

B_C BIRDING

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

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

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

Membership Dues

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

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

Annual Membership Dues

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

NewsMagazine Submissions

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

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

Advertising Rates

Full page: \$125 per issue or \$112.50 each for 4 or more issues
Half page: \$75 per issue or \$67.50 each for 4 or more issues
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BCFO Website: <http://bcfo.ca/>

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COVER STORY

Ring-necked Pheasant

Photographer: William Murdock

This pheasant was at Deer Lake Park on the southwest corner hillside. I went there often and it was not afraid of me. I could be standing and it would walk past me just 18 inches away. I took many photos from just a few feet away, including this one.

BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS

Needs submissions

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

BCFO RESEARCH GRANTS

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

1. Requests for funding must be for planned, rather than completed, projects.
2. Under normal circumstances applicants should be, or be willing to become, members of BCFO.
3. Projects and their results are to be reported in BCFO's journal **British Columbia Birds**.
4. In order for BCFO Directors to give a timely response to project proposals, deadlines for submission are January 1 and July 1.
5. All reasonable requests up to a \$1000 limit and within the financial strength of the organization will be considered, with any larger requests requiring approval at the AGM.
6. Applicants should obtain a copy of the grant policy and the application guidelines from a member of the executive before making a submission.

<http://bcfo.ca/bcfo-research-grants/>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."

Yogi Berra

What's true for humans may not be true for birds. Some of the many birds hatched this year will perform spectacular fall migrations to places about which they have no knowledge, completing their journeys with the help of only a simple direction 'hard-wired' into their brains. Other birds, having done the journey once, will migrate over familiar territory and 'know' the 'someplace else' they're heading for. Still other young birds simply stick with the family and learn their route to the wintering grounds by following those that know where it is, and how to get there.

So birds have some advantages. They may or may not know where they're going, but they've got some things that can help to get them there. However, September is *not* migration month for your BCFO board, but it is the time to think about where BCFO is going. If we want to get 'someplace else' in the future, we do have to know where we want to go and how to get there. September is planning month for your organization, and September 28 will be the day directors will meet in person and via Skype to get down to work.

For some things we do already know where we're going. Our 2016 AGM will be in Cranbrook, a 'someplace else' BCFO has not visited before for our annual gathering. Mark your calendars for May 27, 28, and 29. See our website <<http://bcfo.ca/>> for more details. We also know we're heading for southern Alberta for this year's extension trip, but we don't know the details yet. There's some planning to be done here.

We also need to do some succession planning so that the organization is in good hands for the years to come. This will be my final year as President and other Board positions will need to be filled.

Also on our planning agenda is to complete the selection of locations for next year's Two-day Field Trips for members. Suggestions from you are most welcome. Where would you like to go? Would you volunteer to lead one in your area? We'll also be looking at expanding our Young Birders Program.

Of course we'll be looking at improving our services to members. We'll take stock of how we're doing and look to what we need to focus on for the future. Can we improve our PayPal system? We've had some very popular excursions this past year. How can we ensure members get equal opportunities to book field trips and the extension trip? We've been growing over the last couple of years. How do we continue to attract new members and maintain the ones we have? What can BCFO do that will attract even more of the birding community to join us? Should we continue to do well the things we do, or should we add more activities and attractions? Would we be overextending ourselves, or can we manage to do more things?

All of these questions will be thrashed around this month. We'll look at the feedback from the members who attended the AGM, and if you've got things to tell us, let us know. Directors' emails are on the website, or you can simply leave a comment for us on the website. It will all be grist for the planning mill.

Enjoy the fall, whether you stay on familiar ground, or migrate to 'someplace else'.

George Clulow, President



EDITOR'S NOTES

In this issue you will find write-ups for the many field trips associated with our AGM in Oliver. We certainly took advantage of the wide variety of environments provided by the Okanagan Valley from dry sage-brush slopes to the wetlands of the oxbows to the cool upland forests of spruce and lodgepole pine. It all started with the two-day field trip in the Kelowna area, well organized by Les Gyug. Then there were four trips from Oliver (eight actually, with each route being covered on both Saturday and Sunday). Then to top it off, our very successful extension-trip to eastern Washington, which is described here by George and illustrated by Carlo's photos. And if that is not enough, Adrian Leather, who put together his personal "extension-trip" following the main meeting, shares with us some additional (and remarkable) birding experiences that most of us missed by heading home.

Note that species lists for all the field trips will be posted separately on the BCFO website very soon.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed text and/or photos to this issue. You will find that Chris Charlesworth's Rare Bird Report is missing from this issue – but will be continued in December.

This is the last issue of *BC Birding* for which I am responsible: Clive Keen will be taking over as the new Editor for the December issue. You will already be aware, from reading his 'Reflective Birder' essays, that he is a long-time writer and birder. He also has much experience with newsletters, magazines and books (and wears several other hats as well). I'm sure he will do an excellent job – so please support him by contributing materials for the NewsMagazine. I have enjoyed doing the constructive tasks related to the production of each issue – but it has taken a lot of time and effort.....

My best wishes to you all

June Ryder
Editor (Retiring)

Request for Nominations

THE STEVE CANNINGS AWARD FOR B.C. ORNITHOLOGY

In 2007, B.C.F.O. presented its first award for contributions to B.C. ornithology, now named *the Steve Cannings Award for B.C. Ornithology*, to Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan. Recent recipients are Fred C. Zwickel (2013), and Martin K. McNicholl (2014), and Alan Burger (2015).

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

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

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



ANNOUNCING: BCFO 2016 AGM – CRANBROOK

Next year we'll be heading to the East Kootenay city of Cranbrook – May 27th, 28th, 29th, 2016.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Cranbrook lies in the Rocky Mountain Trench between the Rockies to the east and the Purcell Mountains to the west, with the Kootenay River winding along the valley floor. The huge diversity of habitats here offers a fabulous variety of birds. Extensive wetlands, grasslands and open forests, along with mountain habitats at various elevations will ensure memorable birding in the East Kootenay.

The Rocky Mountain Naturalists, our partners in Cranbrook, have the detailed local knowledge needed to make the venue a birding success. We're already working with them to plan a full roster of AGM field trips you will not want to miss.

We're also doing prep work on our pre-conference 2-day field trip – likely the Creston Valley, and the post-conference extension targeting Southern Alberta. Stay tuned!

For preliminary information about location of the AGM and accommodations, check the website [link here](#).

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Compiled by Wayne C. Weber

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

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

2015 MEETINGS

Sept. 4-7-- WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION annual meeting, Burnaby, BC. For information and to register for the meeting, visit the WBBA website at http://www.westernbirdbanding.org/meeting_2015.html.

Sept. 4-6-- 29th ANNUAL OREGON SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL, Charleston, OR (near Coos Bay). Includes a pelagic birding trip as well as shorebird field trips. For information or to register, visit the festival website at <http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/shorebirdfestival.htm>, phone Dawn Harris at (541) 867-4550 (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office in Newport, OR), or email Dawn at dawn_harris@fws.gov

Sept. 5-- WESTPORT SEABIRDS pelagic birding trip from Westport, WA, with additional trips scheduled on September 6, 19, 20, 26, and 27, and October 3 and 10. For information and to make reservations, check the website at <http://www.westportseabirds.com>, or contact the boat operators, Phil and Chris Anderson, by e-mail (pmand001@comcast.net) or by phone (360-268-9141).

Sept. 11-13-- PUGET SOUND BIRD FESTIVAL, Edmonds, WA. For information and to register (starting Aug. 1), check the festival website at <http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com>, or contact Sally Lider at the City of Edmonds Parks Dept. (phone 425-771-0227, or email her at sallylider@edmondswa.gov).

Sept. 20-- PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP from Ucluelet, BC, on the MV Frances Barkley, organized by WildResearch. For information or to sign up, visit the WildResearch website at <http://wildresearch.ca/news/pelagic-trip>.

Oct. 3-4-- RIDGEFIELD BIRDS & BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL, Ridgefield, WA (near Vancouver, WA). For information, check the festival website at <http://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest>, or contact the Friends of Ridgefield NWR by phone at 360-887-9495, by email at ridgefieldfriends@gmail.com, or by snail mail at PO Box 1022, Ridgefield, WA 98642.

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

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

Nov. 21-22-- FRASER VALLEY BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL, Harrison Mills, BC. For information, check the festival website at <http://fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca>, send an email to info@fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca, phone 604-826-7361, or write the Mission Chamber of Commerce, 34033 Lougheed Highway, Mission, BC V2V 5X8.

Dec. 14 to Jan. 5 (2016)-- 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.

2016 MEETINGS

Jan. 1-31-- 29TH ANNUAL BRACKENDALE EAGLE FESTIVAL, BRACKENDALE, BC. For information, check the website at <http://www.brackendaleartgallery.com/Calendar.html> , phone 604-898-3333, or email the Brackendale Art Gallery at info@brackendaleartgallery.com

Feb. 10-13-- 43rd ANNUAL MEETING, PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP, Turtle Bay, Hawaii. For information and to register, visit the conference website at <http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/index.php?f=meeting&t=Annual%20Meeting&s=1> .

Mar. 18-20-- 19TH 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. 15-17-- 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). Registration begins in October 2015.

Aug. 16-21-- 6th NORTH AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE in Washington, DC. Member societies include the AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ASSOCIATION OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS, and SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS. The advance conference website is at the following address:

<http://naoc2016.cvent.com/events/naoc-2016-advanced/-event-summary-9cca73ad2f044f8790ca08d7f1d28536.aspx>

Sep. 28-Oct. 2-- WESTERN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS annual conference, Fortuna River Lodge, Fortuna, CA (near Eureka). For details, visit the WFO website <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/conference.php> .

Bird Studies Canada Seeking Volunteers in BC

The 17th season of the [British Columbia Coastal Waterbird Survey](#) begins on September 13, and we have several vacant survey sites in Vancouver, Tofino, and Ucluelet. This long-term monitoring program helps identify population and distribution changes in overwintering waterbirds. Volunteers conduct counts of ducks, loons, grebes, gulls, and other waterbirds on the second Sunday of each month throughout the winter. We welcome all our new and returning volunteers, and hope you enjoy the surveys!



NEW SURVEY BSC is also seeking volunteers to assist with a new **bird-window collision** monitoring project in downtown Vancouver. Surveys will be conducted in September and October, and involve walking along a route just after dawn for about 20 minutes to look for evidence of collisions at various buildings. The results will help our scientists assess mortality rates, identify vulnerable species, and understand the impacts of collisions in Vancouver. A workshop is planned for September 22.

To learn more or to volunteer for either of these projects, please contact Karen Devitt at BCvolunteer@birdscanada.org or 1-877-349-2473.

The Reflective Birder #12

We're a Competitive Lot – and That's Just Fine

Clive Keen

The splendid Pete Dunne, as many birders will know, has suffered a stroke which limits his mobility. Fortunately for us, it doesn't seem to have limited his ability to make us think about all things birdish. One of his latest articles was typical Pete. After forty years as a *birder*, he wrote, he just might be ready to be elevated to the ranks of the *birdwatcher*.

For four decades, he explained, he was quick to jump in his car and travel to the next state to tick off a rarity. Week in, week out, he was ready with his checklists and rare-bird alerts; that's what birders do. But not being able to travel while recovering, he was obliged to stay put and simply look at the regular birds in his neighbourhood. Which meant he could really look. And appreciate how gorgeous, and fascinating, run-of-the-mill local birds can be. The implication from this was clear: pure appreciation is superior to all that scrambling for ticks. *Birdwatchers* have the higher moral ground.

As with all things Pete Dunne, there's a twinkle-in-the-eye aspect to this, and no doubt he was just winding us up. But it is a theme that keeps coming back in various guises. Many years ago, an article by the young Roger Tory Petersen poked fun at the fact that people were turning bird watching into a *sport*, which involved travelling to see how many birds they could see in a set time. And countless articles since, even in this collection, hint at discomfort over the competitive aspects of birding. Make no mistake, competition really is in the DNA of birding. The competition might just be with oneself: to get more lifers or a better year tally, to recognize more birds by sound, to distinguish the most challenging of birds, or whatever. But often enough, the source of the competition is competing discreetly with others: to get the best Christmas bird-count score, the best yard list, to name birds that others can't, to get a higher position in the Top eBirders table, etc.

Doesn't this competitive element mean that birding is inevitably sullied, inevitably inferior to the purity of birdwatching? No. It's time to lay that misassumption to rest.

It's not too surprising that competition has a PR problem. "Winning or losing is not a matter of life or death – it's more important than that" has been attributed to various football coaches. Yes, at the professional and extreme levels, competition can lead to all sorts of perversity unbecoming of civilized folk. But at the purely amateur level, competition can be entirely benign, particularly when one is one's own referee, we set our own standards for success, and there really is nothing at all at stake.

First, the competitive element allows a structure to activities. Consider: kids enjoy kicking balls around, because it's fun – but it's more fun when someone puts down sweaters to act as goalposts. The addition of purpose to the activity allows it be put into better focus; the kick-about morphs into something more engaging and rewarding. Winning and losing still don't really matter – but it helps greatly to act as if they do.

There's a parallel here with appreciation of novels. Enjoyment of fiction is only possible if one pretends that what is described *matters*. Without the willing suspension of disbelief, we won't be engaged in Frodo's quest. We have to willingly ignore the fact that there's no Middle Earth, no furry-footed short people, no Mount Doom, and not even a Gandalf, so we can bury ourselves in the narrative. Similarly, at the everyday amateur level of competition, we need to *pretend* that the competition matters, or it's all just pointless placement of balls into holes, nets, or outfields.

When my extended family gets together, board games come out. In the past, the matriarch has joined in, but she doesn't approve of competition, and thus amends rules in an attempt to prevent people from losing. She also shows disapproval if anyone shows delight at successes. The result? "Dad - can you make sure that Gran doesn't play? It's no fun if she does."

So, us birders pretend that it matters if we see 40 species rather than 39 on a morning, or that we can tell all the peeps apart, or distinguish the song of a Willow Flycatcher from an Alder. It adds spice as well as structure. And it also means that we look with care and attention. The end result of this is that we become much better, and more satisfied, *birdwatchers*. Far from being incompatible or in opposition, birding and birdwatching are complementary. In the midst of our checklisting and rarity chasing, we'll often enough stop and simply admire. And we can savour hundreds of experiences and subtleties which casual birdwatchers miss entirely.

Listen to people returning from birding trips and you'll see their true colours. They might start off with some "score," saying that they've seen a specific number of species, but the real delight shines through when they add "and we had absolutely killer views of" Their eyes will light up as they recount how the bird came right out into the open, perching where everyone could all see it, giving long, wonderful views. In truth, every good birder is a birdwatcher at heart, and their birdwatching is made rich and nourishing precisely because we are, discreetly, a competitive lot. It really is just fine.

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

BCFO TWO-DAY (PRE-AGM) FIELD TRIP, KELOWNA, MAY 28 & 29, 2015

Les Gyug

Day 1: Thirty BCFO members showed up bright and early on just another gorgeous sunny Okanagan morning. I had almost everything organized in advance. The party split into two groups of 15: I led one and Don Wilson and Logan Lalonde led the other. My group went to Robert Lake, the remnants of Alki Lake (most of which is now under the Kelowna landfill), and up Beaver Lake Road. The other group did the whole thing in reverse order.

The first stop was Robert Lake on a beautiful, quiet, calm morning. The stop is at the end of the road adjacent to a tiny regional district park which occupies just one corner of the lake. We spent about an hour there. A few American Avocets wandered about along with the usual gang of alkaline lake birds including Wilson's Phalaropes, Eared Grebes, Ruddy Ducks, many other waterfowl, and five species of swallows. Well into the hour, a raptor flew in slowly from behind us, which we didn't notice until it was over the lake. Yup, a falcon, much larger than a kestrel, and then it turned its head doing a lazy loop: Peregrine Falcon. Eventually we had to get on our way and leave this idyllic little spot.



Wilson's Phalarope at Robert Lake Clive Keen

On to the dump, i.e., the landfill and the remnants of Alki Lake. But not before a short stop to look over Little Robert Lake, which until last year had never been accessible to birders. Now it is close to the new landfill access and can be easily seen. Only a few species were here as the lake is not as alkaline as Robert Lake or Alki Lake and has no exposed mudflats.

We checked in at the landfill office with all our City of Kelowna waiver forms signed, put on reflective safety vests, and then drove in our little convoy of four vehicles to the water's edge. The city has made a parking area there just for birders where we can be out of the way of all the other landfill traffic and machinery. The landfill also includes a major composting and

recycling operation that seems to take up almost as much space as the 'landfill' part. Many American Avocets were quickly heard and seen, some still sitting on nests, but we did see quite a few little fluff balls running and swimming around as several nests had already hatched. Up to four Black-necked Stilts were present as well, but we never could see any actually sitting on a nest. There were lots of Northern Shovelers and other waterfowl, and several Bald Eagles. We moved to the other side of the remnants of Alki Lake and saw more avocets on nests, and had great looks at many more youngsters. And finally to the old dump entrance where Bredin's Pond, a deeper pond used as an irrigation water reservoir, held a family of Barrow's Goldeneye.



Birders at the landfill

JMR

Eventually we drove on, north through Glenmore and Winfield and turned right onto Beaver Lake Road with the first stop just past the Kelowna City Limits. Josh's car had gone out ahead as he knew where Beaver Lake Road was, and would stop at the city limit sign. But once we were there, he ending showing up last: I hadn't realized that there were four such signs on this particular route!

The grasslands were full of Western Meadowlarks and Vesper Sparrows. Mountain and Western Bluebirds were in roadside nest boxes, along with Tree Swallows and House Wrens. Shrubs held Lazuli Buntings, while Western Kingbirds showed great interest in power poles where they were probably nesting. As we worked our way up the hill, we got to the first aspen copses with Bullock's Oriole, Gray Catbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Spotted Towhees, Dusky Flycatchers, and Western Wood-Pewees "pee-e-ering" at us. Most of the group had great looks at a Lark Sparrow alongside the road. Then we got up to the Douglas-fir forest where Nashville Warblers and Western Tanagers appeared. Then even higher where spruce and lodgepole pine started appearing in the forest, and Townsend's Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hammond's Flycatchers, Mountain Chickadees, Evening Grosbeaks and Cassin's Finches all showed up on cue. We made

a long stop in late afternoon at Beaver Lake for Osprey, Common Loon and lots of Brewer's Blackbirds. Interestingly, the Gray Jays, once common at Beaver Lake, are there no more. It seems that all the original forest, except a ring around each of the many plateau lakes has been logged in the



Lark Sparrow

...Clive Keen

last few years – and with that, Steller's Jays seem to have replaced the Gray Jays.

After a long break we took a quick poll and decided to go on a bit further to search – unsuccessfully as it turned out – for Northern Waterthrushes. And then it was back down the road and into Kelowna.

Don and Logan's group found a few additional species on their way up Beaver Lake Road first thing in the morning, including Black-chinned Hummingbird, Least and Pacific-slope flycatchers, and their bird-of-the-day, a Ferruginous Hawk. Past Beaver Lake, they also found Spotted Sandpiper, Varied Thrush and Ring-necked Duck.

After supper, an intrepid few (11 in total) met to go owling up the Bear Forest Service Road on the west side of Okanagan Lake. As the light was failing, an incredible chorus of what must have been 20 or more Swainson's Thrushes saw out the day. And as it got dark, a distant Flammulated Owl started hooting. We retreated a few hundred meters back down the road hoping to get closer, but no such luck. On the way back, we stopped at 1 km on the Bear FSR to check for Common Poorwills. One not only answered Logan's calls but flew right up to us.

Day 2: The last weekend in May or the first in June (the second weekend after Victoria Day) is the usual date for the 'Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park Bird and Critter Count'. The count, which started in 1993, is sponsored by the 'Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club' (and others). Results up to 2011 were published in the BCFO journal '*British Columbia Birds*' in 2013. So, we shifted the day slightly so that Day 2 of the two-day field trip was part of the count. We had three extra BCFO members come out just for the second day. The BCFO birders were divided into five groups, so that five of the

count routes (of 11 total routes) were done with BCFO assistance. BCFO members joined CONC leaders and members for the count.

Logan and I led a group of 11 on the Boulder Trail (a 7-km loop), starting at 7 am. The other four groups (Golden Mile Road, Murdoch Property, Rimrock Trail, and John's Property Regional District Park) met at 7:45 am.

It was, of course, another gorgeous sunny, but not too hot, Okanagan day. On the Boulder Trail, House Wrens were easily the most abundant bird of the day with what seemed like several present whenever or wherever you would happen to stand still for a moment. We tallied 124 House Wrens! Most of the route is in the 2003 burn, although there were very few trees ever for much of the distance as the trail goes across natural grasslands and rock outcrops.

All three nuthatches showed up at one point or other with Red-breasted the least common of the three and only where there were remnant live trees. Most of us had good looks at a pair of Pygmy Nuthatches entering a cavity in a fire-killed ponderosa pine, but not through the obvious cavity entrance: instead they entered through the stub of a hollow branch. Along with the many House Wrens were a few Rock Wrens and one distant Canyon Wren. And several Olive-sided Flycatchers were plaintively calling out for beer -- which we only managed to actually get when we all met up at Boomer's Pub at noon (or more like 12:15 or 12:30 by the time our group actually got there) for lunch and to compare results.

One highlight of the John's Property route, led by Hugh Westheuser, was a Peregrine Falcon, the first ever listed on the count. The John's Property is a new regional park adjacent to Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park and this was the first year that it was included with the count.

As it is more than just a bird count, Margaret Bryan's Murdoch Property group highlight of a huge rattlesnake, a veritable monster, at the parking lot on Lakeshore Rd just as they were finishing, actually does count. By the time our group got to the parking lot later, the snake had curled up under a rock. I think it was the fattest rattlesnake with the biggest head I have ever seen in

House Wren

MH



the Okanagan. About every second year we find rattlesnakes on the count, but it seems never in the same place twice, and certainly never *that* large before.

On the Golden Mile Road, Gwynneth Wilson's group found 22 Calliope Hummingbirds among a total of 52 species . On Rimrock Trail, a mix of burn and only



Turkey Vultures beside Okanagan Lake seen from Golden Mile Road
MH

partially burned mature Douglas-fir forest, Don Wilson's group had 46 species with, like a microcosm of the whole count, the most common being among the most common on the count in total: House Wren, Dusky Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Spotted Towhee and Chipping Sparrow.

After comparing notes, we each went our separate ways, most of us to Oliver for the BCFO AGM. The five routes done as part of the BCFO two-day trip produced a total of 77 species, while another 18 species were added from the six other routes for a grand total of 95 species. This year set a new Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park Bird and Critter Count record for participation with 58 people, eclipsing the first year (1993) when there were 55. Many thanks to all those who contributed their time and effort to the count, this year and over many years. I know I enjoyed the two days, the weather cooperated, the birds were out and singing, and I met many BCFO members for the first time as well as renewing old acquaintances.

NOTE: For species lists, please refer to the BCFO website.

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BCFO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, OLIVER, MAY 30, 2015

DIRECTORS' REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

For the President's Annual Report see 'President's Message' in the June 2015 issue of *BC Birding*.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Revenue	2013	2014
Memberships	6,513.38	7,324.42
Conference Fees	5,960.00	7,525.00
Conference Extension		2,325.00
Other Conference Income	134.25	285.00
Donations	660.00	914.22
Field Trips	372.00	190.00
Bank Interest (Chequing A/C only)	1.83	4.84
(GST) HST Rebate		759.85
Advertising	230.00	259.00
BC Birding - Fees	445.00	370.85
Total	14,316.46	19,958.18
Expenditures		
BC Birding - Printing	474.03	516.77
BC Birding - Mailing	468.67	570.44
Conference	5,230.85	7,602.51
Conference Honouraria	233.50	250.00
Conference Extension		517.39
BC Birds - Printing		784.00
BC Birds - Mailing	409.05	602.88
Postage & Comms	120.86	48.59
Bank Fees	128.79	
Insurance	750.00	750.00
Website	14.50	112.60
BC Society Fee	25.00	25.00
PO Box Rental	156.80	157.50
BCFO Awards	55.95	151.42
Total	8,068.00	12,089.10
Surplus	6,248.46	7,869.08
Savings Account	46,158.09	54,722.03
Chequing Account	9,800.46	9,669.54
Total	55,958.55	64,391.57

Submitted by Mike Fung, Treasurer

REPORT OF THE EDITOR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS

Volume 25 (2015) of *British Columbia Birds* was produced in March 2015. That volume presents a breeding bird atlas for the City of New Westminster, which may help BCFO engage people in the appreciation and conservation of birds in urban landscapes.

I currently have four manuscripts for Volume 26 (2 complete and 2 under revision), but we need a steady flow to continue to have *British Columbia Birds* published regularly. All members are encouraged to submit manuscripts and to encourage friends and colleagues to do likewise. This is your journal, and it has room for a diversity of papers on wild birds in British Columbia.

The quality of all of the papers is enhanced by our Editorial Board: Neil Bourne, Andy Buhler, Rob Butler, Mark Phinney and Mary Taitt. Thanks go to them as well as to the external reviewers of the papers, all of whom have given willingly of their time and thought. Neil Dawe again has done a splendid job of producing the journal and of placing the papers on the website.

Art Martell
Editor, *British Columbia Birds*.

REPORT OF THE EDITOR OF THE NEWSMAGAZINE

This was another good year for *BC Birding* – the four quarterly issues (Volume 24) were compiled and sent out close to the beginning of the appropriate months. As of the March issue, we changed the subtitle of this publication from "Newsletter (of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists)" to "Newsmagazine" to represent more closely its contents, which include news but also a wide variety of additional articles on birds and birding.

Each issue contained between 24 and 48 pages, altogether totaling of 128 pages. Contents included the usual variety of materials, ranging from regular news items and volunteered articles to short reports on sightings and unusual bird behaviour, BCFO field-trip reports, summaries of scientific articles, and a variety of advertisements for birding activities and researchers' requests for help.

I would like to thank all the regular contributors to *BC Birding*: Wayne Weber, Martin McNicholl, Clive Keen, Chris Charlesworth, Jenny Hards, Michael Church, George Clulow and Adrian Leather, and big thank you to the authors of all the other articles that appeared in the 2014 issues, to the photographers who provided images, to Jude Grass for proofreading, and to Mark Habbas for selecting photos and photo editing when

necessary. We hope for similarly interesting contents for *BC Birding* in 2015 but, as always, we need help from the membership because *this is your newsletter*. Please send in your contributions.

J.M.Ryder
Editor, *British Columbia Birding*

MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR THE 2015 AGM

MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY FOR 2014

The BCFO membership for the year 2014 was two hundred and twenty-one (221) regular members, four (4) honorary members, three (3) Young Birder Award Winners and seven (7) institutional members for a total of two hundred and thirty-five (235). There were seventeen (17) new members for 2014. Eighteen members (18) from 2013 failed to renew for 2014.

Of the regular, honorary, and YBA Winners 96% provided an email address. From those members 87% have opted to electronically access the NewsMagazine and 33% the Journal.

Membership by region using the Provincial Tourism Zones:

39% Vancouver Coast & Mountains (89) (4)*	1.8% USA (WA 2, ID 1, NJ 1) (2)*
22% Vancouver Island (51) (5)*	2.2% Alberta (5)
17% Thompson/Okanagan (38) (4)*	0.4% Ontario (1) (1)*
8% Northern BC (16) (2)*	0.4% Saskatchewan (1)
6% BC Rockies (13)	0.4% Nova Scotia (1)
3.9% Cariboo/Chilcotin Coast (9)	

() * Non-renewals

CURRENT 2015 MEMBERSHIP STATUS

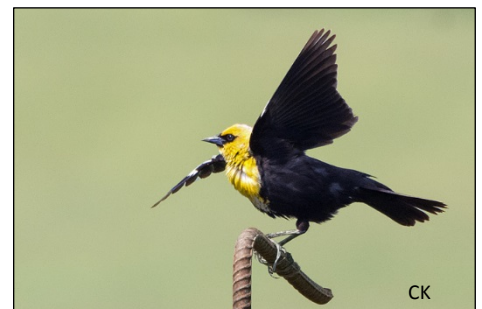
As of May 26/2015, BCFO membership stands at two hundred and fifty-four (254) regular members, four (4) honorary members, seven (7) Young Birder Award winners and seven (7) institutional members for a total of two hundred and seventy-two (272). There are fifty (50) new members. Fifteen (15) members from 2014 have yet to renew. Twenty-five (25) members have pre-paid their dues for 2016, and one (1) for 2017.

Membership by region using the Provincial Tourism Zones:

39% Vancouver Coast & Mountains (98) (1)	2% Alberta (5)
26% Vancouver Island (66) (2)	0% Saskatchewan (0) (1)
13% Thompson/Okanagan (33) (4)	0.4% Ontario (1)
7% Northern BC (18) (1)	0.4% Quebec (1)
5% BC Rockies (13) (3)	0.8% Nova Scotia (2)
4% Cariboo/Chilcotin Coast (11) (2)	0.4% Nunavut (1)
1.6% United States (4 – WA 1, ID 1, NJ 1, CO 1) (1)	0.4% Finland (1)

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Cowan
Membership Coordinator



BCFO AGM 2015, MAY 30 FIELDTRIP TO SAGEBRUSH COUNTRY,

Brian Self

I was just one of a large number of participants who had elected to take a field trip away from the Okanagan Valley floor and explore something a bit different.

After an excellent 5 a.m. cooked breakfast in the Community Centre, participants in the various field trips gathered in the parking lot for their early departures. We turned out to be 18 birders in five vehicles led by Michelle Dano, a 'Nature Conservancy of Canada' employee. NCC has recently purchased a parcel of land to add to three other acquisitions to create the **Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area**. Our aim was to visit two of these.

The Conservation Area is a 1390 hectare (3440 acres) of vital grassland habitat that extends north from the Canada – U.S. border near Osoyoos. It is part of the migratory corridor that connects the Canadian dry interior grasslands to the desert areas of the western U.S.A. Sagebrush Slopes and Sparrow Grasslands were acquired by NCC in 2012, South Block in 2014 and Kit Carr the most recent, only added this year. Nearby Kilpoola Lake, which we drove past, is an IBA. It's nice to see that this very important and sensitive habitat is being preserved and the Nature Conservancy of Canada encourages you to discover and explore it.



We drove to the foot of Richter Pass on Hwy 3 before turning south for the climb on minor paved and good gravel roads to Blue and Kilpoola Lakes. By 7 a.m. we were out of the vehicles at the start of the Sagebrush Slopes section at 745 metres elevation to walk a dirt road through sagebrush covered hillsides with pines and aspens in the gullies. We were a large group with some very capable birders along and a lot of people were calling the birds they were seeing and hearing. As I had been designated/coerced/ordered (the Society President was along) to make up the eBird species list, I spent a hectic first 10 minutes writing before getting around to actually looking at birds. We

quickly found seven species of sparrows, although not everyone saw all seven, Clay-colored was missed by many, but Lark Sparrows and Lazuli Buntings in scopes were a treat. Flycatchers were represented by Dusky, Wood-Pewee, Say's Phoebe, W. Kingbird, and W. Bluebird. I have us down for 20 House Wrens, which was a conservative count I think, as was the 50 singing Meadowlarks. There was a Gray Catbird up there, Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks, many Kestrels, and three species of Woodpecker. I recorded 36 species in the two hours we spent in this spectacular piece of habitat. And in case you haven't worked out the seven sparrows: Lark, Chipping, Vesper, Towhee, Clay-coloured, Savannah and Brewer's.



On the drive out from this first stop we had to drive by Blue and Kilpoola Lakes where we recorded 8 species of dabbling and diving ducks and two shorebirds, Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper.

A short drive from the two lakes brought us to Sagebrush-South Block, slightly higher at 900 metres elevation, and again we walked a dirt road along sagebrush slopes to get a look into a meadow below where Burrowing Owls were reputed to be nesting. Additions here were Lewis's Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher and a Rock Wren, well seen and scoped, on the bluffs above us. The owls were seemingly busy burrowing. On the drive out our vehicle spotted a Pied-billed Grebe on a tiny pond and our only Black-headed Grosbeak of the day.

Lunch was being served back in Oliver at noon, to be followed by the business part of the day, so our stay up here was all too short. This is definitely on my list of Okanagan special places to visit again, and we owe a big thank you to the NCC for saving it for us and many future generations.

Just a great morning out.

For more information about the Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area go to:

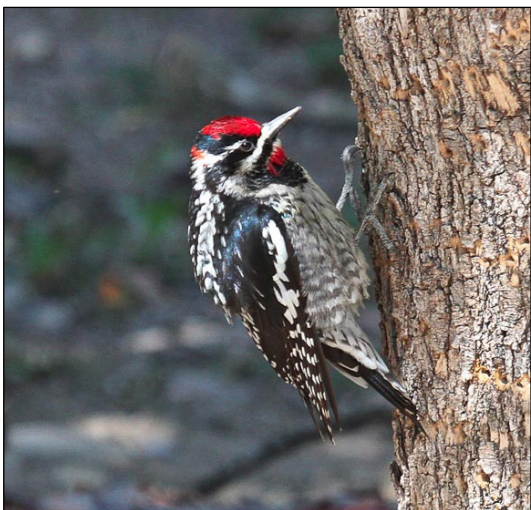
<http://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/british-columbia/featured-projects/sage-and-sparrow.html#.VeN8gZcWZIE>

For a map of the area showing access roads: http://www.natureconservancy.ca/assets/documents/bc/okanagan/Map-to-Sage-and-Sparrow-Conservation-Area-2014_web2.pdf Visitors should drive to designated parking places and then walk.

BCFO AGM 2015, MAY 30
ANARCHIST MOUNTAIN, LEHMAN SPRINGS & SIDLEY MOUNTAIN ROAD

Dave Boyd

We drove to Osoyoos, and at the junction of Hwys 3 and 97, met our guide, Doug Brown. Then in convoy we drove Hwy 3 eastward, up the switchbacks to the rolling ranch land on the east side of Anarchist Mountain at about 1100 m elevation. We turned north onto the east leg of Wagonwheel Road to our first stop at the Lehman Springs property – a small area of predominately coniferous forest recently donated to the Land Conservancy of BC (see note below). Then it was over the fence and onto partly overgrown tracks. Almost our first sighting was a Williamson's Sapsucker in the canopy, but it cooperated nicely and we all had excellent views. We continued to the SE boundary for another WISA and other species. Then we backtracked northward to view a Great Gray Owl, again very visible from the right location. Two target species in 30 minutes, with many other good sightings.



Red-naped Sapsucker (MH)

Note: The Lehman Springs property was donated to 'The Land Conservancy of BC' by local ranchers Dale and Anita Lehman and their family in 2003. This enabled protection of a significant stand of Western Larch, along with Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and spruce. Many of the larch trees are older than 600 years -- the stand has never been logged. This woodland is also habitat for birds such as Williamson's Sapsucker, other woodpeckers, owls and Swainson's Hawk (see Anarchist Mtn checklist on BCFO website for more). The area also includes nine natural artesian springs.

The Lehman Springs property is fragile, so general public access is not permitted, but visits can be arranged by contacting the Land Conservancy's office in Penticton.

BCFO AGM 2015, MAY 31
RICHTER PASS, NIGHTHAWK ROAD AND MT. KOBAN

Peter Candido

This trip, led by Don Wilson, began along Highway 3 with a stop at Spotted Lake where the group was treated to views of a pair of Wilson's Phalarope, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Bullock's Oriole, Brewer's Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak and Western Wood-Pewee, among others. Further along the road in Richter Pass, a single Chukar was observed standing on the cattle fence constructed of tires at the Elkink Ranch, and good telescope views of this sometimes elusive species were had by all. At the same stop, an adult Golden Eagle was spotted skimming the high ridge above us. Two American Kestrels, a Bald Eagle and Lesser Scaup were also tallied.

Then it was on to nearby Nighthawk Road where Say's Phoebe, Calliope Hummingbird, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows were noted. A male Bullock's Oriole showed well in the telescope, and Lark Sparrows were also cooperative. Sage Thrasher was a hoped-for possibility at this site, but despite a good search none was detected.

The group then headed up the Mt. Koban road, birding the first 3 km or so. Highlights here included good looks at several male Lazuli Buntings, a pair



Western Tanager

MH

of Mountain Bluebirds bringing food to a nest box, a singing male Cassin's Finch, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak and Red-naped Sapsucker. In all, 48 species were tallied on this field trip.

With time available at the end, the group opted to finish the morning with a stop at the junction of Black Sage Road and Road 22 to look for Yellow-breasted Chat, where two birds were heard and some in the group had brief views of one of these skulkers.

BCFO AGM 2015, MAY 30 ROAD 22 AND MCKINNEY ROAD

Ralph Currie

Don Wilson led a group of fifteen on this field trip. The first stop was the Gold Hill Winery – actually the corner of Road 22 and Highway 97 -- where notable sightings included Bobolinks, Wilson's Snipe, and a Marsh Wren. Virginia Rail and Sora were heard, and a very cooperative Willow Flycatcher was seen singing. A male Black-chinned Hummingbird that paused briefly at some flowers by the roadside and was seen by a few of us.

We then moved east on Road 22 to investigate the area around the Osoyoos Oxbows viewing platform. It yielded a pair of Grey Catbirds nesting in a rose and a large flock of juvenile Yellow-headed Blackbirds. We then moved across the river to check out the dyke on the east side. Yellow-breasted Chat had been seen in this area a few days earlier. Although there was no sign of the chat, we had good looks at a Western Wood-Pewee and a posing and singing Veery, as well as a female Black-headed Grosbeak building a nest right next to the path.

We continued east, turning right on Radio Tower Road, and stopping just south of the junction with Road 22. Yellow-breasted Chat were heard as soon as we got out of the cars, and within a few minutes everyone got good looks at the chat, as well as a singing Grey Catbird. We then moved up to the east end of Meadowlark Lane where a Grasshopper Sparrow was heard but not seen. Lazuli Buntings put on a nice show, and a walk to the bluff in the Haines Ecological Reserve yielded a singing Rock Wren. Some of our group found a Lark Sparrow and heard a distant Canyon Wren.

We continued fairly quickly north to McKinney Road (the lead car narrowly missing a Lewis's Woodpecker on Black Sage Road), stopping at about the ten kilometre point where both the Gray and Dusky flycatchers were heard and seen, as was a pair of Cooper's Hawks, which kept the birds down for a while. Species such as Cassin's Vireo, Mountain Chickadee, Calliope Hummingbird and all three species of nuthatch were also recorded.

We continued east to 'Woody's Landing' where the 'White-headed Woodpecker' (plywood) is still nailed to a tree. In terms of 'real birds', there was another sighting of the Gray Flycatcher and a great views of a singing Hammond's Flycatcher. At this point we turned around and started back to Oliver. At about kilometer five (at the two dead trees) we stopped to watch three Lewis's Woodpeckers make frequent visits to a pair of nest trees that were used by a number of species, including Bullock's Oriole. Continuing down McKinney Road, our final stop was about two kilometres from Oliver town centre where we had good looks at nesting Bank Swallows, although it had to be a brief stop as we could not effectively pull off the road. An excellent morning of birding with a good list and back to the Oliver Rec Centre just in time for lunch. Our thanks to Don -- who noted that the success of the morning was largely a result of the good ears and good eyes in the group birding McKinney Road:

(This account includes some notes from Peter Candido.)



Red-tailed Hawk!

Photo: Peter Candido

POST-CONFERENCE BLUES?

Adrian Leather

*Can you have too much of a good thing with
birding?
Of course not!*

And so it transpired, following the 2015 BCFO annual conference in Oliver, a wonderful weekend of birding which drew ninety birders. Whether listening for a Brewer's Sparrow among the evocative sonic landscape of Western Meadowlarks and Vesper Sparrows at Kilpoola Lake, staring in awe at the song-flight of a Yellow-breasted Chat at the Osoyoos Oxbows, relishing the sight of a female Williamson's Sapsucker on Anarchist Mountain, or trying your luck for desert specialties near Chopaka, nobody could have left disappointed.

But what happens after a conference?

At Sunday lunch, BCFO President, George Clulow, had wrapped things up by announcing the 2016 conference will be held in Cranbrook with some enticing possibilities for an extension trip (see p.6). Some members were preparing to embark on this year's exciting extension trip into Washington State while others pointed their vehicles homeward, and some, doubtless tired and somewhere on a big adrenaline curve, were still plotting birding adventures.

I returned to the 'Maple Leaf Motel & RV Park' and read the relevant section of *'Birdfinding in British Columbia'* by Russell and Richard Cannings. Feeling inspired, I ventured out to Anarchist Mountain near Osoyoos. Jerry McFetridge had been on the conference trip to Anarchist Mountain, and found it really interesting. On the high plateau, grasslands are interspersed with woodlands, ranches, and some very exclusive housing areas. The vistas of Osoyoos Lake from the mountain are truly breathtaking. I tried a short side road. A male Western Bluebird landed on a nearby tree, then a female bluebird appeared. I realized they were feeding young in a nest-hole in a snag. I heard a Lazuli Bunting singing, and

rotated the scope for another intense shot of red, white and blue. I watched a Golden Eagle circling.

I tried another spot and heard an Olive-sided Flycatcher, then heard a Swainson's Hawk. Suddenly it was circling directly above me, providing dream views of every textbook detail. A House Wren was explosively rattling away, and a Red-naped Sapsucker visited some well-hidden roadside sap-wells. The Swainson's Hawk landed in a tree so I trained my scope on it, and then heard the telltale sound of a birder's vehicle slowing down and stopping a polite distance away. "May I ask what you've got?" It was BCFO member, Wayne Weber. We walked along the road and checked out a forest. In quick succession we heard Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Pacific Wren, and the drumming of a suspected Three-toed Woodpecker. Two Steller's Jays flew in, and we could hear a Clark's Nutcracker. I walked towards the nutcracker and to my great surprise a Great Grey Owl flushed. I followed it through the trees with my bins and very fortunately it landed in sight. I called Wayne over, and we enjoyed a nice clear look with the Great Grey staring back at us. Perhaps the jays, nutcracker, and American Robins had been mobbing the owl? The owl terminated our staring contest by stepping onto a branch around the other side of the tree. We left, delighted with our sighting.

I awoke fairly early on Monday morning, grabbed



some breakfast in Oliver, then headed up Camp McKinney Road. It was surprisingly quiet apart from a distant Dusky Flycatcher. I watched a Mountain Chickadee visiting its nest chamber. I decided to walk downhill and after a short time, to my delight, a Grey Flycatcher started singing, and continued for five minutes. I saw it dart away through the trees. Relative silence reigned again. I recalled a visit to the area in the late-90s, when Laurie Rockwell tried to show myself and Debbie, my wife, a Grey Flycatcher. Laurie had heard it singing, but as we advanced gingerly, it flew, and that was that for a further fourteen years. The Grey Flycatcher sang again, but now only occasionally. I was scanning as many branches as I could, and just as the phrase 'needle-in-a-haystack' entered my mind, there he was, the little guy, perched near the end of a branch. He posed for about half-a-minute then flew off. I was working my way back down the hill, listening to a Nashville Warbler, when Jerry rang my cell and suggested meeting.

Jerry proposed driving to White Lake, where a Sage Thrasher had been seen. On arrival we looked up to watch White-throated Swifts zipping over the cliff, and admired a pair of Western Bluebirds. We moved along the road, a car had stopped by the roadside -- it was Chris Charlesworth of Avocet Tours. He mentioned that Peter Candido was out in the sage looking to photograph the thrasher. We joined Peter and enjoyed watching the thrasher foraging for insects, and delighted in its beautiful song.

Chris excitedly informed us that he'd seen a Baltimore Oriole at nearby St. Andrews Golf Course, a second record for Okanagan Valley. We arrived at the site, and shortly after, were joined by Laura Neish, who I remembered from the late 90s as a trip leader on a BC Nature Camp. We continued on, then, as we rounded a bend, there was Peter, and the Baltimore Oriole could be heard singing magnificently from some huge willows. We had no possibility of walking on the golf course, but very fortuitously the bird flew in our direction, continuing its beautiful song and providing great looks at its contrasting bright orange and jet black colouration. Wow! Laure's vehicle appeared and we waved her over, and she was thrilled to see the oriole.

We were on such an adrenaline high. Everything seemed to be going our way, but surely it couldn't continue, could it?

Jerry told me about a White-faced Ibis and a Hudsonian Godwit that had been seen at Beaver Ranch Flats near Nicola Lake. So instead of taking Hwy. 97.C, we drove along Hwy.5A from Merritt toward Kamloops. On arrival at the flats we espied a couple of birders, but they didn't appear to be focused on anything in particular. We asked about the birds and were informed they were seen a little

further north the previous day. So we stopped by the roadside and started to scan. Many ducks were present, also some Wilson's Phalaropes, a few Greater Yellowlegs and, to our surprise, a Common Grackle. Then, the words you want to hear, as Jerry said, "Oh, I think I've got it, yep, upturned bill". There it was, a superb Hudsonian Godwit, in stunning breeding plumage, and would you believe, just to its left was the White-faced Ibis! I've waited eighteen years in BC to see a Hudsonian Godwit, and Jerry and Lynne, I would guess, a few years more. We couldn't get enough of these beautiful birds, noting all the diagnostic features, and drinking-in these precious moments. The "hudwit" has a very noticeable habit of flicking its bill forward while feeding, of which we had been unaware.

We couldn't believe our good fortune, and felt this could surely be our best ever day's birding in BC, and here we were, post-conference, simply returning to Quesnel, from Oliver. What a conference, and what a trip!

MORE IMAGES



California Quail, Kelowna



Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area

BCFO EXTENSION TRIP TO EASTERN WASHINGTON, JUNE 1 – 3, 2015

Great Birds, Fascinating Geology

George Clulow and Carlo Giovanella

It's an expectation, and pretty much a guarantee, that the annual post-AGM Extension Trip will feature great birding and great birds. This year's excursion did both, and provided a significant bonus too. Not only did we see wonderful birds, but our birding was all done in an area of stunning natural beauty and dramatic geological features. What a backdrop we had to enjoy three days of outstanding birding!

Under the energetic and skillful leadership of Charlie Wright, we hit hotspot after hotspot, and saw highlight after highlight. Our first afternoon of birding, after crossing the border and driving south to Tonasket, was just a hint of what was to come. Eighteen Bobolink, our first Swainson's Hawk and a Williamson's Sapsucker were the highlights among the fifty-seven species we saw that afternoon.



Intrepid leader, Charlie Wright
Photo: Carlo Giovanella

Day 2, and on the road early, found the group heading up the into the forests along Moses Meadow Road looking for one of our target species, and we didn't have to wait long. Pretty much the first bird seen, at our first stop, was a male White-headed Woodpecker – a tad distant on a tree top, but shortly afterwards a female gave good looks for everyone. Talk about starting the day with on a high note!



There's a Gray Flycatcher up there somewhere!
Photo Carlo Giovanella

Continuing our search for ponderosa pine specialists, some careful stalking of a singing Gray Flycatcher finally resulted in good looks for everyone, but here we paid a price. Walking through the open forest's grassy understory, we



picked up more than a few wood ticks. The "tick stop" was a memorable moment but all for the wrong reasons. But once they were flicked-off and plucked-out, we were on our way again enjoying the birds and soaking up the landscapes, even if we were all squirming and scratching a little as we travelled along.

Gray Flycatcher
Photo: Carlo Giovanella

After the great start to the morning, we continued to rack up an impressive list of species. In all, we saw 110 species on day 2, our first full day in Washington and our highest single-day total.

And it wasn't just quantity. Notable birds we saw included: Cackling Geese, a surprise for everyone, Eared and Clark's Grebes, Black-necked Stilts, an American Avocet, Forster's Terns, and Rock Wrens.

Rock Wren
Photo: Carlo Giovanella



American Avocet
Photo Carlo Giovanella

An early start again on Day 3, and the group was headed for Tricolored Blackbird territory. En route, Para/McCain's Ponds provided great viewing of many wetland species. Surrounded by a dozen or so species of waterfowl, and with Red-winged Blackbirds all around, we were treated to a soundscape of over one hundred Yellow-headed Blackbirds choking, creaking, and chattering from the cattails and bulrushes. Meanwhile, a flock of forty or more American White Pelicans sailed gracefully past, and later provided a majestic flyover for the group.



American White Pelicans
Photo: George Clulow

While the commoner blackbirds were abundant, finding a Tricolored proved to be considerably more difficult. Lengthy scrutiny of blackbird flocks at a nearby cattle feeding operation finally turned up a single bird. But no sooner identified, than it promptly took flight before anyone could get really good looks. Fortune was on our side, however, and the bird was tracked to a quite distant fence line. Humping down the roadside, scopes over shoulders, we soon had the bird in our sights, giving reasonable scope views for everyone. Only one Tricolored Blackbird seen, but one "counts".



As we continued our journey, the regularly changing habitats offered us another fine selection of birds. Among the many highlights not already mentioned for Day 3 were: Black-crowned Night-Heron, Ferruginous Hawk, Wilson's Phalaropes, Loggerhead Shrikes, Canyon Wrens, Yellow-breasted Chats, Grasshopper and Sagebrush sparrows, and Lesser Goldfinches.

The final morning's birding, on Day 4, continued our successful run of finding target species. Right after breakfast, we were searching the mainly agricultural areas around Othello, and soon saw Long-billed Curlews striding across the fields, and a little further along a family of Burrowing Owls captured our attention for a while.



Burrowing Owls

Photo: Carlo Giovanella

Heading one last time into sagebrush country, and gaining some elevation too, we added Brewer's Sparrows to our list, and also saw another Grasshopper Sparrow, and some more Sagebrush Sparrows. Ending the trip on a high-elevation plateau overlooking the Columbia River, reinforced the feeling that not only had we seen fantastic birds, but the landscapes provided a stunning backdrop too.



Palouse Falls

Photo: Carlo Giovanella

Chanelled Scablands, outflow channels, giant current ripples, potholes, glacial erratics and flood basalts describe some of the natural features and landscapes through which we birded. The awesome geology of Eastern Washington provided a dramatic setting for our travels. Gigantic glacial floods, and stupendous volcanic eruptions have created unique landscapes in this part of Washington. We were fortunate to have birder/geologist/photographer Carlo Giovanella along with us to interpret, and help us to see not only the birds, but the landscape too.



The Group

Photo: Anon

Summary of Sightings (eBird)

Date range: May 31, 2015 - Jun 3, 2015 Total # of Species: 149 plus 2 other taxa

Total # of Checklists: 20

Location(s):

Baird Springs Rd; Birder's Corner--Desert WLA; County Line Ponds (Grant Co.); Disautel Pass; Dry Falls Interpretive Center; Grand Coulee; Lemaster Rd; Lower Crab Creek Road; Lyman Lake-Moses Meadows Rd; Lyons Ferry Park; Montlake Park, Moses Lake; Moses Lake, south of I-90; Okanogan Highlands--Bobolink field, Havillah Rd.; Okanogan Highlands-Havillah Sno Park; Palouse Falls State Park; Para/McCain's Ponds; Soap Lake; US-WA-LaCrosse - 46.6567x-118.2649 - Apr 20, 2014, 7:19; WA - Okanogan - HWY 155 Marsh; Washtucna STP.

Summary	May 31	Jun 1	Jun 2	Jun 3
Number of species	57	110	85	43
Number of Individuals	320	716	1,294	221
Number of Checklists	2	8	7	3



THE NEWS IS GRIM

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has released the latest version of its annual 'red list' of threatened species. The list recognizes four categories of organisms: vertebrates, invertebrates (including insects), plants and fungi-lichens-algae. These groups make up a total of 1.73 million known organisms, of which 'only' 76,000 (4.4%) have been evaluated for extinction threat. Of the assessed total, 51% are vertebrates, and that group includes 59% of known vertebrates. All 5513 described mammals and 10,425 described bird species are evaluated, but there are lesser proportions of known reptiles, amphibians and fishes. In fact, the mammals and birds are probably mostly known, there being today but a small number of additions per decade, mostly from South America and southeast Asia. It is estimated (or, rather, blindly guessed) that the total number of organisms encompassed by the assessment groups (microorganisms, such as bacteria, are excluded) falls between 2 and perhaps 50 million; most of the missing probably being deep sea organisms and insects.

Overall, 29.4% of the evaluated organisms are considered to be under threat: that is 22,413 species! (But one must beware of a deliberate bias in that number: the IUCN directs attention to organisms known or suspected to be threatened.) The number has increased by about 1000 in the past year and has doubled in 12 years (partly, no doubt, because of improved information as well as a deteriorating prognosis).

Well, what about the birds? IUCN judges that 1373 species – 13% of described species – are currently under threat of extinction. In comparison 26% of mammals and 41% of described amphibians are currently threatened. The latter, catastrophic, figure is the consequence of viral diseases that currently are ravaging populations of amphibians. In comparison, only 1% of investigated insects are under threat, but only 0.5% of known insect species was studied, and known species are estimated to be less than 20% of the probable number of species, so who knows what's really with the insects?

In comparison with this picture, 145 species of birds, recently with us (that is, within recent centuries) are now extinct (compared with 79 mammals). Threat of extinction clearly is gathering steam. Experts fear that, within a few centuries, Earth may experience a 'mass extinction' (loss of 75% or more of species), comparable with five such events (all due to natural geophysical causes) that have previously occurred in Earth's history -- and had startling effects on the evolution of life. Current rates of extinction are reckoned to fall somewhere between 10 and about 700 per week: the higher figure being the wildly guessed

consequence of not really knowing what's going on with marine creatures or insects.

In Canada, COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) maintains the list of endangered species. It currently contains 3 extinct bird species, 2 that are extirpated at least from part of their range and 29 species considered to be endangered. 'Endangered', however, means at risk of extirpation from a significant part of the range but not necessarily everywhere. Thus Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) is endangered in Newfoundland and Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) is considered to be extirpated in British Columbia.

Why are creature so severely threatened? Experts assign 37% of losses to deliberate exploitation by humans (hunting, fishing), 31% to habitat degradation and change and 13% to outright habitat loss. Climate change (7%), impact of invasive species (5%), pollution (4%) and disease (2%) are presently lesser effects. (The disease effect is surprisingly low considering the current plight of amphibians – again, lack of knowledge about what has actually expired may be a reason for this.) For birds, the habitat factors are probably dominant, but hunting has been important in the past (remember the Passenger Pigeon, extinct just one century ago) and may still threaten some species.

References

The IUCN website, with detailed tables, is at <http://www.iucnredlist.org/about/summary-statistics>

The COSEWIC detailed report is at http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct0/index_e.cfm#sar

Monastersky, R. 2014. Life – a status report. *Nature* 516: 159-161. (a brief summary with graphic display).

Summary by M.Church

The Great Auk was a large alcid that became extinct in the mid-19th Century. The large, flightless bird, easily caught by hunters, was valued for its meat, eggs and down (the equivalent of eider-down). As it became increasingly rare, it was targeted more and more by collectors. Although protected by early environmental laws, the population continued to decline. The last pair was killed by hunters for a collector in 1844.



Based on Wikipedia

HAMILTON MACK LAING'S COLLECTING TRIP TO ROSSLAND, B.C., JUNE - AUGUST, 1929.

By Bill Merilees

In 1925 Dr. Rudolf Anderson, Chief Mammalogist at the National Museum in Ottawa, conceived an ambitious plan to undertake an exhaustive survey of birds, mammals, and herptiles along British Columbia's southern border, from tide water to the Rocky Mountains (Mackie, 1985). This four year project is sometimes referred to as "The Boundary Survey". Field work began in the spring of 1927, starting at the coast and proceeded inland as far as Princeton.

Hamilton Mack Laing (1883 – 1982), usually referred to as "Mack", was then settled at Comox, B.C. In 1927 Anderson hired Mack to assist Charles "Bugs" Young, veteran field collector at the National Museum of Canada.



Mack's interest in nature began at an early age in Manitoba. Through his writings he came to the attention of Percy Taverner, Chief Ornithologist at the National Museum of Canada. In 1921 he was hired by Taverner to become his summer field assistant. Becoming a seasonal museum collector allowed Mack to apply his skills as a hunter, teacher, naturalist, writer, artist and photographer, with the added benefit of being paid travel expenses along with a reasonable salary (Mackie, 1985). During the 'non field season' of October to April, he would return to Comox to resume his writing, illustrating and personal collecting interests.

During the third field season (1929) for the area between Osoyoos and Yahk, Mack was given full responsibility for the survey, assisted by summer student Elgin Hall from Ontario. Field work began at Osoyoos on May 6th, their second camp was at Midway (May 27th to June 12th), and between June 15th and August 6th they collected around Rossland, in the vicinity of Green and Old Glory Mountains (Laing, 1929A & 1929B).

Mack's hiring by Anderson in 1927 was tinged with controversy, as it placed Mack, to quote Mackie (p. 77) *"in the most acrimonious personality conflict in early twentieth-century Canadian Science: that between National Museum rivals Rudolf Anderson and Percy Taverner"*. Despite this clash of personalities, Mack completed the boundary survey for Anderson but also remained close friends with Taverner.

From a West Kootenay perspective, in 1922, after his summer work for Taverner, Mack made a short excursion east from the Okanagan Valley into the West Kootenay. From Rossland he wrote, *"My last view eastward disclosed at 2,000 feet below, the desert of the Columbia Valley – blue-hazy, burning: that man-made desert that is more gruesome than any work of Nature. The blight of the poison gas from the Trail Smelter has killed and left the blanched skeleton of a forest at its feet"*. (Mackie, p. 150). No wonder, that during his 1927 boundary survey season, the high country in the vicinity of Rossland was the only area he surveyed!

Twenty-five years earlier (1902), four years before the commencement of smelter operations, William Spreadborough had collected in the same general area when he travelled down the Columbia River collecting and observing birds from Revelstoke to Trail and Rossland before heading west along the Dewdney Trail to Cascade (Christina Lake). (Merilees, 2012).

The Laing party's collecting record for the Rossland area yielded 155 small mammals and 21 birds of 9 species (Laing, 1929A). In addition to this specimen tally, Laing also compiled a list of 64 bird species observed during this period. This field work did not add any new species for the West Kootenay Study area but contributed multiple specimens and observations of higher elevation species, notably American Three-toed Woodpecker, Fox Sparrow and Hermit Thrush.

As a hand written addendum to Laing's list (Laing, 1929A), believed to be in Anderson's hand writing, was the report of a Dicksissel observed at Trail. No date or other details are given and therefore this record is hypothetical. Birds of B.C. Vol. 4, (Campbell et al. 2001) accepted six records for this species between 1922 and 2000, designating the status of the Dicksissel as Casual.

Acknowledgements:

The author would like to thank the staff of the National Museum of Canada for providing copies of Laing's field notebook and trip report for this expedition, and Lesley Kennes of the Royal British Columbia Museum and Betty Brooks for their assistance.

Copies of Laing's unpublished reports (1929A & 1929B) have been deposited in the Selkirk College Library in Castlegar, B.C.

Photo: Mack Laing Heritage Society of Comox Valley.<

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NOTE: The above article is part of a series on the early ornithologists who laid the groundwork for our understanding of West Kootenay birds. Previous articles in this series have appeared in British Columbia Birds, most recently: H.H.Currie in Vol.24, 2014; Dr. J.E.H.Kelso in Vol.23, 2013; and William Spreadborough in Vol.22, 2012.

MEMORABLE AVIAN ENCOUNTERS #1

"WHAT WAS THAT?"

"A Downy Woodpecker! It hit the window while being chased by another."

So out I went to pick up the male Downy, which was splayed on the deck. Being rather chilly outside on a late November afternoon, I brought it inside, cradling it in my hands to keep it warm and calm.

Over half an hour later it appeared ready for release.

Not anxious to leave, it rested in my hand for a fair while before taking wing, boomeranging to the left and landing on my leg. Overcoming my immediate delight, I gestured through the closed sliding door for my wife to get the camera.

She took several photos with the door closed. Cautiously, I slid the door open for better pictures as it continued to cling to my leg. Though the lighting was poor for really good shots, my wife managed to get several photos before the Downy flew away.

The whole episode took about an hour with the bird on my leg over seven minutes. Having carefully studied the woodpeckers coming to the suet and able to identify individuals by their markings, it was with great relief that I saw this Downy the next day and throughout the remainder of the winter.

A truly memorable encounter.

Dennis Leonard



MEMORABLE AVIAN ENCOUNTERS #3

It is so nice to relax on the deck in the middle of a Spring afternoon while the sun beats down. Occasionally, a surprise occurs to create a memorable moment.

I happened to hear a Red-breasted Nuthatch "ank, ank, ank" a few times from the trees about 20 m (65 ft) away. So, I did a nasal call back to it as I've often done in the past.

After another chat with it, the nuthatch moved to the birch tree 10 m (32 ft) off the deck. So, the conversation continued a few times. Don't know what I was saying, but I imagined I was getting a response.

Whoa! The male nuthatch flew to the feeder pole on the corner of the deck just above the railing. So, I called again receiving a surprising response like a cat hissing back at me. Of course you know what I did next, I called another time.

After that call, the bird flew within an arm length of my head, landing on the back of the chair on the opposite side of the table. He strongly hissed again. Yes, I called again, but this time his response was a call. I guess my next call told him to fly to the feeder pole again, because that's what he did. One more "ank, ank, ank" from him and he flew off into the forest. No, I didn't tell him to do that.

Dennis Leonard

Since 2006, I've had many conversations with nuthatches only to be rebuffed by them all, but, still grateful for such a memorable encounter.



NOTE: Memorable Avian Encounters #2 will appear in the next issue.

YOUNG BIRDERS IN ACTION

Melissa Hafting and Carlo Giovanella

The BCFO Young Birders Program to date has inducted seven new members into the BCFO, 3 in [2014](#), and 4 in [2015](#). This brief report summarizes some of their recent activities. In general, all are continuing with their birdy pursuits and most enter eBird data on a regular basis. Several are very active posters on local bird forums and are well-known, prominent members of the birding community. Two of our YBs were selected to attend the Bird Studies Canada [summer workshop](#) for youths at Long Point, Ontario; Liron Gertzman went in 2014, and Joshua Brown attended in 2015. Liron has been a virtual whirlwind of activity. In addition to attending Long Point, his list of accomplishments include: organizing a successful pelagic trip to Triangle Island; having two images selected in the 'top 100' in a photo contest sponsored by the National [Audubon Society](#); offering instruction in photographing shore birds at Boundary Bay; publishing a short photo-essay in 'British Columbia Birds'; arranging a very successful [showing](#) of his bird photography at an art gallery in downtown Vancouver as a fund-raiser for the Stanley Park Ecology Society, of which he has been a very active member for about four years. One has to wonder what he will come up with next! Logan Lalonde has become a major player on the Okanagan scene. He co-lead a BCFO field trip near Kelowna, and also helped plan a youth Okanagan Big Day (next paragraph).

The real action involves the field trips organized specifically for the youngsters (keep in mind, we do call ourselves the BC **FIELD** Ornithologists!). The first outing was organized by Russell Cannings in May 2014 when he invited young birders to camp at his parents' Penticton estate and participate in the Okanagan Meadowlark Festival's Big Day. When Russ left the continent the reigns were passed over to Melissa Hafting who organized a similar event for 2015, and this May there was another successful happening with seven youngsters participating. Here is Melissa's account of the event.

Russell Cannings asked me to help out alongside Tom Plath, Pablo Jost, Cathy Reader-Lee and Warren Lee at the 'Okanagan Youth Big Weekend' in the south Okanagan this past May long weekend (May 15-18). It was part of the 'Great Canadian Birdathon' (more information [here](#)). We had a total of 150 species in just over two days and all donations raised went to 'Bird Studies Canada'. Our group's big day produced 128 species and we scored 120 for the Vaseux Lake count area. Youth attendees were Logan Lalonde, Joshua Brown, Liam Singh, Liron Gertsman, Emma Reader-Lee, Rebecca Reader-Lee and Sandro Jost. Highlights of the weekend, which included many lifers, were: Black Terns, Gray Partridge, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Dusky Grouse (a male), American Redstart (breeding male), Red-necked Phalarope, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lewis's Woodpecker, Veery, Common Poorwill,

Flammulated Owl and many others! We saw bears and Mountain Goat, which was a mammal lifer for many!

During our trip we heard about the White-faced Ibis that had been seen in Knutsford! So we decided to go twitch them, and were rewarded with 12 beautiful birds!! We were all so happy because this bird was a Lifer for almost all on the trip both young and old!

It was an amazing weekend and Logan Lalonde did a great job of organizing everything on his home turf! Thanks also to Russ and Dick Cannings who did a lot of the planning and who one again opened up their home to the young birders. All of the youth involved constantly amazed me with their joy, enthusiasm and knowledge! We had a great time birding from the Nicola Valley to the Osoyoos Oxbows!.



From Left to Right: Liron Gertsman, Josh Brown, Logan Lalonde, Emma Reader-Lee, Liam Singh, Rebecca Reader-Lee, Sandro Jost. Photo by Warren Lee.

But Melissa did not stop there. In June she rented a van and took a group of young participants to bird in Manning Park. Here again is her account.

On June 13th I organized a youth birding trip to Manning Park. Ten youth participated in the event, coming from as far away as Victoria! Three adults joined me to help supervise, and I am grateful for their support: Becke Sawatzky, Cathy Reader-Lee and Warren Lee. We spent 8 hours at the park birding! We all had an incredible time.

We left Vancouver at 7 am and stopped at Popkum to view some nesting Western Kingbirds, a lifer and treat for many of the children. We also found a Gray Catbird, another lifer for some! At Hope airport we saw many Eastern Kingbirds and Black-headed Grosbeaks. Upon arrival at Manning Park (just before 10 am), where we met other young birders from Chilliwack and Victoria, we viewed dozens of Rufous Hummingbirds at feeders and Red-breasted

Sapsuckers, fledgling Clark's Nutcrackers with their parents, Evening Grosbeaks, Common Ravens, and Columbian Ground Squirrels - and this was just at the lodge! At this point the kids were in heaven feeding the ground squirrels, it wasn't easy to pull them away but since it was a birding trip I did just that, and we went on for our birding adventure.

Our first stop was Strawberry Flats where I hoped to show them a Three-toed Woodpecker! But before we even got there, we found a beautiful Black Bear beside the road! The kids were thrilled. As we walked with hopeful hearts there was no sound of tapping or a woodpecker calling. We did hear many Sooty Grouse and Mountain Chickadees though! So as we came to the end of our planned trail (about 4.5 km) we decided to turn around and head back, still hoping for a woodpecker. And what do you know, after meeting some Gray Jays I said "look kids there is a male Three-toed!!" and one flew right in front of us! It was a lifer for almost all in the group, and they got lovely close shots, when the bird flew on to the tree trunk in front of us!

We also ended up seeing two Red-naped Sapsuckers and a gorgeous Nashville Warbler (both lifers for many!) The warbler gave us stunning views, uncommon for Manning Park. We also had two Black Swifts, and Hermit and Swainson's thrushes singing in the same tree, plus an obliging Pacific Wren. So our walk in was not too eventful but our walk out was pretty special indeed! This is why I told the kids you must never give up when birding!

After lunch beside Lightning Lake, we went up to the Heather Trail hoping for Boreal Chickadee. We did a long hike here and enjoyed beautiful scenery and ended up photographing many Yellow-bellied Marmots, Chipping Sparrows, Townsend's Warblers

and Hermit Thrushes, but sadly we dipped on the Boreals. We had a great time learning about the alpine flowers, and had stunning views of the Cascade Mountains. We were hoping to see a Northern Goshawk here, as we had previously, but no joy this go around.

After a stop at Cascade Lookout where we saw a Mountain Bluebird, we descended and hiked around Beaver Pond, where we got a few Yellow-rumped Warblers. Then we went around Lightning Lake once more to see if we could find any grouse like Spruce or Sooty. We ended up with another Red-naped Sapsucker, an Olive-sided Flycatcher, and a large family of 11 Barrow's Goldeneye ducklings.

So our great adventure came to an end. We were all tired and hungry and decided to go celebrate our fantastic day at a restaurant in Hope. We had a delicious dinner full of laughs (as we had all day!) and a big piece of pie. We discussed all we had seen and began to plan our next big trip.

Melissa Hafting

But there is still more ahead! Melissa has chartered a boat for a Juan de Fuca pelagic birding trip with Guy Monte as expert leader. Fifteen youngsters are signed up for that. She had offered an alternative of a mountain hike to search for ptarmigan, and the kids were so keen she is now also planning such a hike to Blackcomb Mountain at Whistler. The youngsters (and the BCFO) are hugely grateful to Melissa for her tireless efforts, encouragement, and dedication on their behalf.

Note: The field excursions described above were not official BCFO events, but they were led by BCFO members. BCFO is currently arranging for direct sponsorship and support for future youth field trips.

The British Columbia Field Ornithologists YOUNG BIRDER AWARD

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR 2016

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

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

BCFO is seeking nominations for our next round of 'Young Birder' awards. Our previous awardees (see Newsletters for March 2014 and 2015) are carrying on in impressive fashion, and we expect there are more like them out there

Send queries and nominations to: cgio@telus.net

MEMORABLE AVIAN ENCOUNTERS #4

"Hurry, hurry, hurry." (No, the next part is not "hurry hard" as this wasn't at the curling rink, though it was winter time.) "There's a warbler on the deck railing," became another memorable avian moment on December 10, 2010, in Clearwater, BC.

Questions arose. Will it go to the black-oil sunflower seed feeder? Will it like the homemade suet? Will it eat fat from the wire cage?

Well, it only seemed to eat bits of suet and fat dropped by other birds while they ate at the feeder pole. It must have stopped to fuel up for migration.

"It's baaaack," was the excited shout the next day. Again, it only ate the dropped suet and fat before flying into the woods. Believing it wasn't going to get enough to eat, I grated more suet onto the railing. Shortly, it returned to feed again.

"It's baaaack," turned into "Warbie's baaaack," It was a Yellow-rumped Warbler, specifically, a Myrtle, though only Audubon's had ever been identified on the property. Later, the shouts weren't quite as exuberant as 'Warbie' appeared each day throughout the winter. Of course, I grated suet onto the railing, sometimes twice a day. Also, with heavy snowfalls, one must create some sort of cover for the suet. Other species and a squirrel enjoyed that as well.

Then in late March and early April, things began to change. Those things were feathers as 'Warbie' began to moult. The challenge to get photos documenting the change in attire resulted in considerable time on the deck waiting for the bird to arrive or waiting for brighter skies. Gray skies meant too slow a shutter speed to get good photos without a DSLR camera. This was well before the recent popular motion-detection cameras.

The ultimate look was not captured since 'Warbie' left for parts unknown on April 22, 2011. Perhaps, he was persuaded to leave by a male Audubon's in full breeding plumage that was spotted a day later.

Thus, one memorable avian moment became one memorable winter.

Dennis Leonard



(1)



(2)



(3)

Note from Master Bander Derek Mathews: "This bird is an SY (second year) having the 1st prealternate molt, producing 3 sets of feathers – retained juvenal, formative and 1st alternate feathers."

For more photos of Warbie's moult see Mark Habdas's website at (<http://www.birdsphotography.com/members/dennis/>) and check out Mark's site for other beautiful photos.

THE TROPICAL FOREST BLUES

The tropical forests of the Americas, Africa and southern Asia are home to the greatest abundance of bird species on Earth. But the forests are disappearing, and so are the birds. The forests are disappearing due to clearance for agriculture and due to logging. Special attention focuses on forests that are managed for continuing logging because it is those forests, along with forest parks and reserves that will provide habitat for tropical forest birds in the future. Most tropical logging is selective logging: the forest never entirely disappears. But pervasive effects of the logging include poor road design, construction and maintenance; unsustainably high wood extraction rates; and poor silvicultural management. The diversity of tropical forests, of human activities in the forests, and of birds in the forests' makes it difficult to draw any general lessons about the impact of forest exploitation. However, a group of researchers has now gone some way to overcome this gap by conducting a meta-analysis (an analysis of prior reports) that summarizes 4283 cases of tropical forest harvest, taking into account the response of 992 bird species, yielding, on average, 4.3 case studies (range 1 to 12) for each bird species.

The researchers strongly suspected that both characteristics of the logging and characteristics of the birds, as well as interactions between the two, are significant indicators of avian response to forest harvest. Accordingly, they considered harvest type (conventional practice, reduced impact logging), harvest intensity (how much wood is extracted per hectare), time since last harvest, and number of harvest cycles conducted in the forest. For the birds, they recorded feeding group (frugivores; nectarivores; granivores, herbivores, insectivores, carnivores, omnivores), diet breadth (narrow to wide), body mass, nesting type (tree nesters; cavity nesters; ground nesters), range extent, and hunting pressure (including trapping for the pet trade). Finally, they added continental location to the list. The response variable was 'change in abundance, by species'. For each case, there was a 'treatment unit' (i.e., logged forest tract) and a matching 'control unit' (unlogged forest tract).

They found 2022 cases of negative responses by birds (reduction in abundance) to forest harvest and surprisingly, 2052 positive responses (but some of those were likely temporary), and 209 neutral cases. The most important factors affecting bird responses were found to be harvest type, time since last harvest, feeding group, and hunting pressure. Harvest type effectively categorizes the intensity of the forest disturbance while time since harvest is a measure of recovery potential. Amongst bird traits, feeding group was most predictive of avian response, but also most variable. Frugivores and insectivores were strongly negatively impacted: trees bearing edible fruits tend to be removed and the open clearings post-logging are much less supportive of insects than an intact forest understorey. But it is puzzling that insectivore loss appears to be long-term, persisting even after the understorey grows back. In contrast, nectarivores and granivores benefit from the

forest openings, where flowers and grasses flourish, but they tend to fall off again as the forest canopy closes up. Carnivores also benefit from forest clearings, possibly because they gain more visible hunting space. Curiously, birds subject to hunting pressure appear to benefit from forest harvest – the reason remains unclear. The temporary nature of some of these effects leads to a demonstrable interaction effect between feeding group and time since harvest. Discouragingly, complete recovery of bird communities is not observed even 40 years after the last harvest and there is an overall net decline in bird abundance. But all of the established causative factors together explain only 32% of the observed variation in bird abundance – clearly, there remains much to learn.

The results do have useful lessons for tropical forest management, however. To sustain bird (and probably animal) populations, tropical logging needs to adopt reduced impact practices and extended rotation times, and forest heterogeneity must be maintained; for example, individual tree species – especially fruit- and nut-bearing trees – should not be entirely logged out.

There is a more general lesson in this story as well. Forty years ago these results would have been inaccessible. The huge expansion of reported observational studies since has enabled the more universal results reported here. This is an important outcome to consider when pondering whether or not to archive your own observations (on e-bird perhaps) or to join organized regional surveys, even if your observations are not so systematic as those that underlie the tropical forest meta-analysis.

Reference

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Summary by M. Church

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Bewick's Wren

Photographer: Mark Habdas

