

BC BIRDING

Newsmagazine of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists

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Sculpting the Wood-Pewee nest – Photos by John Gordon, taken during a Conference trip to Moberly Marsh. See page 11.

Publisher

BC Birding is published four times a year by the British Columbia Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 61670, RPO Brookwood, Langley, BC V3A 1K0.

A subscription to this quarterly is a benefit of membership in the society. Members will also receive a copy of the annual journal, *British Columbia Birds*.

About the BCFO

Membership in BCFO is open to anyone interested in the study and enjoyment of wild birds in British Columbia.

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

Membership

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

Annual Membership Dues

General Membership (Canada): \$30

Junior Membership (Canada): \$20

U.S. and International Membership: \$35

Newsmagazine Submissions

To submit material to this publication, contact the Editor by email (clive_keen@hotmail.com). Books for review should be sent to 10790 Grassland Road, Prince George, BC V2K 5E8.

Photographs should be in mid-resolution jpg (preferably 1–4 MB, and articles should be in plain text, either as the content of an email, or as an attachment (preferably Word). Topics may include birding experiences, casual observations about bird behaviour, site guides, birding equipment, trip reports (including overseas trips), and other subjects of broad interest to birders. Brief items are always welcome, but average submissions tend to be in the 400–600 word range. For longer submissions the normal maximum length is 1,500 words. Note that this is a newsmagazine rather than an academic journal, and thus formal reference lists are not needed.

Deadlines (i.e. final dates for submission of material) are as follows. Material received after the deadline will be held over to the subsequent edition.

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Young Birders Program: Melissa Hafting

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Cannings Award Committee: Wayne Weber (Chair), Art Martell, Dick Cannings.

Conservation and Education Committee: Gary Davidson (Chair), Art Martell, Gerald McKeating, Stephen Partington, Marian Porter.

Young Birder Awards Committee: Carlo Giovanella (Chair), George Clulow, Melissa Hafting.



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Photos: Great Gray Owl shots by Kalin Ocana, taken during the Young Birders' Kamloops trip – see page 18.



President's Message

Marian Porter, Salt Spring Island

After many months of planning the Golden AGM and Conference was a memorable and successful event. Local field-trip leaders as well as BCFO members conducted a varied selection of trips with great birding.

I took a small group to visit the property of BCFO member Gerhardt Lepp beside the Columbia River and wetlands, where he maintains stewardship of the birds, bats and turtles on his land. We continued on to the Dutch Creek Hoodoos to see White-throated Swifts and unexpectedly found a flock of Black Swifts further down the road. I look forward to reading about the other field-trip experiences during the conference.

Rachel Darvill provided an overview of the impressive efforts of many local citizen-scientist volunteers involved with the Columbia Wetlands Waterbird Survey over a five-year period to collect baseline data on waterbirds which will support the inclusion of the Columbia

Wetlands into the Important Bird and Biodiversity Program. Data collected for the Columbia Wetlands Marsh Bird Monitoring Project will enable population estimates for target species of waterbirds to assist in achieving an IBA designation.

Vance Mattson took us on a virtual tour of the local mountains during his presentation of the results of a study to determine the breeding population of Golden Eagles in the southern Rocky Mountains of British Columbia. In a region with no baseline data identifying breeding territories for the species, 38 breeding pairs were discovered in the 2018 season, with another eleven sites requiring further investigation.

The banquet presentation on long-term monitoring of songbird populations in Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Park revealed some unexpected results showing population declines in some previously common species, with no obvious explanation in the protected environment of a National Park. Collecting basic data on bird populations is important so monitoring in the future will help us understand how they are responding to the challenges of a changing environment and climate. Your membership and support of the annual conference and extension trips

enables BCFO to give financial support to some of these important projects, and the Board of Directors would like to see a greater participation in both events.

An online survey has been proposed, and when the details have been finalized at the next board meeting, you will be invited to give us your feedback on how the organization may better serve the membership. We need to understand the requirements of our long-term members while encouraging a newer generation to become involved in our activities and assist in running the organization.

The Southern Alberta extension trip accomplished a bird list with virtually all target species, and we would like to continue with this program in areas members would be excited to explore.

The annual AGM and conference is an unforgettable experience providing an intense weekend immersed in the birds, the people and conservation issues providing a greater appreciation and understanding of a unique area of our province. It is a time to reconnect with the birding community, reflect on the past and look to the future. I hope you will assist us in determining what that future will be.

Photo below: a Forster's Tern photographed by Jim Cosgrove at Frank Lake during this year's pre-conference trip (see page 7).

Welcome New Members



Marianne Baharustani - Vancouver

Ken Burrell - Kitchener, ON

Larry Joseph - Hazelton

Karen Kellett - Prince George

Greg Klein - Vancouver

Paul Prappas - Nelson

Steve Cannings Award

2019: Neil Dawe

Art Martell, Courtenay

The 2019 recipient of the Steve Cannings Award is Neil Dawe of Parksville. Neil was born in New Westminster and raised in Squamish and Burnaby. After high school, he tried UBC (without direction), followed by two years as an ironworker, and seven years as a banker. In 1970, following his banking career, he returned to UBC to study astronomy but changed plans when, through Wayne Campbell, he developed an interest in birds. He sought to learn more about them and their natural history, soon joining the Vancouver Natural History Society and serving on their Board as Treasurer.

In 1971, Neil worked as a Park Naturalist with BC Parks Branch, establishing the first nature interpretation program at Wasa Provincial Park. Later that year he was offered the position of Chief Naturalist at the George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary. He held that post until December 1974 when, encouraged by R.D. (Bob) Harris, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), he left Reifel to accept a position as Habitat Manager of the CWS National Wildlife Areas and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries on Vancouver Island.

Upon arrival to the island in 1975, Neil was met with a request from Elton Anderson, President of the Federation of BC Naturalists, asking if he would accept the position of Regional Vice-President of the Federation for Vancouver Island, a position he held for three years. He was accepted into the Association of Professional Biologists of British Columbia in 1988 and is currently a member of the College of Applied Biology, British Columbia, and a Registered Professional Biologist.

In 1990, Neil co-founded the Brant Festival and was its co-Chair for the first five years (1991–1995). The festival's main goals were to celebrate the arrival of the talkative little sea goose and to protect the Brant habitat in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach area. The latter goal was met in 1993 with the

creation of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area.

Neil was a Director of the Mid-Island Wildlife Watch Society (1990–2006) and a founding Director of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve Foundation (1996–2001). The Parksville-Qualicum Beach and surrounding areas were officially designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve in 2000 as the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region. In 1997, he was given a two-year appointment to the Healthy Community Advisory Commission of the City of Parksville, BC.

Neil retired in 2006 after 31 years with the Canadian Wildlife Service,

Environment Canada. Following his retirement, he became the first Canadian Director of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, Arlington, Va. (2006–2012) and encouraged a number of organizations in British Columbia, including the BCFO, to adopt a position on the fundamental conflict between economic growth and biodiversity conservation. He is a founding Director and currently President of the Qualicum Institute, a society for ecological, social, and economic sustainability.

Neil has authored or co-authored over 100 scientific, technical, and popular books or articles on sustainability,

Neil Dawe, 2019 Steve Cannings Award recipient, and Marian Porter, BCFO President. Photo by Art Martell.



wildlife, estuarine ecology, and conservation and was a principal author of *The Birds of British Columbia*. His reports on the bird use of estuaries along the east coast of Vancouver Island contributed to the creation of the Baynes Sound and Little Qualicum to Nanoose Bay IBAs. He also played a role in the protection of the Englishman River, Cluxewe River, and Marble River estuaries. His recent papers document the damage to the estuarine marsh vegetation of the Little Qualicum River and Campbell River estuaries by introduced Canada Geese.

Neil has contributed significantly to BCFO since 2007 as the Production Editor of *British Columbia Birds* and helps support the BCFO website. He is a recipient of Environment Canada's National Citation of Excellence Award for outstanding achievement in advancing the goals of conservation and protection of wildlife and habitats (1992). In 2001, he was honoured with the Ian McTaggart-Cowan Award of Excellence in Biology from the Association of Professional Biologists of British Columbia in recognition of his signifi-

cant contribution to the biological sciences in British Columbia.

THE STEVE CANNINGS AWARD FOR BC ORNITHOLOGY

The Steve Cannings Award has been presented every year by BC Field Ornithologists since 2007. It honours the memory of Steve Cannings, an outstanding amateur ornithologist, naturalist, photographer, and conservationist who was a lifelong resident of Penticton. The Cannings Award recognizes someone who has made significant contributions over a long period of time to ornithology in BC in any one or more of the following three areas: (1) research on bird biology or ecology, or detailed documentation of the birdlife of any portion of BC; (2) conservation of birds or of bird habitats in BC; and (3) public education about birds in BC. The award recipient is selected by a three-person Award Committee (Wayne Weber, Art Martell, and Dick Cannings, Steve's son) and approved by the BCFO Board. The award is announced annually and, when possible, presented to the recipient during the banquet at the BCFO Annual Conference.

We request nominations from any BCFO member for candidates for future Steve Cannings Awards. Nominations should include at least a brief statement as to why the nominator(s) believe that the nominee is deserving of the award. The Award Committee will follow up for more details as needed. 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.

Nominations should be sent in writing to Dr Wayne C. Weber, Chair of the Steve Cannings Award Committee, either by mail to 51-6712 Baker Rd, Delta, B.C. V4E 2V3, or by email to contopus@telus.net.

Notes

Inez Weston

Inez Weston, a BCFO member since 1993, passed away on May 26 at the rich age of 98. Long-time readers of the ncnbird listserv will remember that she contributed until late in life; others will know her from her many published papers on ornithology. Those who met her are more likely to remember her anecdotes of life in New Guinea bringing up her family with her husband – Tom.

Among many other of Inez's accomplishments were starting a masters degree at 79 and completing it within a respectable four years, at the age of 83. Age was never an obstacle for her.

Short Trips

The "BCFO Two-day Trips" section in the magazine has had to be renamed the "BCFO Short Trips" as the first BCFO three-day trip has been arranged for next May. This trip, to Bella Coola and area, is too distant for most participants

to be restricted to just two days. Read all about it on page 15.

New Breeding Records

There are reports of three new breeding species for BC: Lesser Goldfinch in Osoyoos, Western Kingbird in Hazelton, and Whimbrel in the Haines Triangle. The latter is written up on page 26. Reports on the other discoveries are sought for the next edition of this magazine.

Birdwatching Backpacks

BCFO members were well represented during the launch of the Birdwatching Backpacks project. A partnership between The Fraser Valley Regional Library, Wild Birds Unlimited, the City of Delta, and Bird Studies Canada has made 56 backpacks (including binoculars, field guide, and fold-out) available for loan from the 25 FVR libraries. As part of the launch, a video was created with birders explaining the value of taking up birding. Included in the video were young birders Joshua Brown and

Adam Dhalla, and David Bradley of Bird Studies Canada.

The video can be seen at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHCzSP9VeDI&feature=youtu.be

Proposed Park Reserve in Okanagan

An agreement has been reached between two British Columbia First Nations and the federal and provincial governments on a boundary for a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. The proposed reserve is 273 square kilometres of mountains, lakes and grasslands and is home to 76 per cent of BC's species at risk, including American Badgers, Western Rattlesnakes, Northern Leopard Frogs and Burrowing Owls.

Environment advocacy group Wilderness Committee says many people have worked for the reserve since 2003, adding that the region is one of the four most endangered ecosystems in Canada.

Pre-conference Trip 2019

Jim Cosgrove, Victoria

With the organizational efforts of Adrian Leather and BCFO President Marian Porter and with the support of trip leader Daniel Arndt of Bow Valley Birding and Wildlife Tours, a 2019 AGM pre-trip was arranged for the area around Calgary, Alberta.

On Monday, June 17, most of the participants met with Daniel for a meet-and-greet and to get our marching orders for the trip.

Three vehicles were leased for the trip and each vehicle had a designated driver and a pair of walkie-talkies so that everyone could stay in contact and talk about the birds we were seeing.

Tuesday, June 18

Our trip started at 4:15 in the morning and we travelled north of Calgary in the dark. We hit a Tim Hortons in Cochrane for breakfast just as it opened at 5:00.

We arrived at our first site just as dawn broke and were rewarded by seeing Wilson's Snipe, Red-winged Blackbird and Savannah Sparrow. By ear we documented Sora, Nelson's Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow and several Yellow Rails.

As we drove to a new location, Daniel spotted a Great Gray Owl, and we were able to turn back, giving everyone



Ferruginous Hawk – a lifer for many on the trip. Photo by Jim Cosgrove.

a good look.

We spent the morning and early part of the afternoon birding before stopping for lunch at the Water Valley Saloon, where there was good food and a chance for the group to talk a bit. There were twelve of us (thirteen counting Daniel), all from BC. Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, the Okanagan, the Cariboo and Northern BC were all represented.

Pressing on about 3:00 PM, we birded until we arrived at our hotel in Hanna, Alberta at nine o'clock. It had been a 17-hour day but we were impressed with Daniel's efforts to get us to as many birds as possible. Our total for the day was a very respectable 115 species. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Ferruginous Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, American

Pelican, Franklin's Gull and Sandhill Crane were all on the list.

Wednesday, June 19

Day 2 saw us on the road at 5:30 and we headed to the south towards Brooks, Alberta. For some of us west-coasters it was a treat to look at miles and miles of rolling grassland with the occasional larger water body. We birded along the roadside and got a number of birds as we approached Dinosaur Provincial Park. We headed down into the Hoodoos where we went on several short walks because we were dodging thunder storms and rain. Fortunately, lunchtime came along and we sat out some light rain at the Bar-B-Que Pit in The Patricia Hotel (Patricia, Alberta). We saw and heard a number of birds, adding 15 new species to our list: Yellow-headed Blackbird, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Ring-necked Pheasant, Say's Phoebe, Yellow-breasted Chat, Rock Wren, Brown Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, Horned Lark, California Gull, McCown's Longspur and Chestnut-collared Longspur.

We arrived at our hotel in Brooks at six o'clock for a quick dinner and as much sleep as we could manage.

Thursday, June 20

Day 3 again saw us on the road at 5:30 AM. This time we visited several sites near Brooks, had lunch in Brooks, and then headed west in a loop to the south of Calgary. Tillebrook Provincial Park was a treed site where we got some excellent looks at Baltimore Oriole and Western Wood-Pewee. We also noted a

*"A highlight was finding a Ferruginous Hawk nest with four chicks in it."
Clive Keen photo.*





Frank Lake was indeed a photographer's dream. Above: an American Coot feeds its wing-quivering young. Bottom: An Eared Grebe takes chicks for a ride. Clive Keen photos.

Cedar Waxwing, a Western Kingbird and Western Wood-Pee-wee all on nests.

Leaving the Park, we spent most of the afternoon birding the grassy fields beside the back roads between Brooks and Calgary. Rain storms were often seen but we dodged most of them.

This also was a fairly long day with us reaching our hotel at eight o'clock but again we managed to add six birds to our list bringing our three-day total to 136 species. The new birds on the list were Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, Gray Partridge, Golden Eagle, Grasshopper Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper. A highlight was finding a Ferruginous Hawk nest with four chicks

in it.

Friday, June 21

Our final day took us first to a muddy prairie road that did not yield any results. A second site just north of Frank Lake yielded a Sprague's Pipit display flight and several quick glimpses of the pipits above the tall grass.

Then we moved on to Frank Lake, south of Calgary and it was a spectacular site with a large number of water birds. We added Great Blue Heron, Forster's Tern, Western Grebe, Gadwall and Bufflehead to the list.

This site was also a photographer's dream as many of the birds were very

close to the shore or easily seen from the blind. Also, many of the birds had young and the young were easily photographed.

As we left Frank Lake, Daniel took us on some backroads to the west of Calgary to see if we could find a Bobolink and a couple of other species but the skies opened up and we were immersed in a genuine Alberta gully-washer. We did manage to find our first Bald Eagle and a Common Goldeneye but that was it for the trip.

We sloshed back to the hotel to pick up our cars and said goodbye to Daniel as well as thanking all the drivers for their efforts in getting us safely to all the birds. Our total for the trip was 143 species and the lists have been published on eBird.

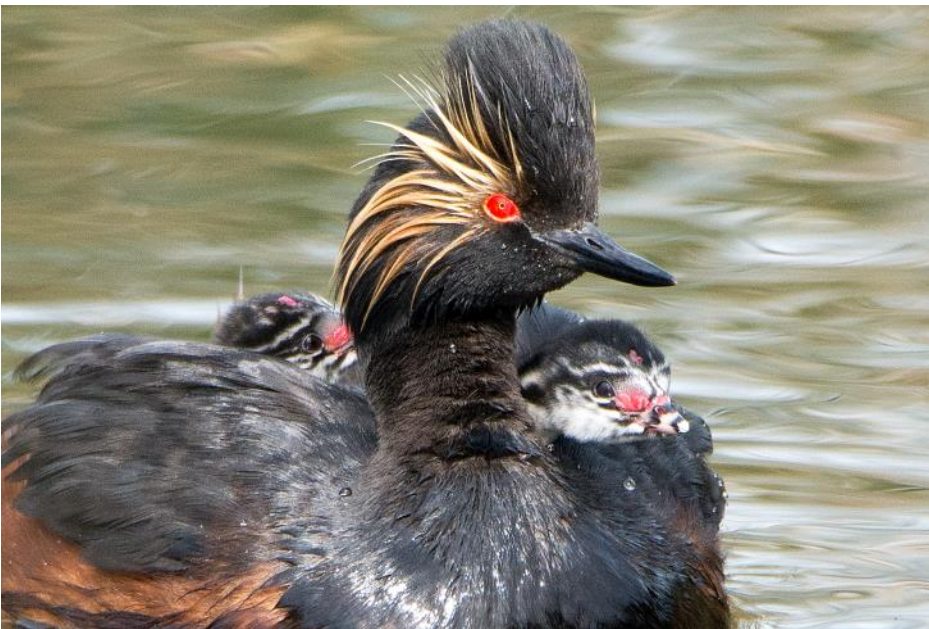


Avian Encounter 1

It's a Bird. It's a Plane – No, It's Fish

Mike McGrenere, Victoria

A strange thing happened in our yard. Barb and I were sitting on our patio enjoying a cup of tea in the afternoon on the last Sunday in July. All of a sudden, we heard crashing coming through the large poplar trees at the back of the yard. We then saw grey bits on the ground. We first thought a broken branch that had been hung up in one of the trees had fallen and broken apart. Barb went back to look and indicated that she was looking at a fish. And another. And another. I went back as well and counted twelve small herring-like fish across the yard, all approximately 8–10 cm in length. We scanned the skies but could not see anything. We are guessing that it was likely a Great Blue Heron, flying very high in the sky, that for some reason threw up all or a good portion of its catch. There must have been a hungry nestling somewhere in Victoria that night.



BCFO AGM Reports, June 22, 2019

Education & Conservation Committee

The Education and Conservation Committee was struck at the BCFO AGM in 2018. The committee members are Gary Davidson (chair), Art Martell, Marian Porter, Gerald McKeating and Stephen Partington.

A review of the existing guidelines for BCFO grants was undertaken and several revisions were made. The new guidelines are now available on the BCFO website.

During the past twelve months seven applications for funds have been received. Three of these did not meet the criteria of the BCFO and were denied. Four others were approved and a total of \$6,385 was granted.

Members of the Committee have been making an effort to promote the grant structure by encouraging groups and organizations to consider taking on projects that will benefit birds and their habitat. Grants are available for new projects that meet one or more of the purposes of the Society. Applicants must be members of the BCFO.

Gary Davidson, Chairperson

Newsmagazine (BC Birding)

In the year preceding this AGM the newsmagazine was again produced according to plan, with the four quarterly editions prepared and distributed as scheduled. The table summarizes the content, with the previous year's figures in parentheses.

Content

Thanks are again due to all contributors, and particularly regular contributors John Gordon, Michael Church, Chris Siddle, Larry Cowan, Adrian Dorst, Wayne Weber, and Melissa Hafting. Contributions from BCFO Young Birders have been outstanding this year, and it is hoped they will continue when Melissa Hafting stands down from her role as BCFO Young Birder Coordinator in 2020.

Additional regular contributors con-

Membership Report

Membership Summary for 2018

The BCFO membership for the year 2018 was 283 regular members, 3 honorary members, 23 Young Birder Award Winner members, 6 institutional members, and 6 complimentary memberships for a total of 326. There were 30 new members for 2018. Forty members from 2017 failed to renew for 2018.

Membership by region using the Provincial Tourism Zones:

37% Vancouver Coast & Mountains (104)
25% Vancouver Island (70)
14% Thompson/Okanagan (41)
8% Kootenay/Rockies (22)
6% Northern BC (16)
5% Cariboo/Chilcotin Coast (13)
1.1% Alberta (3)
1.1% United States (3)
1.1% Ontario (3)
0.7% Nova Scotia (2)
0.7% Quebec (2)
0.4% Manitoba (1)
0.4% Finland (1)

Current 2019 Membership Status

As of June 17, 2019 BCFO membership stands at 259 regular members, 3 honorary members, 16 Young Birder Award winners, 6 institutional members and 7 complimentary memberships (AGM field guides) for a total of 291. There are 21 new members and 46 members from 2018 have yet to renew for 2019. Thirteen (13) members have pre-paid their dues for 2020.

Membership by region using the Provincial Tourism Zones:

38% Vancouver Coast & Mountains (98)
23% Vancouver Island (59)
16% Thompson/Okanagan (41)
8.5% Kootenay/Rockies (22)
6.6% Northern BC (17)
4.2% Cariboo/Chilcotin Coast (11)
1.2% Alberta (3)
0.8% Ontario (2)
0.8% United States (2)
0.8% Nova Scotia (2)
0.4% Quebec (1)
0.4% Finland (1)

Respectfully submitted, Larry Cowan, Membership Secretary

tinue to be sought: they might cover areas such as regional summaries, book reviews, and equipment reports. Members are also reminded that Avian En-

counter notes, however brief, are always welcome as are trip reports and high-quality photographs. (continued next page)

Edition	Pages	Items	Photographs & Graphics
September 2018	32	19	42
December 2018	32	26	37
March 2019	48	27	27
June 2019	26	23	29
<i>Total 2019 (2018)</i>	<i>138 (136)</i>	<i>95 (95)</i>	<i>135 (155)</i>

Staffing

Clive Keen continues to edit and desk-top-publish the magazine, Virginia Rasch is copyediting chief, and June Ryder arranges print and distribution of the printed edition.

Clive Keen, Editor, BC Birding

Financial Report

Below is a slightly updated version of the spreadsheet prepared by Treasurer Josh Inman as part of his report to the AGM.

Journal (*British Columbia Birds*)

Volume 29 (2019) of *British Columbia Birds* was produced in March 2019. This issue included (cont. next page)

	2018 Operating	2018 Education & Conservation (\$50,000 as of Jan 1)	2019 to July 31 Operating	2019 to July 31 Education & Conservation (\$48,815 as of Jan 1)
Revenue				
Membership and hardcopy	9,187.13		4,109.47	
Conference Fees	7,050.08		6,673.14	
Conference Extension	387.80		3,734.75	
Donation	749.75	800.00	0.00	346.50
Bank Interest (Coast Capital only)	2.79		1.73	
Bank Interest (Tangerine)	570.02		407.16	
GST Rebate	TBD		262.07	
Advertising				
Caps			546.80	
BC Checklists	935.71		0.00	
Total	18,883.28	800.00	15,735.12	346.50
Overall	19,683.28		16,081.62	
Expenditures				
Newsmagazine Printing	750.57		1,060.53	
Newsmagazine Postage	604.80		1,006.09	
Conference	6,581.32		9,223.69	
Conference Honouraria				
Conference Extension	400.00		1,833.71	
Extension Honouraria			2,032.29	
Journal Printing	1,349.60		1,791.98	
Journal Postage	707.43		852.62	
Postage - membership & general	33.55		361.83	
Website	17.84		16.99	
Insurance	920.00		0.00	
Walkie-talkie				
Caps			661.02	
Decals				
Society Fee	80.00		0.00	
PO Box Rental	174.30		184.85	
Research & Other Grants		1,995.00		5,600.00
BCFO Awards			40.60	
Young Birders - Trip Subsidies				
Young Birders - Caps mailing				
Young Birders Program	928.46		296.57	
Change of Address				
BC Checklists	3,294.07		67.76	
Travel Costs	18.70		0.00	
Zoom Meeting	199.28		120.00	
Trip Honourarium	300.00		500.00	
Total	16,359.92	1,995.00	20,050.53	5,600.00
Overall	18,354.92		25,650.53	
Surplus/Deficit	2,523.36	-1,195.00	-4,315.41	-5,253.50
Overall	1,328.36		-9,568.91	
Education and Conservation Fund				
	\$48,815.00 as of Dec 31		\$43,561.50 as of Jul 31	
Assets				
Bank Balance: Tangerine	75,456.24		75,863.40	
Bank Balance: Coast Capital	12,286.72		2,154.08	
PayPal			1,073.21	
Total	87,742.96		79,090.69	

papers on breeding waterbirds on Vancouver Island, Sandhill Cranes in the Lower Mainland, and Canada Geese in Nanaimo, as well as the Annual Report of the Bird Records Committee. I thank all of the authors for their submissions and the members of the Bird Records Committee for their important work.

I currently have four submissions for Volume 30, but more are needed. 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: 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.

I am sad to note the sudden passing of Dr Neil Bourne last summer. Neil

worked at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo from 1955 until his retirement in 1994 and was a lifelong bird watcher. Neil was a long-time member of BCFO and served on the Editorial Board of *British Columbia Birds* since 2003. Many papers benefitted from his through, helpful reviews, and his contributions to birds in British Columbia will be missed.

Art Martell, Editor, British Columbia Birds.

Conference Field Trip Reports

Note: A summary by Larry Cowan of all the species seen on the conference field trips is added as an attachment on pages 33-36.

Moberly Marsh

Verena Shaw, Golden

On Sunday June 23 I took fifteen people out to the Moberly Marsh area as part of the BCFO AGM in Golden. This is an area of fields, trees and shrubs, an old dike system, and some wetland habitat. The first part is a private area that the owner graciously allowed us to explore and the rest is part of a little-known and not easily accessible provincial park, Burges James Gadsden Provincial Park. We spent the next five hours or so seeing and hearing 67 species of birds, six being species at risk, which included Bobolink, Great Blue Heron, Peregrine Falcon, Barn Swallow, Bank Swallow, and Black Swift. We also saw a Western Wood-Pewee building a nest and heard several LeConte's Sparrows, which some of us were able to see as well – a bird I didn't even realize was in the area, and a first for me. It was a most enjoyable walk for all.

John Gordon, Surrey

After some excellent birding on the Saturday of the BCFO Golden conference, the birders who had signed up for the Moberly Marsh Sunday morning walk were well and truly stoked.

Despite rain and grey skies the walk



A LeConte's Sparrow photographed on the trip by John Gordon.

kicked off a surprise find. Thanks to the highly tuned ear of Adrian Leather we were right onto a pair of LeConte's Sparrows. We eventually heard a total of five and that was just along the pathway. How many others were spread out over the many hectares of fields will remain a mystery. Also present were a small colony of Bobolinks.

The owner of the field whom we met at the end of our walk has been understanding enough not to mow his fields until after the nestlings had

fledged. I hope a letter of appreciation from BCFO goes to the farmer in question. As the group walked on (birders move far quicker than birder-photographers) I became distracted by a movement on the bushes; it was soon obvious that a pair of Bobolinks was courting. Although the image of the two birds is sub-standard it does show an interesting interaction.

Already LeConte's and Bobolinks and we had only been birding thirty minutes. More great sightings were to



John Gordon's shots of female and male Bobolinks.

come, including a nest with a Western Wood-Pewee and a squabble between a crow and a pair of Bullock's Orioles which led to some interesting interactions. No one seemed worse for the fracas. Sixty-five species later a soggy but contented group returned to our cars, but not before spotting a pair of Sandhill Cranes, a highlight for many.

A big thanks goes out to our guide Verena Shaw for arranging permission to access the private property.

Fred Bushell, Rossland

The early morning held promise. We would be exploring a new area, Moberly Marsh, with a group of fifteen members and leader.

A short drive from Golden along Highway 1 West lead us to our starting point. We began on private property before entering a provincial park that orders the Columbia River and is home for a good number of small ponds and marshy areas.

We began our outing by walking the edges of the private field. The grass meadow was certainly a busy place with songs emanating from all directions. Sparrows galore could be heard

but somewhat similar. Discussions ensued and a tentative consensus emerged that it could be a LeConte's Sparrow, and sure enough not long after the bird was spotted. I was disappointed to catch only a glimpse; this would be a life bird for me and I certainly was hoping for a better view. Suddenly we seemed to hear the LeConte's from several directions, there were clearly a number of birds. It wasn't long before my hopes were fulfilled as a cooperative LeConte's perched briefly, a great visual. Photos were quickly snapped and the excitement of seeing the elusive grassland bird shared.

The grassy field held other treats for our group. Beautiful male Bobolinks first seen in the distance were soon enjoyed from close range. Resplendent in their breeding plumage the Bobolinks certainly were not shy. Soon a female was also spotted and a courtship display witnessed. Our group was on a high.

The building clouds provided not only the promise of showers but were suddenly filled with swallows and swifts. Ooohs and Ahhhs from the group as we listed off different swallows: Bank, Barn, Violet-green, Northern Rough-winged and Tree. But the

swifts! The skies were full of the masterful fliers and after scanning overhead we settled on a number of 80 Black Swifts – their flight inspiring and a wonder to a group of land-locked birders.

Wandering back and forth along the dikes kept our excited group busy. Across the field were spotted a couple Sandhill Cranes; overhead a common Loon called; and the bushes were filled with flycatchers, kingbirds, warblers and pewees, sixty-two species in all. A final treat was provided by a Lazuli Bunting singing brightly from his perch.

A truly memorable morning with great friends and great birds.

Bush River FSR

Gary Davidson, Nakusp

The Sunday morning field trip up the Bush River Forest Service Road was largely exploratory. Very little was known about the habitat or the bird diversity in the area. The road leaves the Trans-Canada Highway at Donald, about 30km west of Golden. Initially it follows the Blackwater River up to Blackwater Lake. It continues northward to Kinbasket Lake and eventually to the Bush River, ending about 100km from Donald.

Our field trip covered only the first 30km. The first 10–15km passed through coniferous forest and did not



Male American Redstart at Moberly Marsh by John Gordon.

offer a great many birds. Hammond's Flycatcher, Pacific Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Thrush, Dark-eyed Junco, and Western Tanager were a few of the species encountered. The pockets of deciduous and the overgrown clearcuts provided the best birding in this lower section. Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, White-throated Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, and American Redstart were some of the species seen here.

Between km 19 and km 20, we encountered a large sedge wetland adjacent to the road. We spent over an hour

exploring this one-kilometre stretch of road; we had 36 species during that time. The wetlands, the adjacent riparian, and the meadows provided habitat for species such as Solitary Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Willow Flycatcher, four swallows species, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and seven species of warbler, including a singing Tennessee Warbler. We also had both Black and Vaux's Swift forging over the wetlands.

A few kilometres further along the road we came to Blackwater Lake. This was the first of four small lakes along the valley. A pair of loons with one

young was on Blackwater Lake. The next three lakes, called Comfort, Help and Aid, added a few new species to our day list: Common Merganser, Spotted Sandpiper, Osprey, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Cassin's Vireo, and Steller's Jay.

At 11:30 we reluctantly turned around and headed back to Golden. This appears to be a very good birding location and warrants further exploration. There were other locations along our routes that looked promising, but we couldn't stop everywhere! And what might lie in the other 70km of road that we didn't see at all? If you should find yourself in the area and have some time to spare, why not take a drive up the Bush River FSR!

Emerald Lake

Keith Riding, Vancouver

I was on Wayne's walk around Emerald Lake. It was a lovely scenic walk around a spectacular lake. It was fairly peaceful until people started arriving by the bus load at about 10 am, but we had almost finished by then. I was thrilled to see White-winged Crossbills and a pair flew down to the trail to pose for us. That was very nice. We also heard American Three-toed Woodpeckers tapping in their characteristic way. My wife and I enjoyed the walk very much.

Conference Overviews

Daryl Calder, Cranbrook

"Swifts at 1 o'clock," announced Wayne. "Four."

Sure enough, Black Swifts danced high in the air on sickle-shaped wings above the banks of the Columbia River. It was certainly a privilege to join BC Field Ornithologists as Verena guided us to Moberly Marsh near Golden.

Three years ago, BCFO held their AGM in Cranbrook, and several Rocky Mountain Naturalists guided our guests to some favourite local bird hotspots.

Now it was our turn to become immersed in the wonders of a new area in the company of about 14 enthusiastic birders/naturalists. Swifts are among my favourites, so I kept an eye on them.

We worked our way along a brushy dike system situated between the Trans-Canada Highway / CP Rail mainline corridor, and the Columbia River. Soon, the flock of swifts had grown to about ten, and became difficult to count because the agile, dark birds mixed with several species of smaller swallows. A few minutes later, we stood in the gentle rain with an unobstructed view to the south toward Golden. Obviously feeding, dozens of swallows swooped above the wetlands while 80 swifts occupied the zone above.

Quiet discussion inevitably swung around to the notion of "spark bird," a term I had not previously encountered, but seemed self-explanatory.

Perhaps 20 years ago, while walking at dusk near Elizabeth Lake on the western edge of Cranbrook, I experienced such a pivotal moment. Groups of swallows flew in from the north.

They weren't saying much, but there was an unfamiliar, rapid, squeaky, staccato, twittering chip. And, in the fading light, it became clear that one third of the flock were black swifts. Beautiful and mysterious, I realized that it was time to sharpen my observation skills: there was no turning back.

As our species list swelled into the sixties, we wondered aloud what might be next. Perhaps two kilometres away, in a tall cottonwood, perched a stately Bald Eagle. To the south, a Northern Harrier coursed above a meadow, while Sandhill Cranes strode along the wooded edge beside the railroad tracks. Spark birds anyone?

Our group had the good fortune to take a detailed look at lovely Emerald Lake. While crossing the outlet bridge to begin our tour, our intrepid leader, Wayne Weber, was obviously thrilled to see an adult Common Loon swim

underwater beneath us. The cool water, clear and calm, reminded us of visionary Canadians with the foresight to protect spectacular landscapes.

So many birds were encountered. Half a dozen White-winged Crossbills worked their way through the boreal forest to drink at the water's edge. Up ahead, Varied Thrushes whistled and Pacific Wrens sang complex sequences. On the tundra adjacent to the inlet stream, a Killdeer piped briefly, several waterfowl rested on the lakeshore and bright wildflowers including Yellow Ladyslipper and scarlet Paintbrush accented the scene. Nearing the parking lot, throngs of well-intentioned tourists, many with dogs, headed up the trail. Over one kilometre of parked cars lined the access road, overflowing the parking areas.

My visit to Golden was special in several respects. Often travelling from Cranbrook to the North Okanagan or Victoria, Golden is not necessarily a place to stop. Gas is a bit more expensive and there is an urgency to keep going while Highway 1 is open. This time, I camped at the pleasant Municipal campground along the Kicking Horse River, bicycled to Confluence Park and renewed acquaintances with many like-minded birder friends. Conference highlights included Vance Mattson's unique work and presentation on Golden Eagles, Rachel Darville's important waterbird survey work and of course the fine food services.

Fran Pattison, Kelowna

I really got a lot out of this conference.

1. The two field trips I went on were awesome, led by Wayne Weber to Emerald Lake and Verena Shaw to Moberly Marsh. I especially liked the fact we walked in a meandering way the whole time and that the leaders didn't rush. They allowed time for appreciation of the birds rather than just ticking the species off on a list. Wayne gave us lots of in-depth information on many of the birds and other aspects of the natural environment. And Verena shared good background information about the wetlands.

A big thank-you to the many expert birders on these walks who so willingly take the time to share their knowledge too.

2. Speakers Rachel Darvill and Vance Mattson were great and their presentations very interesting. I also enjoyed the well-run AGM and found the introduction of an Ethics topic timely and thoughtful. I hope we can have more of these conversations in the future.

3. The food was awesome! And I truly appreciate that this caterer was so knowledgeable about her gluten-free options. Thanks to the organizing committee for that.

Kathleen McEachern

The AGM was over and I had already washed the mud off my car from the Blaeberry River area and the Bush Forest Service Road but it was a beautiful evening in Golden, BC, and I still had a little bit of energy left.

Who knew that birding could be an exhausting exercise? Up at 3:30 AM on the first morning of the Alberta Extension and around 4:30 AM on most of the other days: sleep deprivation was becoming tangible. And it kept going through the AGM weekend. Now I had an evening free with the prospect of getting up at a decent hour in the morn-

ing, so where to relax and enjoy myself? Reflection Lake was the perfect place, just a short drive from my hotel.

With nine lifers on my list from the trip to Alberta (thanks, Daniel Arndt!), I could just relax and listen to the evening birdsong by the lake. Ah – that is actually a Virginia Rail doing its grunt call several times with short intervals between. Fantastic! Another new bird for the trip for me.

Then two Sora began to whinny from the marsh just in front of the viewing platform. Then the Virginia called again. The low slanting light showed two Eared Grebes in their warm rich rust hues. A female Redhead with five young foraging around the edge of the cattails took my attention for a while. Pied-billed Grebes and Ruddy Duck were also feeding young. A Marsh Wren and a Song Sparrow were busy carrying food to nests in the cattails.

This lake is a bird breeding sanctuary! My evening list totalled a modest 29 species and it was a great relaxing way to end a super birding trip, my first extension with the BCFO but hopefully not my last!

IT MAY NOT BE A BIRD, BUT

Mike McGrenere

Barb and I were on the Saturday field trip at the Golden conference that went to the Moberly Marsh and James Gadsden Provincial Park. We did not pick up any unexpected bird species – the Sunday trip had about 50% more species than our trip – but I think we had the best mammal species of the conference with a pine marten in a cottonwood tree. (Photo by Mike McGrenere.)



BCFO Short Trips

How the Short Trips Work

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

The first day is all-day birding followed by an evening get-together at a restaurant to recap the day and tally species. On three-day trips, the second day is similar.

The final day is morning birding, with optional birding in the afternoon.

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

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

Cost: No cost to members; fee to non-members: \$30, which covers BCFO membership.

If you have ideas for a short trip, Adrian Leather would be pleased to hear from you at q-birds@xplornet.com.

Two Days: Port Alberni, September 14–15, 2019

Leaders

Daryl Henderson, Annette Bailey.

Registration

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

Itinerary

Saturday: Road trip for coastal birding between Ucluelet and Tofino. Possible stops include Amphitrite Point, Pacific Rim NPR, Kwisis Visitor Centre, Florencia Bay, Combers Beach, Tofino Airport, and an IBA. Bag lunch.

Tally-up 6:30 PM at Starboard Grill, 5440 Argyle St, Port Alberni, 778-421-2826.

Sunday morning: Somass Estuary and sewage lagoons, Stamp River PP. Bag lunch.

Sunday afternoon: optional birding

Accommodation

- Best Western Plus Barclay Hotel, 4277 Stamp Ave, Port Alberni, 250-724-7171. The trip leaders will meet with birders here on Friday evening.
- RV/Camping: Arrowvale Campground & Farm, 5955 Hector Rd, Port Alberni. 250-723-7948.

The Port Alberni area is well-birded, with around two dozen eBird hotspots in the immediate area. A number of the hotspots are on the Somass Estuary, which is a nature reserve – the sewage lagoons area of the Somass Estuary has recorded 179 species.

Three Days: Bella Coola Valley & Anahim Lake, May 16–18, 2020

Leader

Local expertise plus Adrian Leather.

Registration

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

Itinerary

Saturday: (Lower Valley) Estuary, Clayton Falls, sloughs, airport, Snooka Trail, Nusatsum, Noosgulch.

Sunday: (Upper Valley) Burnt Bridge, Fisheries Pool, Stuie, Tote Rd, Atnarko and/or Talchako, to the plateau.

Monday: Anahim Lake area.

Accommodation

- Bella Coola Mountain Lodge & Brockton Bistro, Hagensborg (nights of May 15 & 16). 1-866-982-2298, Pete & Jayme.
- Eagle's Nest Resort, Anahim Lake (nights of May 17 & 18). 1-800-742-9055, Tim & Tena.

Participants are encouraged to book early as there is a range of suites, rooms, and cabins to select from, space might be limited at one location, and we want to keep the group together at single sites.

Description

Bella Coola claims to be “the real BC” and offers spectacular scenery. A local birder will lead us around a good variety of habitat, and altitude, starting at the oceanfront and working along the valley up The Hill to the tundra-like plateau, and exploring the Anahim Lake area.

The valley has Black-throated Gray Warbler and Sooty Grouse, among many others. Anahim Lake often has American White Pelican, and has hosted breeding American Bittern, Least Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Yellow Rail. The folks at Eagle's Nest Resort maintain bird feeders, and the resort is situated on a small peninsula which attracts numerous species. Great Gray Owl and Great Horned Owl have been recorded. Birders might choose to continue birding across the Chilcotin Plateau, where vast lakes attract coastal species, and Eagle Lake holds breeding Arctic Tern and Semipalmated Plover. Of course, some species will have returned, others not. Who knows what we will find on this exciting mid-migration foray?

Transport

- Bella Coola and Anahim Lake have airports.
- BC Ferries offers service from Port Hardy to Bella Coola (check for availability).
- Hwy 20 from Williams Lake is a beautiful drive.

Party Size

The trip is limited to a maximum of 15 birders.



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.

For most meetings, festivals and other events, the website is the main source of information, and registration can usually 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.

For a detailed listing of birding festivals all over North America, please check the Cornell "All About Birds" website at this URL: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/birding-festivals>.

2019 Events

Sept. 7 – First WESTPORT SEABIRDS pelagic birding trip of the fall from Westport, WA. Westport Seabirds has eight trips scheduled between September 7 and October 5. For information on the trips, schedules, and to reserve a spot, please visit the Westport Seabirds website at westportseabirds.com. Many of the September trips are already full; it is best to register at least two months in advance.

Sept. 13-15 – PUGET SOUND BIRD FESTIVAL, Edmonds, WA. For information and to register check the festival website at www.pugetsoundbirdfest.org, or contact Jennifer Leach at the City of Edmonds Parks Dept. (phone 425-771-0227), or email her at jennifer.leach@edmondswa.gov.

Sept. 14 – First OREGON PELAGIC TOURS bird trip of the fall from Newport, OR. This is the first of six tours scheduled this fall, including one trip each from Charleston (Coos County) and Garibaldi (Tillamook County) as well as from Newport. For further information and to sign up, please visit Oregon Pelagic Tours' website at www.oregonpelagictours.com.

Sept. 19-22 – WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION annual meeting, Brighton, Colorado, hosted by the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. For information and to register, visit the WBBA website at www.westernbirdbanding.org/meeting_2019.html.

Sept. 22 – PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP from Ucluelet, BC on the M.V. Frances Barkley has been CANCELLED.

Sept. 26-29 – Second annual WINGS OVER WILLAPA BIRDING FESTIVAL, based in Ilwaco, WA. For information and to register for events, please visit the festival website at wingsoverwillapa.org.

Sept. 29-Oct. 3 – 26TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY, Reno, Nevada. For information, check the TWS conference page at wildlife.org/2019-conference.

Oct. 3-5 – FALL GENERAL MEETING, BC NATURE, Pitt Meadows, BC, hosted by the Burke Mountain Naturalists. The venue will be the Pitt Meadows Golf Club, 1365 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows. For further information and to register, please check the Burke Mountain Naturalists website at www.burkemountainnaturalists.ca/2019-fgm-conference.

Oct. 4-5 – BIRDS AND BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL, Ridgefield NWR, Ridgefield, WA (near Vancouver, WA). For information, visit the Friends of Ridgefield website at ridgefield-friends.org/birdfest-bluegrass.

Oct. 27-30 – Joint meeting of the WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY and ASSOCIATION OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS, Cape May, New Jersey, USA, hosted by the Cape May Bird Observatory. For details, check the society websites (www.wilsonsociety.org for WOS, afonet.org/wp_english/meetings for AFO) closer to the conference date.

Nov. 5-9 – RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION annual meeting, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA. For further details, visit the society website at raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/upcoming-conferences.

Nov. 6-9 – 43rd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WATERBIRD SOCIETY, Salisbury, Maryland, USA at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore campus. For details, check the society website at waterbirds.org/annual-meeting.

Nov. 16-17 – 24TH FRASER VALLEY BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL, Harrison Mills, BC. For information, check the festival website at 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 (2020) – 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*.

2020 Events

Feb. 12-15 – PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP, 47th ANNUAL MEETING, Portland, Oregon. For information and to register, visit the conference website at pacificseabirdgroup.org/annual-meeting.

Feb. 13-16 – WINTER WINGS BIRDING FESTIVAL, Klamath Falls, OR. For information and to register, please check the festival website at winterwingsfest.org.

Mar. 20-22 – 18th ANNUAL WINGS OVER WATER NORTHWEST BIRDING FESTIVAL, Blaine, WA. For information, please check the website at www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com or contact Debbie Harger (phone, 360-332-8311; email, dharger@cityofblaine.com).

Mar. 20-22 – 23rd ANNUAL OTHELLO SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL, Othello, WA. For information, check the festival website at www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org, or phone 509-989-5606.

Apr. 15-21 – 25th ANNUAL GODWIT DAYS birding festival, Arcata, California. This is one of the premier birding festivals in North America, with dozens of field trips to various places. For information or to sign up, visit the festival website at www.godwitdays.org.

Young Birders Program

Trip Reports

Melissa Hafting, Richmond

South Okanagan, July 8–9, 2019

We drove up from Vancouver via Hwy 3 and our first stop was Manning Park. We stopped to stretch our legs and we hoped to see some Hummingbirds at the lodge. Sadly not a single hummer feeder was up, which is a shame because sometimes Calliopes are seen here. We got to see a Clark's Nutcracker and then were on our way to Nighthawk.

At Nighthawk we quickly found a singing Sage Thrasher and some Western Kingbirds. There was no sign of the Grasshopper Sparrows I'd seen there last year. We then went on to Osoyoos where we hoped to see Canada's first breeding Lesser Goldfinches along Kruger Mountain Road. The breeding record was just confirmed by David Bell who had photographed an adult feeding a fledgling that couldn't fly. Cole quickly found a male Lesser Goldfinch that nobody else saw: it took two hours for the rest of us to find another male, which gave us good looks. He sat there and was singing his heart out. While waiting for him to show up we saw 38 species including Black-chinned and Calliope Hummer, Say's Phoebe, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings and Gray Catbirds.

We then went to a nesting tree I knew of where we found the bird of the



Above: Flammulated Owl by Melissa Hafting. Bottom: Common Poorwill by Katya Kondratyuk.

day: a Flammulated Owl. We only stayed briefly with the bird as not to disturb it. This was a lifer for all the youth and they said the highlight of the trip. Seeing a Flammulated Owl is always a thrill for me. The youth behaved fantastically with the nesting bird. They were all quiet and just watched her and took a few photos before we left. It was a magic moment with a tiny secretive owl that few get to see, especially in the day.

We then went to Vaseux Cliffs where we found White-throated Swifts, heard Canyon and Rock Wrens and saw a nice posing Osprey. Later that night after a nice dinner at the "Burger Patio"

restaurant across from Okanagan Lake, we drove one of the gravel roads at night in Penticton. Here we found some Common Poorwills roosting on the road. We found three and they gave us great views. We used my car headlights to illuminate the bird. We loved listening to the poorwills doing their "poor-will" calls.

The next morning, after waking up early at 5000 Motel we grabbed

breakfast and headed to White Lake. Here we got great views of a Sage Thrasher, a few Grasshopper Sparrows and Brewer's Sparrows. We also saw a Short-eared Owl hunting by the lake which was unusual and super cool. The Short-eared Owl even dive-bombed a poor Coyote.

After this we drove to Road 22 and found some Yellow-breasted Chats singing their hearts out. Then we were off to The Throne, AKA Haynes Lease Land in Osoyoos. Here we got spectacular views of several Canyon and Rock Wrens, Western Bluebirds, Lark Sparrow, Bullock's Orioles, Western and Eastern Kingbirds, California Quails and White-throated Swifts. It was super birdy here and the wrens were a lifer for all of the youth. Cole also had a Grasshopper Sparrow here but we dipped on Chukar and Gray Partridge which this site is usually good for.

Next we drove up to Anarchist Mountain where we found two beautiful Williamson's Sapsuckers, another lifer for some of the youth. As we left and were coming back into Osoyoos we found a large Bank Swallow colony just off Hwy 3. There were at least 100 birds here with active nests. We could see the babies peeking out and adults coming in to feed them.

We next were off to Mt. Kobau



where we hoped to track down a Black-backed Woodpecker that Chris Charlesworth had recently found. He has actually found them there two years in a row. The burn up at the top is very large and we didn't find the bird, despite finding many Rufous and Calliope Hummers, Dusky Flycatcher, Lazuli Buntings and a Hairy Woodpecker. However, while we were searching, Cole found a male Tennessee Warbler. The rest of us were not able to relocate it, sadly. Funnily enough Dick Cannings had found one the day before near his home.

While we were up there Chris Charlesworth texted me and told me that there was a photo and report of an Alder Flycatcher at Yellow Lake. Many wanted to go but sadly it was an hour back in the wrong direction, so we couldn't go. A few were disappointed but we continued on. We drove to August Lake in Princeton as we were driving home to Vancouver. Here we saw Mountain Chickadees, Lewis's Woodpecker, Sora, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Barrow's Goldeneyes with their chicks just to name a few. We didn't see any Williamson's Sapsuckers which the site is known for. This made us very happy that we had driven up Anarchist Mountain to get them earlier!

As we were driving through Manning Park, Katya started screaming "Mel! Mel! look out the window – THERE'S A MOOSE AND BABY!" I immediately pulled off on the shoulder and we got out and saw the cow and calf moose in a lake by the side of the road. A large truck came by unfortunately and scared them off into the woods but it was a lifer mammal for all the youth.

After this we heard that a Black Phoebe was found in Coquitlam. Since we would be driving right by the spot after we dropped off Katya in Langley we decided to stop. Here we found the Black Phoebe quite quickly in some spitting rain. Coming into the Lower Mainland it was a real change from the 28 C weather and sunshine we had up in the Okanagan.

The Black Phoebe was a lifer for Nicky. We also got great views of an American Bittern that flew right in front of us. Dozens of swallows and Wood Duck ducklings were out and we also had a calling Sora. It was a really nice way to end our fantastic overnight trip to the Southern Okanagan.

Kamloops, June 22, 2019

Kalin joined us from Kelowna, newbie Nick from Pender Island and Bridget and Ian came from Metro Vancouver. Sadly, Isaac from Kamloops was away from the city and couldn't join us. He was having a great time in Wells Gray Park though! The main reason we had initially booked this trip was for photography at Lac Le Jeune. We had planned to go by boat and photograph Common Loons and their chicks riding on the backs of their parents but sadly River Otters had predated all nests and chicks at the lake. So I arranged to do a Kamloops birding day instead. It turned out to be a fantastic alternative.

We started off in the boreal forest where I hoped to find an American Three-toed Woodpecker nest I knew about but sadly (for us) they had fledged. We then went to Goose Lake where we found a Horned Grebe in breeding plumage and many other good birds including a winnowing Wilson's Snipe.

We also had Cassin's Finches and Pine Siskins eating grit from the road. We also saw a Willow Flycatcher, tons of Ruddy Ducks in breeding, Gadwalls, a couple Blue-winged Teal, Barrow's Goldeneyes and their young, Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup and House Wrens just to name a few. There

were also young Common Ravens kicking up a row and some Spotted Sandpipers. We were hoping to find some Black Terns in the area but didn't. It doesn't seem they have nested in the Thompson-Nicola area now sadly for a few years. We saw quite a few Swainson's Hawks both light and dark morphs, American Kestrels, Ospreys and Bald Eagles on the raptor front during the day.

We then drove to Separation Lake where we had come a few years ago, as a group, to see the rare White-faced Ibis. Today there was an American Coot and many Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Bank and Cliff Swallows. We then made our way to Pritchard. Here along Kamloops-Shuswap Road we hoped to see the Bobolinks that had been breeding in the area recently. They were only discovered at this location in 2018. Most people from Vancouver go to Osoyoos to see Bobolinks but now there is a much closer option. We ended up seeing three birds for sure (possibly four) in a field with cows. It was a real thrill to see these cool unique birds.

We also found Swainson's Hawks with three fledged young nearby crying out for food and a Western Wood-Pewee nest and Mountain Bluebirds. The male Mountain Bluebird was so brilliant blue. We also had Western and Eastern Kingbirds, Vesper Sparrows and Savannahs along this road. The

Great Gray Owlet by Kalin Ocana.



Western Wood-Pewee nest was especially cool being so full frontal for us. It was the first time any of the youth had found a Pewee nest. We had to thank Nick for spotting it for us.

On the way out we were sure we saw a Gray Catbird but due to brief views didn't count it. We did however see tons of Cliff Swallow fledglings perched on the wire fences. It was also fun to drive over the single-lane bridge nearby and see tons of cute Alpacas by the river.

The young birders also got to see a Coyote chasing a young deer and tons of Yellow-bellied Marmots.

We then went to look for Burrowing Owls and ended up finding one out of

Kalin Ocana and Ian Harland were able to capture a video and photos of the adults feeding a vole to one of the young. It was such a cool interaction; we were glad to have got it on film.

After a heavy rain shower (actually a downpour) we decided to leave. One of the owlets looked thoroughly drenched.

It sure was a funny day weather-wise in Thompson-Nicola. We had rain, thunder and sun all day. Funny enough it seemed to only rain when we would be ready to leave a location and be sunny while we birded; so it was pretty perfect and we were very much blessed.

We then started to make our way back to Vancouver but only after searching in Merritt for some Williamson's Sapsuckers. The nest I knew about there was supposedly active this year. It was where we had them on a previous young birder trip to Merritt. However, this time it was really windy and we dipped or the birds had fledged. We did find a nice consolation prize though when Kalin spotted a female Anna's Hummingbird. This is a rare bird for Merritt. We also had a Lazuli Bunting on this road and many Red Crossbills but didn't find a Pygmy Nuthatch

as we have in other years. After this, we even got to see three Common Loons in beautiful breeding plumage as we drove home.

It was so nice meeting Nick for the first time and laughing our heads off at Kalin's jokes. Everyone talked about their exciting upcoming vacations to Vermont, Yukon, Africa and Arizona. I told Bridget how much I am going to miss her next year as she goes out of country for university. They are certainly growing up and I'm so happy and proud of them. Hearing what they all want to do with their futures in the car was inspiring. We had fun discussing this and the recently discovered first BC breeding record of Whimbrel and plant-eating Salamanders over our dinner at Dairy Queen in Merritt. Kalin was really excited that day because he had just found out he had got into Beaverhill Bird Observatory's Young Ornithologists' Workshop in Alberta!

Seen: 81 species.

Below: Kalin Ocana at the young ornithologists' workshop at Beaverhill Banding Observatory in Alberta. For more about the workshop, see www.beaverhillbirds.com



Burrowing Owl photo by Bridget Spencer.

the corner of my eye. He was well hidden but I could see the little cutie looking angrily at us. They always have such cute but angry-looking expressions. Seeing the Burrowing Owl was a real highlight for the youth and some said it was their favourite bird of the trip. Here we also had a singing Clay-colored Sparrow.

The fun was far from over and we decided to go looking for more species for our list. In our search we ended up seeing a family of Great Gray Owls. Seeing these wise-looking owls was the highlight for most of us. It certainly was mine. The adults were calling softly to their two young. They would then fly in silently carrying voles which the babies would devour in a few gulps. One of the chicks was taller and more developed. He obviously hatched before the runt. The youth and I named the runt "Puffball." He was so adorable and all feathers! The ethics the youth demonstrated around the nesting owls and frankly all birds during the trip was wonderful to see.



The Absence of Sparrows

The novel *The Absence of Sparrows* by Kurt Kirchmeier was released on July 9, 2019. As part of the launch, the author and the Hachette Group publisher contacted Melanie

Hafling, asking her to distribute free copies of the book to young birders, which she was happy to do.

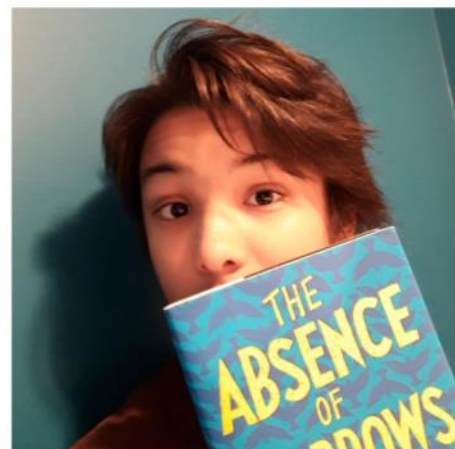
Below are some of the young birders from Nelson to Kelowna, Vancouver to Vancouver Island, who received their free books from Melanie.

The children's novel is a coming-of-age tale about a young birder faced with a catastrophe, who is

convinced that the missing sparrows hold a clue to resolution of the crisis.

More information about the book can be found at:

www.hachette.com.au/kurt-kirchmeier/the-absence-of-sparrows



Fighting Nature Deficit Disorder

Find the Birds!

BCFO Young Birder Adam Dhalla (14, Coquitlam) has decided to do something very practical about the current plague of Nature Deficit Disorder among young people. Kids spend too much time on their cell phones? Well, how about using some of that time to encourage them to develop a love of nature and then get outdoors?

The recipient of the American Birding Association's 2018 Young Birder of the Year award, Adam is now partnering with the National Wildlife Federation to produce a mobile game he created: *Find the Birds: US + Canada*.

In this game, which will be a free download from Apple App Store and Google Play, players will search for birds and complete conservation quests. They will choose from top birding hotspots, including several Canadian ones, and explore virtual forests, wetlands, grasslands, and beaches by swiping, tapping, and zooming. Songbirds, waterfowl, gamebirds, shorebirds, raptors, and seabirds will appear and disap-

pear among the trees, clouds, bushes, and lakes. Players will quickly tap on birds to "find" them. Conservation quests to help birds, such as placing nest boxes, will also be featured.

When a player finds a new bird species, realistic illustrations and fun facts will appear. Players will receive coins for finding birds, with more coins for

rarer species. Those coins can be exchanged for items that will attract and help birds, such as bird baths.

So far, it might look as though this is just more electronic entertainment, but the game will also include interactive technologies to get kids outdoors and explore their natural surroundings, both to look for birds in the flesh and to get involved with actual conservation initiatives. Armed both with knowledge and where to go, this will be an easy step to take.

A fundraising campaign has been started to cover the costs of production by software development company Petricore, Inc. To learn more – or better, to help with the funding – head to:

[www.gofundme.com/
findthebirdsuscanada](http://www.gofundme.com/findthebirdsuscanada)

At this location you will also see a four-minute video of Adam being interviewed by David Mizejewski of the National Wildlife Federation, explaining both how he got into birding and his aspirations for the game.



Briefings 1 & 2

Summaries by M. Church

Cooperative Brood Parasitism

Really? Brood parasitism occurs when a bird deposits its egg(s) in the nest of another bird and leaves it to the unfortunate recipient to raise the young (think Cowbird). How can that be construed as cooperation? Well, it turns out that the Greater Ani, a New World tropical cuckoo, has an answer. Greater Anis are cooperative nesters. That is, two, three or, occasionally, even four females will lay in one nest. Then all the adult birds involved take part in rearing the chicks. But when the nest is destroyed by predators (as not infrequently happens) the females do one of two things. Either they defer further egg laying to the following year or they

deposit a parasitic egg in the nest of some other Greater Ani. That is, they deposit the egg but do not take part in raising the young of that nest – they commit true brood parasitism. And in this case (unlike our Cowbirds) this is conspecific brood parasitism.

Avian theorists (of the human kind) have supposed that conspecific brood parasitism may arise for one of three reasons. (i) Unusually fecund females may lay more eggs than they can handle in one nest, so the extra eggs are deposited in another nest. This is known to occur in a few species. (ii) The female is a specialized parasite – she never tends her own nest. This would have to be an individual deviant behaviour, else conspecific parasitism, and the species as a whole, would have to fail; there is little evidence that this actually occurs. (iii) The female is making the best of a bad situation after nest predation has occurred. More than 300 bird species (about 3% of all species) nest cooperatively and 200 (2%) resort to conspecific

brood parasitism, so getting to the basis of such behaviour is of considerable interest.

Two ornithologists from Princeton University have made an 11-year study of nesting in a colony of Greater Anis in Panama, using genetic markers to ascertain who is whose offspring. This immediately established that there is no evidence of kinship in parasitic acts, so the notion that the parasitism serves to strengthen family lineage is not part of the answer. Altogether the researchers studied 240 clutches laid by 210 females, totaling 1,776 eggs. Cooperative nesting was overwhelmingly dominant: there were only two instances of a lone –pair nest. Sixty-one nests were parasitized; 33 females were involved, contributing 65 eggs (so nearly all instances involved only a single extra egg in the nest) and many of these females were repeated parasitizers. Of all the eggs examined, 3.7% were parasitic. Fifty-five of those eggs were laid by failed nesters, eight were laid by lone

females who did not have their own nest in that year, and two by birds who had already completed a successful nest. Evidently, individual's reasons for parasitism are various but mostly related to nest failure.

Most of the parasitic eggs were inserted into a host nest after the host clutch was complete and incubation had begun. Most parasitic eggs were also smaller than the host eggs. As a result, while females who sometimes resorted to parasitism laid more eggs in total than strict cooperators (who would choose to defer to next year if their nest was predated), the number of eggs hatched was statistically similar between the two groups and the number of fledglings was smaller (but not significantly so) for the mixed strategy females. It appears, then, that the resort to conspecific parasitism after nest predation (or after failure to establish a nest) serves as a mechanism to even out the reproductive success of females in cooperatively nesting species.

Conspecific brood parasitism is strongly associated with cooperative nesters and high rates of nest predation. It appears that cooperative nesting may be an obligatory response to the rate of nest predation (more adults can better defend a nest). Conspecific brood parasitism may be a further consequence of this situation. Among the studied Anis, date of nest failure and stage of the nest at failure were the only significant factors correlated with the propensity of a female to resort to parasitism. The proximity of the parasitized nest to the parasitizer's failed nest was the only factor significantly correlated with the choice of parasitized nest. It all sounds very much like a sort of "best of a bad situation" strategy.

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Zink, A.G. and Eadie, J.M. 2019. "When cooperators cheat." *Ibid.* 34-35 (a commentary on the article).

Geeky Bird Gets the Girl – or So It Seems

Does mate selection depend on the perceived smartness of the potential partner? Humans appear to believe so.

Charles Darwin (inevitably) thought that such a situation might confer evolutionary advantage and so he hypothesized as much. But it has proven devilishly difficult to demonstrate any such effect. A major problem is that animals (like people) almost certainly weigh a number of factors in mate selection so that it becomes very difficult to finger intelligence, or any other single factor, as critical. It would require a subtle experiment to isolate any one factor. But now comes a team of Chinese and Dutch researchers who have designed experiments sufficiently devious (at least from the birds' perspective) to shed some light on the matter.

Their subject is the Budgerigar, a small Australian parrot and popular cage bird. Budgies are native to the dry interior of Australia where sourcing food may sometimes be a significant problem, so that possessing superior food-finding skills may be adaptive for this bird. Furthermore, during nesting, the male feeds the female, whence females may be particularly interested in the male's food-sourcing abilities. Accordingly, the experiments were based on male ability to access food. The experimenters formed triads comprised of two males and one female. They worked with nine experimental triads and eight control triads for a total of 51 birds. Superficial physical features did not vary notably among the birds (apparently eliminating one potentially confounding effect).

In the first stage of the main experiment each of the females was exposed to the two males in her triad and the one nearer whom she spent the greater portion of the fixed test period was deemed the preferred male. The time allotment between more and less preferred males in both the experimental and control groups was similar. After this test the less-preferred males in the experimental group were trained in two means to demonstrate skill in accessing food: by opening a petri dish, and by opening a three-step box. The preferred males received no such training. By this procedure, the initially less-popular males were made to appear to be the smarter birds. The females were then allowed to observe "their" males once more. All nine less-preferred males succeeded in opening both food containers and feed; no preferred male succeeded. During this time, there was a loaded regular feeder near the female's perch, but it

was taped shut. The females were then once again allowed to associate with their males: in every case the choice of preferred male switched to the successful food acquirer – formerly the less-preferred individual. In the control group, females observed the less-preferred male given free access to food (no training; no boxes to unlock). They were then allowed to associate once more with the males; they continued to prefer their first-stage favourite. Females switched preference only in the case of the observed puzzle solvers.

In a subsidiary experiment, the eight control females were subjected to the same series of tests but the two companion birds in this case were also females. The test birds exhibited no change in preference for a female companion regardless of the outcome of the food-unlocking experience. This result appears to establish a clear element of sexual preference involved in companion or mate choice, and that the preference favours the apparently smarter bird.



But is the test foolproof? Put another way, could the birds have subverted the test? The fact that the females showed no desire to prefer males who had free access to food (no puzzle to solve) argues for the validity of the result. Still, this remains only one test, albeit the first to directly imply that mate preference may be based on demonstrated skill in an essential survival task. How general this result may be across species remains to be learned. But, once again, it appears that Darwin divined the answer even though he had no means to demonstrate it.

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Avian Encounters 2 & 3

Rhinos by the Thousands

Peter B. McAllister, Salt Spring Island

On July 31 Ren Ferguson and I made a run in my boat down from Salt Spring Island to check up on possibly large numbers of Rhinoceros Auklets in the channels between Sidney Island and James Island. I had made a rough count of about 1,400 on July 21 in one small area of Cordova Channel near the Tsawout Reserve where I was escorting the Cowichan First Nation canoe, one of close to a hundred, on their journey across the Salish Sea.

Bewildered by dense, shifting black patches of rhinos covering about five kilometres of Sidney Channel, we struggled mightily to challenge our first estimate of about 12,000, but that's the figure we reluctantly settled on. Marian Porter on August 4 ran her boat down from Salt Spring to see what kind of numbers she could come up with. The rhinos had spread out and stretched from Coal Island down through Sidney Channel. Her total was 11,673, almost identical to our estimate of 12,000.

A combination of post-breeding dispersal and good forage-fishing is

the likely cause of so many Rhinos coming up here from the Protection Island colony of 30,000 nesting Rhinos in Washington, about 50 kilometres south and east as the crow flies, across Juan De Fuca Strait.



Grosbeak Undipped

John Gordon, Surrey

I rarely photograph birds at feeders, but after dipping on a Black-headed Grosbeak at a local woodlot I decided to sit on the porch of a friend's house and photograph the House Finches and hummingbirds. A few moments later not one but six grosbeaks flew into the cedar above the feeder. As quickly as they arrived they were gone, flying over the pond and into a stand of Red Cedars. I thought I had lost my chance of a photo when one of the birds flew in and landed back on the feeder. The birding gods were with me as the composition and lighting came together for my favourite-ever feeder shot. 2019 Metro Vancouver year bird (June 15) #191.



The Year of the Curlew

Clive Keen, Prince George

Curlews have for years had a special place in the minds of Prince George birders. The primary reason has been the discovery of the extraordinary Shelley Curlew Field just outside the city, where large numbers of long-bills congregate each year in April, just as the snow is melting. The congregation is so predictable that the Naturalists Club automatically schedules a trip each year to watch them. Club members can expect to see a couple of dozen birds at each visit, but on one famous occasion, ninety-four birds – the record – were seen in the single field. And the curlews don't simply sit around looking handsome, but as often as not, fly squawking over the observers' heads, squabble, preen, and yes, procreate in the full light of day. It is the degree of amorous activity on hand that has led this writer to suggest that the field is a trysting place, where older couples arrange to meet up, singles get to reconsider their old flames, and youngsters get themselves a first date. And yet range maps show Prince George as the very northernmost part of the birds' range, where



sightings ought, it would seem, to be unusual.

2019, though, has imprinted curlews even more firmly in the minds of Prince George birders. If there was a vote for the City Bird, mere Canada Jays and Common Loons wouldn't get a look-in. The reason is that Bird Studies Canada has conducted, with local aid, a detailed study of the breeding birds, and it has produced a flow of news that kept many of us hankering for the latest scoop on Jean, Peter, Schalin, Jack, Martha, Konrad and Ivan.

To back up a bit:

In early 2019 local birders were contacted by David Bradley of Bird Studies Canada, who explained that a study of Prince George curlews was planned and asked for information on where curlews were most likely to nest. In May, David and three others from BSC arrived, and armed with lots of local tips, worked mostly in the Wright Creek area, where they reported "an amazing density of birds." They soon located thirteen nests, from which they caught ten birds, and attached leg flags and seven satellite transmitters. Successful hatching was observed by the team and local birders at eleven of the thirteen nests, just two being depredated during incubation.

The fun for Prince George birders had only just started. Some kept a watch on the birds after the Bird Studies folk left, and an observer living in the Wright Creek area delighted listserv ncnenbirders with her reports of the curlews on her driveway, which frequently reached a count of forty. After hearing that, the Secretary of the Naturalists Club drove out with a Vancouver visitor who'd never seen curlews, and those forty cooperative curlews showed themselves and put on a show. Reports were almost as dramatic from the second study site at Stoner, where up to twenty



Left: Not an atypical sight in April in the Shelley Curlew Field.

Top: Curlew at Wright Creek.

Clive Keen photos.

juvenile curlews could be seen on several occasions in one field. Daily reports of this kind gave updates on fledglings and their adult guardians. We heard of adult curlews chasing away a Bald Eagle, ten curlews group-bombing human observers, and gangs of curlews swooping on Sandhill Cranes. Meanwhile, birders and farmers kept a look out for leg flags, which allowed individual birds to be identified. And on top of this, reports were coming in from the satellite pings, showing where the birds were located. At first, those pings showed just local movements of the seven birds carrying satellite transmitters. But then came this message from Jack Bowling:

“The female curlew Martha was logged as being over Prince George at 0700 hrs on June 23, 2019. 24 hours later, she was logged as being southwest of Sacramento, CA! That is about 1,740 km in 24 hours for a ground speed of 73 km/h, apparently non-stop!”

And then:

“Shalin likely left Wright Creek around 7 pm on June 30, 2019. At 80 km/h, she would have covered the remaining distance of 880 kilometres from Portland, OR to Sacramento, CA in about 11 hours putting her touchdown at Sacramento around 6 pm July 1, 2019, or an approximate 23-hour journey. Pretty darn impressive.”

From that point on many of us looked twice daily at a Bird Studies Canada website showing the location of “our” curlews. This site is open to anyone and is fascinating. You just have to head to:

birdscanada.org/research/speciesatrisk/index.jsp?targetpg=lbcu&targetpg=lbcu



Jack, equipped with his satellite transmitter. This was a recapture of a bird that had been banded and tagged earlier in the project. Holding Jack is Jay Carlisle, a licensed bander. Photo by Jack Bowling.

At the time of writing, we can see that Schalin as well as Martha made highly efficient bee-line trips to their wintering grounds. Jack took off a lot later – it is known that, as with other shorebirds, female curlews leave most of the rearing duties to the male and depart the nesting grounds first. Jack, possibly with youngsters in train,* certainly took a slower and more circuitous route, though he eventually found himself in the same spot as Shalin and Martha. Konrad, by contrast, seems to have had more difficulty route finding, finally ending up in Southern California close to the Mexico border.

As the interim locations became known, Google maps were scanned to see what it could be that attracts curlews to particular stop-off points. This

will produce a wealth of new insights which I’m sure will be appearing in ornithological journals in coming years, and perhaps in updated reports in this magazine.

But here in Prince George, many of us are feeling bereft that our curlews have left and are waiting anxiously for the first news in Spring 2020. Will all our named curlews make it back? Will Konrad get lost again en route? When will those leg flags first be seen in the Shelley fields? Roll on the spring, and perhaps another Year of the Curlews.

*Later sightings indicated that the males took off south before the youngsters, some of which were still being seen around Prince George as late as August 16.

Ornithology Rules

No. 1. Bergmann’s Rule

Species and sub-species tend to be larger in colder climates.

This one makes ready sense. In cold environments, big bodies with their smaller ratio of surface area to volume will retain more heat. In hot areas, body heat needs to be dissipated, and small bodies with proportionately greater surface area will do that more effectively.

It’s not just why we had Ice Age megafauna like mammoths, giant sloths and four-metre-tall bears, but why the penguins in Galapagos are 0.5 metres in length while their ancestral relatives in Antarctica span a full metre.

Carl Bergmann, a German professor of Anatomy and Physiology, described the pattern in 1847. Though there are many exceptions to the rule, it generally holds true for birds and mammals, which are endothermic (warm-blooded).

Next time: *Gause’s Law*, which explains why we no longer have Crested Mynahs in downtown Vancouver.

Whimbrels Nesting in the Haines Triangle

A New BC Breeding Species

Syd Cannings, Jean-François Jetté, and
Logan McLeod, Canadian Wildlife
Service, Whitehorse

On 20 June, 2019, we were doing bird surveys along the British Columbia portion of the Haines Highway in the far northwestern corner of the province. Despite being a bit weary after our early morning work, we were all eager to stroll through the big fens west of the highway (in Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park) to search for Hudsonian Godwits. These magnificent shorebirds have been occasionally recorded as breeding in the region as far back as the 1960s, but we wanted to update that information since the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) had recently assessed the species as Threatened.

Off we went through the thick willows and birch scrub, killing mosquitoes as we went. Except for the mountains and the nearby forests, the landscape was reminiscent of the wetlands we had surveyed for godwits on the northwestern corner of the Mackenzie Delta in 2018. There, Whimbrels swirled noisily overhead as the lone Hudsonian Godwit sat quietly below. So as we battled our way through the bushes, I (Syd) said, "Wouldn't it be really cool if we found Whimbrels here?" To my shock, as we entered the large fen and spread out on our godwit search, loud curlew-like calls rang out and J.-F. shouted, "Whimbrels!" A pair of the birds, obviously upset with us, were soon joined by another pair to the south. J.-F. walked around a small copse of White Spruce and came across a nest with four eggs! We didn't want to disturb them further so kept going through the fen complex to the south, obviously passing through the territory of the second pair. We saw no godwits, although we recalled the advice of a shorebird expert who said that they prefer to nest among Whimbrels and Mew Gulls. The gulls were present here, too, although not in large numbers.

There is one summer record for the region: a single bird was seen at Mosquito Flats on 17 June, 1980 (see account in *Birds of British Columbia*, vol.



Above: Whimbrel photographed in situ by Syd Cannings.

Below: Nest photographed by J.-F. Jetté.

3); but this is the first documented breeding record for the province.

The Haines Highway corridor is well known to biologists as a place where arctic and subarctic species have small, disjunct populations. Birds such as Smith's Longspur and Hudsonian Godwit immediately come to mind, but there are also mammals such as the

Tundra Shrew in the region. A special place indeed! The valley of the headwaters of the Tatshenshini River, and the Mosquito Flats area contain extensive peatlands that appear to be great habitat for Whimbrels and Hudsonian Godwits, so there are plenty of opportunities for more discoveries.



Protocol Survey, Chopaka East & Kilpoola Lake IBA

Jason & Matthias Bieber

The BCFO provided support funding to the Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Program of BC Nature to coordinate a bird count using the eBird IBA protocol developed by Bird Studies Canada. This count was the fourth of its kind in BC and the second in the Okanagan. The goal of a count like this is to document the status of birds during the breeding season. The BCFO grant for the coordination of the count also helped cover costs for fuel and food for volunteer participants.

Eleven experienced birders travelled down to the Chopaka East & Kilpoola Lake in the South Okanagan for the count on June 9, 2019. Birders had come from as far as Vancouver Island to participate, and the youngest birder was 16 – the local expert on his team, and an encouraging sign for the future!

A cool fresh morning brought clear skies and warm temperatures into the later morning which made for good weather for hiking through the hills and grassland. This year we experienced a warm dry spring but water levels in Kilpoola Lake have been higher than those noted in the past few years.

Last year a similar count was conducted in White Lake IBA with a large group of 15 volunteers. Even though fewer birders were available this year, which made for larger-than-desired area

sizes for each team to cover, overall we still estimate a coverage of roughly 50% of the IBA in the six-hour period starting at sunrise.

The Chopaka East & Kilpoola Lake IBA is located at the Canada/USA border about five km west of Osoyoos. The IBA sits amongst rolling hills and includes Blue Lake, Kilpoola Lake and some small wetlands in an open grassland with bunchgrass and big sagebrush, and with small stands of aspen and open dry coniferous woodlands comprised of Douglas-fir and Ponderosa Pine. Invasive and introduced grasses and other plants have altered the grassland's plant composition and habitat characteristics. Cheatgrass, for example, increases the fuel load and risk of fire. Grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada and the South Okanagan hosts 30% of BC's red-listed wildlife species and 45% blue-listed wildlife species. Many of these species depend on these unique habitats for their survival.

The IBA hosts a nationally significant population of Threatened Lewis's Woodpeckers, the Endangered Sage Thrasher and small numbers of Special-concern Flammulated Owls known to breed near Blue Lake, Common Nighthawks, and Provincially Red-listed Brewer's, Grasshopper, and Lark Sparrows.

Endangered Burrowing Owls have

also been reintroduced for several years to the area by the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC in an attempt to re-establish a population across their previous range in southern BC, extirpated since the early 1980s.

Loss or alteration of habitat is the key pressure for Lewis's Woodpecker, Sage Thrasher, Flammulated Owl and other species at risk in the Kilpoola Lake area. Activities such as grazing, recreation, logging and removal of dead and dying trees on the private lands as well as competition with invasive European Starlings for nest cavities are all becoming more of a threat to these sensitive species.

The six-hour count was meant to provide a thorough inventory of birds in a one-day snapshot, similar to a Christmas Bird Count. These counts provide important data on numbers of rare birds in our IBAs. Using eBird data, we created a checklist of all birds regularly recorded during the breeding season in the IBA. This produced a potential species list of 160 species.

On June 9, 2019, we counted a total of 1,856 birds within the Chopaka East & Kilpoola Lake IBA consisting of 101 species identified. The only species identified during the count that had not been previously recorded during the breeding season was Common Loon.

Most abundant species were Western Meadowlark (209), Vesper Sparrow



(169), Chipping Sparrow (121), Spotted Towhee (100), and American Goldfinch (96). Other species with good numbers were Western Wood-Pewee, House Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, Lazuli Bunting, Pine Siskin and Red Crossbill. Species that might have been expected based on eBird data but were not detected include Northern Pintail, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Eared Grebe, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ring-billed Gull, Golden Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank and Barn Swallows, Evening Grosbeak, and House Finch.

The only owl species observed or heard was the Short-eared Owl which is a BC blue-listed species. We counted three individuals and were pleasantly surprised to find them and enjoyed watching them hunting over the open sagebrush grassland. Other species at

risk observed included two BC red-listed species, a group of nine Grasshopper Sparrows found in one area of the IBA, and only one Sage Thrasher observed for a very short moment near the Canada/USA border.

Blue-listed species observed include Lark Sparrow (12) in a few areas of the IBA, and a good number of Brewer's Sparrows (37) detected in almost all areas within the IBA. Other interesting counts and observations include 15 Dusky Grouse, a diurnal observation of a Common Poorwill, 15 Chukar, 10 Willow Flycatcher, a Veery, and 5 Clay-colored Sparrow.

Counts such as these provide great baseline data which is important as the South Okanagan region is experiencing high rates of urban and agricultural expansion which has increased pressure on our ecosystems and the native birds

and other wildlife that depend on them. Data collected in this way can be an important tool in conservation and land-use planning. Increased presence to these areas also brings to light other issues such as dogs off leash within the IBA.

A big thank you to the BCFO for the funding, to BC Nature and the IBA program coordinator for applying for the grant, and to the volunteers that came out to participate in this very important bird count. We also want to thank the landowners, Nature Trust of BC, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and BC Parks for granting land access for the count.

The count data was all entered onto eBird using the IBA Canada protocol.

Briefing 3

Summary by M Church

Saving Seabirds

The Alaska longline fishery is one of the largest in the world. Over 1,300 vessels deploy about 4,000 hooks each in demersal fisheries for Pacific cod, Pacific halibut and Sablefish. ("Demersal" refers to bottom-dwelling species.) While the lines are towed deep, seabirds enthusiastically follow the fishing vessels and dive on the lines as they are being launched in order to capture the bait, whereupon they are caught on the hook and dragged to their death by drowning. In the years 1993–1999 on average 16,100 birds were caught in each year. While such totals are disturbing, they amount only to 8.3 birds/100,000 hooks deployed. The major species caught are Laysan Albatross, Black-footed Albatross, Short-tailed Albatross, Short-tailed Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Northern Fulmar and various *Larus* gulls – in short, the Alaskan offshore avian community, save the storm petrels. The Short-tailed Albatross is an endangered species in American waters, vulnerable worldwide, and in fact was once considered extinct.

Following a period of research on methods to mitigate this loss, streamer lines were adopted in 2002 and made mandatory for use in 2004. Streamers

are relatively large, colourful objects that either divert birds' attention from the baited hooks or scare them off, according to their action in the water (in sport fly fishing they are a special class of fly.) The results have been quite dramatic. From 1993 to 2002, 32,000 birds were killed in 98,000 sets that deployed a total of 370 million hooks (for 8.7 birds/100,000 hooks). From 2002 through 2015, 13,400 birds were caught in 164,000 sets deploying 703 million hooks (1.9 birds/100,000 hooks, a 78% decline in kill rate). Altogether, it is estimated that, since 2002, 675 albatrosses have been saved each year and 9,400 other species, this despite a 47% increase in the number of hooks deployed during the period.

It has also been found that night settings catch half as many birds as day settings while increasing the catch of the target fish species. There is, however a downside to this finding; the number of Fulmars caught increases at night by about 40%, the consequence of the bird's nocturnal feeding habit. (In the end, it may prove necessary to sacrifice abundant Fulmars in order to better protect the endangered albatross.)

Another finding is that a very small number of vessels account for a hugely disproportionate number of bird kills. Three Sablefish vessels, for example, account for 46% of albatrosses caught since 2002. The reason for this is unknown but might involve fishing schedules or area fished. Sablefish are mainly fished near the continental shelf edge

where pelagic seabirds also congregate to feed in upwelling waters.

Despite the overall success of deploying streamer lines, losses of non-albatross species have been erratic, practically tripling in 2007 and 2009 over the apparent stable mean figure. Again, the reason is unknown. It might include complacency amongst fishing crews, more varied vessel gears and schedules, or simply hungry birds, including perhaps greater numbers due to varying breeding success or even the successful suppression of the fishery kill rate. However that may be, there have been major gains in Alaskan seabird conservation since the millennium.

Reference

Melvin, E.F., Dietrich, K.S., Suryan, R.M., and Fitzgerald, S.M. "Lessons from seabird conservation in Alaskan longline fisheries." *Conservation Biology* 33: 842-852.

Oddment

Any birder's day will be improved by taking a look at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hoL93tEkrM

This 30-second video shows the courtship behaviour of a pair of Hooded Grebes. It is an extract from the documentary "Tango in the Wind."

Book Review

Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Western North America by Nathan Pieplow, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 648 pp, Paperback, \$40.

Art Martell, Courtenay

This is the second book on bird sounds by Nathan Pieplow and follows the format of the well-received *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Eastern North America*. The book is 13x3x21 cm, and weighs 911g – about the size and weight of the *National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America*. A website with 7,500 audio files of bird sounds accompanies the book (www.petersonbirdsounds.com; ademy.allaboutbirds.org/peterson-field-guide-to-bird-sounds/). The book covers 537 species regularly found in western United States west of the 100th meridian and adjacent Canada south of the 50th parallel. Together, the two books provide a quite comprehensive reference to North American bird sounds (the breeding-season sounds of some arctic nesters are omitted unless they are known to be given during migration or winter).

Nathan Pieplow is well qualified to produce these books. He teaches writing and rhetoric at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and has intensively studied bird sounds since 2003. He is well known for his blog *Earbirding – recording, identifying, and interpreting bird sounds* (earbirding.com/blog/) which has much interesting and helpful information on bird sounds.

Pieplow notes that “I became dedicated to finding new and better ways to learn, describe, and catalog bird sounds.” He was motivated in part because “My high-frequency hearing is getting worse every year, and I don’t have a great auditory memory” which may make the book attractive to many birders. The approach is based on sonograms, computer-generated graphs that show the basic shape of an audio wave and how its frequencies change over time. Many of you will remember the sonograms in the *Golden Field Guide Birds of North America* from the 1960s.

Those sonograms did not catch on, likely partly due to their small size and poor legibility. Pieplow refines the sonogram approach and produces them for a great variety of sounds, beyond song, for each species. This new approach is based on visualizing and indexing bird sounds. The sonograms show us the speed, repetition, pauses, pitch pattern, and tone quality of the sounds, but visualizing them can still be challenging.

The book is divided into three sections: Introduction (33 pp), Species Accounts (490 pp), and Visual Index (87 pp). The Introduction discusses how to visualize the sounds in the spectrograms, and the names used for the sounds. It is essential to read and understand this section before using the book. Visualizing sounds is not familiar to most of us, but it is the basis for using this book. Information on how to visualize sounds is also available at <http://earbirding.com/blog/specs>. The Species Accounts present a small illustration, a range map, and short information on each species which help connect the bird we know with



the spectrograms for songs, calls and other sounds. The Visual Index lists every sound in a group with similar sounds, a symbol of roughly how the sounds appear in the spectrograms, and a list of species that exhibit the sound. The inside covers also provide quick references to the bird sounds.

Although Pieplow describes his book as a field guide, I found it to be most useful as a reference guide. I took the book to the field to use as I heard the songs and sounds of various birds with which I was familiar. I sometimes had difficulty in translating what I was hearing into the specific “pip,” “pik,” “chirp,” “cheep,” “seet,” “tseew,” “dzit,” “keek,” “chit,” “chup,” “chur,” etc. used in the book. I found myself looking up the sound as I heard it only to find that it was in the book under a slightly different label. I think that my problem was one of “language” and that making the book effective as a field guide would require me to learn a new “language.” Perhaps because I learned bird songs using other tools, including sound memorization and mnemonics, I had more difficulty than someone who starts with this visual

approach.

Using the book as an effective field guide requires time, study, and patience. Pieplow notes that there are several spectrogram apps available that can allow you to make a picture of a sound right when you hear it, which can then show you the shape of the sound, and then you can compare that shape to the ones in the book. “It turns bird sound identification into a visual challenge, which can be really advantageous since many of us have an easier time remembering visuals than sounds.” I would be remiss, however, if I did not point out that a simpler, but extremely useful approach to bird calls is found in *A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island* (six CDs and 68-page guide) by Ian Cruickshank, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, rpbo.org/bird_call_resource_kit.php.

On the other hand, I found the book quite useful as a reference guide in separating some similar sounding notes of different species. The careful documentation of the sounds helped me in hearing the subtle differences in the notes and calls. Using the book in conjunction with the accompanying website is useful, if not essential, in hearing and learning the differences in the sounds and the names used in the book.

A very useful feature of the book is that for several species, accounts are presented separately for distinctive subspecies/types: Northern Pygmy-Owl (Southern Rockies, California, Mountain), Warbling Vireo (Western, Eastern), White-breasted Nuthatch (Pacific, Montane, Eastern), Marsh Wren (Western, Eastern), Swainson’s Thrush (Russet-backed, Olive-backed), Evening Grosbeak (Type 1, 2, and 4), Red Crossbill (Type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10), Brewer’s Sparrow (including Timberline), Bell’s Sparrow (including Mojave), Fox Sparrow (Sooty, Thick-billed, Slate-colored), Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored, Red-backed), Savannah Sparrow (including Belding’s and Large-billed), and Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle, Audubon’s). This assists in separating these subspecies and types and I am sure will be used by many birders.

Overall, I found the book to be a useful addition to any birder’s library. It is valuable as a comprehensive reference book to bird sounds and, for some, it provides a new approach to learning bird sounds and a useful field guide.

Featured Species, No. 7

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*)

Adrian Dorst, Tofino

Audubon's Warbler: Fairly common spring transient, uncommon summer visitor, rare fall transient. Casual in winter. Breeding likely but unconfirmed.

Myrtle Warbler: Uncommon transient in spring, fairly common in fall. Generally rare in winter, but locally fairly common.

The Yellow-rumped Warbler can be divided into two easily identifiable subspecies known as the Myrtle Warbler and the Audubon's Warbler. Indeed, they were considered separate species for a long time, and may well be again in the future. The Myrtle Warbler breeds in the northeastern United States and across forested regions of Canada, from Newfoundland and the Maritimes west to the Rocky Mountains, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Alaska. The Audubon Warbler is confined to the west, from southeast Alaska and southwestern British Columbia south throughout most of the western states. It is absent from most of Arizona and California. Both subspecies move south in winter, though small numbers of Myrtle Warblers winter along the Pacific coast, north to Washington and southwestern British Columbia.

In British Columbia, the species breeds throughout most of the province east of the Coast Mountains. In the north, however, birds breed westward into the mountains and into southeast Alaska. The dividing line between breeding Myrtle Warblers in the northeast and Audubon Warblers in the southwest runs approximately from Calgary, Alberta, to Atlin in the far northwest of British Columbia. Birds often interbreed where the two subspecies meet.

In our region, the first spring arrivals are usually male Audubon Warblers, resplendent in fresh breeding plumage. Local wintering Myrtle Warblers, on the other hand, are still in drab plumage

at this time. Audubon Warblers usually begin arriving in April, although there are records as early as March. The earliest arrival date is 14 March in 2000, in Tofino. There are also records for 24 March 1968, 26 March 2001, and 20 March 2016, all in Tofino, and several late March records from Jordan River. However, all March records that occur before the last few days of the month are exceptionally early. Most records are from April and the first week of May.



There are far fewer records of Myrtle Warblers as spring transients, but on 21 April 1999 and 29 April 2000, mixed flocks of ten birds of both subspecies were seen at the Pacific Rim National Park sewage pond. The earliest spring record for a migrant Myrtle Warbler was 12 April in 2012 at the Long Beach Airport. The latest, also at the airport, was 22 May in 2011.

Male Audubon Warblers heard singing in June and July are likely on territory and almost certainly represent breeding pairs. They have been seen and heard in those months at a number of locations, including the Long Beach Golf Course, Vargas Island, the Kennedy River lowlands, Harris Creek north of the San Juan River, Zeballos, Gold River, and Head Road, well west of Gold River. On Brooks Peninsula, the Audubon Warbler has been recorded from 5 May through 13 August. It is suspected of breeding there in deciduous woodlands near river mouths. Further north, in the vicinity of Grant Bay and Browning Inlet, the species is considered an occasional migrant. Currently, the breeding range of this subspecies is regarded as being south of Brooks Peninsula. Any future breeding evidence from the west coast region will hopefully be documented. Other than singing males in June, the only evidence for breeding consisted of an adult and young seen at Swan Lake on 7 July 1972. This record was not accepted as confirmation of breeding by Hatler et al.

or *The Birds of British Columbia*.

Birds seen and heard on Vargas Island in June, where they almost certainly breed, inhabit an open forest of shore pine (*Pinus contorta*) at low elevation. These are areas of poor drainage, often with standing water. The Long Beach Golf Course was built on similar habitat and remnant stands of shore pine are found there. If this is the preferred nesting habitat for the species, then there are fairly large areas on the west coast suitable for breeding, particularly in Clayoquot Sound and on the Hesquiat Peninsula.

It is difficult to determine exactly when local birds depart, though it is likely in August. The first northern birds begin arriving in late September and the movement continues through October and well into November. October appears to be the main migration period. On 14 October, 1983, 30 birds were seen at Stubbs Island, and on 11 October, 2012, 18 birds were counted at Tofino. Dates of 16 November, 1982 at Tofino and 20 November 1982 at Radar Beach indicate that very late transients are still passing through then. All fall birds were Myrtle Warblers, except on two occasions: one Audubon's Warbler was seen on 11 November, 2004 at Stubbs Island, and two were observed on 11 October, 2012 accompanying a flock of Myrtle Warblers in Tofino.

There is a small wintering population of Myrtle Warblers on Stubbs Island, near Tofino, where they are found in an area containing stands of red alder and a profusion of wax-myrtle bushes, also known as Pacific bayberry. This is a unique situation in coastal British Columbia (R.W. Campbell, personal communication). By feeding on the waxy berries, Myrtle Warblers are able to survive the winter with minimal reliance on insects. The winter climate on the central west coast, it should be noted, is often the mildest (and wettest) in Canada, and insects in midwinter are not unusual. Myrtle Warblers have been seen here each winter since 1982, with counts varying from 6 to 30 birds. Due to the dense vegetation, any particular count likely does not take in all of the birds present.

This is an extract from Adrian Dorst's The Birds of Vancouver Island's West Coast, UBC Press, which covers 360 species in its 550 pages. The book can be ordered at ubcpres.ca.

Gone Fishing

Chris Siddle, Vernon

Birds of the Okanagan Valley revisited

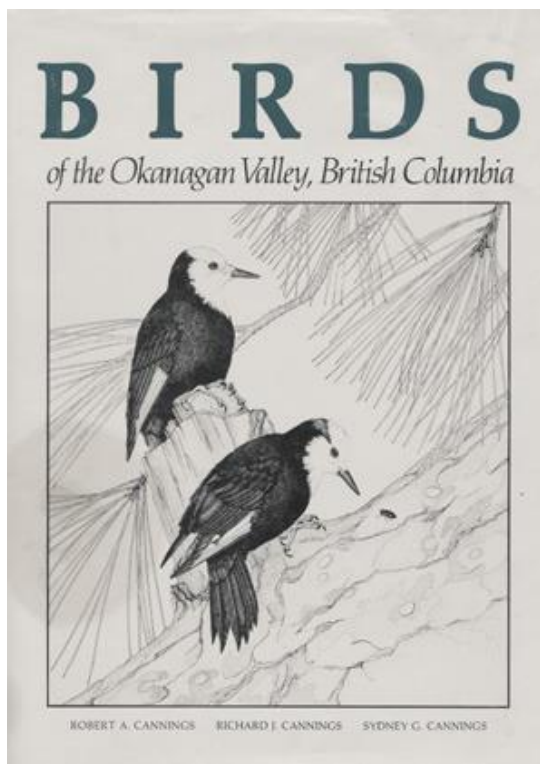
New World warblers have their moments in the sun when their stunning colours seem to eclipse everything else around them, but then they flit into the leaf shadows and are gone. Think of that little flame, the Cape May Warbler, that you finally spotted singing from atop a White Spruce or the dramatic black, green and yellow Townsend's Warbler whisking through the Douglas-firs like a spot of light. Here and then gone.

Bird books are similar. The longer you're a birder, the taller the stack of once must-have/now-forgotten books you'll leave behind. For example, in 1983 you had to have the three volumes of *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding* for the latest field identification tips. Since 1983 the Master Guide slipped into the shadows like the Cape May Warbler and really hasn't been heard of since (though the authors of the Guide were responsible for discovering field marks that have since become part of our modern field guides). Once field identification was dominated by an enormously talented painter-writer with the initials RTP whose field guides were on your shelves and in your car. Now those letters have been obscured by the abbreviations "Sibley" and "Nat. Geo." However, one book, a study of the birds of one long valley in British Columbia, remains as influential today as it was when it was published over three decades ago and if it's not in your reference library, it should be.

As I examine other works of BC regional ornithology, it's clear that *Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia* remains the very best single work to date. Thirty-two years after its publication, this book by Robert, Sydney and Richard Cannings remains an invaluable resource for naturalists and birders and is widely regarded as one of the best regional ornithological works of North America. There's still nothing quite like it on the market or online. For anyone who hopes to write a regional bird study, this book stands as a model of the best kind. For the BC birder who wants to know more about the birds

he's seeing, "BOKVBC" is a must have.

Several factors contribute to its value. No other regional work deals in such a depth of local detail as BOKVBC does, including its clear maps, superb historical photos, and its comprehensive introductions to the valley's geography, climate, and habitat. Secondly its essays on the geographical composition of its bird fauna and the history of its ornithology serve as valua-



ble context to the book's 307 species accounts. Thirdly, each account for the 192 breeding and 92 migrant and/or wintering species of at least casual occurrence contains unusually complete analysis of local data including range within the valley, arrival and departure times, wintering population size (each species' range, frequency, and mean for Christmas Bird Counts of Vernon, Penticton, and Vaseux Lake), nesting information including habitat preferences, nest sites, laying and incubation data, period of chick dependence, and foraging strategies. Finally, the brief but detailed essay entitled "The Okanagan Birding Year" is as useful today as it was in 1987, and that despite local habitat loss, urbanization, and climate change. It is a synopsis of what a birder can expect to find happening among the birds of the valley. Each month is divid-

ed into two with the main avian events described. To paraphrase, from March 16-31, for example, Cassin's Finches and Spotted Towhees arrive, Common Goldeneyes and American Coots show up in numbers on the lakes and Great Blue Herons arrive at their colonies. Dusky Grouse hoot in the hills and towards the end of the period Ruffed Grouse drum in the draws and Chukars cackle from the cliffs. Red-necked Grebes return. Expect movements of

Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels through the valley by month's end and the return of Brewer's, Red-winged, and Yellow-headed blackbirds in abundance. Early nesting occurs among Common Ravens, Mallards, and Canada Jays. Despite global warming trends, "The Okanagan Birding Year" remains remarkably accurate and useful, as well as serving as a chronological benchmark against which to measure future changes.

Fans of the online program eBird might argue that regional bird books no longer need to be written, since eBird automatically produces bar graph checklists illustrated with the best available bird photographs of local origin. However eBird is a database that does not include life history and ecological information and habitat.

Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia has aged far better than many of the birders it has served over the years. The AOU, now the AOS, has shuffled the taxonomic order of the North America bird families at least twice since the book's publication. The book presents its birds in the old Wetmore order, beginning with loons and ending with weaver finch, not a major problem since you won't be carrying the volume with you into the field and will have time at home to use the book's index. The English names of species have fared better than their taxonomic order, with only 15 of the book's 307 species having official name changes. These include Green-backed Heron which was flipped back to Green Heron; Oldsquaw which is now known by its non-racist Old World name, Long-tailed Duck; Rock Dove which became Rock Pigeon (and almost no one cares), and most recently Gray Jay became Canada Jay.

Since 1987 the Okanagan has gained several species due to taxonomic splits including Cackling Goose, American

and Pacific Golden-plovers, Pacific and Winter Wrens, and Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles.

Next to Vancouver and Victoria, no area in BC has gained more accidental and casual species than the Okanagan Valley, partially because over the years several of the province's top birders have lived there. About 40 species have been added to the Okanagan checklist since 1987. These include Tufted Duck, Black Scoter, Clark's Grebe, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruff, White-rumped Sandpiper, Little Gull, Western Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Slaty-backed Gull, Least Tern, Brown Pelican, Snowy Egret, White-faced Ibis, Black Vulture, Broad-winged Hawk, Acorn Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Black-capped Vireo, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Bewick's Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, Brambling, Lesser Goldfinch, Green-tailed Towhee, Orchard Oriole, Great-tailed Grackle, Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Lucy's Warbler, Northern Parula, Blackburnian Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Summer Tanager and Indigo Bunting. The majority of these species are of accidental or casual status and as such don't affect the main contents of BOKVBC.

Species that have experienced substantive changes in status since the book's publications are far fewer. Changes in birds' status within the valley are a topic deserving its own article, if not book, and of course I encourage the authors to revise *Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia*, but given that Robert, Syd and Richard are busy men, I don't expect this to happen any time soon. So for the purposes of this article let a few examples of changes suffice. There has been a dramatic increase in Broad-winged Hawks appearing as autumn migrants. The Burrowing Owl re-introductions initiated in the 1980s have not been successful to date in spite of huge volunteer effort. A few species have finally been documented as Okanagan breeders like the Great Gray Owl. Pure and hybrid Glaucous-winged Gulls have increased as residents. One or two Lesser Black-backed Gulls make almost annual winter visits. Bewick's Wren established itself as an uncommon resident at least as far north as Kelowna, and Lesser

Goldfinches show signs of becoming local breeders near Osoyoos.

Whether you're a young birder who has not yet had a chance to purchase a copy of *Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia* or are someone who has come late to birding, now is a good time to look for secondhand copies, as birders who have aged beyond the demands of their hobby downsize their book collections. At a Vernon secondhand bookstore I frequent, there's almost always at least one copy for sale. Expect to pay about \$35.00 for

the sturdy soft-cover edition and more for the much scarcer hard cover. Hard cover or soft, this is one book every birder living in or visiting the Okanagan Valley will find rewarding and well worth the purchase price.

Below: Female Purple Martin at Blackie Spit Crescent Beach. Purple Martins arrive in the Lower Mainland in April and then migrate back to the Amazon Basin in September. John Gordon photo.



Summary of Species Tallied at the Golden Conference & AGM

The following chart is a summation from field trip summary sheets with a few additional reports from field trips not included on those sheets. As a reminder, the field trips included Blaeberry Valley, Moberly Marsh, Yoho – Emerald Lake, Golden to Parson, Donald-Bush River Road, and Spillimacheena – Westside Rd.

WATERFOWL	Blaeberry	Moberly	Yoho	Parson	Donald	Spillim
Canada Goose	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trumpeter Swan				X		
Wood Duck		X		X		
Blue-winged Teal			X			
Northern Shoveler			X			
American Wigeon		X				
Mallard	X		X	X		X
Redhead				X		
Ring-necked Duck	X			X		X
Bufflehead	X	X		X		X
Common Goldeneye	X					
Barrow's Goldeneye	X					
Hooded Merganser	X	X		X		
Common Merganser			X		X	
Ruddy Duck				X		
GROUSE						
Ruffed Grouse	X				X	
GREBES						
Pied-billed Grebe	X	X		X		
Eared Grebe				X		
PIGEONS & DOVES						
Rock Pigeon				X		
SWIFTS						
Black Swift	X	X			X	
Vaux's Swift					X	
White-throated Swift						X
HUMMINGBIRDS						
Black-chinned Hummingbird	X					
Rufous Hummingbird	X		X	X	X	X
Calliope Hummingbird	X					
RAILS & COOT						
Sora		X		X		X
American Coot	X			X		
CRANES						
Sandhill Crane	X	X				

PLOVERS						
Killdeer	X		X	X		
SANDPIPERS						
Wilson's Snipe	X	X		X	X	X
Spotted Sandpiper	X		X	X	X	
Solitary Sandpiper					X	
LOONS						
Common Loon	X	X	X	X	X	
HERONS						
Great Blue Heron	X	X		X		
VULTURES						
Turkey Vulture	X	X		X		X
OSPREY						
Osprey	X	X	X	X	X	
HAWKS & EAGLES						
Northern Harrier		X				
Bald Eagle		X		X		
Red-tailed Hawk	X	X			X	
KINGFISHERS						
Belted Kingfisher	X			X		
WOODPECKERS						
Red-naped Sapsucker	X			X	X	
American 3-toed Woodpecker			X			
Downy Woodpecker	X	X		X		X
Hairy Woodpecker			X		X	
Pileated Woodpecker	X	X		X	X	X
Northern Flicker	X	X		X	X	X
FALCONS						
American Kestrel						X
Peregrine Falcon		X				
FLYCATCHERS						
Olive-sided Flycatcher			X			
Western Wood-Pewee	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alder Flycatcher		X				
Willow Flycatcher	X	X		X	X	X
Least Flycatcher	X	X		X	X	X
Hammond's Flycatcher	X			X	X	X
Dusky Flycatcher	X					
Western Kingbird						X
Eastern Kingbird	X	X		X		X
VIREOS						
Cassin's Vireo				X	X	

Warbling Vireo	X	X		X	X	X
Red-eyed Vireo	X	X		X	X	X
CROWS, JAYS, & MAGPIES						
Canada Jay	X		X			
Steller's Jay					X	
Black-billed Magpie			X			X
American Crow	X	X	X	X		X
Common Raven	X	X	X	X	X	X
SWALLOWS						
N Rough-winged Swallow	X	X		X	X	
Tree Swallow	X	X	X	X	X	
Violet-green Swallow	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bank Swallow		X				
Barn Swallow	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cliff Swallow		X		X	X	X
CHICKADEES						
Black-capped Chickadee	X	X		X	X	X
Mountain Chickadee			X	X		
NUTHATCHES						
Red-breasted Nuthatch	X		X	X	X	
WRENS						
Pacific Wren			X		X	
Marsh Wren	X	X		X		
KINGLETS						
Golden-crowned Kinglet	X		X	X	X	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	X		X		X	X
THRUSHES & ALLIES						
Mountain Bluebird						X
Townsend's Solitaire	X					X
Varied Thrush	X		X			
Veery		X	X	X		
Swainson's Thrush	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hermit Thrush			X			
American Robin	X	X	X	X	X	X
CATBIRD						
Gray Catbird		X		X	X	X
STARLINGS						
European Starling	X					
WAXWINGS						
Cedar Waxwing	X	X		X	X	X
FINCHES & ALLIES						
Pine Grosbeak			X		X	
Purple Finch		X				

Cassin's Finch		X				
Red Crossbill				X	X	
White-winged Crossbill			X	X	X	
Pine Siskin	X	X	X	X		X
American Goldfinch						X
SPARROWS						
Chipping Sparrow	X	X	X			X
Clay-colored Sparrow	X	X		X	X	
Fox Sparrow					X	
Dark-eyed Junco	X		X	X	X	X
White-crowned Sparrow	X	X	X			
White-throated Sparrow	X				X	
Vesper Sparrow						X
LeConte's Sparrow		X				
Savannah Sparrow	X	X		X	X	X
Song Sparrow	X	X		X	X	X
Lincoln's Sparrow	X	X	X	X	X	X
Spotted Towhee			X			
TROUPIALS & ALLIES						
Yellow-headed Blackbird	X			X		
Bobolink		X				
Bullock's Oriole		X				
Red-winged Blackbird	X	X		X	X	X
Brown-headed Cowbird	X	X		X		X
WARBLERS						
Northern Waterthrush	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tennessee Warbler					X	
Orange-crowned Warbler	X	X		X	X	X
MacGillivray's Warbler	X	X	X	X	X	X
Common Yellowthroat	X	X		X	X	
American Redstart	X	X		X	X	
Magnolia Warbler	X			X		
Yellow Warbler	X	X		X	X	X
Blackpoll Warbler			X			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	X	X	X	X	X	
Townsend's Warbler			X	X	X	
Wilson's Warbler			X			
CARDINALS & ALLIES						
Western Tanager	X	X		X	X	
Black-headed Grosbeak		X		X		
Lazuli Bunting		X				
----- STATISTICS -----	Blaeberry	Moberly	Yoho	Parson	Donald	Spillim
Species seen - 127	75	66	45	75	60	49