge Area so Unique."

TO REGISTER FOR THE AGM/CONFERENCE:

Via regular mail

Complete the registration form in this issue of *BC Birding* and mail it along with your cheque for payment to:

P.O. Box 45111 Dunbar
Vancouver, B.C.
V6S 2M8

Via the BCFO website (PayPal)

Go to the AGM/Extension Payments tab under the Events > Annual Conference drop downs.

A fillable registration form is available for completion. *To pay for more than one registration*, simply make sufficient single payments for each person you wish to register.

TO REGISTER FOR THE EXTENSION TRIP:

Via the BCFO website

Note: The only way to register for the extension trip is via the Website.

Payment may be made either by cheque, or via the PayPal button.

Go to the *AGM/Extension Payments* tab under the *Events > Annual Conference* drop downs.

The fillable registration form available on the website for completion which will include a requirement to indicate your choice of pre or post-AGM Extension. **To pay for more than one registration** via PayPal, simply make sufficient single payments for each person you wish to register.

*On-line registrations open on
April 2 at 0900 PDT*

FIELD TRIP SELECTION AND WAIVER FORMS:

Field trip selections for the morning of June 10 and June 11 will be made when checking in on Friday, June 9. At the same time, you will be asked to complete your conference waiver form. To ensure fairness, field trip selection will be opened at 1700 on June 9.



BCFO 27th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, June 9 – 11, 2017, Tumbler Ridge, BC

Accommodation Information

The majority of the conference events will be based out of the Trend Mountain Hotel and Conference Centre. Field trips will leave from the hotel parking lot; breakfasts, lunches, the afternoon keynote presentation, the AGM and Saturday evening banquet will be in the hotel conference facilities. Participants should be aware that the Friday evening reception will be held at the Dinosaur Discovery Gallery on Murray Drive.

We have arranged a conference room rate for those wishing to stay at the Trend Mountain Hotel. If you intend to book at one of the other locations, please contact them by phone and indicate that you are attending the BCFO conference.

Trend Mountain Hotel & Conference Centre

375 Southgate Street, Tumbler Ridge BC V0C 2W0. Phone: 250-242-2000
Fax: 250-242-2005

www.trendmountainhotel.com

email: info@trendmountainhotel.com

Room choices (conference rates)

Standard two queen beds - \$112.49 + taxes; Executive king suite - \$121.49 + taxes

Tumbler Ridge Inn

275 Southgate Street, Tumbler Ridge BC V0C 2W0. Phone: 250-242-4277

Room Choices: Standard two double beds - \$89 to \$127 + taxes

Tumbler Ridge Hotel and Suites

360 Northgate Street
Tumbler Ridge BC V0C 2W0
Phone: 877-242-5405 or 250-242-0053

Room Choices: One bedroom: \$110 + taxes (full fridge, stove, cooking utensils). Two bedroom: \$120 + taxes (full fridge, stove, cooking utensils)

Lions Flatbed Campground

1.5 km north of Tumbler Ridge, just off Hwy. 29 on Flatbed Creek

Phone: 250-242-1197

Cost: \$20.00 per night

Monkman Way RV Park

Located in Tumbler Ridge, operated by the District of Tumbler Ridge

Phone: 250-242-4242

Tumbler Ridge Golf & Country Club & RV Park

1 Golf Course Way,
Tumbler Ridge
Phone: 250-242-4656

Post-conference Extension Trips

Mark Phinney and Brian Paterson will be leading two parallel trips. The planned itinerary is as follows:

Sunday, June 11

Drive to Dawson Creek, birding along the way at Arras, Bear Mountain Pasture, Radar Lake and McQueen's Slough. Overnight in Dawson Creek.

Monday, June 12

Birding south of Dawson Creek, including Swan Lake, Road 201 and Boundary Highway followed by a night trip to McQueen's Slough or East Pine for Yellow Rail and sparrows. Overnight in Dawson Creek.

Tuesday, June 13

Birding north to Fort St. John, including Farmington, Taylor, Beaton Park and Boundary Lake. In addition there will be a possible night trip to Watson Slough for Yellow Rail and sparrows. Overnight in Fort St. John.

Wednesday, June 14

Birding on Pink Mountain, followed by a drive back to, and conclusion of extension trip at, Fort St. John.

Possible species

- Broad-winged Hawk
- Sharp-tailed Grouse
- any/all Ptarmigan
- Yellow Rail
- Upland Sandpiper
- Franklin's Gull
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
- Eastern Phoebe
- Philadelphia Vireo
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Blue Jay
- Boreal Chickadee
- Winter Wren
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Cape May Warbler
- Palm Warbler

- Bay-breasted Warbler
- Canada Warbler
- Connecticut Warbler
- Mourning Warbler
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Le Conte's Sparrow
- Nelson's Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- "Red" Fox Sparrow
- Common Grackle
- Rusty Blackbird
- Baltimore Oriole

Costs and Further Details

Cost: \$200 per person – transportation, accommodation, and food not included.

Watch the website for any further details.

BCFO Two-day Trips

Parksville: March 11–12

Birds of the Herring Spawn

Leader: Dave Aldcroft

Itinerary: Roaming between Nanoose, and Deep Bay, sites will include Rath Trevor Beach Provincial Park, Englishmen River Estuary, Parksville Bay, French Creek and Columbia Beach.

Possible species: rafts of sea ducks including all three scoters, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck. Numerous gulls with good chance of Iceland/Glaucous Gull. Good chance of rarities among the fray. The herring spawning is a great spectacle of nature!

Suggested accommodation: Sandcastle Inn, Parksville.

To register: dsaldcroft@shaw.ca .

Quesnel Area: June 7–8

This trip has been arranged to allow birders to travel to Tumbler Ridge on June 9 for the BCFO Conference & AGM.

Wednesday, June 7

Itinerary: Soda Creek – West Fraser loop. Morning: Soda Creek to Rudy Johnson Bridge, including a stop to observe members of Quesnel Birding Club banding hummingbirds. Afternoon: West Fraser Road. Tally-up at Best Western Plus Tower Inn, 500 Reid St, Quesnel at 6 pm.

Possible species include: Lazuli Bunting, Western Kingbird, Western Meadowlark, Veery, Long-billed Curlew, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Spotted Towhee, Gray Catbird, Mourning Dove, Golden Eagle.

Suggested accommodation: Best Western Plus Tower Inn, Quesnel. www.bwtowerinn.ca, 250-992-2201. Travelodge and Ramada are in close proximity.

How the Trips Work

BCFO two-day field trips are member-led, but participants make their own arrangements for accommodation, food, and travel.

- Day 1: all-day birding and then evening get together at a restaurant to recap the day and tally species.
- Day 2: morning birding, afternoon optional birding.

Carpooling is encouraged and will be arranged on the morning of Day 1.

Register at least two weeks in advance. The leader will give specific details of when and where to meet.

Cost: Members \$10 per person; non-members \$40, which includes BCFO membership.

Thursday, June 8

Itinerary. Morning: Highway 26 to Wells including stops in the Stanley area. Lunch at Big H's Halibut n' Chips in Wells. Afternoon: The Meadows (the bog) in Wells, and Bowron River bridge at Bowron Lakes. Optional visit to Barkerville Historic Site.

Possible species include: Tennessee Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Black-poll Warbler, Three-toed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Fox Sparrow.

Leaders

Brian Murland and Adrian Leather (two groups).

To Register

q-birds@xplornet.com or 250-249-5561.

Briefing 1

Update on Epidemic Birds

In the last issue of *BC Birding* (December, 2016), we discussed the recent history of "bird flu" – influenza viruses originating in domestic poultry, spread widely by wild birds and possibly able to attack humans. The 2014–15 outbreak of influenza type H5N8,

which led to wholesale culling of domestic poultry flocks in Europe and North America, demonstrated how quickly the infection can spread via migratory birds. An important characteristic of viruses that spread via migratory animals is that, though they may weaken (but not too much) or sicken (but not too severely) their carriers, they customarily are not fatal. If they disable or kill the host animal, then the objective of the virus – spreading itself – is defeated. So the birds, mainly freshwater ducks, that carried H5N8 from its origin in southeast Asia into Europe and North America were not themselves severely affected.

Fast forward to 2016. In the northern summer a new strain of H5N8 was detected in arctic Russia on the summer grounds of European and Asian wild waterfowl. Unusually, it was killing the birds. In November, dead waterfowl began to be found in central Europe, and the toll has rapidly spread as far as North Africa and into domestic poultry. Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), one of the known carriers, has been particularly hard hit. Extensive poultry culls are again underway in Europe. The increased deadliness of the virus is a mystery – it seems to defeat the strategy for widening viral infection described above. Scientists speculate that it may have a long latency period, during which an infected bird continues to live and travel normally, and then become highly virulent after some time, or perhaps only when the infected bird joins a dense flock.

The good news is that this H5N8 strain appears not to affect mammals (that includes us). But the ability of influenza viruses to mutate rapidly leaves little room for comfort. Furthermore, the dense concentrations of domestic poultry in southeast Asia appear to have become a permanent incubator for variant influenzas. H5N6 is already widespread in the region; it does sicken humans. It probably is only a matter of time before it hitches a ride along the great hemispheric flyways to turn up at a pond (or poultry farm) near you.

From a news story in *Science* 354: 1363–1364 (16 December, 2016)

Summary by M. Church

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 BIRD-NET 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.

Mar. 9–12 -- WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY annual meeting at Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida. For further information, check the WOS website at <http://www.wilsonsociety.org>.

Mar. 10–12 -- 15TH 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. 13–Apr. 15 -- BRANT WILDLIFE FESTIVAL, Qualicum, BC. For information, phone Robin Rivers at 1-866-288-7878 (in Greater Vancouver, 604-924-9771), e-mail rrivers@naturetrust.bc.ca, or check the festival website at <http://brantfestival.bc.ca>.

Mar. 18 -- First WESTPORT SEABIRDS pelagic birding trip of the spring from Westport, WA. This is the first of 19 trips scheduled from March through October 2017. For information and to sign up for a trip, please visit the Westport Seabirds webpage at <http://www.westportseabirds.com>.

Mar. 24–26 -- 20TH 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. 7–9 -- OLYMPIC BIRD FESTIVAL, Sequim, WA. For information, visit the festival website at <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org>, or contact the Dungeness River Audubon Center by phone (360-681-4076) or by e-mail (info@olympicbirdfest.org).

Apr. 7–9 -- HARNEY COUNTY MIGRATORY BIRD FESTIVAL, Burns, OR (focused on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge). For information, check the festival website at <http://www.migratorybirdfestival.com>, or phone the office at 541-573-2636.

Apr. 19–25 -- GODWIT DAYS, Arcata, California. It's a little way away, but Godwit Days is one of the premier birding festivals in North America. For information, check the festival website at <https://godwitdays.org>.

May 4–7 -- BC NATURE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Lillooet, BC, hosted by the Lillooet Naturalists. For information and to register, check the BC Nature website at <http://www.bcnature.ca>, or phone Betty Davison at the BC Nature office (phone 604-985-3057; e-mail manager@bcnature.ca).

May 5–7 -- 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 5–7 -- TOFINO SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL, Tofino, BC. Events not all scheduled yet, but check the festival website at <http://raincoasteducation.org/events/tofino-shorebird-festival>.

May 6–13 -- VANCOUVER BIRD WEEK, Vancouver, BC. Most events not scheduled yet, but please check the website at <http://www.vancouverbirdweek.ca>.

May 7 -- PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP from Ucluelet, BC, operated by WildResearch. For information and/or to register, check the WildResearch website at <http://wildresearch.ca/news/pelagic-trip>, or send an email message to pelagics@wildresearch.ca.

May 8–14 -- WINGS OVER THE ROCKIES FESTIVAL (21st 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 12–14 -- SKAGIT VALLEY BIRD BLITZ, Skagit Valley Provincial Park, BC. For information and to register, check the event website at <http://hopemountain.org/programs/skagit-valley-bird-blitz-may-12-14-2017>. Inquiries may be made by email to La Vern at klassen@hopemountain.org or by phone at 604-869-1274.

May 18–22 -- MEADOWLARK NATURE FESTIVAL, Penticton, BC. The full schedule of events will be posted by early April. Please check the festival website at <http://meadowlarkfestival.ca>.

May 18–21 -- LEAVENWORTH SPRING BIRD FEST, Leavenworth, WA. For information, email info@leavenworthspringbirdfest.com or check the festival website at <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com>.

June 9–11 -- BC FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Tumbler Ridge, BC. For details, check the BCFO conference page at <https://bcfo.ca/bcfo-agm-tumbler-ridge-2017>.

June 16–18 -- MANNING PARK BIRD BLITZ, Manning Provincial Park, BC (based at Loneduck Campground on Lightning Lake). For information and to register, check the website at <http://hopemountain.org/programs/manning-park-bird-blitz-june-16-18-2017>. Inquiries may be made by email to La Vern at lklassen@hopemountain.org or by phone at 604-869-1274.

July 31–Aug. 5 -- JOINT MEETING OF AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' SOCIETY, AND THE SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. For further details, to register, or to submit a paper for presentation, please visit the website at <http://aossco2017.fw.msu.edu/>.

Aug. 8–12 -- ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WATERBIRD SOCIETY, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland. For details, check the society website at <https://waterbirds.org/annual-meeting>.

Aug. 16–20 -- ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS at Pueblo, Colorado. For further details, check the WFO website at <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/conference.php>.

Sept. 15–17 -- OREGON BIRDING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING, at the Malheur Field Station, near Burns, OR. For information and to register, check the OBA website at <http://www.orbirds.org/2017annualmeeting.html>.

Sept. 15–17 -- PUGET SOUND BIRD FESTIVAL, Edmonds, WA. For information and to register (starting Aug. 1). Check

the festival website at <http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.org>, or contact Jennifer Leach at the City of Edmonds Parks Dept. (phone 425-771-0227), or email her at jennifer.leach@edmondswa.gov.

Sept. 21–25 -- WASHINGTON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Semiahmoo Resort, Blaine, WA. No details posted yet other than the dates and location, but check the WOS website (<http://wos.org/annual-conference/current-year>) closer to the conference date for details and to register.

Sept. 23–27 -- 24TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY, Albuquerque, NM. For information, check the TWS conference page at <http://wildlife.org/learn/conferences-2>.

Nov. 8–12 -- RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION annual meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah, hosted by HawkWatch International. For information, check the RRF website at <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/upcoming-conferences>, or contact the chairperson, Dave Oleyar, by email at dolyar@hawkwatch.org, or by phone at 206-972-0163.

Dec. 14 to Jan. 5 (2018) -- 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*.

Briefing 2

Not a Bird in Sight

That's right; no birds in this one. But a fascinating story nonetheless!

Researchers in southern England have used upward-looking radars to detect flying insects. What they found is astonishing. It turns out that about 3.4 trillion insects, totaling about 3,000 tonnes in weight, migrate seasonally over the country at heights between 150 and 1,200 metres. Insect speeds are in the range 10-15 metres/second, indicating that the bugs are hitching rides on favourable winds. These summary findings represent a 10-year average. Compare 2.1 billion passerines (of which 30 million are from the United Kingdom) that move seasonally between all of Europe and Africa.

Radar directly detected insects weighing more than 10 milligrams (mg); smaller insects were sampled for relative abundance in aerial nets deployed at about 200 m height and their abundance estimated by ratio to larger insects. The largest insects weighed up to 500 mg (half a gram). Most of the

insects were flying below 750 m height, with an upward displacement at night of the greatest density from below 200 m to about 350 m. In daytime, most of the larger insects are beneficial ones, including hoverflies, ladybeetles, various carabid beetles and butterflies. At night, moths and lacewings dominate the species mix. Daytime density (by weight) is about four times nighttime density, with a curious minimum at dusk, when almost nobody is moving.

For the larger insects, the migrations are evidently purposeful. Spring migrations are oriented toward the north, while autumn migrations are southward. In each case, the dominant direction diverges from the direction of the dominant wind by close to 90 degrees, though the insects choose to fly when they do have a favourable tail wind. Net summer movements appear to constitute random drifting aligned with the dominant winds. Small insects appear to be blown by the prevailing winds in all seasons. This observation raises the interesting question of how the larger, but still diminutive, creatures sense direction (a question that is still incompletely settled for birds, who seem to have a number of possible means).

Migration intensity was greatest on warm days. Possible reasons for this may be that insects are more mobile at higher temperatures and that upwardly directed convection currents generated by surface warmth may easily lift the insects into the stronger winds aloft.

These insect movements seasonally transfer a significant biomass from one region of Earth's surface to another, including significant nutrients contained in their bodies. Insect biomass moving in and out of the United Kingdom each year is about 7.7 times the migratory songbird biomass. As well, these insects carry various pathogens and parasites. If the UK figures generalize to the total continental airspace, these insect movements constitute by far the most significant annual animal movements on or over the terrestrial Earth. Yet how environmental change may be affecting these important movements remains completely unknown.

Reference

Hu, G. + 6 others. 2016. Mass seasonal bioflows of high-flying insect migrants. *Science* 354: 1584-1587.

Summary by M. Church

Young Birders Program

Young Birder Awards

Upon the recommendation of Young Birder Awards Committee Chair Carlo Giovanella, the Board has approved the following Young Birder Awards:

- Willa Crowley, age 12, from Fort St. James, nominated by Gabrielle Aubertin
- Adam Dhalla, age 11, from Coquitlam, nominated by Melissa Hafting
- Matyas Gerloczy, age 14, from Kelowna, nominated by Melissa Hafting
- Katya Kondratyuk, age 11, from Surrey, nominated by Melissa Hafting
- Toby Theriault, age 12, from Tofino, nominated by Adrian Dorst
- Viktor Vandereyk, age 17, from Langley, nominated by Melissa Hafting



Willa Crowley, above, was featured in the December issue of this newsmagazine as a potential recipient. Willa began observing birds in earnest at the age of eight, but her favourites have always been hummingbirds. When she was four years old, a local Tl'azten Elder asked her what her spirit animal was and she declared, "Hummingbird!"

The 2016 season was her third volunteering with Rocky Point Bird Observatory's Hummingbird Project. It was an exciting season, because it was the first year she acted as scribe and began learning about morphological measurements.

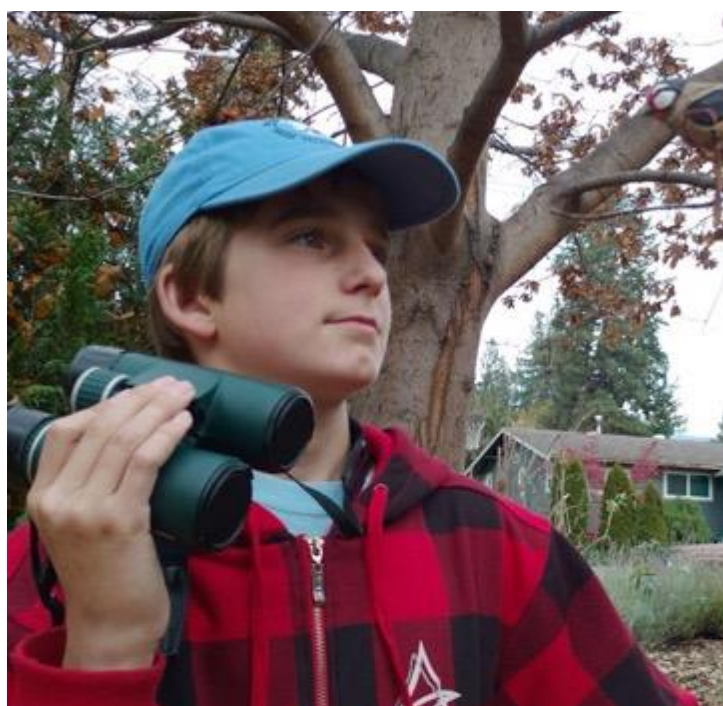
Matyas Gerloczy (right) started birding three years ago and loves to bird in the Okanagan with his friend, Logan, from whom he has learnt a lot. He has also been able to bird in Europe. He posts bird photographs on Flickr (www.flickr.com/photos/145162454@N02/) and takes an active part in discussing bird identification on the Birds in British Columbia forum at birding.bc.ca.



He posts bird photographs on his Flickr site (www.flickr.com/photos/134098256@N05/), blogs on his birding adventures (adamdhalla.com), and is an active contributor on the Birding in BC forum at birding.bc.ca. He also creates bird art out of Lego pieces.

Adam Dhalla (above) has been birding for three years. He loves to travel for birding and has already been to Japan, Hawaii and all over southern BC, and hopes to get to Costa Rica and Australia next. This is why, at just 11 years old, he already has a life list of 300 species.

He posts bird photographs on his Flickr site (www.flickr.com/photos/134098256@N05/), blogs on his birding adventures (adamdhalla.com), and is an active contributor on the Birding in BC forum at birding.bc.ca. He also creates bird art out of Lego pieces.





Katya Kondratyuk (above left) is, according to Melissa Hafting, the most enthusiastic birder you could ever meet. Though a newcomer to birding, her spotting skills have been proven as exceptional. She contributes to eBird routinely, the Birding in BC forum (birding.bc.ca), the Christmas Bird Count for Kids and the Young Birder Program field trips. She also posts fine bird photos to her Flickr website: www.flickr.com/photos/141005852@N07/.

Viktor Vandereyk (above right) started birding when he was eight years old and is an avid hiker and naturalist. He joined the Young Birder program in 2016 and has been very helpful to the younger children, serving as a fine role model. Viktor is a talented artist, as can be seen from his painting of a Kestrel on page 15. He is also a contributor to the BC Birds Forum (Birding.bc.ca) and adds his photos to Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/144379173@N02/.

Toby Theriault (right) decided at the beginning of 2016 to do a Big Year, with a goal of seeing 120 species – and ended the year with 217, mostly in BC, but with a boost from a trip to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Toby and her close friend, Cedar, founded a birding club called the Tough City Twitchers, currently with four members. This summer she was interviewed on CBC radio about her birding passion. Her birding blog can be found at: birdymcbirdface.blogspot.ca.



Mentoring Young Birders

Melissa Hafting

There are many barriers for youth in birding and in society. One they run into often is adultism. Some adults feel that a child or young person tagging along will “dumb down” or slow the group down so to speak, so they avoid birding with them. In my opinion this is the furthest thing from the truth. Birding with youth can only increase your knowledge and gives you a new perspective at looking at birds that you may never have known before. The way we communicate and interact with children and youth helps develop positive relationships with them. We need to empower them, respect them and talk to them on the same level and never talk down to them. When we give them a positive experience, it leads to youth feeling that they can take on more responsibility, garners trust, and increases their willingness to learn. A place where the kids can feel they can be safe and themselves is vitally important. Adults benefit from the youth’s intelligence, optimism and excited approach

to birding, which only inspires us to do more.

Many youth involved in birding and nature programs feel a sense of belonging to a group. Connecting to nature lifts their spirits, decreases their stress levels, and motivates them to care and hopefully do something about the environment and conservation. It inspires them to education and future careers in nature. It encourages independence, increases focus and ability to handle tasks, improves confidence and self esteem, increases laughter and happiness, improves communication skills as they interact with other children, and fosters friendships. For any child that has suffered any trauma, bullying or loss, this can be a small but vitally important step to healing and recovery as well.

I have been constantly inspired by the young birders I have worked with in BC. I started this youth birding program four years ago now before joining BCFO, when I kept running into solo young birders who amazed me with their abilities. I started to take these kids out on their own with me on birding adventures. On these trips we would learn about birds, identification, and

wildlife and generally have a great time. I learnt a lot from the kids about birds and their perspectives on them as well. Almost every trip they have a new fun fact for me.

The first kid I went birding with was Liron, and I’ll never forget some of the trips we have had together. One day we found 44 grouse of four different species in one day! Bridget and I have enjoyed many birding days when we talk about the importance of bringing more women into birding, which is something she is passionate about. We have fun trying to hit as many places and see as many species possible, until the sun goes down. Cole and I have had some fabulous trips to Boundary Bay for shorebirds, and he will tell me where the rarest shorebirds are currently in the ABA. When I am in Kamloops I take Isaac out when I can, and we’ve had some incredible adventures in Lac du Bois and Tranquille. As well with the other wonderful children, the list of similar experiences goes on and on. I treasure the time I have shared with each of them individually. I still do take them out solo to this day and I’m even more blown away by their skill level now. I could go into detail about the

This fine painting of an American Kestrel is by Viktor Vandereyk, one of the recipients of this year’s Young Birder Awards. See the previous page for more about Viktor.



individual strengths of each one of these gifted children but the list would be far too long. I think my favourite thing is watching a child get a lifer on our trips; the excitement is simply infectious.

Anyway, I thought that all of these kids should meet and interact and so I decided to facilitate this through interactive field trips. I would rent an SUV, the parents would meet me bright and early, and we would go on our full-day adventures. Our first field trip was to Manning Park where all the kids really got to know one another. We celebrated our first field trip with a great meal at Home Restaurant in Hope. The kids love the pie and macaroni and cheese there. The friendships and bonds that were made between the children and me were unbreakable from that day forward. They have taught me more than I could ever have taught them. Our group is made up of children from Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and the Southern and Central Interior. The kids consist of many different races and there is a good mix of sexes, which is the new face of birding. They are all passionate about citizen science, helping others with bird ID, and taking part in banding and other birding activities in the community such as Christmas Bird Counts.

I am thankful I have worked with such great and supportive parents, some

of whom are volunteers in the program. All the parents have supported me from day one and the love and passion for birding in their own children. I deeply care about these kids and am constantly impressed by their knowledge, enthusiasm and love of nature. They genuinely care about the environment and want to make a difference. We have had several discussions about the impact of politics and our own actions on the environment and what we can do now and when they're older to help remedy this. We have discussions on rare birds, common birds, birding by ear, wildlife safety, hiking, music and general pop culture. Many times they will ask me, "Mel, is that a so and so?" and instead of just giving the answer I'll reply, "What do you think it is, trust your gut" and 99% of the time they are correct. This helps to build confidence and independent thinking. I, of course, go over with them why this is the species, with field marks and how to rule out other similar species. However, these kids have the birding abilities some adults could only dream of. We even play games on the way home from our trips. One of our car-ride favourites is "Identify this



Short-eared Owl from the Flickr site of Adam Dhalla – see page 12.

bird" while one child plays the call on his/her phone and the other kids have to answer.

I treat them as my equals and my friends because they are. I respect them and am proud of them. One of the young birders, Alice, who started on my first field trip is now in university studying ecology and has joined a birding and photography club at McGill in Montreal. All these kids are sensational photographers, by the way, not only birders. I am blown away by their photography skills. So many of these kids have asked me to write reference letters for them to all these diverse birding and bird banding programs in North America. I have also seen some of the older kids in the program mentor the younger ones as well, which provides good role models for the younger kids. These kids are so ambitious, passionate and worthy; they are destined for great things.

What really makes me love these kids is their gratefulness. They are always appreciative of everything I and others do for them; not one has never said "thank you" or behaved poorly. Even when we dip after an eight-plus hour hike, the kids are still grateful and happy to be taken out and given the opportunity. If only all adults behaved this way. When events I plan get cancelled due to weather, or we dip on their main target (like the WTPT) and

Rock Wren from the Flickr site of Katya Kondratyuk – see page 13.



I'm a little disappointed for them, they personally phone, text or email me and try to comfort me! They appreciate the other stuff they see, even if it isn't birds. I swear on our Flatiron, Whistler and Manning Park trips the kids were equally as excited to see Marmots and Ground Squirrels and Bears. They view all nature as important.

When I am hopefully old and grey, I will never forget the joy these children have brought to my life. These kids have made and will make the world and the birding community a better place. I hope that my small impact on their lives gave them a quarter of what they have given me.

They are our future, and with young people like them around our future is bright. Many have said our future is grim, as young people are lazy, sit inside on computers and don't care about the environment. That is the furthest thing from the truth. I can bet you that those adults who are calling those children lazy would view things differently if they would only reach out a hand to them and take them outside. If they did so, they would discover a special child inside. Not every child enjoys hiking or birds, but if you show an interest in their particular hobby, you will notice that things will change for the better for both you and the child.

The benefits of mentoring children cannot go unmentioned. I encourage you to mentor a young birder in your community. I have been happy to personally see some young birder mentors, such as Adrian Dorst who mentors Toby in Tofino and Ann Nightingale who has done so much for Liam in Victoria.

Russell Cannings did the same for Logan when Russ lived in BC. It is people like this who have opened up great opportunities for these kids such as banding, getting them to lead birding walks, and teaching them about ear birding and identification and much more. All these things have helped shape the kids into the great birders they are today by simply giving them a chance.

There are many kids in rural communities whom my young birder program cannot physically reach, but if one adult shows them kindness, respect and inclusion, it can make a difference to them.

I was touched to have a couple from Quesnel reach out to me. They told me that they liked my Young Birders Program and what I have done. They said that they are thinking of doing the same with the kids in Quesnel. This thrills me to no end because I can't reach the children there. I am only one person and am based in Vancouver. I think it is wonderful that people want to reach out to children in their community and share the joy of birding. I will help them in any way that I can to facilitate their goals and get the program off the ground, if they decide to go through with it. It is no doubt a big time commitment and a lot of work but the benefits are worth it in my opinion.

It means more to a child than we know when an adult spends time birding with them and shows an interest in their passion. Kids are very eager and willing to learn, when given the opportunity. I have seen many shy, introverted kids whom I've worked with in this program bloom into the most talkative,

extroverted children you can imagine. All you need to do is show children support, to foster that growth.

I am grateful to George Clulow and Carlo Giovanella for asking me to bring my youth birding program into BCFO and develop an official Young Birders Program here. Their support and care for the children with the Young Birder Awards Program that they developed has really enhanced things. They are always sending me new recruits they meet in the community, and George is always asking me what I need; and that support really means everything to me. Both George and Carlo have mentored kids in the community, some of who are adults now. George mentored Khalid, and he has told me how much he has learned from George, what they have seen together, and how he looks up to him and finds him to be an amazing birder and person. Ilya, who is an adult now, was mentored by Carlo. To this day he still talks about all the things that Carlo did for him, how grateful he is for it, and how it has helped shape him into the incredible birder he is today. This just proves the long-lasting impact that mentoring a child has. They carry it into adulthood and it helps shape who they are; they never forget the kindness and knowledge that was shared with them.

BCFO also gives the kids an official organization to be part of and makes them feel included. The hats that Larry Cowan made for them make them feel part of a club. The kids love those hats and are always wearing them with pride. It has really thrilled the kids to see our trip reports and their photos, news and art published by Clive Keen in *BC Birding* magazine. Many of them let me know as soon as they get the magazine that their photo or art is in there and what page I should look for it on. They also tell me that they like reading about their field trips.

It is so nice to see kids with such a sense of self worth and love for birds and nature. These kids give me great hope for the future. What more can we ask for?

Here's to many more adventures.

Left: Great Horned Owl from the Flickr site of Matyas Gerloczy – see page 13.



CBCs of Note

Multiple Haida Gwaii CBCs

Many BCFO members will have wondered about the opportunities for birding on Haida Gwaii. The following reports on the islands' Christmas Bird Counts will help us know what we are missing and perhaps inspire a visit. Even in the midst of winter, it is clearly a remarkable and unique part of the province. Where else would a CBC turn up a Rustic Bunting?

Each report is by Margo Hearne.

Hecate Strait

It's hard to beat the bright blue water upon which the ferry sailed. There were no clouds in the sky but there were many white dots on the water. Were they murres, loons, or long-tails? Well, once we got close enough to see, they were all of the above. Gulls too: they seemed excessively white against the brilliance of the blue. This cold north coast is unlike anywhere else in the world when the sun shines. Most places now have a taint of pollution, but not here.

We dressed in our warmest clothes and stayed on deck all day. It is such a pleasure to be able to do that; it is usually too stormy and wet to linger long outside.

The ferry was full of returnees who had visited family over Christmas, the temperature was minus one, the sea developed a nowhere chop which came from all over, but the ship sailed on through clouds of Surf Scoters (1,160) White-winged Scoters (165), Long-tailed Ducks (603), Common Murres (3,228) and over 2,000 Glaucous-winged Gulls. Where were the shearwaters? Not one; no fulmars either. But lots of loons: Yellow-billed (4), Common (24) and Pacific (241). Fifty-four winter-plumaged Pigeon Guillemots, those little black-and-white birds with red legs that nest by the ferry terminal, swept away from the ship, but neatest of all were the tiny pinpricks of splash that dove when we approached: one-hundred and two Ancient Murrelets. They were so tiny as to be almost mistaken for fish. Maybe they were fish

with feathers. The dolphins in Edye Pass were definitely fish-like as they splashed along beside the ship, and giant Hump-backed Whales blew like Moby Dick, the great white whale. Nobody rushed on deck to see them. It was just too cold so we had them all to our-

selves. Not being birds, we couldn't add them to our count, but there were eleven anyway. Total bird species: 30.

Tlell

Our friend Cacilia reported that she had seen "hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of ducks; hundreds of gulls; four Bald Eagles; fifty-two crows and one heron" in front of her seaside property in Tlell. "There were so many I couldn't count them!" It was a great day; from the highway we could see 1,672

Map of Haida Gwaii by English Wikipedia user Kelisi,



Common Goldeneyes, 3,716 Pacific Loons, 105 Red-throated Loons and 159 Pelagic Cormorants out in Hecate Strait. And those were only the ones nearshore. It was one of those perfectly calm days when you could see for miles and the birds flew by in streams. They were quite beautiful.

We roamed the highway, stopping at places where the ocean was visible and counted until darkness descended. It was the highest count ever for Pacific Loons in the thirty-five years we have been doing the Haida Gwaii counts. In 2004 year we saw 11,612 Common Goldeneye (still an all-time high for British Columbia) but that day a screaming southeaster was blowing and they were all tucked into Southeast Harbour. This year they just kept flying by in tight flocks.

So where did all the birds come from and why were they here? Well, according to fishermen friends, birds have their own weather station. Tides, winds and currents all tell them when it's time to move, and the weather had turned the day of the count. The wind veered from the chilly north-northeasters of the previous two weeks to south-southeasters and the birds knew it. Their feathers were in flight mode to get to the feeding grounds somewhere else.

Among the merry crew were twenty-three Common Loons, twenty-six Red-necked Grebes and seventy-nine Red-breasted Mergansers. There were even eleven Great Blue Herons and we don't see many of them on this count. This short report only scratches the surface but we can't leave without mentioning the ten Trumpeter Swans resting calmly in Noel and Barbara's quiet garden. They are so at home there that they are almost part of the family. Total species: 53.

Skidegate Inlet

With four down and two to go, it seemed like a very long count season; then the day before the Skidegate Inlet count, a photo arrived in our inbox. "Is this a Meadowlark?" asked Barb, "it's in my front garden!" Yes, it was a Meadowlark, incredibly back after a three-year absence! We had found one at Copper Bay on the 2013 CBC but it's such an exceptionally rare find that we never thought one would show up again. Ronnie Stewart in Masset recorded the first one in the early 1950s. It's a colourful bird with a bright yel-

low throat and black bib and, once seen, can't be mistaken for anything else.

The day of the Skidegate Inlet count dawned with a rosy sunrise and a brisk wind that made for choppy seas. The small "Kwuna" ferry bounced through it, as did the boat party braving the northeasters to find record numbers of Black Oystercatchers and 770 Western Grebes, those of the swan-like neck and dainty aspect. There were also 236 Red-necked Grebes, a high number for any winter; they seem to be staying around longer than they used to. Brant geese numbers were down; we only saw seven for the day but 618 Canada Geese was a new high and in the mix was one Dusky Snow Goose, obviously a juvenile that hadn't come into its bright white colours yet, and eleven White-fronted Geese. Two tiny Anna's Hummingbirds continue at feeders in Sand-spit, and mixed in with nine Savannah Sparrows was one lone Orange-crowned Warbler, tricky to identify in its winter colours. Three Lapland Longspurs swung through the bright air, and the over 100 Robins were a new record. They have appeared all over the island this winter; the cold north has driven them down. Shorebirds were many: Sanderlings, Surfbirds, Dunlin, Turnstones, Rock Sandpipers, Killdeer and Black-bellied Plovers were all recorded, but the bird of the day was a Northern Mockingbird, the first CBC record in 163 counts in 35 years! Total species: 72.

Rose Spit

The riverbank fell into the river as the tide fell; the whole area is changing. The sandy entrance to North Beach is now only a few metres from the Hiellen River and the buffer of trees is gone. The tiny Dipper wasn't deterred from keeping on its appointed rounds, however. It hopped into the rushing water and ran along the river bottom before fetching up on to a rock close to the bank. It was a treat to see.

Offshore it seemed as though all the birds usually seen in Dixon Entrance had stayed in Hecate Strait. There were only a handful of ducks: eleven Black Scoters; two White-winged Scoters and one Common Goldeneye. Loons were few: eight Common, six Pacific and seven Red-throated. Even though it was a calm day, the surf was huge. It rose like a wall, sharp as blue crystal, then fell over itself and rushed onshore. Two Mallards came from somewhere and

fled away again. Sixty-three Surf Scoters dove into the breaking waves and came out the other side, true to their name. At Yakan Point two Harlequin Ducks dove in the rocky sea-rush and ten Long-tailed Ducks kept on going. Sixteen Black Turnstones fed on the rocks, a Peregrine Falcon turned a tree into a totem and fifty-eight Varied Thrushes rushed from the roadside. We were happy to hear the Virginia Rail again this year; it's an elusive bird, sometimes heard, rarely seen. But the day belonged to the Pelagic Cormorants as they swept in droves from the far-away to create an ocean raft just off Tow Hill. The flock got bigger as the day got darker until we seemed to be counting shadows. The surf roared on, and gulls skimmed the wave tops like so many drifts of foam as they headed offshore to roost for the night. Total species: 36.

Port Clements

It's a tough slog through the cold and ice in the middle of winter, but it's worth every moment. The Port Clements count was great as the most amazing array of feathered songsters circled us all day. In a small sunny clearing, it felt as though we'd fallen into bird heaven. Robins, thrushes, flickers, siskins and an Anna's Hummingbird came out in the winter sun. In the centre of town, another little haven for birds produced a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos feeding on seeds scattered on the icy ground and among them the rarest bird of all – a Rustic Bunting. After 160 counts, it was our first ever on a CBC. It fed quietly under a bench. This bunting "nests in northeast Europe to northeast Russia and is seen rarely in Alaska. It's also rare on the Aleutians and the Bering Sea islands and very rare on the Pacific Coast to California." It was a sight for the ages. In the high trees a Townsend's and Yellow-Rumped Warbler flitted and disappeared, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet joined the Golden-crowned Kinglets for a second. What a lovely place it was.

Down towards Kumdis Bay, we found a small patch of open water in a partly frozen pond where twenty-five Ring-necked Ducks all preened quietly. Among them were a few Mallard and teal. We leaned from the vehicle window to snap a photo before they all fled. Had we got out and slammed the door, they'd have flown in a flash. In another quiet garden, two Lincoln's

Sparrows sat in a leafless bush while three White-crowned, three Golden Crowned and one White-throated Sparrow fed with the juncos. We watched them from a friend's warm home; back out in the cold world, twenty Trumpeter Swans fed in Yakoun Estuary. The road to Juskatla had been a sheet of ice the previous day but had been sanded, so we got there and back safely. We found a few Killdeer sitting on a distant log and the only Eurasian Wigeon and Gadwall for the day. And it didn't rain at all. Total species: 52.

Red-breasted Sapsuckers on the Sunshine Coast CBC

Tony Greenfield

Red-breasted Sapsuckers are a fairly common species on the Sunshine Coast at all seasons and all elevations, but under normal circumstances are never abundant. In the seven years from 2009 to 2015 a total of only 17 birds was recorded on the Sunshine Coast CBC for an average of 2.4 birds per count.

Periodically, about once a decade, when the arctic front envelops southwestern BC and brings cold temperatures with daytime highs around zero, often with accompanying snow, the area is inundated with large numbers of

Red-breasted Sapsuckers. Documented irruptions have occurred in early January 1993, 22 December 1998 (Pender Harbour CBC), 20 December 2008 and 17 December 2016 (both Sunshine Coast CBCs).

On 20 December 2008 the Sunshine Coast was under the influence of an arctic front with overnight temperatures as low as -14C when the 30th Sunshine Coast CBC was conducted. At the end of the day, the seven parties of birders had counted 101 sapsuckers, considerably more birds than the total tallied on all of the previous 29 counts. It was also about double the high total recorded on any other North American count that year and I believe it was the highest ever count for the species on any count in the history of the CBC going back to 1900.

When the 38th CBC was held on 17 December 2016, an arctic front prevailed again with frigid weather for a few days prior to count day. On that day the sapsucker count was 124 birds, breaking the previous record set in 2008 and tentatively a new record high for any count in the history of the CBC.

On the same weekend as the Sunshine Coast CBC and with the same weather prevailing, the Vancouver CBC on 18 December recorded 101 sapsuckers and the Pender Islands CBC on the 17th recorded 61 birds. The data from these two other counts indicates that the phenomenon is not restricted to the

Sunshine Coast.

The evidence is that an arctic front drives the sapsuckers out of the mountains into the sea-level lowlands of the Sunshine Coast. What we do not know is whether the influx is of short-distance altitudinal migrants dropping out of the local mountains down to sea-level or if the birds arrive from longer distances.

The aftermath of these sapsucker irruptions has not always been a happy one for the birds. In the January 1993 event, on the following days, there was a documented high mortality of sapsuckers with birds flying into windows and decks, being hit by vehicles, caught by cats and raptors, etc.

At the countdown for the 2016 CBC, participants from all the separate parties reported the high numbers of sapsuckers seen that day. However, some of the parties had observed another phenomenon that I had not previously encountered: internecine warfare as sapsuckers fought each other to the death. One report was of a "vicious fight and the aim seemed to be to kill the opponent." Another reported "one bird on top of the other, beating it with its bill, with the victim crying out continually." The party I was with observed two sapsuckers fighting in a shallow creekbed. Eventually one bird flew off, leaving the other comatose and soaking wet in the freezing cold water. I waded in and picked up the bird which did not protest at all. Fortunately, there was a happy ending to this story as after a few minutes drying out and warming up in a box in my vehicle the sapsucker revived and was fluttering around inside my vehicle so I let it out and it flew away.

Another interesting incident reported on count day was when an observer watched a sapsucker struggling on a lawn in the talons of a small unidentified raptor (Merlin or Sharp-shinned Hawk). Suddenly a Bald Eagle swooped in and scooped up both the sapsucker and its assailant.

Note

To avoid confusion: the CBC known as the Sunshine Coast CBC covers the southern portion of the coast from Gibsons to Sechelt. The Pender Harbour CBC, which is also on the Sunshine Coast, covers the northern portion centred on Pender Harbour.

Below: A seriously rumped Red-breasted Sapsucker, regaining consciousness after a high-speed window strike. CNK photo.



Oversens Trips Reports

Birding in Ecuador

Andy Buhler

In December 2016 Marilyn and I were fortunate enough to check out some of the fascinating birds of Ecuador. Earlier in the year we scanned a number of remarkable bird pictures and some exciting reports from birding friends who had been to Ecuador before. We checked out tour groups online – their challenges, their benefits, their inclusions and their costs. We scrutinized our discretionary funds and thought about our physical status. The relaxed state of our exercise regimens actually needed more scrutiny than the state of our funds. If we were going to hike in the Andes, we would really need to shape up. Plans were formalized, payments were made and planned times to walk a mile around the Vernon arena concourse were started. Our breathing rates began to get better. The Canadian dollar began to get worse. Our planning continued. We were still on a positive track.

Suddenly it was December! Our

journey was underway. We had booked a day in Quito pre-tour so that we could recuperate from our plane flights. We also wanted to adjust to life at nearly 3,500 metres. Our flight landed late at night so we could not spot any birds on arrival, but, first thing next morning, we flipped open our curtains to tally our very first South American bird. A flock of them flapped around by a hotel right across the street from our room. They looked familiar. They were familiar. They were Rock Doves! However, the birding and the tour locales both went up after that.

After a restful day on our own in Quito, we hit the hay early. We needed to be up before dawn to meet Jose, our guide, and Hugo, our driver. They both arrived on time. Jose greeted us in English. Hugo, like us, was unilingual and spoke only Spanish. We checked out our vehicle for the other clients. Apparently there were none. Our tour turned out to really be “our” private birding tour. Tropical Birding, the tour organization, had stated they would go with just two clients and they kept their word when no others had decided to join this booked tour.

Our first destination was to be Yanacocha, above Quito, at a reserve owned and operated by the Jocotoco Foundation. Jose had ears that could hear a tree fall, or a bird call, almost anywhere in the tropical “forest”

around us. His only failing was that he, like other tropical guides we have had, did not understand the concept of “flat.” Any footpath or trail under about 35 degrees from horizontal constitutes “flat” to them. Our mile-long “flat” walks around the arena in Vernon had certainly not been enough of a conditioning. Puff, puff, pant, pant, aching knees! Still Jose did find us birds.

He started early with a perched Andean Pygmy-Owl and then took us past a melange of different passerines, raptors and hummers. On our first day we found twelve species listed on our checklists as “hummingbirds.” On Day Two we got a day count of 17 species of “hummingbirds.” I am putting “hummingbirds” in quotes. Clive Keen, in the Winter 2016 issue of *BC Nature*, page 6, noted “... *The folks tasked with naming hummingbirds had a particular problem. There are 336 known species, so good names ending in ‘hummingbird’ soon got desperately short.*” Clive noted a sampling of name variants in his article. We got to see:

- White-necked Jacobin
- Stripe-throated Hermit
- Brown, Green and Sparkling Violetears
- Gorgeted Sunangel
- Tyrian Metaltail
- Violet-tailed Sylph
- Black-tailed Trainbearer
- Booted Racket-tail
- Shining Sunbeam
- Collared and Brown Incas
- Great Sapphirewing
- Buff-tailed Coronet
- Fawn-breasted and Golden-crowned Brilliants
- Purple-bibbed Whitetip

– and about twenty more species – all considered to be “hummingbirds.”

Other birds with amazing names that Jose sought out for us included:

- Ocellated Tapaculo
- Stout-billed Cinclodes
- Many-striped Canastero
- Pale-legged Hornero
- Orange-bellied Euphonia

– and the crowning glory of a name:

- Superciliaried Hemispingus

The tour itinerary took us from strenuous cloud forest mixed-flock birding to

Crimson-rumped Toucanet. Photo by Andy Buhler.



sedentary feeder-watching to treks in both wet and dry paramo habitats and even to the top of Papallacta Pass. Each habitat had its own set of “specials” to look for. At the top of the Pass, about 4,000 metres, Jose located two Rufous-bellied Seedsnipes for us. He had been unable to find any Seedsnipes on his last six visits there. Bonus! In the Antisana above Quito (dry paramo), we were able to get good views of up to eight Andean Condors, about 100 Carunculated Caracaras, one each of Black-faced Ibis, Paramo Pipit, Andean Gull, Paramo Ground-Tyrant, Aplomado Falcon and even a female Ecuadorian Hillstar (another hummer). That was a great day! All of the birds were openly visible. There was no need to peer through a lot of dank and verdant foliage just to catch a glimpse of some speedily receding rarity.

There were two other very memorable days on the tour. One was a visit to Paz de las Aves where we got to see about five species of Antpittas, a Wedge-billed Hummingbird and a couple of displaying Andean Cock-of-the-Rocks at their lek. This was also the



Left: Violet-tailed Sylph. Above: Golden Tanagers. Photos by Andy Buhler.

day when Marilyn and I had to bail on one very steep and slippery trail so we did not get to see Maria, the Giant Antpitta, which the local owner / guide had trained to come in to his call, especially when his call was accompanied by his handful of fresh mealworms.

Our other very memorable day was near Milpas enjoying a bag picnic breakfast at a couple of fruit-feeders put out by the owners of Amagusa Reserve. We were not overwhelmed by hummers. Instead we watched in awe the arrivals of so many colourful tanager visitors. During our lunchtime we talked:

- Golden Tanager
- Lemon-rumped Tanager
- Glistening Green Tanagers (both adult and juvenile)
- Blue-capped Tanager
- Flame-faced Tanager
- Golden-naped Tanager
- Rufous-chested Tanager
- Moss-backed Tanager
- Blue-and-black Tanager
- Silver-throated Tanager
- Bay-headed Tanager
- Blue-gray Tanager

– and, on the way there, a Swallow Tanager. A greedy Crimson-rumped Toucanet also entertained us and a pair

of drowsy Bronze-winged Parrots rounded out our special visit there.

Jose’s mission seemed to be to find us as many species and endemics as he possibly could in the limited time we had. We frustrated his efforts a bit. Our slow pace along his “flat” hikes and our noisy panting to get sufficient oxygen into our labouring lungs meant he, and we, missed a couple of his target birds. Still, without counting any of the heard-only or guide-only species, we were able to tally 365 species in that introductory ten-day tour.

Ecuador was an amazing place to bird. We would go again in a heartbeat, but next time, we would attempt to improve our heartbeats, our breathing and our wonky knees before setting out again with Jose. At least then he might give us a passing grade as acceptable senior-aged hikers.

Into the Kalahari

Steve Ellis and Cathie Jackson

Was it the gaping ground-squirrel holes in all the worst places, or the tiny ants swarming the ground and our feet? Was it the owl that grazed Steve’s head as he relieved himself in the blackness, giving him the fright of his life (you never quite lose that feeling that a lion’s lurking in the nearby grass)? Or was it the

hand-sized flying insects suddenly all attracted at once to our headlamps and thus our faces, our necks, and, “Ugh!” down our shirts? Yes, it was all of that incidental wildness that bowled us over and left us speechless as we sat, heads back, lost in the flight of the Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters. We watched them for hours, not minding the mounting heat. Steve insisted he’d never seen such an acrobatic display, but I thought to myself, “He’s seduced by the magic of the place.” And of course I was right. When you drive for hours through thick sand then set up camp in the Central Kalahari, if you are as lucky as we were, you’re about 20 km from another human being in every direction. And everything becomes greater.

From the roof of our truck, we sat and watched the sun rise over the pan. As the light increases, rocks become gemsbok and the bushes, ostrich. Patches of brush shift and move: a huge herd of antelope meanders like a stream. In the silence that is not silence, we hear the jackal’s cry and with patience we know we will see him, or her, loping along, parting the long grass.

How can I think of silence when the air is filled with bird song? The rains were generous this year and the world of the Kalahari swells with life. We sit a while longer and Steve identifies the call of the Black-Chested Prinia and the song of the Kalahari Scrub Robin. Be-

side us, at eye level up here on our perch, we see that the Pale Chanting Goshawk still sits in the thorn tree at the edge of our campsite. He’s been here since we arrived yesterday, and he’s beautifully camouflaged by the soft grey of the branches. Behind us, as we turn to clamber down, we see the White-browed Sparrow-weavers flitting through the thorn trees that form an umbrella over our campsite. They are the humble weavers, the ones with nondescript brown coloring and the loose, messy nests. We find them remarkable, though, wondering how they construct those long, dark tunnels. So close and so high, we feel as if we are in the tree too; we look right down into the nest as a Southern Grey-headed Sparrow lines it with her feathers.

Over the next few days we learn that those pesky ants are food for the Red-Eyed Drongos, Namaqua Doves and the Sparrow-weavers who all hop here and there in our campsite, keeping us entertained. In the low brush ringing our campsite, we see the Orange-winged Pytilia, a Red-headed Finch and a flock of Melba Finch. The breeze picks up in the afternoon, and the Shaft-tailed Whydah clings to the tip of a bush while his tail does a delicate dance with its four graceful shafts. Her cousin, the dramatic Paradise Whydah, was kind enough to make himself and his gorgeous tail plumage seen near Shoshong

on our drive here. Incidentally, Shoshong, a small village on the secondary highway between Mahalapye and Serowe, had the most beautiful, showy birds lined up along its telephone wires. As well as the Whydah, we were startled by the brilliance of both the Carmen and the European Bee-eaters, and so many stunning Lilac-breasted Rollers. Just past Serowe, a flock of Common Waxbills rose from the roadside, and I wished hard for a sighting of the delicate Blue Waxbills, which used to visit us every morning when we lived in Lobatse (for a year in 2000).

The heat of the afternoons is beaten by game drives in our air-conditioned truck. It’s on these drives and on our day-long trips between campsites that we see the most amazing sightings. I am mesmerized by the ocean of grasses; by the sheer height, the softness, the gentle greens and whites. We had to stop and wait for giant gemsbok, for springing springbok and for the plodding wildebeest as the herds spread across the road. Our races with ostrich streaking along beside us, glimpses of cheetah glancing back at us before disappearing over a dune, of wild dogs, of bat-eared fox in the early morning light – filled us with gratefulness.

Our chief companion on every Kalahari drive was the Black Korhaan, whose sudden and frequent screech never failed to make me jump. By contrast, the strange clicking of the Eastern Clapper Lark made Steve stop, and both of us wonder, “What is that delicate clapping sound and the barely audible wheeeee?” Eventually we validated Steve’s hunch that it was a bird and not some insect or barking geckos. After many stops, we witnessed its amazing flight: arcing high above the grass with a rapid clapping of its wings, a frantic hover, then a sudden swooping descent with wings arched back and a barely audible ascending “wheeeee”.

In the low thornveld that stretched forever on either side, we managed to pick out the Scaly-feathered Finch (a Groucho Marx look-alike), the dark Anteater Chat, a Red-backed Shrike and many Lesser Shrikes. Thankfully they all love to perch on the highest branch (of a low bush), silhouetted against the sky.

A frequent road companion in Passarge Pan was the dainty Double-banded Courser, and we were lucky enough to see the Buff Pipit running

Gabar Goshawk. Photo by Steve Ellis.



ahead of us as well. A pair of the incongruous Secretary Birds strode through the scrub, and we frequently heard the Kori Bustard's loud squawk as it spread its huge wings. There was always someone circling high in the sky: the Greater Kestrel hovering above the pans, a Bataleur, the African Hawk-Eagle, a Gabar Goshawk, and of course the ever-present buzzards and vultures, including Steppe Buzzards, White-backed Vultures and a lone Lappet-faced Vulture.

Seeing and identifying so many wonderful birds made our sojourns over rough tracks even longer than a top speed of 30 km would allow and our arrival at the next campsite unwisely late in the day. Night falls quickly, and arriving after dark in lion country is just not smart. Often done, but not smart.

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill. Steve Ellis photo.



But the rewards were well worth a little evening stress, and I had made a set of candle lanterns to ring around our campsite while I prepared dinner. I'm comforted and Steve humours me. In my own defense, this campsite at Letinahau was full of large cat prints, though narrow, so not lion. Later we identified them as cheetah. As the sun went down and the sky turned scarlet, the barking of the geckos was louder than we'd ever heard it. Later, from the safety of our bed high up in the truck, we listened to the lions roaring. This is the Kalahari nightly lullaby, strangely peaceful when it's distant and more like the woof of sea lions than we'd ever imagined. We were a bit timid that night, though. Our vehicle had been surrounded by a pride of lions that day. It happened in the blink of an eye, and

while they really didn't pose a real threat, they clearly wanted us gone. Likely they had cubs hidden under a nearby bush.

With another long day of deep sand and rough clay track, a picnic lunch in Deception Pan, and a stream of amazing sightings, we made our way out of Central Kalahari. On the last leg, the track dips and rises relentlessly and the grass is so tall on either side we were bouncing through a grass tunnel. Near the gate, a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill stuck a pose against the deep blue sky, a fitting goodbye from a familiar friend.

Bird List

From Mochudi to Central Kalahari:

- Yellow-bellied Eremomela
- Melba Finch
- Red-headed Finch
- Black-chested Prinia
- Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
- Common Waxbill
- Sedge Warbler
- Willow Warbler
- Pied Babbler
- Ant-eating Chat
- Buffy Pipit
- Eastern Clapper Lark
- Kalahari Scrub Robin
- Carmine Bee-eater
- European Bee-eater
- Swallow-tailed Bee-eater
- Marico Flycatcher
- White-backed Mousebird
- Lilac-breasted Roller
- Paradise Whydah
- Shaft-tailed Whydah
- Crimson Boubou
- Red-eyed Bulbul
- Fork-tailed Drongo
- Grey-headed Bush Shrike
- Lesser Grey Shrike
- Red-backed Shrike
- Burchell's Glossy Starling
- Crested Barbet
- Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
- Hoopoe
- Grey Laurie
- Laughing Dove
- Namaqua Dove
- Rock Pigeon
- Kori Bustard
- Bronze-winged Courser
- Double-banded Courser

- Natal Francolin
- Northern Black Koorhan
- Ostrich
- Secretary Bird
- Yellow-billed Egret
- Blacksmith Plover
- Bataleur Steppe Buzzard
- African Hawk-Eagle
- Gabar Goshawk
- Greater Kestrel
- White-backed Vulture
- Lappet-faced Vulture

Briefings 3 & 4

Shorebirds Are Tanking

We recently (September, 2016) discussed the plight of Eurasian Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*), whose numbers are in rapid decline, seemingly the consequence of arctic climate warming. Earlier and warmer arctic springs have desynchronized the Knots' breeding cycle from the peak availability of food on the tundra, so that young Knots are smaller and less fit than in the past. This is but one visible indication of a much larger global problem. Shorebird populations in North America have declined by 70% over the past 40 years!

Red Knots breeding in the Canadian Arctic (*C. canutus rufa* and *C. canutus islandica*) have declined by 75% in the last 30 years. Unlike the European case, the cause is not firmly known, but there are several possible (and probably reinforcing) problems. First, these birds are hunted on their Caribbean and South American wintering grounds, and the effect of that harvest is not known (surveys are currently underway). Second, on their long migrations (despite their small size, they make some of the longest of all avian migrations), they rely on stopover places with abundant food resources to refuel themselves. But these places are increasingly disturbed and may no longer adequately feed the birds. The most prominent example is Delaware Bay on the American East Coast, where the birds stop after an overseas flight from the Caribbean to gorge on the eggs of Horseshoe Crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*). Today, the commercial harvest has deprived the birds of the much-needed food. Recently, another important stopover has been

identified at the mouth of the Nelson River, on the west coast of Hudson Bay. But here, hydroelectric power operations in the river appear to be interrupting river-mouth feeders. And on the breeding grounds, the birds face the same climate and food supply changes experienced by their Eurasian cousins.

Finally, and probably most important, small tundra-breeding shorebirds face a losing battle for secure space with the burgeoning population of Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*). It is estimated that, over the past 50 years, the North American Snow Goose population has exploded from 1.5 million to about 20 million birds. The geese destroy coastal marshes and mow down the tundra grasses within which the small birds hide their nests. The geese directly disrupt nesting and, further, have attracted to their colonies foxes and other predators that also prey on the eggs and young of the shorebirds. Altogether, the geese have substantially reduced the biodiverse resources of the tundra. At a study site invaded by Snow Geese on Southampton Island (north end of Hudson Bay), fewer than 7% of shorebird eggs survived to hatch in 2016, while at a control site with no Snow Geese, survival to hatch was 55%. With such statistics, shorebird populations cannot sustain themselves at the disturbed site.

Human hands appear to be behind the Snow Goose explosion, at least for the Hudson Bay and eastern Arctic populations. Revised agricultural practices

in the midwestern and southern U.S. have provided improved winter feeding opportunities for these birds, which accordingly are surviving in much greater numbers. Mixed up as such changes are with the evident effects of a changing climate, forecasting the overall character of environmental change and its effect on the flora and fauna becomes excruciatingly difficult.

(The Red Knot is now listed as “endangered” in Canada and “threatened” in the U.S.)

From a news story in *Nature* 541: 16-20 (5 January, 2017).

Desperate Birds

Ross’s Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*) is a rare and little-known gull of the high Arctic. Small numbers are found around Queens Channel (north of Cornwallis Island; east of Bathurst Island). Six to twelve of the gulls breed on Nasaruaalik Island, near which a small polynya (an area of persistently open water) provides a foraging area for local birds during early spring. In the high Arctic, breeding and rearing young is a necessarily hurried process. Birds arrive in the nesting area before the snow has gone and immediately begin courtship activities and pairing. Nesting occurs as soon as a suitable site is uncovered by snowmelt.

From 2011 to 2013, the Nasaruaalik Ross’s Gulls were observed

each spring. Three types of courtship behaviour were observed: synchronized pursuit flights, tail bobbing, and attempts (by males) to mount. The amazing aspect of this is that, in the absence of conspecifics in the immediate vicinity, individual Ross’s Gulls directed courtship activity toward any nearby gull. Attention was observed to be variously directed toward Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*; a decidedly odd potential partner), Sabine’s Gulls (*Xema sabini*), Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) and, most commonly, Black-legged Kittiwakes (*Rissa tridactyla*). Over the three years, 63% of displays were directed toward other species, and only 37% to conspecifics. In the cold, delayed spring of 2013, only 23% of displays were conspecific. The overwhelming majority of interactions were flight and tail displays, but seven instances of attempted copulation with another species were observed.

Interspecific courtships and attempted copulations amongst species not closely related have been observed before in experimentally contrived situations, but this is apparently the first instance of its being recorded in the wild as an evidently routine practice (instances were recorded in all three years of observation).

What purpose might such behaviour serve? The observers suggest that, first, it may attract the attention of a conspecific who happens to be in the neighbourhood. Second, it may serve as practice for later successful performance. Third, and perhaps most germane, it may serve to stimulate the hormonal rebalance within the bird to bring it to readiness to breed. In the Arctic, this latter reason is important since the restricted summer period demands that nest establishment and breeding occur just as soon as a nest site is available. For the same reason, these initial display activities can have little to do with nesting territory defence (as practiced by some birds) – so long as the snow lasts, there are no territories available to defend.

Reference

Maftai, M., Davis, S.E. and Mallory, M.L. 2016. Observations of Heterospecific Courtship Behaviour in an Isolated Population of Ross’s Gulls (*Rhodostethia rosea*). *Arctic* 69: 341-346.

Summaries by M. Church.

A National Bird for Canada

David Stirling

Having read a multitude of emails regarding why the Whiskyjack should be Canada’s national bird, although having fewer votes than the Common Loon or the Snowy Owl (what! no Canada Goose!), and reading Val George’s comments, *Victoria Naturalist*, (Jan–Feb 2017), I agree absolutely. But I may be biased as this jay-bird was one of the few species at my bird feeder on a backwoods homestead in the dead of winter.

In P. A. Taverner’s *Birds of Canada* (1934), it was called Canada Jay, long before the museum-tray ornithologists changed “Canada” to “Gray.” Taverner makes this strange comment, “It has all the family characteristics (of other jays) ... but seems to lack the keen appreciation of its own humour that the others possess!” (A bird with no sense of humour? – exclamation mark mine.)

I would like to see this jay become Canada’s bird with its name changed to Whiskyjack, one word, which is close to the Cree (another permanent Boreal Forest resident) language. Whisky, not “whiskey,” national beverage of Scotland, was a popular Canadian drink before we discovered wine. In the days of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s fur trade, after a cold, brutal day on the trapline, and a supper of bannock and industrial-strength tea, sitting by the fire with “a wee drap o’ whusky” must have been absolute contentment.

Avian Encounters

Imperturbable Pygmy-Owl

Gordon Brown

Our seed and suet feeders had been up since 1986, but not until 2014 did they draw the attention of a Northern Pygmy-Owl. In fact, I'd lived on Shutty Bench since '79 and had never seen the bird, much less photographed it. And then one day, there it was: perched in the mountain ash twenty-five feet from the camera on the dining room table. The owl stayed around for a couple of days and seemed either fearless of, or oblivious to, my presence. When perched in



Northern Pygmy-Owl photos by Gordon Brown.



the lilac in front of the deck, the bird allowed me a photo op from about six feet without so much as a blink. I've subsequently learned this shouldn't have been surprising.

On the third day, Jeannie heard what she described as a scream. My wife's hearing is far more acute than my own, but this was loud enough to be easily discernible over whatever she was doing in the kitchen. From the dining room window, she saw, on the snow beneath one of the suet trees, the little owl on top of a Northern Flicker. She hollered and I came rushing downstairs, grabbing the camera on my way to the deck.

What unfolded probably took only a couple of minutes. At first view, the birds were stationary, and I assumed the flicker had been killed. I'd taken only a few shots when the scene suddenly burst into action with the resumption of a wrestling match eventually found to have traversed eighteen feet. With talons holding the much larger bird by the chest, the owl was attempting to keep it grounded. But by the end of this struggle across the snow, the flicker had finally managed to free both wings and took off with the owl hanging on like a front-mounted papoose. It happened so quickly that I missed the shot when the owl finally dropped away from the flicker about three feet off the ground. As far as we know, the flicker survived; the only evidence to suggest anything untoward may have happened was a flicker breast feather found stuck to a suet-approach branch on the birch tree. It stayed there until spring.

On what may have been the next day, we were having morning coffee in front of the wood stove when movement through the patio door caught my attention. In flight, another flicker was about to take the single remaining mountain ash berry from the tip of a branch. While I watched, the owl hit the flicker just as it reached the berry, and both dropped to the deep snow beneath. We hadn't been aware of either bird before the attack, and the entire incident couldn't have lasted more than a few seconds. Camera in hand, I eased out the patio door, shooting while I cau-

tiously moved to within about twenty feet. Unlike the first event, this time everything was still; the owl just stared at me. I finally realized the flicker hadn't moved since it hit the snow and must have died almost instantly.

My camera angle up a gentle slope wasn't providing the best perspective, and having come out without a jacket, I was now freezing. Fortunately, it then occurred to me that a better camera position could be had from the second floor bathroom window so up I went, picking up a jacket and tripod en route. Jeannie didn't stray far from the wood stove, because I spent the next six hours, jacket on, shooting out the open-in-February window with two tripod legs and one of my feet in the bathtub.

Because of the flicker's mass and the softness of the snow, the owl had no chance to cache its prey. Instead, it returned many times throughout the day and fed on the carcass until dusk, presumably having created a regurgitated cache nearby. By the next morning, there was virtually nothing left of the flicker.

After an absence of nearly three years, the little owl showed up again in mid-January. It was seen on only two consecutive days, and there was no feather explosion in the snow to indicate a capture relative to our feeders. Just at this time, the six Varied Thrushes we'd entertained all winter disappeared commensurate with the last of the mountain ash berries. They had given the raw suet brief attention but didn't



just how insouciant the owl was, but it sank in when my neighbor walked up with a point-and-shoot and recorded the event from about three feet. Two hours later both birds were gone; now we know that a Northern Pygmy-Owl has enough lift to carry off a Varied Thrush, but not a Northern Flicker.

The Cat and the Coot

Len Jellicoe

Dian and I spent the month of December 2016 in Casa Grande, Arizona. One of the areas we always bird while in Southern Arizona is the Sweetwater Wetlands in Tucson. Checking eBird reports, we noticed a bobcat had been spotted there. We were delighted when we found the cat casually strolling along the trail in front of us. It was quite indifferent to our presence, and this gave us the impression it may have rabies which had been reported in the area. We cautiously followed it for a few minutes when it stopped beside a pond, crouched and sprang into the reeds out of sight.

It emerged from the water with an American Coot. It was holding the Coot in such a way that the bird couldn't flap its wings. I don't know if this was an intentional action that had been learned from experience or just a fortuitous

stay; a phone call two days later explained why.

The call was from our neighbour, inquiring if I'd like to come over and photograph a Pygmy-Owl with a thrush kill. I did and got the story as well. These folks had been putting up commercial suet cakes, which the birds seem to prefer over the unrendered version presumably because of the reduced energy they're required to expend per calorie acquired. That's where our thrushes had gone, and the little owl knew it. The bird was found on top of a thrush, which had expired after a struggle on the snow similar to that found at our place three years earlier. I used a short telephoto zoom and made shots from about twelve feet, not wanting to cause the bird to abandon its meal. I still hadn't realized



grip.

The bobcat carried its prey into some dense undergrowth where it was difficult to photograph. Here we found the cat lying down and watching the released Coot try to slowly walk away.

I believe the cat may have rendered the Coot unable to fly with its grip between the shoulder blades as it certainly had the opportunity to fly. When the Coot crept too far, the cat would spring on it again and again. We wondered out loud how the bobcat got to the other side of the fence. This mystery was solved when we witnessed it leap right through the six-inch mesh. It played

Bobcat photos by Len Jellicoe.

with the Coot for about five minutes before it decided the game was over and started to pluck it.

We left the scene and returned about 30 minutes later to find the bobcat cleaning up. We felt very privileged to witness this event. One cannot help but feel sympathy for the Coot, but such an emotion towards prey, in all likelihood, does not exist in the psyche of the bobcat or any other wild predator.

A few days later we heard a report of a man who was attacked by a rabid bobcat in the Phoenix area. We believe the Sweetwater cat was just habituated to the many people visiting the



park and that is what allowed our close approach.

For a complete rundown of our trip to Arizona, please peruse the blog: lenanddiansadventures.blogspot.ca.

Leucistic Bald Eagle

On the last day of 2016, new BCFO member Janice Melendez spotted and photographed the very unusual Bald

Eagle shown below left. She notes that she's seen hundreds, if not thousands, of Bald Eagles, but never one looking anything like this. She nearly drove off the road in surprise when she first spotted it on 72nd near Boundary Bay in Delta. See also page 2.

Breakfast of Champions

John and Dave Sprague

We noticed an eagle fly down to the reef in front of our place (Salt Spring Island) and start feeding on something. It joined another eagle that continued to stand on the reef. The menu looked like a big blob of stuff, so one of



us kayaked out to identify. It was octopus. The suckers were dime- to nickel-sized. Perhaps someone can speculate how it got on the reef?



Rare Bird Alerts

The British Columbia Rare Bird Alert (bcbirdalert.blogspot.ca) continues to be compulsive viewing. Here are a few of the entries.

January 22, 2017

Liron Gerstman found two Pink-footed Geese in Saanich. If accepted as non-escapees, this would be a first record for the Province of British Columbia. Photo by Liron Gerstman.

January 7, 2017

Chris Buis found a male Lesser Goldfinch at his Gazebo feeder in Abbotsford. This followed a December 18, 2016 sighting by Liis Jeffries during the Merritt CBC. Photo by Nobert Sharp.

January 1, 2017

Ben Keen found an adult male Tufted Duck in the SE inner pond at Iona Regional Park. Photo by Janice Melendez.

December 30, 2016

Jeremy Gatten found a first-cycle Purple Sandpiper at Kitty Islet in Victoria. This is the first record for British Columbia and the second record for the Pacific Coast in the ABA. Photo by Melissa Hafting.

December 22, 2016

During the Comox CBC, Shayne Tillapaugh found a female Red-flanked Bluetail at Lazo Wildlife Park. (No photo.)

Overwintering

The Green Heron below, first reported in early November by Cos van Wermeskerken, has been seen regularly throughout the winter at Brydon Lagoon, Langley. Photo by Janice Melendez.



Briefing 5

Nest Duties

All organisms respond to and organize their activities about the 24-hour day/night cycle. There are important physiological reasons for this regular diurnal rhythm, modulated by the internal circadian “clock” possessed by most organisms. It is known that those who ignore circadian prompting are subject to a number of less or more serious health problems, such as experienced by shift workers, for example. But social obligations can lead one to disrupt normal daily rhythms – ask any “party animal.” But most real animals closely follow circadian rhythms, even though they may be reversed from human experience (many mammals, for instance, are nocturnal). So it comes as a bit of a surprise to learn that periods of nest attendance amongst ground-nesting shorebirds incubating eggs may vary widely from circadian rhythm.

Over twenty years, investigators studied 729 pairs of shorebirds, comprising 32 species. They found that the birds switch nest duties over periods that vary from one hour to fifty hours. While some birds that switch nest duties relatively frequently roughly synchronize their cumulative periods to the 24-hour day, most do not. What might be behind this unusual behaviour?

Possibly it's an evolutionary factor. The investigators noted that, indeed, closely related species tend to have similar incubation rhythms, so there does appear to be an inherited factor at play. What else? Since incubation precludes feeding, one might suppose that smaller birds, with lesser energy stores, would have to leave the nest more frequently to feed. But there was no evident relation between body size and the length of a stay on the nest. So perhaps thermal regulation might compel birds in colder climates to move and feed more frequently. In fact, birds in colder climates tend to have longer incubation bouts. So energy status seems not to be a factor.

The key factor appears to be nest defence strategy. Birds with plumage that provides good camouflage tend to defend the nest by remaining still, so that potential predators do not notice the nest. For this strategy to be success-

ful, it is wise to minimize activity around the nest, hence infrequent parent exchanges. Birds not well camouflaged adopt attack or active diversionary tactics (for example, the “broken wing” stunt) to defend the nest. In this case, short incubation bouts have the advantage of maintaining alertness to possible threats. Hence the Calidrii (sandpipers and allies), mostly brown and white stripey things that disappear into the tundra grasses where they nest, have long incubation bouts. In contrast, other Charadrii (e.g., plovers and allies), mostly more patchily and brightly feathered, have active defence strategies and short incubation bouts.

Here is an excellent example of a

social obligation that trumps circadian rhythm. But its finding raises a whole host of new questions. How does the pair decide on what rhythm to adopt? Is the behaviour consistent through the nesting period and from year to year? Are there other influences not yet recognized? There remains much to learn.

References:

Bulla, M. + 75 others (!). 2016. Unexpected diversity in socially synchronized rhythms of shorebirds. *Nature* 540: 109-113.

Commentary by Buck, C.L. Wild times. *Ibid.* 49-50.

Summary by M. Church

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Argentina Complete Northeast – Pampas to Selva November 4 – November 22, 2018



Giant Wood-Rail, Entre Rios

Photo: Thomas Plath

Cost: TBA (approx. \$6600.00 CAN) from Buenos Aires

Costs include all accommodation, meals, transportation (including boat trips and 4x4) and guide fees from Nov 4th to Nov 21st (18 nights).

Leaders: Thomas Plath, Wildlife Biologist, R.P.Bio, Pablo Jost, BSC; GIS Specialist

Summary: The Ibera marshes, the grasslands of Corrientes Province, and subtropical forest in Misiones support many threatened, range-restricted and enigmatic bird species. This tour targets all these species. Expect 420-440 species.

Highlights: Black-fronted Piping Guan, Dot-winged and Red-and-White Crake, Olrog's Gull, Snowy-crowned Tern, Sickle-winged Nightjar, Vinaceous-breasted Parrot, Helmeted Woodpecker, Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail, Curve-billed and Straight-billed Reedhaunter, White-bearded Antshrike, Spotted Bamboo-Wren, Canebrake Groundcreeper, Araucaria Tit-Spinetail, Cock-tailed, Strange-tailed and Streamer-tailed Tyrant, Sharp-tailed Grass-Tyrant, Black-and-White Monjita, Azure Jay, Ochre-breasted Pipit, Lesser Grass-Finch, Long-tailed Reed-Finch, Yellow-billed and Yellow Cardinal, Glaucous-Blue Grosbeak, Marsh, Chestnut, Pearly-breasted and Dark-throated Seedeater, Saffron-cowled and Scarlet-headed Blackbird

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Watson Slough No More?

Critical Wetland under Threat in the Peace Valley

Ana Simeon

On World Wetlands Day, February 2, we heard, ironically, that BC Hydro is set to begin logging a stretch of the Peace Valley that includes Watson Slough, a significant wetland sheltering at-risk bird species, in preparation for the Site C dam reservoir.

Watson Slough is used by Trumpeter Swans and several neotropical birds as a feeding and rest area on their spring and fall migration. At-risk species such as Canada Warbler and Common Nighthawk have both been observed at Watson Slough. In their book *Birdfinding in British Columbia*, the

father-son team Richard and Russell Cannings describe birding at Watson Slough on pp. 289-290. They note the presence of American Bittern, Sora and Yellow Rail, as well as boreal forest songbirds such as the Tennessee Warbler. For decades, Watson Slough has been used to educate local school children about birds, ducks, vegetation, fish and amphibians. The school program was supported by Ducks Unlimited and the Peace River Regional District.

This is only one of the many losses B.C. birds and biodiversity at large would suffer with the construction of Site C dam. The Joint Review Panel – whose largely negative findings on Site C were ignored by the provincial and federal governments – found that the Site C dam would cause significant adverse effects on migratory birds which cannot be mitigated. The reservoir would also flood Bear Flats, a south-facing benchland on the Peace River where I heard a Western Meadowlark in July 2015. The distribution map for Western Meadowlark in the Campbell-Kennedy *Birds of British Columbia* (page 344), shows that this grasslands songster doesn't go farther north than

the Cariboo – with the exception of a tiny dot in the Peace country. This is Bear Flats!

The Peace River Regional District and a number of conservation groups have asked BC Hydro to hold off from destroying Watson Slough now, since it wouldn't be flooded before 2024, and there is no engineering reason to destroy it this early in the project timeline.

First Nations, Peace Valley residents and many citizens' groups are questioning the rush to destroy the highly biodiverse Peace Valley and prime farmland for Site C. The dam would saddle taxpayers with a costly white elephant that BC Hydro itself admits wouldn't be able to pay for itself for at least another 70 years.

More information can be found at:

- peacevalley.ca
- sierraclub.bc.ca
- desmog.ca

Watson Slough – one of the locations planned for a BCFO AGM 2017 post-conference visit.

Photo by Don Hoffman.



The March of the Eurasian Collared-Dove

Accelerated Spread in BC

Vancouver birder Martin Gebauer is currently in Oxford, UK, taking an M.Sc. in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management. He wrote the following article for the course's blog, and it is well worth repeating here, particularly in light of CBC records showing that Collared-Dove numbers in BC continue to consolidate.

Martin Gebauer

The beautiful Eurasian Collared-Dove is adorned in muted grays, browns and whites, and has a distinct dark crescent on its neck. Its incessant cooing is gentle and familiar to city and farm dwellers throughout Europe and North America.

Before its unprecedented expansion across Eurasia and later North America, it resided in southern Asia from Turkey to southern China and from India south to Sri Lanka. At the beginning of the 20th century, Collared-Doves began dispersing westward and then northward, reaching Britain in 1953 and breeding by 1955, arriving in Ireland in 1959, and Iceland by 1964 (although it has never become established there). Collared-Doves also expanded eastward to southern Russia, most of China, and even Japan (where they may have been introduced), and southward to Egypt, Morocco and the Canary Islands. This rapid rate of expansion has been estimated at 27 miles/year, not bad for a non-migratory, but obviously highly dispersive, species. Today Collared-Doves are ubiquitous in towns and countryside throughout Europe and Asia, where they seem to be comfortably coexisting with their avian neighbours.

But that's not quite the end of the story. The invasion of collared-doves in North America began when a small flock escaped captivity in Nassau, Bahamas in 1974. By 1982, Collared-Doves had arrived in Florida, where they rapidly began expanding and then very quickly moved to nearby states. By 2005, Collared-Doves had arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, greatly surpassing expansion estimates. Given their arrival in southern Florida in 1982, Collared-Doves have dispersed across

the approximate 2,800-mile distance between Miami and Vancouver at a phenomenal rate of ~128 miles/year, much faster than estimated dispersal rates in Europe (27 miles/year) and for other introduced species such as Starlings and House Sparrows in North America.

Expansions of other introduced species in North America are also well documented. European Starlings were first introduced in Central Park, New York, in 1890 and 1891, and by 1959 had reached Vancouver, BC, on the West Coast. Starlings had made the approximate 2,400-mile journey at a dispersal rate of about 42 miles/year. House Sparrows have a similar history of dispersal. First released and established in New York between 1851 and 1855, they were first reported in the Vancouver area around 1900. House Sparrows made the 2,400-mile journey

petition may not be a significant issue. For example, the size of seeds selected by Mourning Doves and Collared-Doves is quite different, which may limit foraging competition between these species and Collared-Doves are not overly aggressive. Collared-Doves may take over other nests (e.g., American Robin), but this affect has not been widely documented and is likely not a major issue. As well, there has been some concern that Collared-Doves could transmit new pathogens or infectious diseases to native bird species, but evidence of inter-species transmission in Collared-Doves has not been well documented.

So should we be concerned or impressed? Is this a good news story when accounts of bird extirpation and range retractions are almost a daily event? Should we embrace the increased species richness or alpha diver-



This Eurasian Collared-Dove found its way to Prince George in 2012. CNK photo.

to Vancouver at a dispersal rate of about 49 miles/year, very similar to Starlings. In contrast, Collared-Doves have dispersed at a much more rapid rate (128 miles/year).

So, how concerned should we be for our native fauna, particularly other dove species such as Mourning Dove and Common Ground-Dove? Recent research suggests that inter-species com-

sity in our local towns and gardens? Do Collared-Doves bring satisfaction and joy to urban dwellers, who rarely move beyond their city gates? One thing is for certain, Eurasian Collared-Doves are here to stay. I can only be impressed by their versatility, adaptability and tenacity as they have settled into their new homes.

Mugaha Marsh Bird Banding Station, 2016

The Mugaha Marsh Bird Banding Station, located near Mackenzie in northern BC, completed its 22nd season in 2016, and a fine year it was. Rain and wind can play havoc with bird banding, but these were not too problematic during this July 19–September 23 season, though moose sometimes made nuisances of themselves in the mist nets. The twelve nets, planned to be open for six hours a day from sunrise, were operational for a total of 4,447 hours, and 3,390 birds in all were banded. On average, 54 were banded each day, representing one banding every seven minutes. On August 6, the numbers peaked, with 110 birds banded – roughly one every three minutes!

Starting in 1994, the banding operation has now become remarkably well-tuned and organized. Birders from the north who regularly visit the station tend to assume all banding stations are like this, and then are taken aback by the spartan conditions elsewhere. But like all the other stations (it is one of 25 stations in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network coordinated by Bird Studies Canada), it is placed in an excellent spot for migratory birds. The location in the Rocky Mountain Trench, adjacent to the Omineca Mountains and the Williston Reservoir, produces a funnelling effect for migrating birds, ensuring a substantial flow as they return south.

The station, about a two-hour drive north of Prince George, is also a particularly fine place for birding in general: the 2016 report covers sightings of many species in the area over and above those caught in the mist nets. Regrettably the banding season will not have started when the BCFO 2017 AGM is being held in Tumbler Ridge, or it would have been a must-visit spot on the way. But for birders travelling north, particularly between the middle of July and most of September, be sure to drop in (you can find directions at the address given below). Vi and John Lambie, the force behind the station, are always pleased to see BCFO members. They are, of course, members themselves.

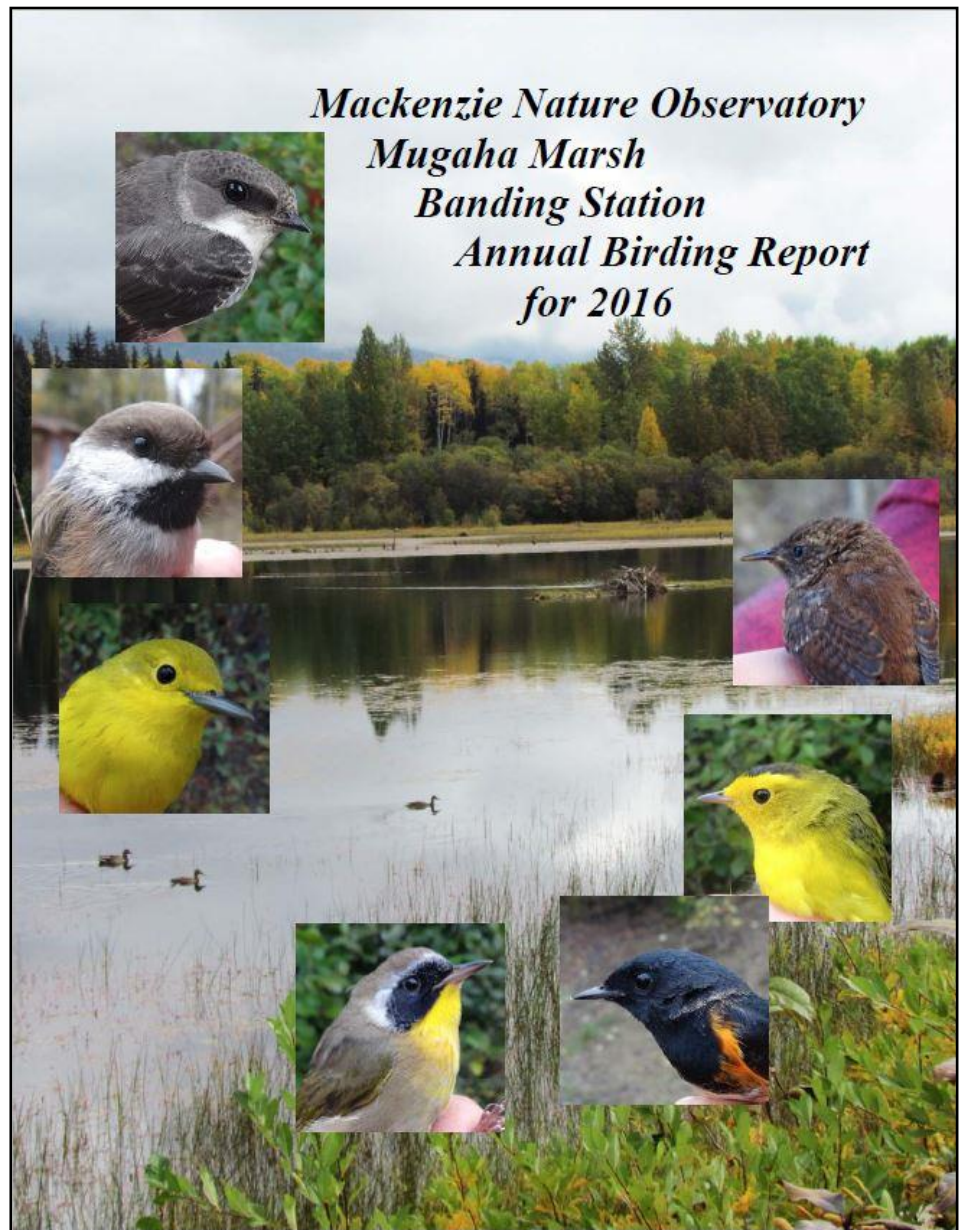
Over the 22 years of its operation, the station has banded 61,953 birds, bringing a wealth of data about the birds coming through the region. 113 species have been banded so far, with 2016 surprises including a Cape May Warbler, a Blue-headed Vireo, and the first confirmed records of Marsh Wren and Nashville Warbler. Data from the banding can also show where the birds are from, how long they can live, whether they are increasing or decreasing, and where they head to. For example, a Purple Finch banded in July 2015

was later found at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, 3,038 kilometres away.

In addition to the knowledge generated by the station, it is a marvellous and inspiring educational asset. Visiting kids, in particular, get turned on to nature, as made abundantly clear by their looks of delight. This is no doubt one of the reasons why the station receives financial support from the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Baillie Birdathon and many individual donors.

– CNK

Below: The front cover of this year's report. To read the whole report, which goes far beyond the information above, go to mackenzienatureobservatory.ca.



Kootenay Bank Swallow Survey

Following is the report for 2016 of this BCFO-supported research project.

Assessing and monitoring regional numbers of a nationally threatened species

Janice Arndt

Background

Across Canada, many birds that feed on flying insects are showing significant declines. Bank Swallows were assessed as federally Threatened in 2013, due to an estimated population decrease of 98% over forty years. Other BC aerial insectivores that are considered to be at risk nationally or provincially include Black Swifts, White-throated Swifts, Common Nighthawks, Barn Swallows and Purple Martins.

Bank Swallows nest in colonies in cutbanks along watercourses and roads,



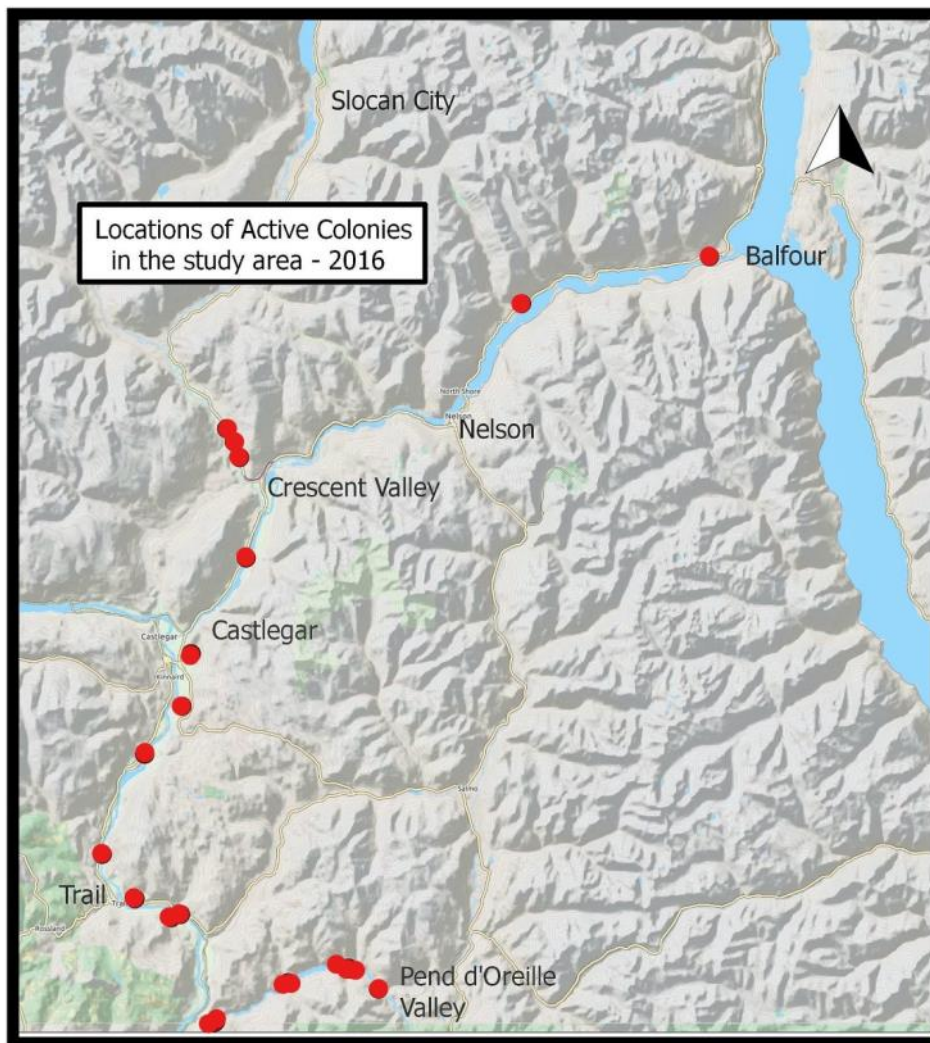
as well as in gravel pits and quarries. Although the birds themselves are small and often difficult to detect, their colonies, sometimes consisting of hundreds

of burrows, are conspicuous and provide a relatively simple means of monitoring populations. The Kootenay Bank Swallow Survey (KBSS) was initiated in 2015, with its primary goal being to provide baseline abundance estimates and ongoing monitoring of breeding populations for use in trend assessments and recovery strategies.

Planning and Fieldwork

During the breeding seasons of 2015 and 2016, several methods were evaluated to estimate numbers of swallows at active colonies. The number of burrows at a colony does not accurately reflect the number of breeding pairs that are present because not all burrows are occupied. Published studies from other parts of the swallows' range adjusted burrow counts by employing a correction factor, called the burrow occupancy rate, with recommended values ranging from 45-60%. This corrects for burrows that are not in use. KBSS conducted non-intrusive active nests counts at selected colonies to determine a burrow occupancy rate appropriate for the Kootenay region.

Each colony was visited twice in July, and nests where chicks were visible, or where adults were observed entering and exiting, were marked on colony photos and then tallied. Actual nest contents were not examined, which means that some active nests were likely missed, as were nests that had failed prior to the counts in July. However, the active nest count at each colony



under study was believed to provide a reasonable, if conservative, index to numbers of breeding pairs. The counts were compared to the total number of burrows, and a regional burrow occupancy rate of 50% was selected and applied to all colonies.

Field studies in 2016 were concentrated on the southwest Kootenay subregion around Nelson, Castlegar and Trail. Twenty-one active colonies were identified, ranging in size from 12 to 648 burrows, and totaling 3,806 burrows. The estimated size of the breeding population in this area, using a burrow occupancy rate of 50%, was therefore about 1,900 pairs, or 3,800 adults. Additional colonies were reported from Arrow Lakes, Creston, Cranbrook, Fairmont, and Kootenay National Park. More than 30 birders, naturalists and biologists have participated in the project so far.

In addition to field studies, activities of the Kootenay Bank Swallow Survey have included giving presentations on declining aerial insectivores, compiling historical information on colony locations and sizes, and providing recommendations to operators and owners of gravel pits and quarries to reduce disturbance to nesting swallows.

Next Steps

We are aiming for greater coverage of the East Kootenay in 2017. Members of Rocky Mountain Naturalists are interested in evaluating burrow occupancy rates for colonies in the Cranbrook area. KBSS is keeping a catalogue of current and historical colonies from throughout southeastern BC. Please report any Bank Swallow colonies that you observe in the Kootenays in 2017 and also provide any information you have from previous years.

Key information to record when reporting colonies includes:

- colony location
- photographs that show all sections of the colony
- numbers of burrows (counted in the field or from photographs)
- date and number of adults observed

In addition, notes on access and ownership are very useful. The best time to visit colonies in this part of the province is June 20 through July 20, when most adults are feeding young in the burrows. However, colony locations and number of burrows can be documented, and photographs taken, at any time of the year. Please send all information and photos to kootenaybankswallows@gmail.com, or to 901 Hwy. 3A, Nelson BC V1L 6J5.

Support for the Survey

The Kootenay Bank Swallow Survey is a project of the West Kootenay Naturalists' Association. The Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program provided important in-kind support. BCFO gave financially to the project in 2016, as did the Waneta Terrestrial Compensation Program, Columbia Basin Trust and BC Nature/BC Naturalists' Foundation.

Thank you!



Bewick's and House Wrens: Diverging Fortunes

Tony Greenfield

Bewick's Wren

When I began birding on the Sunshine Coast in the 1970s, Bewick's Wren was a fairly common year-round resident. In 2017 it has all but disappeared as a member of the local avifauna. The best data illustrating the decline of the species comes from the Sunshine Coast CBCs.

The species has only been recorded

(including returning regularly to the Halfmoon Bay nest site). From 2009 to 2014 the species was on an upward trajectory with records from three–four locations per year. Then in 2015 there was a population explosion with the species reported in twelve separate locations.

The earliest records for the species in the 1990s were all basically waterfront locations around human habita-

SC-CBC	Birds recorded	Recorded on	Average/count
1980-89	17 in 10 years	8/10 counts	1.7
1990-99	19 in 10 years	8/10 counts	1.9
2000-09	13 in 10 years	6/10 counts	1.3
2010-16	1 in 7 years	1/7 counts	0.14

on three counts from 2004-16.

Other than the CBC record, the decline of the species can be tracked by the number of locations in which birds have been reported during individual years. In 1993 Bewick's Wren was recorded in five separate locations on the Sunshine Coast, and from 1993 to 2004 it was always recorded in two to five locations. Since 2005 it has only been recorded in one to two locations per year, and in three of those years, it has not been reported at all on the Sunshine Coast.

On the Sunshine Coast, Bewick's Wrens are residents of low-elevation brushy habitats, often in dry locations.

House Wren

House Wren was unrecorded on the Sunshine Coast from 1971, when I began birding, until 1993. In 1993 I was alerted that House Wrens were nesting in a nest box in the Wilson Creek area. Coincidentally, on the same day that I visited this location to observe and verify the species, Arnold Skei independently found another bird a few kilometres away in the Sechelt area.

These two reports remained the only Sunshine Coast records until 1999, when the species nested in a cavity in a tree in Halfmoon Bay, just north of Sechelt. Thereafter, the species was recorded almost annually until 2008, but usually only in a single location

tions. However, in 2015–16 when the population exploded, most records were in brushy regenerating forest clearcuts. In the coming years crown closure of the planted seedlings will remove these locations as viable habitat for House Wrens, but we can expect that there will always be new clearcuts available for colonization. The occupied clearcuts to date have been at elevations below about 250 metres.

House Wren is a summer visitor to the Sunshine Coast and has been recorded within the dates April 18 to September 15. The September 15 date was unusual in that it was a bird controlled at a banding operation. Otherwise, the latest date is August 17.

So, the Sunshine Coast has a divergent story to tell with regard to Bewick's Wren and House Wren, with the previously well-established Bewick's Wren declining almost to extirpation while the previously unrecorded House Wren has undergone a significant range expansion into the area and a subsequent dramatic population increase. The apparent rapid decline of Bewick's Wren can be traced back to 2004 while the increase of House Wren dates to about 2009. Is there the possibility of a causal relationship between the two events? It seems possible, given the similar habitat the two species occupy on the Sunshine Coast.

Briefing 6

Decoding Birdsong

Sparrows tend to have a variety of song bursts; song details certainly vary regionally and may vary locally, or even in one bird. But, somehow, once one has learned one variant of a particular sparrow's song, it becomes easy to recognize other variants as song from the same species. Two recent studies may yield some clues as to why this is so.

Most young birds learn to sing by imitating their parents. In studies of Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia guttata*), researchers found that the syllables of a song and the rhythm of the song (the spacing of the syllables) are remembered and mediated by different regions of the bird's brain. When young Zebra Finches were raised by Society Finches (*Lonchura striata domestica*; also known as Bengalese Finches, a domestic cage bird not occurring in the wild), the Zebra Finches learned the Society Finch syllables, but retained Zebra Finch rhythm. The implication is that, while the song content is learned, vocal rhythm is innate – genetically hard-wired in the bird's brain.

These findings seem to explain why the song of a particular species may have regional, or even local, variations. As a learned exercise, there is room for mistakes that become cultural drift. Nevertheless, the hard-wired nature of the song rhythm limits the nature of the drift so that the bird is assured of being able to communicate with conspecifics to confirm group identity, or to claim territory or to advertise for a mate. And it perhaps explains why we humans can "see" through song variations and identify the bird, even when the song is a bit different than we have heard before.

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Araki, M., Bandi, M.M. and Yazaki-Sugiyama, Y. 2016. Mind the gap: Neural coding of species identity in bird-song prosody. *Science* 354: 1282-1287.

Both articles are highly technical. Readable commentary by Tchernichovski, O. and Lipkin, D. Encoding vocal culture. *Ibid.* 1234-1235.

Summary by M. Church

Gone Fishing

Chris Siddle

Editor's note: This is the first instalment of what will now be a regular column.

Close Encounters: Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawk

There is a life-and-death drama being played out in my yard. From my kitchen and living room windows, I have the best seat in the house.

Meet the killers. The first is an adult Cooper's Hawk, which I have judged to be a male by his size. He has been visiting my yard at the base of Silver Star Mountain, Vernon, since mid November. He favours the neighbours' big maple tree because a perch halfway up gives him a commanding view of my yard where I maintain a bird feeder.



Cooper's Hawk in the yard, January 31 2017. All photos by Chris Siddle.

Actually, *bird feeding station* is more accurate than calling where I put seed a "bird feeder." Every dawn I scatter about a dozen cups of mixed bird seed on and around a big round piece of an old Siberian Elm that was felled and cut up a few years ago. The pseudo stump sits at the base of a little patch of lilacs growing next to a sprawling ancient apricot tree. Lilac and apricot are growing more or less directly below the male.

Meet the second killer. He's a Sharp-shinned Hawk, also an adult and also a male. He visits the yard as well, but rarely on the same days as the Cooper's and never, to my knowledge, at the



Sharp-shinned Hawk in my yard. Note how its expression differs from that of the much larger Cooper's Hawk.

same time.

Attending my feeding station are Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, a couple of Red-breasted Nuthatches, one female Downy Woodpecker, and up to three Northern Flickers. These birds have no part to play in my story because so far they have been ignored by the killers or have evaded them so successfully that it's unlikely they will be caught.

Also faithful to the feeding area are California Quails (up to 40), Eurasian Collared-Doves (up to 5), Mourning Doves (up to 37), Dark-eyed Juncos (30), Song Sparrows (4), House Finches (8), American Goldfinches (5) and House Sparrows (20). The quail and the doves are of much interest to the Cooper's Hawk, and the sparrows, juncos and finches clearly fascinate the Sharp-shinned Hawk.

On 15 December 2016 the Cooper's Hawk appeared in the maple early. It was a gloomy morning, valley fog over the North Okanagan, and the hawk blended well into the shadowless murk. With his gray back to the line of California Quail that were slowly infiltrating the lilac hedge off to the hawk's right, he must have been harder than usual to see. Whatever the reason, the quail seemed not as wary as usual. At 10:51 the hawk suddenly leaned right, propelled himself off his perch and with

two or three power flaps peeled around the end of the hedge and struck a female quail on the back. His momentum carried him on top of her, and though she struggled, he kept at least one large foot clamping her body to the snow.

Once on his prey, he looked around intently, probably to make sure that he was safe from attack or interruption. Keeping the quail gripped with one foot, he peg-legged his way on to the snowy base of the lilacs and began plucking his prey. Fortunately the hedge was thin enough so that I could see the hawk and his prey quite clearly from a living room window. He began plucking the quail only about 3–4 minutes after seizing her. Plucking and eating the quail took about 47 minutes.

At which point the quail died, I do not know. I hope it expired almost immediately, but some tell-tale shifting of the hawk upon its prey suggests that the quail may have struggled a few minutes even while in the hawk's grasp. This led me to the question "how does a Cooper's Hawk or other accipiter actually kill?" I found an answer in Leslie Brown's classic text *Birds of Prey*. Referring to high-speed photographic studies of striking raptors studies carried out by the ironically named G.E.



Halfway through the meal.

Goslow, Brown describes the strike of the Cooper's Hawk and that of a Northern Goshawk:

Both accipiters attacked in essentially the same way. They first gained speed by vigorous flapping, [then] ceased flapping, the Cooper's Hawk at 3.5 to 4.5 metres and the Goshawk at 7.5 to 9 metres. Still closer the hawks swung the body upwards to bring the pelvis

beneath the head, spreading the tail to brake, and at the same time threw the feet forward hard. At the actual instant of strike, the feet were traveling towards the prey at almost or more than twice the speed of the head. In the Cooper's Hawk, the relative velocities were 4.8 metres per second for the head and 11.4 for the feet...by thrusting the pelvis and feet forward, the striking accipiter delivers a violent blow at the prey and does not just grab it with outspread feet...To kill their prey these accipiters used a kneading action of the talons, something like that of a contented cat on a lap. Pp. 123-124.

Although his final simile strikes me as not quite appropriate, I think you understand a little more clearly now how a Cooper's Hawk strikes and kills.

From about 10:55 to 11:47, the Cooper's Hawk plucked, tore apart and swallowed the quail bit by bit. The area immediately around the hawk became feather-strewn. He paused only once to watch the neighbours leave in their vehicle and twice to scrape particularly bothersome feathers from his beak. His first real break from eating came at 11:47, when he sat for three minutes in the centre of the feathery circle, presumably fairly replete.

A nosy Black-billed Magpie approached the hawk within 2-3 metres. The hawk peg-legged out onto our lawn (for a clear runway) and flew with the tattered remnants of the quail still in his grip to the maple and a few seconds later into a dense Douglas-fir hedge. The Magpie lost interest and flew off. About three minutes later at 12:06, the Cooper's Hawk returned without the quail skin to the maple, where he perched, crop bulging, for an hour and a half before flying off for the day.

The *Birds of North America's* revised account of the Cooper's Hawk describes three methods of attack. Cooper's Hawks sometimes stoop from high flight, like a Peregrine might do. This has to be a fairly rare hunting technique. I say that because I don't know of anyone who has seen such an aerial attack. In the second method, a Cooper's Hawk puts on a sudden burst of speed as it leaves its perch. This describes the kill that I had witnessed. Finally a Cooper's Hawk can hunt on

foot, entering even thick shrubbery after birds, an approach toward securing prey also employed by the Cooper's smaller cousin, the Sharp-shinned Hawk.

My Sharp-shinned Hawk showed up in the yard on 6 January. For his first few visits, I saw him only as he briefly passed through the yard, but finally on 13 January he stuck around to try some hunting. In my eBird entry for that day, I called his hunting technique "drop and hop."

Like the Cooper's Hawk, at first the Sharpie perched in the maple, but there the similarities between hunting styles ended. When he spotted potential prey, usually among the juncos, finches or House Sparrows, he did not push off in



Sharpie, eyes on the prize, just about to drop and hop.

power flight, but simply appeared to drop the few metres down to the lilac growing beside the feeding area. Invariably some of the songbirds bolted into the many-stemmed lilac around which the Sharpie now fluttered. He would perch on slender ends of branches, then fly in a tight circuit around the bush, wingtips almost brushing the twigs. Frequently he dropped to the snow and half hopped, half flapped, around the base of the bush, reaching between stems trying to snag supper from the small birds sheltering within the bush's base. If small songbirds dream, their nightmares might feature a surprisingly long slender leg ending in a long-toed foot armed with wicked talons able to reach

through even the tightest cage of stems and grab at them.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk made far more hunting sallies per day than did the Cooper's Hawk. While the Cooper's Hawk waited sometimes hours before attempting a hit, the Sharp-shinned Hawk was willing to try his luck whenever small birds gathered at the feeder. However, his success rate was nil at least while I was watching. All of a half dozen or so attempts that I witnessed over the next few days failed until 8:59 am, January 15, 2017 when he dropped, hopped and plunged through the twigs to pin to the snow a White-throated Sparrow that was just too slow to avoid him. Through a kitchen window, I was able to snap one picture of this capture before the hawk flew away with his prize in his talons.

My attitude towards raptors was tested very briefly. Normally as when the Cooper's Hawk caught the California Quail, I thought that I remained objective, neither pro-hawk nor pro-prey. I dressed my supposed neutrality in reasoning that death by hawk was Nature's way. That's why there were so many quails and so few Cooper's Hawks. In the grand scheme, quails were hawk chow. However, when the Sharp-shinned Hawk snatched the only White-throated Sparrow ever to attempt to overwinter in my yard, my single thought was, "What! You nailed the White-throated Sparrow! You couldn't grab one of the common species? Come on, Sharpie. That's not fair!"

My indignation didn't last long though. The thought intruded that far from being neutral about the life and



The White-throated Sparrow was just too slow trying to escape from the base of the lilac bush.

death struggles in my yard, I had been pro-raptor all along. After all, there was nothing natural about my feeding station. It was an artificial concentration of seed, attracting a concentration of quails, doves and other species unlikely to occur in such high numbers without human intervention. Lots of avian activity attracts accipiters according to scientists E.L. Dunn and D. Tessaglia.

However, their study of Project Feeder Watch also expressed the idea that successful kills are quite rare. And, for me, truth be told, the sight of a hunting accipiter, buteo, harrier, eagle or falcon quickens my pulse as no quail or sparrow ever can. Let me be clear: I am not feeding birds just to feed raptors. I like having ALL species around the yard, but if I am going to continue feeding birds I might as well be honest about my feelings. Raptors, whether they are Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawks or Pygmy-Owls, successfully kill birds coming to the feeder so rarely that I don't think I am upsetting anything in any major way. But each of us who feeds birds must make up his or her own mind about the effects of feeding birds in the backyard, a backyard that can become the setting for a life-and-death drama.

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The Sharpie back at its post.



Media Review

Beaks, Bones and Bird Songs, by Roger J. Lederer. Timber Press, 2016, 280 pages, hardcover.

This is a book written by an ornithologist with birders rather than biology students in mind. It is a highly readable overview of the state of ornithological knowledge, crammed with information of the kind that should most appeal to BCFO members. Have you ever wondered, for instance, why a number of bird species coexist in two-size pairs: Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, etc? Read this book and you'll see why it's no accident. (Hint: it's explained by Gause's Principle and Hutchinson's Ratio.)

Lederer does not simply provide a welter of interesting facts but gives an explanatory framework. Perhaps the best thing about the book is that the

theory reads so effortlessly. All in all, it is hard to put down; this reviewer read the book in just two sittings.

The book starts with something rather sombre: the fact that it is extremely tough being a bird. Only around ten percent of songbirds make it from egg to adulthood, and then the adults face so many dangers that only half of migratory birds succeed in surviving a single migratory cycle. But, starting from this premise, the author continues by explaining, and marveling at, the various ways birds cope with the huge array of challenges.

The book sections cover foraging; avian senses; flying; migration and navigation; dealing with the elements; bird communities; and human influences. Few pages go by without genuine enlightenment for the birder – why Crested Mynas disappeared from Vancouver, for instance (Gause's Principle again), and why Eurasian Collared-Doves have spread so quickly (having three-six broods a year helps). And sprinkled throughout the book are fun facts that will delight even non-birders:

for instance, if you hold a chicken up to your ear, you can hear the grinding of its gizzard; birds still in the egg tell mum to turn them over if they are cold on one side and hot on the other.

Some readers might have preferred the author to pause at times and go into greater depth, and on a few occasions, the flow of facts does seem a little breathless, but the range of ornithological knowledge is now so extensive and fast growing that the book could too easily have become encyclopedic rather than a delightful read. And for those wanting more, there's an extensive bibliography.

The Amazon Canada price of the book is \$30.59, but since there are few photographs, it's a sensible move to get instead the very inexpensive Kindle edition. At just \$1.99, it's a great choice when travelling light on a birding holiday.

—CNK

The Reflective Birder

Clive Keen

A Conundrum Worth

Exploring

There would seem to be a conundrum at the heart of birding. The majority of birders take up the activity seriously only when they are past the blush of youth – and yet birding as a sport is necessarily a young person's forte. To confidently identify the largest number of birds in the least time requires excellent eyes, ears, memory and reflexes, all of which fade with the passage of time. It might seem, then, that taking up the activity later in life is a perverse thing to do, inevitably leading to disappointment. It wouldn't be surprising if the fear of being unavoidably second-rate kept some older people away from the activity, while other latecomers feel unable to take pride in their accomplishments.

Consider, though, this real-life situation. Two people regularly go birding together, one in his twenties and the other three times his age. On this occasion, they are sea-watching, and the younger man calls out a Horned Puffin, seen at a distance so great that his elder colleague cannot even see the bird, let alone tell its species. As it comes closer, though, the older man gets on to it and watches it for a long time. Asked why he looked for so long, the older man explains his fascination with puffins: he watches them carefully in both breeding and winter plumage, and continues to delight in the fact that, just as deer shed their antlers, puffins shed their bills. He goes on to explain that those great big colourful beaks come in handy for courtship, but are just too heavy to heave around all year. So, just like deer, they get rid of them when the womenfolk are no longer around.

This is one of the reasons the younger man now goes birding regularly with his friend. On the first occasion they birded together, he had grave doubts about the man's skills. After all, the old chap spent a ridiculous amount of time staring at Starlings, which any birder worth his salt would have added to his year list on January 1. When he pointed this out with some disdain, the older man replied that indeed they are worth

studying in January as well, as the plumage changes can then be quite evident. He went on to explain that while most birds change their feathers for courtship by growing fancy new ones to replace their camouflage, Starlings cheat. They have grown a set of feathers which they change by getting the bits of camouflage to wear off. So, paradoxically, the worn feathers are the showy ones. Yet another reason to smile.

After a few more birding trips, the young man realized that whenever his friend spent too long, apparently, on a bird, it was worth asking the reason. As a result, he'd learned that it really was worth lingering when seeing, for example, a Gadwall, because sometimes subtle beauty takes a while to appreciate. And he'd come to know that:

- If he ate as much as a Chickadee, he'd be gulping down 65 pounds of food a day. Small birds continue to eat for most of the day, rather than just at breakfast, lunch and dinner, because of a racing metabolism. A Chickadee eats about a third of its bodyweight daily.
- He didn't always need to look at a bird's bill to see what it does for a living – sometimes it's better to look at the feet. The California Condor, apparently a raptor, lacks those dagger-like talons that raptors use to catch and subdue their prey. Its claws are just short, stubby things, showing that the meal doesn't put

up a fight. Ergo, for all its huge impressive build, it's a carrion eater.

- Watching Sandhill Cranes at the right time of year is particularly entertaining, as you might see them applying cosmetics. Their warm colouring comes from preening with iron-rich mud.

All of these comments, and others like them, had opened to the young man a new world of understanding and greatly increased his pleasure in birding.

Now if the older man were asked about his young friend, he'd say that the lad had an almost mystical ability to pick out rarities from a crowd or an empty sky, and was surely the finest birder he'd ever met. But – and this is the point of the story – the younger man says the same thing of him. He is awed by the older man's knowledge of birds, the delight he takes in them, and his continued quest to know and appreciate birdlife more.

Birding might be a young man's *sport*, but birding is not simply a sport, but an *exploration*. The exploration might concern the aesthetics of birds, or their behaviour, or their unique features, or what they tell us about nature as a whole. While the sporting aspect of birding provides the spice, the exploration provides the nourishment. And it is something for everyone, whatever their age.

Atlantic Puffins also shed their bills – or to be more precise, the colourful outer portion of the Puffin's bill is shed, leaving a smaller, duller bill behind.
CNK photo.



BCFO Listers' Corner 2016 Lists

Welcome to the 2016 BCFO Listers' Corner. To familiarize everyone with the tables, the number under the “%” represents the percentage of an individual's total compared to the total species in that particular area/list. The “incr” column indicates an increase, if any, from 2015. An “*” preceding a total indicates a total wasn't submitted for 2016. If a member does not supply a submission for two consecutive years the listing will be dropped. An individual in **red bold** print indicates the member who had the largest increase from the previous year. A name in *red italics* indicates the reaching of a significant plateau.

Submissions were received from 60 members seven more than 2015. There were seven new members to Listers' Corner for 2016: Peter Candido, Theo Hofmann, Guy Monty, Michael Morris, Tom Plath, Craig Sandvig, and Marian Porter.

BC: Neill Vanhinsberg had the highest increase of the group adding 27. There were 5 new submitters to the list with *Tom Plath* entering the list in 2nd and *Guy Monty* at 9th. *Larry Cowan* passed the 400 plateau at 405. *Mike Toochin* remains atop the list by a comfortable margin.

BRITISH COLUMBIA - 523					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	474	Mike Toochin	91	3	471
2	448	Tom Plath	86	new	
3	445	Sharon Toochin	85	3	442
4	*444	Dale Jensen	85		444
5	442	Jo Ann MacKenzie	85		442
6	437	Dan Tyson	84	3	434
6	437	Wayne Weber	84	3	434
8	434	Roger Foxall	83	3	431
9	433	Guy Monty	83	new	
10	432	Carlo Giovanella	83	3	429
10	432	Keith Riding	83		432
12	426	Peter Candido	81	new	
12	426	Val George	81	5	421

BRITISH COLUMBIA - 523					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
12	426	Brian Self	81	1	425
12	426	David Stirling	81	1	425
16	425	Tony Greenfield	81		425
17	425	Brian Stech	81	4	421
18	424	Murray Brown	81	6	418
19	420	Kevin Neill	80	8	412
20	418	Lloyd Esralson	80		418
21	415	Mike McGrenere	79	5	410
22	413	Dick Cannings	79	2	*411
23	412	Ilya Povalyaev	79	7	405
24	407	Thor Manson	78	1	406
25	405	Larry Cowan	77	6	399
26	403	John Voos	77	2	401
27	402	Bryan Gates	77	2	*400
28	401	Russ Tkachuk	77	1	400
29	398	Len Jellicoe	76	2	396
29	398	Hank Vanderpol	76		398
31	397	Nathan Hentze	76	3	394
32	394	Barbara Begg	75	1	393
33	391	Chris Charlesworth	75	3	388
34	382	Gary Davidson	73	1	381
35	379	Rand Rudland	72	4	375
36	372	Quentin Brown	71	7	365
37	370	Don Wilson	71	1	369
38	368	Laird Law	70		368
38	368	Ken Morgan	70		368
40	367	Bruce Whittington	70	1	366
41	366	Eric Tull	70	5	361
42	361	Art Martell	69		361
43	358	Gwynneth Wilson	68	1	357
44	350	Andy Buhler	67		350
44	350	Marilyn Buhler	67		350
44	350	Peter Blokker	67		350
47	333	John Sprague	64		333
48	325	Ted Goshulak	62	3	322
49	322	Dorothy Copp	62		322
50	321	Craig Sandvig	61	new	
51	*310	Lee Harding	59		310
52	307	Janice Arndt	59	2	305
53	301	Mike Mulligan	58		301
54	298	John Hodges	57	14	284
55	291	Theo Hofmann ON	56	new	
56	288	Neill Vanhinsberg	55	27	261

Canada: John Hodges had the largest increase at 11. Tom Plath joined the list at 3rd and Theo Hofmann of Ontario (tied) at 8th. Larry Cowan added five to pass the 450 plateau.

CANADA - 676					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	548	Roger Foxall	81	2	546
2	527	Jo Ann MacKenzie	78		527
3	517	Tom Plath	76	new	
4	509	Mike Toochn	75	2	507
5	498	Eric Tull	74	2	496
5	498	Dan Tyson	74	2	496
7	493	Brian Self	73	1	492
8	492	Theo Hofmann ON	73	new	
8	492	David Stirling	73		492
10	490	Sharon Toochn	72	1	489
11	*486	Dale Jensen	72		486
12	481	Keith Riding	71		481
13	479	Russ Tkachuk	71	1	478
13	479	Wayne Weber	71	3	476
15	473	Kevin Neill	70	5	468
16	471	Dick Cannings	70		*471
17	469	Carlo Giovanella	69	2	467
17	469	Thor Manson	69	1	468
19	468	Mike McGrenere	69	6	462
20	463	Murray Brown	68	3	460
21	457	Mike Mulligan	68		457
22	456	Peter Candido	67	new	
23	453	Barbara Begg	67		453
23	453	Brian Stech	67	2	451
25	452	Len Jellicoe	67	2	450
26	451	Larry Cowan	67	5	446
27	449	Art Martell	66		449
27	449	Ilya Povalyaev	66	4	445
29	447	Rand Rudland	66	3	444
30	446	Chris Charlesworth	66	7	439
30	446	Hank Vanderpol	66	1	445
32	444	John Voos	66	2	442
33	443	Nathan Hentze	66	4	439
34	441	Lloyd Esralson	65		441
35	437	Tony Greenfield	65	1	436
36	433	Ken Morgan	64		433
37	*423	Bryan Gates	63	2	*421
38	420	John Sprague	62		420
39	419	Gwynneth Wilson	62	1	418
40	415	Quentin Brown	61	3	412
41	412	Gary Davidson	61	1	411

CANADA - 676					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
42	411	Peter Blokker	61	1	410
42	411	Don Wilson	61	2	409
44	399	Andy Buhler	59		399
44	399	Marilyn Buhler	59		399
46	398	Janice Arndt	59	5	393
47	395	Laird Law	58		395
48	388	Ted Goshulak	57	1	387
49	380	Dorothy Copp	56		380
50	356	John Hodges	53	11	345
51	*350	Lee Harding	52		350

ABA: Wayne Weber had the largest increase at 31 catapulting him past the 700 plateau. Nathan Hentze was close behind Wayne's increase with 30. Barbara Begg also had a decent increase of 22. John Hodges pushed past the 400 plateau with an increase of eight.

ABA - 999					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	790	Hank Vanderpol	79	5	785
2	789	Thor Manson	79	11	778
3	785	Mike Toochn	79	1	784
4	783	Roger Foxall	78	1	782
5	775	Mike Mulligan	78	2	773
6	741	Russ Tkachuk	74	3	738
7	729	Wayne Weber	73	31	698
8	723	Art Martell	72		723
9	720	Dorothy Copp	72	6	714
10	718	John Voos	72	3	715
11	714	Brian Stech	71	9	705
12	711	Jo Ann MacKenzie	71		711
13	*709	Dale Jensen	71		709
14	699	Sharon Toochn	70	1	698
15	690	David Stirling	69	2	688
16	689	Eric Tull	69	5	684
17	679	Dan Tyson	68	6	673
18	673	Chris Charlesworth	67	3	670
19	663	Keith Riding	66		663
20	657	Peter Candido	66	new	
21	654	Gary Davidson	65		654
22	*652	Brian Self	65		652
23	651	John Sprague	65	1	650
24	649	Nathan Hentze	65	30	619
25	647	Barbara Begg	65	22	625
26	640	Andy Buhler	64		640
26	640	Marilyn Buhler	64		640

ABA - 999					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
28	639	Dick Cannings	64		*639
29	632	Kevin Neill	63	2	630
30	629	Theo Hofmann ON	63		new
31	628	Gwynneth Wilson	63		628
32	624	Don Wilson	62		624
33	619	Carlo Giovanella	62	1	618
34	615	Mike McGrenere	62	5	610
35	614	Tony Greenfield	61		614
36	600	Len Jellicoe	60	5	595
36	600	Lloyd Esralson	60		600
38	584	Ken Morgan	58		584
39	571	Larry Cowan	57	4	567
40	570	Bryan Gates	57	2	*568
41	562	Rand Rudland	56	1	561
42	547	Val George	55	3	544
43	544	Laird Law	54	17	527
44	538	Murray Brown	54	3	535
45	517	Ted Goshulak	52	3	514
46	*466	Lee Harding	47		466
47	436	Janice Arndt	44	9	427
48	413	Peter Blokker	41	1	412
49	403	John Hodges	40	8	395

WORLD - 10,409					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
16	3,231	Hank Vanderpol	31	105	3,126
17	3,174	Dick Cannings	30	20	*3,154
18	3,158	Rand Rudland	30	7	3,151
19	3,127	Laird Law	30	56	3,071
20	2,928	Val George	28	25	2,903
21	2,896	Dorothy Copp	28	287	2,609
22	2,878	Brian Stech	28	325	2,553
23	2,826	Theo Hofmann ON	27		new
24	2,730	Don Wilson	26	107	2,623
25	2,709	Gary Davidson	26	107	2,602
26	2,257	Ken Morgan	22	16	2,241
27	2,194	Chris Charlesworth	21	31	2,163
28	2,120	Bryan Gates	20	251	*1,869
29	2,110	Andy Buhler	20	384	1,726
29	2,110	Marilyn Buhler	20	384	1,726
31	2,072	Nathan Hentze	20	12	2,060
32	1,562	Larry Cowan	15	60	1,502
33	*1,530	Tony Greenfield	15		1,530
34	1,287	Mike McGrenere	12	14	1,273
35	1,283	John Hodges	12	169	1,114
36	1,006	Kevin Neill	10	2	1,004
37	*948	John Sprague	9		948
38	908	Wayne Weber	9		new

World: Roger Foxall moved past the lofty 5,500 plateau. Husband & wife team, **Andy & Marilyn Buhler**, rocketed over the 2,000 plateau with an increase of 384. *Bryan Gates* also passed the 2,000 plateau with his increase of 251.

North America: This includes all countries from the Colombia/Panama border northward. This list has grown from two to 13 listers.

WORLD - 10,409					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	6,764	Keith Riding	65	27	6,737
2	5,538	Roger Foxall	53	63	5,475
3	5,317	Nigel Mathews	51	85	5,232
4	5,222	Mike Toochn	50	71	5,151
5	5,088	Jo Ann MacKenzie	49	63	5,025
6	4,522	Art Martell	43		4,522
7	4,492	Eric Tull	43	191	4,301
8	4,351	Sharon Toochn	42	65	4,286
9	4,339	Peter Candido	42		new
10	4,066	David Stirling	39	12	4,054
11	3,946	Peter McIver	38		new
12	3,641	Brian Self	35	254	3,387
13	3,586	Mike Mulligan	34	9	3,577
14	*3,346	Dale Jensen	32		3,346
15	3,265	Barbara Begg	31	52	3,213

North America 2011					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	1,588	Dorothy Copp	79		new
1	1,588	Brian Stech	79		new
3	1,387	Keith Riding	69		new
4	1,381	Mike Toochn	69	1	1,380
5	1,363	Roger Foxall	68		new
6	1,260	Art Martell	63		1,260
7	1,155	Rand Rudland	57		new
8	1,123	David Stirling	56		new
9	1,027	Theo Hofmann ON	51		new
10	1,018	Peter McIver	51		new
11	963	Eric Tull	48		new
12	727	Laird Law	36		new
13	504	Janice Arndt	25		new

ATPAT: Janice Arndt had the largest increase at 134. Theo Hofmann joined the list in 4th with 2,020.

(Ticks) All Provinces & Territories					
#	2016	Name	incr	2015	
1	3,019	Eric Tull	5	3,014	
2	2,962	Roger Foxall	3	2,959	
3	2,159	David Stirling	1	2,158	
4	2,020	Theo Hofmann ON		new	
5	1,858	Dick Cannings		*1,858	
6	1,711	Wayne Weber	12	1,699	
7	1,704	Mike Mulligan	1	1,703	
8	1,578	Art Martell		1,578	
9	1,438	Dan Tyson	3	1,435	
10	1,428	Janice Arndt	134	1,294	
11	1,268	Barabara Begg	1	1,267	
12	1,259	John Sprague		1,259	
13	1,189	Gary Davidson	1	1,188	
14	1,107	Laird Law	46	1,061	
15	878	Brian Stech	7	*871	
16	806	Larry Cowan	24	782	
17	758	Dorothy Copp	1	*757	

Alberta: Three members added their totals to the list with *Tom Plath* joining the list in 5th place. **Wayne Weber** had the highest gain at 9.

ALBERTA - 419					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	363	Mike Mulligan	87	1	362
2	362	Eric Tull	86		362
3	322	Hank Vanderpol	77	2	320
4	286	David Stirling	68		286
5	273	Tom Plath	65		new
6	244	Wayne Weber	58	9	235
7	241	Roger Foxall	58		241
8	240	Jo Ann MacKenzie	57		240
9	228	Chris Charlesworth	54	1	227
10	222	Bryan Gates	53		*222
11	218	Dan Tyson	52		218
12	216	Gary Davidson	52		216
13	214	Dick Cannings	51		*214
14	210	Theo Hofmann ON	50		new
15	195	Len Jellicoe	47		195
16	190	Larry Cowan	45		new

NWT: *Janice Arndt* joined the list in 6th place with a total of 106.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES - 326					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	180	Eric Tull	55		180
2	176	Laird Law	54		176
3	155	Tony Greenfield	48		155
4	148	David Stirling	45		148
5	133	Rand Rudland	41		133
6	106	Janice Arndt	33		new
7	105	Roger Foxall	32		105
8	98	Brian Self	30		98
9	97	Barbara Begg	30		97
10	86	Mike Toochin	26		86
11	84	John Sprague	26		*84
12	71	Art Martell	22		71
13	*64	Lee Harding	20		64
14	54	John Hodges	17		*54
15	53	Gary Davidson	16		53
16	52	Wayne Weber	16		52
17	40	Dick Cannings	12		*40

Yukon Territory: Two members added their totals to this growing list with *Theo Hofmann* (ON) joining in 5th spot.

YUKON TERRITORY - 314					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	172	Dick Cannings	55		*172
2	163	Tony Greenfield	52		163
3	155	Eric Tull	49		155
4	150	David Stirling	48		150
5	145	Theo Hofmann ON	46		new
6	142	Roger Foxall	45		142
7	123	Gary Davidson	39		123
8	113	John Sprague	36		113
9	112	Rand Rudland	36		112
10	106	Art Martell	34		106
11	102	Brian Self	32		102
12	90	Dan Tyson	29		90
13	87	Wayne Weber	28		87
14	86	John Hodges	27		*86
15	84	Mike Toochin	27		84
16	64	Dorothy Copp	20		64
17	64	Brian Stech	20		64
18	48	Laird Law			new

Washington: Brian Self had the highest increase with thirteen.

WASHINGTON STATE - 507					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	404	Wayne Weber	80		404
2	349	Jo Ann MacKenzie	69		349
3	325	Mike Toochin	64		325
4	317	Dan Tyson	63	2	315
5	293	Brian Self	58	13	*280
6	285	Hank Vanderpol	56	1	284
7	268	Dick Cannings	53		*268
7	*268	John Voos	53		268
9	260	Roger Foxall	51		260
10	254	David Stirling	50		254
11	243	Brian Stech	48	4	239
12	235	Lloyd Esralson	46		235
13	231	Art Martell	46		231
14	228	Dorothy Copp	45		228
15	223	Larry Cowan	44		223
16	215	Eric Tull	42		new

Okanagan Valley: Chris Charlesworth, Gwynneth Wilson and two others increased their totals by 3. Four members added their totals to the list.

OKANAGAN VALLEY - 342					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	317	Chris Charlesworth	93	3	314
2	306	Dick Cannings	89		*306
3	303	Gwynneth Wilson	89	3	300
4	292	Don Wilson	85	2	290
5	274	Mike Toochin	80	2	272
6	272	Peter Blokker	80		272
7	264	Wayne Weber	77	2	262
8	262	Gary Davidson	77	1	261
9	259	Hank Vanderpol	76		259
10	255	Dan Tyson	75	2	253
11	242	David Stirling	71		242
12	234	Tony Greenfield	68		234
12	234	Jo Ann MacKenzie	68		234
14	232	Tom Plath	68		new
15	225	John Voos	66	1	224
16	219	Laird Law	64		219
17	215	Lloyd Esralson	63		215
18	193	Bryan Gates	56		*193
19	189	Brian Stech	55	3	186

OKANAGAN VALLEY - 342					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
20	176	Eric Tull	51		new
21	174	Larry Cowan	51	3	171
22	172	Theo Hofmann ON	50		new
23	162	Dorothy Copp	47		new

Vancouver: Neill Vanhinsberg had the highest gain with 22. Tom Plath entered the list in fourth place.

VANCOUVER AREA - 409					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	372	Mike Toochin	91		372
2	357	Dan Tyson	87	1	356
2	357	Jo Ann MacKenzie	87		357
4	355	Tom Plath	87		new
5	352	Brian Self	86	1	351
5	352	Wayne Weber	86	1	351
7	348	Carlo Giovannella	85	1	347
8	343	Keith Riding	84		343
9	337	Roger Foxall	82	3	334
10	334	Lloyd Esralson	82		334
11	330	Quentin Brown	81	7	323
12	325	Brian Stech	79	4	321
13	323	Larry Cowan	79	2	321
14	313	Ilya Povalyaev	77	8	305
15	312	John Voos	76	2	310
16	290	Kevin Neill	71	6	284
17	286	Dick Cannings	70		*286
18	274	Ted Goshulak	67	2	272
19	248	Neill Vanhinsberg	61	22	226
20	243	David Stirling	59		243
21	235	Bryan Gates	57		*235
22	234	Don Wilson	57		234
23	209	Eric Tull	51		new

Vancouver Island: The largest gain was 11 by Eric Tull. Mike McGrenere added 2 bringing him to 350 only one behind David Stirling's list topping 351. Guy Monty joined the list in 4th at 341.

VANCOUVER ISLAND - 388					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	351	David Stirling	90	1	350
2	350	Mike McGrenere	90	2	348
3	344	Barbara Begg	89	1	343
4	341	Guy Monty	88		new
5	337	Bryan Gates	87	2	*335

VANCOUVER ISLAND - 388					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
6	332	Hank Vanderpol	86		332
7	317	Bruce Whittington	82	1	316
8	309	Mike Toochin	80	4	305
9	286	Ken Morgan	74		*286
10	280	Tom Plath	72		new
11	273	Wayne Weber	70		273
12	263	Dan Tyson	68	2	261
13	262	Roger Foxall	68		262
14	257	Eric Tull	66	11	246
15	253	Jo Ann MacKenzie	65		253
16	207	Larry Cowan	53	4	203
17	206	John Sprague	53		206

PEACE RIVER AREA - 272					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
6	184	Bryan Gates	68		*184
7	171	Wayne Weber	63	7	164
8	165	Dan Tyson	61		165
9	163	David Stirling	60		163
10	153	Larry Cowan	56		153
11	144	Lloyd Esralson	53		144
12	128	Dorothy Copp	47		*128
12	128	Brian Stech	47		128

BC Winter: Covers the "Winter" period Dec/Jan/Feb with a life total to Dec. 31, 2016. **Larry Cowan** and **Eric Tull** had the best increase with 6. *Dan Tyson* strengthened his first place lead by adding 5. *Tom Plath* joined the list to occupy 4th place.

B.C. Winter List - Dec / Jan / Feb					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	303	Dan Tyson		5	298
2	*293	Brian Self			293
3	293	Mike Toochin		4	289
4	291	Tom Plath			new
5	265	Wayne Weber		1	264
6	254	David Sterling			254
7	222	Larry Cowan		6	216
8	186	Eric Tull		6	180
9	124	Janice Arndt		2	122

World Families: This list continues to attract listers with another 6 joining. *Roger Foxall*, *Peter Candido*, & *Eric Tull* joined moving *Mike Toochin* from 1st to 4th. **Larry Cowan** had the largest increase with 10 followed by *Bryan Gates* with 9 pushing him over the 150 plateau.

World Families 234					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	222	Roger Foxall	95		new
2	217	Peter Candido	93		new
3	217	Eric Tull	93		new
4	210	Mike Toochin	90		211
5	207	David Sterling	88		new
6	206	Art Martell	88		206
7	*203	Brian Self	87		203
8	200	Sharon Toochin	85		201
9	190	Theo Hofmann ON	81		new
10	185	Rand Rudland	79		new
11	*155	Sandra Eadie	66		155

Victoria: **Eric Tull** added 17 during 2016 with *Kevin Neill* adding 12. *Mike McGrenere* added 3 to his total allowing him to nose past *David Stirling* into first place.

VICTORIA AREA - 362					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	335	Mike McGrenere	93	3	332
2	334	David Stirling	92	1	333
3	329	Barbara Begg	91	1	328
4	320	Hank Vanderpol	88		320
5	319	Bryan Gates	88	2	*317
6	306	Bruce Whittington	85	1	305
7	261	Mike Toochin	72		261
8	253	Wayne Weber	70	3	250
9	239	Eric Tull	66	17	222
10	221	Dan Tyson	61	5	216
11	181	Kevin Neill	50	12	169
12	170	Larry Cowan	47	5	165
13	141	Lloyd Esralson	39		141
14	139	Neill Vanhinsberg	38		new
15	137	Dick Cannings	38		*137
16	130	Ted Goshulak	36		131

Peace River: **Wayne Weber** had the only increase at seven. *Tom Plath* joined the list in 2nd place.

PEACE RIVER AREA - 272					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	245	Laird Law	90		245
2	228	Tom Plath	84		new
3	209	Tony Greenfield	77		209
4	203	Mike Toochin	75		203
5	193	Jo Ann MacKenzie	71		193

World Families 234					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
12	151	Bryan Gates	65	9	*142
13	122	Kevin Neill	52	1	121
14	114	Larry Cowan	49	10	104

Non-motorized Transport: Mike McGrenere further enhanced his hold on 1st place improving his lead over 2nd place *Dick Cannings* to 49.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT					
#	2016	Name & location	incr	2015	
1	296	Mike McGrenere, - Victoria	4	292	
2	247	Dick Cannings, - Penticton		*247	
3	155	Janice Arndt, - Nelson		155	
4	114	Barbara Begg, - Sidney	1	113	
5	102	Larry Cowan, - Pitt Meadows	2	100	
6	*78	Lee Harding, - Coquitlam		78	

Sunshine Coast: John Hodges had the highest increase with 13.

SUNSHINE COAST - 307					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	280	Tony Greenfield	91	3	277
2	257	Russ Tkachuk	84	1	256
3	255	Rand Rudland	83	3	252
4	241	John Hodges	79	13	*228
5	176	Dan Tyson	57		176
6	138	Wayne Weber	45	2	136

I'll leave the analysis of the balance of the lists to you the readers.

NORTH PACIFIC PELAGIC WATERS					
#	2016	Name	incr	2015	
1	131	Mike Tootchin		131	
2	104	Ken Morgan		104	
3	86	Tom Plath		new	
4	77	Bruce Whittington		77	
5	70	Kevin Neill		70	
6	68	David Stirling		68	
7	63	Lloyd Esralson		63	
8	45	Bryan Gates		*45	

Haida Gwaii				
#	2016	Name	incr	2015
1	132	Mike Tootchin	10	122
2	106	Bruce Whittington		106
3	97	Laird Law		*97

PRINCE GEORGE AREA - 297					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	274	Laird Law	92		274
2	271	Cathy Antoniazzi	91		271
3	214	Nathan Hentze	72		214
4	190	Don Wilson	64		190
5	168	Dan Tyson	57		168
6	151	Peter Blokker	51		151

Revelstoke				
#	2016	Name	incr	2015
1	211	Michael Morris		new
2	150	Wayne Weber		150

KAMLOOPS AREA - 306					
#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	256	Wayne Weber	84		256
2	200	Gary Davidson	65		200
3	198	David Stirling	65		198

Mt. Robson PP				
#	2016	Name	incr	2015
1	145	Dick Cannings		*145
2	142	Laird Law		142
3	120	David Stirling		120

Comox Valley				
#	2016	Name	incr	2015
1	247	Art Martell		247
2	243	Nathan Hentze		new

Salt Spring Island				
#	2016	Name	incr	2015
1	174	John Sprague	1	173
2	173	Ren Ferguson	1	172
3	126	Marian Porter		new
4	114	Wayne Weber		114

CRESTON VALLEY AREA - 301

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	220	Craig Sandvig	73		new
2	213	Peter McIver	71		new
3	193	Gary Davidson	64	9	184
4	173	Janice Arndt	57	1	172
5	142	Wayne Weber	47		142

WEST KOOTENAY AREA - 313

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	284	Gary Davidson	91		284
2	270	Craig Sandvig	86		new
3	253	Peter McIver	81		new
4	251	Janice Arndt	80	3	248
5	185	Jo Ann MacKenzie	59		185
6	182	Wayne Weber	58		182

Fraser Valley - 318

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	253	John Voos	80	7	246
2	239	Dan Tyson	75		new
3	187	Wayne Weber	59		new
4	155	Larry Cowan	49	2	153
5	139	Ted Goshulak	44	8	131

MANNING PROVINCIAL PARK - 206

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	154	Mike McGrenere	75		154
2	125	Wayne Weber	61		125
3	118	Dick Cannings	57		*118
4	110	Jo Ann MacKenzie	53		110
5	109	Dan Tyson	53		109
6	101	David Stirling	49		101
7	90	Larry Cowan	44		90

Princeton Area

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	103	Lloyd Esralson			103
2	91	Larry Cowan			91
3	90	Bryan Gates			*90

SEA & IONA ISLANDS (Vanc)

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	278	Mike Toochin			278
2	276	Tom Plath			new

SEA & IONA ISLANDS (Vanc)

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
3	247	Keith Riding		1	246
4	238	Wayne Weber			238
5	235	Dan Tyson		1	234
6	204	Lloyd Esralson			204
7	180	Larry Cowan			180
8	167	Dick Cannings			*167

WESTHAM & REIFEL ISLANDS (Vanc)

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	224	Wayne Weber			224
2	213	Brian Self		3	210
3	207	Dan Tyson			207
4	194	Lloyd Esralson			194
5	184	Keith Riding			184
6	158	Larry Cowan			158
7	148	Dick Cannings			*148

BLACKIE SPIT (Vanc)

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	192	Jo Ann MacKenzie			192
2	185	Wayne Weber			185
3	177	Dan Tyson		1	176
4	117	Larry Cowan			117
5	115	Brian Self		1	114
6	91	Dick Cannings			*91
7	88	Neill Vanhinsberg			new

Semiamhoo Peninsula (Vanc)

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	240	Jo Ann MacKenzie			240
2	223	Carlo Giovannella			223
3	208	Roger Foxall		3	205
3	208	Dan Tyson		3	205

Pitt Meadows

#	2016	Name	%	incr	2015
1	203	Wayne Weber			203
2	195	Larry Cowan		1	194
3	107	Neill Vanhinsberg		25	82

Over 1,500m					
#	2016	Name	incr		2015
1	112	Mike McGrenere			112
2	106	Wayne Weber			106

The remaining listings are for areas with single submissions, grouped by Tourism Zones as set out by BC Tourism. This should be of assistance in determining which lists to consider tracking while travelling to destinations around the Province.

Northern Canada	2016	Name	+	2015
YK - NWT - NU	171	Theo Hofmann		new

Northern BC	2016	Name	+	2015
Gwaii Haanas NP	81	Bruce Whittington		81
Haines Triangle	88	David Stirling		new

Kootenay/Rockies	2016	Name	+	2015
Castlegar Area	221	Craig Sandvig		new
Columbia Valley	127	Bryan Gates	4	*123
Yoho NP	124	Wayne Weber		124

Cariboo/Chilcotin	2016	Name	+	2015
Williams Lake Area	160	Bryan Gates		*160

Vancouver Coast & Mnt.	2016	Name	+	2015
Abbotsford	212	John Vooy	5	*207
Colony Farm RP	165	Larry Cowan		165
Derby Reach RP	124	Ted Goshulak	27	*97
Maplewood CA	211	Quentin Brown		211
Trinity Western Univ	150	Ted Goshulak		150
Vancouver CBC Circ	296	Dan Tyson		296

Vancouver Island	2016	Name	+	2015
Miracle Beach PP	159	David Stirling		159
Mitlenatch Island PP	110	David Stirling		110
Pacific Rim NP	175	David Stirling		*175
Saturna Island	102	Tony Greenfield		102

Other	2016	Name	+	2015
ABA Birds Photographed	616	Brian Stech	24	592
Breeding Cdn species	85%	Theo Hofmann		new
World N of Arctic Circle	138	Theo Hofmann		new
Yard List - Oak Bay	102	Bryan Gates		new
Yard List-Saratoga Beach	153	Bryan Gates	2	151

A reminder, there are other opportunities for listing areas & categories not encompassed by BCFO Listers' Corner. These include the American Birding Association and Canadian Listers' Corner.

<http://www.neilyworld.com/neilyworld/listerscorner/listers-corner.htm>

I would like to thank all those who submitted their life totals for this article. Wishing everyone continued good birding in 2017. See you at the BCFO AGM and Conference in Tumbler Ridge this coming June.

Larry Cowan



*When a Barred Owl decides to perch outside your window, it's a very good idea to have a camera handy.
Photo by Bob Steventon.*