

# BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

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## CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS	2
BCFO Officers and Directors	2
UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS	3-4
SOCIETY NEWS	
Notice of Third Annual AGM, Tofino BC	5
New BCFO President, Michael McGrenere	5
BCFO Bird Records Committee Guidelines	6-7
BCFO Bird Records Committee Review List	7
NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS	8-9
Possible El Nino Effect in Beached Bird Survey 1992	10-11
Bamfield Christmas Bird Count -- 2 January 1993	11-13
Birds Seen in Revelstoke Area During 2nd Annual AGM	13
SITE GUIDE: Shoemaker Bay, Port Alberni	14-16
Bird Feeder Talk	17-18
Some Notes on Birdlisting Software	18
LETTERS TO THE EDITORS	19-20
AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE	20

The **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** is published four times a year by B.C. Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1018, Surrey, B.C., Canada V3S 4P5. A subscription to this periodical is a benefit of membership in the society. Members will also receive a semi-annual journal, **BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS**.

British Columbia Field Ornithologist staff:

Editor(s) -- Andy and Marilyn Buhler  
Mailing & Distribution -- Hue and Jo Ann MacKenzie

Send material for publication (mail, phone, FAX, IBM WordPerfect files on discs) to the Editors (name, address & phone no. page 2). We especially welcome bird-finding information for the "Site Guide" series and articles about birdwatching experiences, preferably (but not necessarily) in British Columbia.

Membership in British Columbia Field Ornithologists is open to anyone interested in the study and enjoyment of wild birds in B.C. Our objectives include fostering cooperation between amateur and professional ornithologists and promoting cooperative bird surveys and research projects, and supporting conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve birds and their habitats.

**Membership dues:** Individual memberships or library subscriptions, \$20.00; junior memberships (age under 18), \$10.00; Family memberships (2 or more persons at one address), \$25.00; U.S. and foreign memberships, \$20.00 (U.S.). Memberships are for the calendar year. For further information, or to join, write the Treasurer, B.C. Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1018, Surrey, B.C. V3S 4P5. ◀

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**EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS**


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Yes, your editors did venture to the mainland to see the Dusky Thrush. Ferry fare is high so we procrastinated until 22 January when we had several things that needed doing in Vancouver. Jon Jensen, Federal Way, Washington was on site before us and he located the bird near the top of a holly tree. The thrush tended to provide a rear view, often obscured by holly leaves, but eventually hopped to the end of a branch out in the sunshine, ate a few berries and gave us great front & side views. We all had a good look with scopes & binis and were able to share the experience with Mr & Mrs J Sarles of White Rock and Surrey Naturalists, and another gentleman who had arrived while the scopes were up and the bird still in view.

On the topic of rare birds, BCFO Rare Birds Committee chairman, Gary Davidson, asked us to publish a copy of Goals and Objectives, Rules and Procedures and Review List in this issue (see pgs 6-7). The BC Rare Bird Report Form itself will be a separate enclosure.

Sandy McRuer has provided us with an interesting site guide for Shoemaker Bay in Port Alberni. Be sure to check it out on your way to the AGM in Tofino, but heed the fragility of the area and bird responsibly. Check your local nature stores for a copy of the new checklist of the Port Alberni area. You might also want to peruse Birds of Pacific Rim National Park by David F Hatler, R Wayne Campbell and Adrian Dorst. BC Provincial Museum Occasional Paper #20, 1978 to prepare yourself for birding along & off the Pacific Coast.

Don't forget to book some time for the BCFO Annual General Meeting at Tofino at end of April this year. Pelagic trips, birdwalks, great speakers, interesting habitat, elections & even some business to get completed. See notice on page 5.

Dr. Alan Berger provided us with some interesting facts arising from his beached birds survey data. Elsie Nykyforuk kindly submitted an item on planting her bird garden. (With spring looming around the corner you might like to consider some of her planting suggestions for your own garden.) Inez Weston gave a glimpse of the fun of a Bamfield CBC. (Give it a try yourself next year). Good articles all!

Letters to the EDITORS contained some great suggestions, a rare bird sighting, unusual feeding behavior, & notes on software. Keep sending in your letters, SITE GUIDES, articles, etc. We need, and certainly enjoy, all your input. The smaller print size in most of this issue made it possible to be more current in publication of material submitted to us. Comments, Razzberries, Roses?

**LATE BREAKING NEWS FLASH:** Welcome to our newest BCFO member Larissa Weber born 12 March 1993 to Wayne and Wendy Weber. ◀

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**BCFO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 1991-1992**

President:	Mike McGrenere	(phone 658-8624)
Vice-President:	Wayne Weber	(phone 597-7201)
Secretary:	Tom Hanrahan	(phone 464-3744)
Treasurer:	Gary Kaiser	(phone 940-9477)
Directors:	Lloyd Esralson	(phone 581-4736)
	Rick Howie	(phone 578-7542)
	Marian Porter	(phone 531-5747)
	Michael Shepard	(phone 388-4227)
	Allen Wiseley	(phone 477-4593)
Editors:	Andy & Marilyn Buhler	
	1132 Loenholtm Road Victoria, BC V8Z 2Z6	(phone 744-2521) WORK phone 387-1014 & FAX 356-9937

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

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- Apr. 2-4, 1993 BRANT FESTIVAL, Parksville-Qualicum, featuring Big Day birding competition, wildlife art show, children's activities. For information, contact Brant Festival 93, PO Box 99, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2G3, or phone 248-4117.
- Apr. 13-18, 1993 COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CENTENNIAL MEETING, Sacramento, California. For details, contact Dr. Michael Morrison, Dept. of Forestry and Resource Management, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720 (phone 510-642-5344).
- April 17, 1993 BCFO FIELD TRIP, co-sponsored by DELTA NATURALISTS. This will be a morning field trip to the Reifel Bird Sanctuary and Roberts Bank jetty, Delta, to look for migrating waterfowl, songbirds, and early shorebirds. Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the parking area of the Reifel Bird Sanctuary; the trip will conclude about 1:00 P.M. Please bring \$1.00 for admission to the Sanctuary (\$0.50 for seniors or children) if you are not a member of the BC Waterfowl Society. For details, phone leaders Allen Poynter (943-9129) or John Ireland (946-2438).
- Apr. 29-  
May 2, 1993 WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY & SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS annual meeting, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario. For information, contact Dr. Alex Middleton, Zoology Department, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1.
- April 30-  
May 2 1993 Remember there are always terrific field trips at our Annual General Meeting, this year to be held in Tofino. This is a good time of year to bird the coast for shore birds and song birds. There are plans afoot to have pelagic trips. See page 5 for outline. Watch for a registration package with details to follow in the mail.
- May 8, 1993 SPRING BIRD COUNT, VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY, from midnight to 12:00 noon. For details, phone David Pearce (477-2664). The post-count gathering will be at Goldstream Park picnic shelter, 12:30 P.M.
- May 13-16, 1993 FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS annual meeting, Vancouver. For details, write the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, 321-1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V6H 4A9, or phone 737-3057.
- May 23, 1993 OKANAGAN BIG DAY CHALLENGE. For details, contact Dick Cannings, 3007 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1Z7 (phone 734-9489).
- May 29, 1993 BIRD BLITZ, OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL PARK. Help document the birdlife of this large but relatively little-known provincial park. Field trips will be led by members of the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club. For information see page 4 of this issue.
- June 4-6, 1993 OREGON FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS annual meeting, Malheur Field Station, near Bend, Oregon. For details, contact Tim Shelmerdine, 6873 SW Montauk Circle, Lake Oswego, OR 97035 (ph 503-620-5105).
- June 4-6, 1993 WASHINGTON FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS annual meeting, Walla Walla, Washington, featuring field trips to the Blue Mountains, McNary NWR, and other hot spots. For details, write Washington Ornithological Society at P.O. Box 85786, Seattle, WA 98145, or phone Tom Schooley at (206) 357-8851.
- June 5, 1993 4TH ANNUAL MOUNT REVELSTOKE BIRD BLITZ, sponsored by Parks Canada and the Friends of Mt. Revelstoke and Glacier. For details, contact John Woods at 837-4707.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS Continued**

- June 8-13, 1993 AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION annual meeting, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska. For details, contact Dr. Edward C. Murphy, Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99775-0180 (phone 907-474-7154).
- June 12, 1993 BCFO OWLING FIELD TRIP, co-sponsored by the Kamloops Naturalists Club. Rick Howie, well known for his expertise on owls in BC, will lead an owling trip to the Lac Dubois area near Kamloops. Meet at 8:30 pm in parking lot of the Halston Diner in the Esso Complex on Halston Road. Meeting place directions: travel north on Highway 5 for approx. 5 km from inter-section of Highways 1 & 5. Turn west (left if coming from Kamloops) into the Esso complex. Flammulated, Barred, Great Horned, Saw-whet and other owl species are possible on this trip. For other details phone Rick at 587-7542.
- June 18-20, 1993 11TH ANNUAL MANNING PARK BIRD BLITZ. Join this cooperative count of birds in Manning Park; the group campground at Lone Duck Lake in the park will be reserved for participants. For information, contact park interpreter Michael Tilitzky at 105-985 Jervis St., Vancouver, B.C. V6E 2B7 (phone 687-4681), or contact the Manning Park office after May 15 at 840-8836.
- July 22-25, 1993 CANADIAN NATURE FEDERATION annual meeting, Vernon, BC, hosted by the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club. Registration kits available by January 15, 1993. For information, write the Secretary, North Okanagan Naturalists' Club, PO Box 473, Vernon, BC, V1T 6M4. ◀

**OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL PARK****FIRST ANNUAL BIRD COUNT**

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- HOSTS:** Hosted by the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, with the help of South Okanagan Naturalists & BC Parks.
- DATE:** Saturday, May 29, 1993 beginning at 8:00 am. Collect information packages at 2319 Pandosy St., Kelowna on Friday, May 28, 1993 from 4:00-9:00 pm or Sat, May 29, 1993 from 6:00-7:30 am. If you wish to 'Bird' the south end of the Park from Penticton contact Eva Durance (492-3158).
- POST COUNT:** Gather at approximately 5:30 pm at BC Parks District Office on Highway 97 near Summerland for tally and a Barbecue. (Cost of BBQ is \$5)
- EARLY BIRDS:** Join us for our regular Thursday AM birding on May 27. Friday, May 28 we offer an all-day birding trip: early birding from 6:00 to 8:00 am, a breakfast break, then meet again at 9:30 am for field trip around Kelowna. Bring a lunch. There will also be guided birding on Sunday May 30 on the west side of Lake Okanagan.
- WHERE:** All field trips meet under clock at Mission Park Shopping Centre, 3151 Lakeshore Road in Kelowna.
- FOOD & LODGING:** You will be responsible for your own meals and accommodation. All activities will leave from the vicinity of Lakeshore Road.
- FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Eileen Dillabough, 2319 Pandosy St., Kelowna, BC, V1Y 1T4 (862-8254), or Denise Brownlie (762-3339) or Brenda Thomson (764-4296). ◀

**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS** Continued**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS  
1993 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
TOFINO, B.C.**

**WHEN:** April 30 to May 2, 1993 (Friday to Sunday)

**WHERE:** Weigh West Harbour Resort, 634 Campbell Street, Tofino, B.C.

**PROGRAM:** A field trip to Tofino will leave Victoria at 7:00 am on Friday, April 30 and will have a rendezvous in Nanaimo for those travelling by ferry from Vancouver. A social is planned for Friday evening in the meeting room at the resort.

Field trips will be held on Saturday and Sunday. Boat trips are being organized for Saturday (approximately 4 hours off Tofino) and Sunday (approximately 8-9 hours off Ucluelet).

There will be guest speakers and a business meeting on Saturday afternoon followed by a banquet on Saturday evening. Wayne Campbell will be the banquet speaker and will talk on the "Birds of B.C." project.

**ACCOMMODATION:** The Weigh West Marine Resort has 63 units, dining room and marine pub. There are other motels in Tofino as well as resorts south of Tofino with cottage style accommodation facing the Pacific Ocean. The area has private campgrounds as well as the Green Point campground in Pacific Rim National Park. A more extensive accommodation list will be included with the registration form that will soon be mailed to all members. ◀

**SOCIETY NEWS**

**BCFO PRESIDENT:** It is with regret that the Board of Directors of British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO) have accepted the resignation of BCFO President, Doug Kragh. Doug has had to spend a lot of time south of the border during the past year and his commitments there continue into 1993. We wish Doug well and thank him for his past services to the organization. We value Doug's talents and hope he will continue an active interest as a BCFO member.

The Board of Directors wishes to further announce that in accordance with Part 3, number 21 of the BCFO constitution they have appointed Mike McGrenere to the Board of Directors and, at their last Board of Directors' meeting, Mike McGrenere was elected President.

Mike McGrenere has lived in Victoria for the last eight years and currently works at the Vancouver Island Regional Office of BC Lands, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. During that time he has been president of the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) and is currently their past-president. He was instrumental in establishing the birding committee of the VNHS and is a former chairperson of that committee. Mike was also coordinator of the Victoria Christmas Bird Count from 1987 to 1989. He participated in some of the initial meetings and discussions which led to the formation of the BC Field Ornithologists (BCFO) and has been actively involved with the BCFO since its inception.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and BCFO membership, the Editors would like to welcome Mike McGrenere as president of the BCFO Board of Directors.

**NOMINATIONS FOR BCFO DIRECTORS:** There will probably be at least two vacancies on the BCFO board of directors, to be filled at our AGM business meeting on May 1, 1993. Anyone wishing to nominate a member for the board should send the nomination in writing, with the signed consent of the nominee, to the Secretary, Tom Hanrahan, 3187 Beacon Drive, Coquitlam, B.C. V3C 3W7. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the AGM. If you would like to become involved in BCFO affairs, this is your chance!

**SOCIETY NEWS** Continued

**BCFO FIELD TRIPS:** Two BCFO field trips are scheduled for the next 3-month period. On April 17, a trip to the Reifel Bird Sanctuary will be led by Allen Poynter and John Ireland. On June 12, an owling trip in the Kamloops area will be led by Rick Howie. The trips will be co-sponsored by the Delta Naturalists' Society and Kamloops Naturalists, respectively. For further details, see the "Upcoming Events" section.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS:** The first (Dec. 1991) issue of our journal, **British Columbia Birds**, will be mailed out to members at about the same time as this issue of the **B.C. Field Ornithologist**. We apologize to our members for the long, long delay in the appearance of this issue. This was mainly a result of other demands on the Editor's time, which have now ceased. We have NOT suffered from either a shortage of material or of funds for publication. We have most of the needed material in hand now for the third (Dec. 1992) issue, and are hard at work editing material for the second and third issues. We expect to get the journal back on something like the planned schedule sometime in 1994.

We thank our members, and our authors, for their patience as we have struggled to get the journal off the ground. Producing a journal, a newsletter, and other aspects of running a society with more than 300 members has been a new experience for many of those involved, and have taken more time than some of us expected. BCFO's directors have decided to send the first issue of **British Columbia Birds** to everyone who joined in 1991 and 1992. Membership renewal notices for 1993 are also being mailed out with the journal. We thank those of you who have already renewed for 1993, and hope that all of you will continue to support us as we constantly strive to improve our services to the membership.

**LISTING STATISTICS:** Because of space constraints, the report on listing totals planned for this issue has been delayed to the June issue. A second report on listing totals, based on the listing report forms sent out with the last issue, will be included in the September or December 1993 issue. So, if you haven't yet sent in your listing report form, there is still time to do so! ◀

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**BCFO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE**

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Goals and Objectives

1. To generate a Review List of bird species requiring documentation in B.C.
2. To review all submitted reports of species on the Review List and species not on the current B.C. checklist.
3. To maintain a permanent file of all submitted reports.
4. To make available all data to any agency updating the provincial bird checklist.
5. To encourage documentation of unusual birds and to standardize reporting procedures.

Rules and Procedures

1. Chairman will circulate, on a regular basis, copies of reports submitted.
2. Committee members will critically review each report and return their ballots, with rationale, within four weeks of date of receipt.
3. Where possible, each member should decide on his/her vote without consultation with other committee members.

**BCFO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE Continued**Rules and Procedures Continued

4. Records receiving zero or one reject vote will be "accepted". Records receiving four or more reject votes will be "rejected" Records receiving two or three reject votes will be recirculated to all members with each member's first round comments included for a second ballot. Records that remain undecided after a second ballot will not be considered "accepted".
5. Any record, whether rejected or accepted, may be recirculated if new information becomes available.
6. The chairman will notify all contributors of the committee's decision.
7. The chairman will submit an annual report for publication. ◀

**BC FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REVIEW LIST**

Any person seeing any of the following species, or any species not on the current BC Bird Checklist, is requested to complete a Rare Bird Report Form and submit it to:

Gary Davidson, P.O. Box 294, Nakusp, BC V0G 1R0  
or to any other member of the BCFO Bird Records Committee.

Clark's Grebe	Bar-tailed Godwit	Gray Kingbird
Short-tailed Albatross	Rufous-necked Stint	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Mottled Petrel	Little Stint	Scrub Jay
Black-vented Shearwater	Temmink's Stint	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Red-faced Cormorant	Curlew Sandpiper	Northern Wheatear
Magnificent Frigatebird	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	Brown Thrasher
Least Bittern	Common Black-headed Gull	Yellow Wagtail
Snowy Egret	Iceland Gull	Black-backed Wagtail
Little Blue Heron	Slaty-backed Gull	Red-throated Pipit
White-faced Ibis	Great Black-backed Gull	Loggerhead Shrike
Wood Stork	Ross' Gull	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Fulvous Whistling-duck	Ivory Gull	Blackburnian Warbler
Baikal Teal	Elegant Tern	Painted Redstart
Garganey	Aleutian Tern	Scarlet Tanager
Common Eider	Kittlitz's Murrelet	Indigo Bunting
Steller's Eider	Xantus' Murrelet	Dickcissel
Smew	Parakeet Auklet	Green-tailed Towhee
Broad-winged Hawk	Crested Auklet	Black-throated Sparrow
Ferruginous Hawk	White-winged Dove	Sage Sparrow
Eurasian Kestrel	Black-billed Cuckoo	Lark Bunting
Mountain Quail	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Common Moorhen	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	McCown's Longspur
Whooping Crane	Costa's Hummingbird	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Snowy Plover	Red-headed Woodpecker	Rustic Bunting
Spotted Redshank	Acadian Flycatcher	McKay's Bunting
Terek Sandpiper	Black Phoebe	Great-tailed Grackle
Bristle-thighed Curlew	Tropical Kingbird	Brambling
Far Eastern Curlew	Thick-billed Kingbird	Lesser Goldfinch ◀

**HELP WANTED:** Individuals with experience in layout/design of newsletters, journals or other print materials & who might have an interest in helping with production of **British Columbia Birds** please contact: **Wayne Weber (597-7201)**. This is a volunteer position but if you have the skills and the time we could really use your assistance. ◀

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**NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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**PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM WESTPORT, WASHINGTON** for 1993 are scheduled for May 15, July 17, August 7, 14, 21, and 28, September 11, 12, and 18, and October 2 and 3. The cost is \$59 (U.S.) per person. For further information, or to make a reservation, write T.R. Wahl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham, WA 98225, or phone (206) 733-8255. Spaces fill up quickly, so reserve early!

In addition to the usual trips which travel up to 40 miles offshore, two deepwater trips, travelling up to 70 miles offshore, are scheduled for April 17 and 24, 1993. A deepwater trip in April 1992 found Murphy's Petrel, Laysan Albatross, and Parakeet Auklet, as well as the more regular species. Cost for the April trips is \$130 U.S., same address and phone number.

**A PELAGIC BIRDING TRIP FROM UCLUELET, B.C.** (probably 2 boats) is also scheduled in conjunction with the BCFO Annual General Meeting on May 2, 1993. For info. on other pelagic trips in B.C., contact Mike or Cynthia Shepard at Swiftsure Tours, 1241 Broad Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2A4 (phone 388-4227).

**THE B.C. NEST RECORD PROGRAM** is a volunteer project designed to gather as much information as possible on nesting biology of birds in BC, including geographic distribution of breeding birds, nest locations, timing of the nesting season, and breeding success of common species. All nests found with eggs or young, even of common species like American Robin or Barn Swallow, can produce valuable information, but the best information comes from repeated visits to a nest. An annual report on the results is published in the B.C. Naturalist. Even if you only have time to report on 5 or 10 nests, your contribution will be appreciated. For information or nest record cards, contact Margaret Harris, PO Box 10, Penticton, B.C. V2A 6J9 (phone 492-8958).

**THE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (BBS)** is a cooperative project supervised by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service. It involves running a 39.4 km (24.5 mile) survey route by car, once a year, during the month of June or first week of July. The observer stops every 0.8 km (0.5 miles) for exactly 3 minutes and records all birds seen and heard at each stop. About 2000 routes are surveyed every year in North America, including 40 to 50 in B.C. The BBS is designed to measure both short-term and long-term changes in bird populations in a statistically reliable way. For most species, it is the single best indicator of continental or regional population trends.

Additional BBS observers are needed in several parts of B.C. Coverage in central and northern B.C. would be especially helpful, but there are some vacant routes on Vancouver Island and in the southern Interior. An ability to recognize the songs and calls of all common bird species is essential, although it is not mandatory that you know the calls of every bird species found in your area. Breeding Bird Surveys are not for everyone, as they must be started 30 min. before sunrise & are often in remote areas, but running a BBS route can be an enjoyable way of honing your skills at identifying birds by ear. It is preferred that observers survey the same route every year, but if you will be visiting a remote part of BC & can only commit yourself to a single route survey there are assigned routes which have never been surveyed.

If you are interested in the BBS and would like to be assigned a route, please contact the B.C. coordinator, Wayne Campbell, Wildlife Branch, B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks, 780 Blanshard St., Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4 (phone 356-1376), well before June 1 if possible. If you cannot contact Wayne Campbell, Dick Cannings (phone 734-9489) or Wayne Weber (phone 597-7201) can also help in assigning you a route.

**BIRDS OF THE KITIMAT VALLEY**, written by BCFO member Dennis Horwood, was published late in 1992 by Kitimat Centennial Museum. (\$20.07 includes GST and shipping from the Kitimat Centennial Museum, 293 City Centre, Kitimat, B.C. V8C 1T6). This attractive 178 pg book includes annotated accounts of local bird species by family, remarks on behaviour, local status & abundance; a short section on "Important Habitats for Birds"; 26 pages on bird-finding in the Kitimat area; and a seasonal bird checklist for the Kitimat area, including a summary of the local Christmas Bird Count, which Dennis has organized for 14 years.



**NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** Continued

**OKANAGAN BIG DAY CHALLENGE 1993:** For those who enjoy birding in the Okanagan Valley in late May, consider taking part in the 8th annual Okanagan Big Day Challenge. This event is a competitive team effort to find as many bird species as possible in the Okanagan Valley on the Sunday of the long May weekend (May 23 this year). Each team is led by a top birder who is familiar with the Okanagan, and an effort is made to pair newcomers or beginning birders with an expert. If you don't mind an 18 to 20-hour marathon, this is a good way to get a quick introduction to the birds and birding areas of the Okanagan Valley. All participants are invited to a buffet breakfast at Frank Metcalf and Mary Doherty's house, at the north end of Vaseux Lake south of the Okanagan Falls campground, from 9 am to noon the next day, May 24. Prizes will be awarded & teams will compare notes on unusual birds they saw.

The Big Day Challenge is also planned as a "birdathon" to raise money for the Nature Trust of B.C. for habitat acquisition in the Okanagan, and teams are asked to solicit pledges from as many friends as possible. The target for this year's challenge is \$10,000 (about \$1000 to \$1500 per team). Contact Dick Cannings at 3007 West 7th Ave., Vancouver, BC V6K 1Z7 (phone 734-9489).

**WASHINGTON STATE BREEDING BIRD ATLAS:** This major project, which began in 1987 (see *BCFO Newsletter* 1(1):7-9, 1991), is continuing through 1993. A map showing coverage through the end of the 1990 field season was published in 1991 in the *BCFO Newsletter*. Although much additional data was gathered through 1992, several areas of the state still have very poor coverage. This includes the Olympic Peninsula, the entire outer coast of Washington, the Columbia River valley all the way from Walla Walla to the Pacific Ocean (except for pockets near Longview and Vancouver, WA), and virtually all of the eastern quarter of the state (east of 119 degrees longitude).

Washington State has been divided into about 7800 atlas blocks, each measuring 3x3 miles (5x5 km), or 9 square miles. American land surveys are based on the township (6x6 miles, or 36 square miles), and the minimum goal of the Atlas is to obtain coverage of the southeastern block in each township, which is designated a "priority" block. If this goal is achieved, over 2000 blocks will have been covered, but many priority blocks have not been touched yet!

Ideally, up to 20 or 30 hours should be spent in each block. All habitats present are visited, and nesting evidence of various degrees of certainty is recorded according to standardized criteria. This can range from "confirmed" (nest with eggs or young, adult bird carrying food) to "possible" (bird present in suitable breeding habitat). The objective is to find as many species as possible in your assigned block, and if possible, to confirm breeding status for at least 50% of the potential breeding species. However, at the present level of coverage, it may be more important to obtain partial coverage of unsampled blocks than to gather further data on well-studied blocks. Useful atlas data can be gathered from April to about August 10, but it is important to separate migrants from potential breeding birds.

If you have anywhere from one day to a week to volunteer to the project, you can make an important contribution; even incidental observations made while you are passing through the state may fill in some gaps. The DeLorme Co. *Washington Atlas and Gazetteer*, available at most Washington bookstores for \$12.95, makes it easy to tell which atlas block you are in.

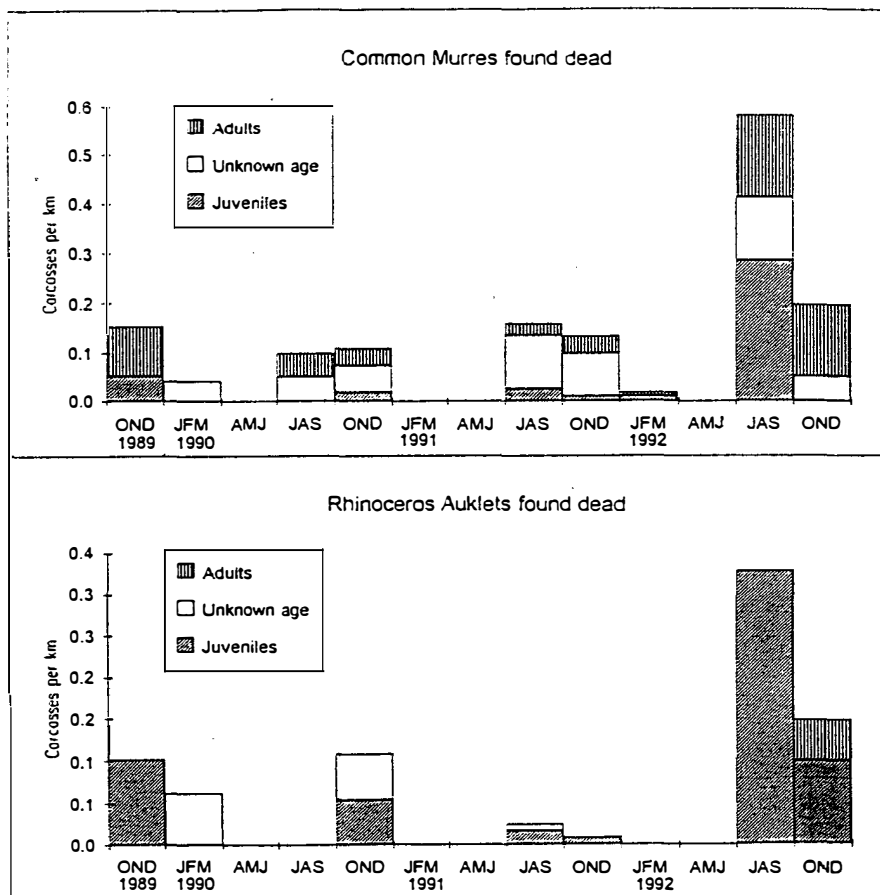
For an Atlas handbook, map of coverage to date, and a supply of Atlas field cards, please contact Atlas Project Coordinator, Dr. Phil Mattocks, 915 East Third Avenue, Ellensburg, WA 98926 (509-962-2191), or the Seattle Audubon Society, 8028 35th Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98195 (206-523-4483).

Happy Atlasing! ↩

**POSSIBLE EL NINO EFFECT DETECTED  
IN BEACHED BIRD SURVEY DATA IN 1992**

Dr. Alan E. Burger, Coordinator  
British Columbia Beached Bird Survey Program  
270 Trevlac Place, RR#3  
Victoria, BC V8X 3X1

Regular beached bird surveys have been conducted along parts of the BC coast since 1989. The program was started by the Royal British Columbia Museum and is now sponsored by BC Environment, Emergency Services Branch. The primary aim of the program is to provide baseline data on seabird mortality and rates of chronic oiling, for comparisons with periods of environmental catastrophes, such as oil spills. The data are also a valuable source of information on the basic biology and mortality patterns of our seabirds. The beach database now has information on 687 surveys, from at least 42 sites. A separate database has information on every carcass found in the surveys and presently has 706 records. In addition to the species of bird, the surveyors also report on the gender and age class of the bird, its state of decomposition, whether it was oiled, other causes of death and whether the carcass was scavenged. I recently did a preliminary analysis of a small portion of these carcass data. Results give indications that our seabirds might be affected by the periodic warm-water oceanic events known as *El Ninos*.



As you might know, 1992 was an *El Nino* year, when ocean conditions brought very warm water to our shores, causing widespread effects among marine organisms. Temperatures off the west coast of Vancouver Island were consistently 2°C above average from January through August in 1992. In some parts of the world, *El Nino* conditions cause significant problems for seabirds. Prey species eaten by seabirds may die, disperse or remain in deep water to avoid the warm surface water. As a result sea-birds often have poor breeding success or fail to breed. In some tropical situations adult birds sometimes die from lack of food. In temperate areas such as BC the *El Nino* effects are usually more muted, but have not been intensively studied.

Figure 1. Quarterly totals of dead Common Murres and Rhinoceros Auklets found during beached bird surveys on the west and south coasts of Vancouver Island and in the White Rock-Boundary Bay area in British Columbia. The data are shown as numbers of carcasses per km of beach surveyed.

**POSSIBLE *EL NINO* EFFECT DETECTED ... Continued**

Several beach surveyors commented on the relative high mortality of Common Murres and Rhinoceros Auklets this year, so I did an analysis of the beach survey data for these species to see if the *El Nino* might be implicated. The average density of murre and auklet carcasses per km of survey was plotted in three-month intervals (see Figure 1) in each year, these species were most often found dead in late summer and early winter. As you can see, there was exceptional mortality in 1992 -- the average densities of carcasses were at least three times higher than in the previous two years. One possible explanation was suggested from discussions I've had with fisheries biologists from the Pacific Biology Station in Nanaimo. They found that the warm water off Vancouver Island coincided with a huge influx of jack mackerel. These fish are normally rare in inshore waters of BC, but this year they were common and very voracious. Stocks of herring and other feed fish off the west coast of Vancouver Island appear to have declined significantly, partly as a result of feeding by the jack mackerel.

Could the *El Nino* conditions and the presence of jack mackerel be responsible for increased mortality of murres and Rhinoceros Auklets? More detailed analysis is needed to answer that question, but my guess is that they are implicated. These piscivorous birds probably eat much of the same prey as the mackerel, and might have faced food shortages.

Notice that most of the carcasses reported were of juvenile birds -- mostly partly grown murre chicks and newly fledged Rhinoceros Auklets (Figure 1). These inexperienced birds would be much more vulnerable to dramatic changes in food supply than the adults. Many of the carcasses I inspected were emaciated, suggesting that they starved. This preliminary analysis shows the value in getting detailed information from carcasses found by volunteer beach surveyors. No-one else in BC has data like these to monitor *El Nino* effects and possible effects of climate change on seabirds.

More detailed necropsies have been performed on carcasses collected on the beach surveys by Dr. Craig Stephens, a veterinarian doing research on aquaculture fish and wildlife in BC. The results are still being analyzed, but show a high incidence of mortality from human-related causes such as oiling and gill-nets. The unoiled carcasses will later be used in experiments to see how quickly they are scavenged off local beaches. This will provide essential data to improve mortality estimates of seabirds following major oil spills or other disasters. Fresh carcasses collected on the beach surveys have also been given to the research collections of the Royal British Columbia Museum. Seabird skeletons from beach surveys are being used as reference specimens by Dr. Greg Monks, an archaeologist at the University of Manitoba, who is studying middens of coastal natives on Vancouver Island. You can see that these dead birds have the potential to provide a great deal of useful information.

If you are interested in participating in the beached bird survey program, please contact Alan Burger in Victoria (479-9833). Volunteers from the northern mainland, northern Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands will be particularly welcome. ↩

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**BAMFIELD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT -- 2 JANUARY 1993**

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Inez Weston  
R.R. # 1, Mill Bay, BC

Snowing, -3°C, and a cheerful call on our answering machine from Alan Burger, leader of the Bamfield count, saying "Bamfield is on, and there are some others coming along too". Our choice of transport was a four-ton motorhome or a small, low-slung Ford station wagon. Neither would get us to Bamfield with about 32 cm of snow around. On the phone again, and we were soon organized with Clive Strauss, who owns a wonderfully large, powerful GMC V8 van. We started packing food for 3 days, lots of spare warm clothes, sleeping bags, and some essential celebratory liquid refreshments.

**BAMFIELD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ... Continued**

The all-white winter scene after leaving Honeymoon Bay was beautiful, and it continued nearly all the way to Bamfield. We did not feel we were in BC at all. Not far out of Bamfield we started thinking of hot coffee and the comforts of civilization. This was not to be -- we met Alan and his brother Luntun, on the road headed for Pachena Bay. We turned around and birded along the shore while Alan checked on a project he had in hand.

All this time dinner was at the back of my mind -- how to get it unpacked, organized, heated, etc. But two other birders were on the beach too -- Lyn and Claudia Lewis, and as they were leaving Claudia said -- "you don't have to worry about dinner, Andrea and Nicky (two other members of the group) have it all organized". What a great start to the weekend!

Eventually, in the dark, we headed on to Bamfield. Alan said we couldn't all fit in the one cabin so we would be in another one "over there, but close by". Clive, with Alan directing, drove us up, down, and around, various roads, and my heart was sinking by this time -- I felt we would never make it to Cabin 2 (where the food and other people were), let alone make it to dinner in time. Alan and Clive patiently explained (several times) we were "just across the road" and you can "take this path", or "perhaps this path is better", & the house is "that one over there, you have to go round the back to get to the front". They hurried off to get Clive settled. But which one of three or four houses "across the road" did we go around the back? All roads, and paths, were covered in snow!!! We hurriedly put on hiking boots, found a flashlight and, driven by hunger, found Cabin 2 -- and our other companions for the weekend. (Next morning, in the daylight, Cabin 2 was exactly opposite and less than a minute away!!!)

Halfway into the evening, Alan decided he had better give us our instructions for the morning -- while we were still able (?) to absorb them. The plan: be at the wharf at 8:30 am to go in the boats, or meet at 12 noon for the land birding, or do both. This had the effect of sending most of us to bed fairly quickly. We returned to our Cabin -- "Cabin" is a bit of a misnomer; the buildings are very spacious and warm with fully equipped kitchens, three to four bedrooms, and a large lounge room.

The boat trips are the draw to Bamfield for most of us. We were Boat #3, headed around the coast, and our first birds were a bit uninteresting -- Double-crested Cormorants, Kingfishers and a few gulls. Interestingly, as the morning progressed, it seemed that ordinarily-mixed flocks of seabirds were in their own groups. We saw Mew Gulls, then Glaucous-winged Gulls, a group of Thayer's Gulls, then cormorants (mostly Double-crested) until we came to an outcrop of rock, where there was the usual mix of seabirds. One Marbled Murrelet popped up beside the boat, and a little later a Rhinoceros Auklet did the same. The male ducks were in striking plumage. We disturbed a few birds sheltering close inshore, such as winter plumaged Pigeon Guillemots and a flock of cormorants. However, the highlight was a Sharp-shinned Hawk trying to harass a Steller's Jay -- later 3 Steller's Jays. He really was totally ineffectual. We heard Varied Thrushes; many birds seemed to come down to the shoreline for food & shelter. It was hard keeping to our schedule of 2 hours because it is such a wonderful opportunity to be out on the water looking at birds we normally have to "scope" from the shore.

Of course, we were frozen stiff when we got back -- at least our legs were -- but the thought of food and warmth drove us up the steep (and slippery) hill to Cabin 2, where we were greeted with plates of hot food and coffee -- Nicky, Lynton's wife, had prepared a hot lunch for us!

We split up for the afternoon birding, one group to Poett Nook, birding the forests and lakes along the way, another group to the estuary and Pachena Bay, and our group to Sarita. This was our first visit to Sarita, and we could have spent much longer there. A lovely area, worth more time and more birders. Again, Clive was driving, the roads had a fair covering of snow and ice, and Clive had little time to enjoy the birding as we did. Later in the afternoon it started to snow, but we still managed to check out the new sighting for Bamfield by Lyn and Claudia of the Ring-necked Ducks, & added another Gadwall to the list.

**BAMFIELD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ... Continued**

On the way home we checked out Pachena Bay again and saw a new friend from the evening before -- an "intertidal" Hermit Thrush feeding (?) along the wet sand, just above the water line. (This is true!!)

Another very happy evening back at Cabin 2, during which Alan checked the species count for the day -- 79! Considering the birds I thought we had missed this was really a good count. We managed another visit to Pachena Bay in the morning before leaving, and then headed back home via Port Alberni. We don't make it to Bamfield every year, but once again, it was such an enjoyable weekend that perhaps the word will get around and next year Alan may have to cope with as many participants as in the Victoria bird count. ◀

**LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED ON FIELD TRIPS  
BCFO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, JUNE 6 AND 7, 1992**

Compiled by John G. Woods

Common Loon	Black Tern (R)	American Robin
Pied-billed Grebe	Rock Dove	Varied Thrush
Eared Grebe	Barred Owl	Gray Catbird
Western Grebe	Black Swift	Cedar Waxwing
Clark's Grebe (R)	Vaux's Swift	European Starling
Great Blue Heron	Calliope Hummingbird (R)	Solitary Vireo
Trumpeter Swan	Rufous Hummingbird	Red-eyed Vireo
Canada Goose	Belted Kingfisher	Warbling Vireo
Wood Duck	Red-naped Sapsucker	Orange-crowned Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Downy Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler
Mallard	Hairy Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler
Northern Pintail	Three-toed Woodpecker	Magnolia Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Northern Flicker	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Cinnamon Teal	Pileated Woodpecker	Townsend's Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Western Wood-Pewee	American Redstart
Gadwall	Alder Flycatcher	Northern Waterthrush
American Wigeon	Willow Flycatcher	MacGillivray's Warbler
Redhead (R)	Least Flycatcher	Common Yellowthroat
Ring-necked Duck	Hammond's Flycatcher	Wilson's Warbler
Scaup (species?)	Dusky Flycatcher	Western Tanager
Surf Scoter (R)	Eastern Kingbird	Black-headed Grosbeak
White-winged Scoter	Tree Swallow	Lazuli Bunting
Barrow's Goldeneye	Violet-green Swallow	Chipping Sparrow
Bufflehead	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Clay-colored Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Bank Swallow	Savannah Sparrow
Common Merganser	Cliff Swallow	Fox Sparrow
Osprey	Barn Swallow	Song Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Gray Jay	Lincoln's Sparrow
Northern Harrier	Steller's Jay	White-crowned Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk	American Crow	Dark-eyed Junco
Red-tailed Hawk	Common Raven	Red-winged Blackbird
Golden Eagle	Black-capped Chickadee	Western Meadowlark (R)
American Kestrel	Mountain Chickadee	Yellow-headed Blackbird (R)
Merlin	Boreal Chickadee	Brewer's Blackbird
Blue Grouse	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Brown-headed Cowbird
Ruffed Grouse	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Northern Oriole
Virginia Rail (R)	Brown Creeper	Pine Grosbeak
Sora	House Wren (R)	Cassin's Finch (R)
American Coot	Winter Wren	Red Crossbill
Killdeer	American Dipper	White-winged Crossbill
Spotted Sandpiper	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Pine Siskin
Long-billed Curlew	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	American Goldfinch
Common Snipe	Veery	Evening Grosbeak
Wilson's Phalarope (R)	Swainson's Thrush	
Ring-billed Gull	Hermit Thrush	

NOTE: Species marked (R) are rare in the Revelstoke area. Two of these, Clark's Grebe and Virginia Rail, were first records for the Revelstoke area. ◀

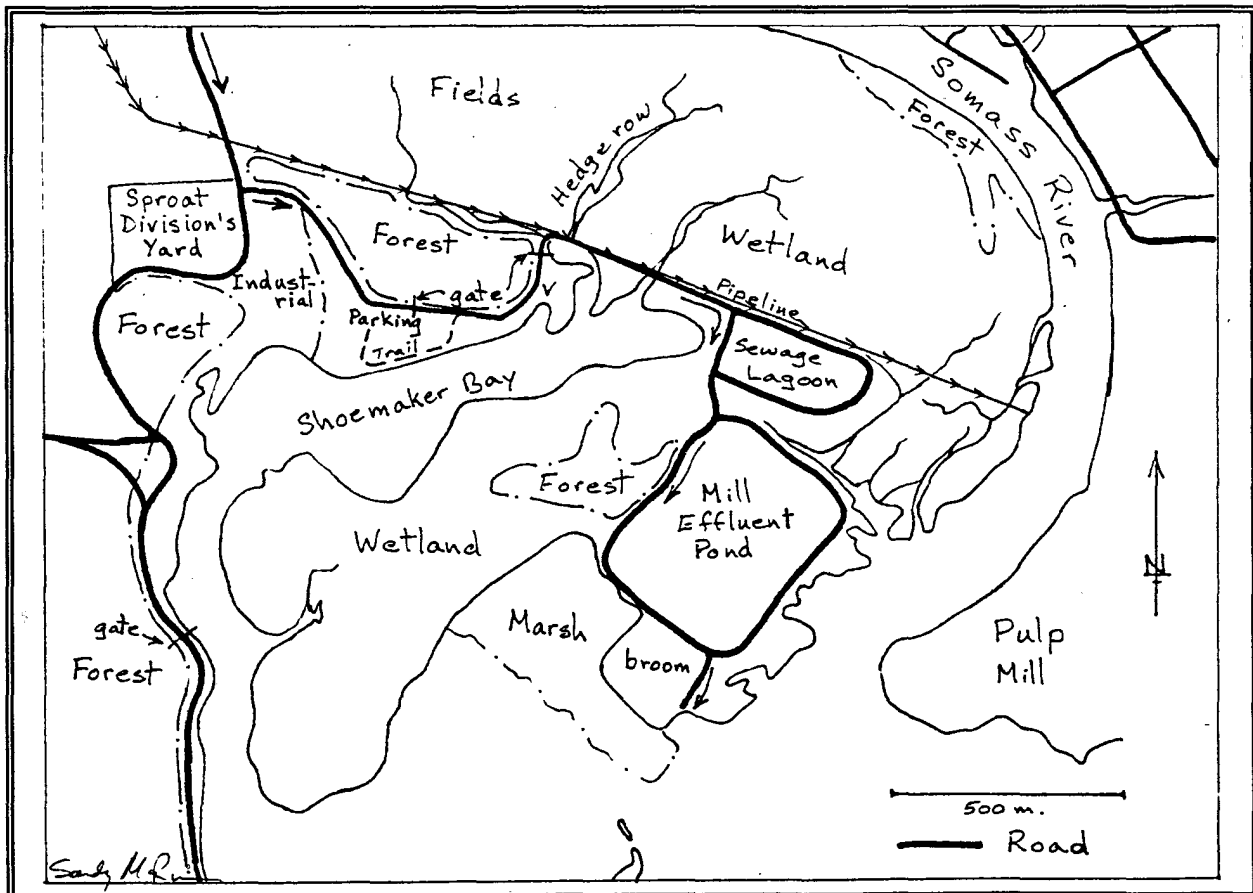
**SITE GUIDE: SHOEMAKER BAY, PORT ALBERNI**

Sandy McRuer  
4728 Southgate Road  
Port Alberni, BC, V9Y 5K6

**General Comments**

The estuary around Shoemaker Bay is easily the best birding in the Alberni area especially in the winter and spring. There are three highly unusual features of this estuary. First, although it is situated at the end of a long arm of the ocean, at no time is there salt in the water here. This is because of the large volume of water being discharged by the Somass River and the poor tidal mixing. Second, it is the most botanically diverse estuary on Vancouver Island. Typical estuaries will have about 50 different plant species. This estuary boasts over 200! -- twenty of which are considered rare while three are remnants of Ice Age vegetation and do not occur elsewhere south of Alaska. There are numerous other botanically unique aspects to the area as well. Because of this, an application has been made to create an Ecological Reserve over the area. However, MacMillan Bloedel, who owns the land, is unwilling to relinquish its ownership. The last unique aspect is that the sedimentation rate is extremely slow. This means that the ecosystem here is very fragile. Digging or other imprints in the mud take years to silt over. So tread lightly, and with respect, and stay on the roads. (See Conservation Note by S. McRuer at end of the Site Guide.)

As mentioned, land around the Somass delta is owned by MacMillan Bloedel. The company has set aside a small area around Shoemaker Bay now called the J.V. Clyne Bird Sanctuary. There is also an air strip, a vegetable farm, municipal sewage lagoon and the mill effluent pond using the delta. Public entry is allowed but please respect the efforts of the farmer and remember the airstrip is still used.



SITE GUIDE: Shoemaker Bay, Port Alberni

**SITE GUIDE: SHOEMAKER BAY, PORT ALBERNI Continued****How To Get There**

When you arrive in Port Alberni stay on the main Highway to Tofino. You will drive down Johnston Street to a T section at the foot of the hill by the Somass River (0 km). Turn right onto River Road and drive upstream along the river until you cross a gray bridge over the river (2.9 km). Proceed along the paved road staying next to the river. A gravel road forks to the left at 3.5 km. Take the right fork still on pavement and then, shortly after, the left fork, still on pavement. You will see farmland on the left where Cattle Egrets regularly visit in the fall. At 4.8 km, opposite Sproat Division's maintenance yard, take a left turn off the pavement. This is the road into the J.V. Clyne Bird Sanctuary. There is a sign here with a picture of Trumpeter Swans on it. Follow this road to parking at 5.1 km where there is a gate preventing further access by vehicle. From here you can proceed on foot down this service road. The road leads on past another gate to the sewage lagoon and the mill effluent pond.

**Birding**

When you get out of your vehicle, you will be standing on a land fill site that was planted with cottonwood twenty years ago. This is a good area for Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Warbling Vireos and other warblers in season. Ruffed Grouse and Ring-necked Pheasant may also be seen here. Look carefully if you see a pheasant because the Alberni Valley has Green Pheasants, a Japanese subspecies. There is also a draw next to the parking lot where Fox, Song & Lincoln's Sparrows may be found. There is a trail/road which heads west toward the edge of the cottonwoods. At the edge there is a bank where you can look across Shoemaker Bay. If the tide is right you may find mud flats here and many kinds of water birds including Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Mallards, Trumpeter Swans, Common Mergansers and cormorants. You can also find shorebirds such as Yellowlegs, Dowitchers, peeps, and Killdeer here.

The trail continues along the bank and shortly heads back to the main road into the lagoons. Further on, you will come to a second parking area which offers another good view of Shoemaker Bay. Stop here and scan with your scope and you are more likely to find Pintail here than the first spot. When you are scanning you will notice a stand of spruce across the bay. Spruce at the left (eastern) end of this stand are a favourite perching area for such raptors as Red-tailed Hawks, Golden & Bald Eagles and the occasional Peregrine Falcon. Scanning to the left, in the distance, you can see the sewage lagoon, and then the large white pipeline which provides fresh water from Sproat Lake to the pulp mill. Even further to the left and partially hidden behind a grove of Douglas Fir is a pond where Hooded Mergansers and, during migration, Cinnamon Teal can often be found.

Stepping back from the parking area, and continuing along the road, you will come to a second chicken-wire gate. You will see signs like "No Unauthorized Persons Past This Point" and "No Discharge of Firearms Inside Municipal Boundaries" on the gate. We have never been challenged when we have hopped around the end of this gate. Everyone seems to do it as a matter of routine, even the hunters who go after ducks on the north side of the pipeline. So go ahead and hop around. I should mention that it may be a little difficult if you have a physical handicap.

On the other side, you will find the pipeline directly in front of you. There is a maintenance walkway running along it which, being elevated, gives an excellent view of the surrounding area. I recommend stepping up on this and walking along it toward the sewage lagoon. At the start there is a large hedge-row dividing a pond on one side from a field on the other. This area has produced such unusual species for the Alberni Valley as Short-eared Owls, Harriers in migration, Semi-palmated Plovers, Northern Shrikes and Swamp Sparrows.

As you walk along the pipeline, you will find a ladder just before the lagoon where you can get down. If you go a little further, there is a ramp you can walk down by the pump house of the lagoon. This lagoon attracts scaup, Bufflehead, goldeneye, a variety of gulls and shore birds like dowitchers in all seasons. Although sewage lagoons in many other communities seem to attract rare species, to my knowledge this one hasn't yet produced anything of special significance. You can either walk around the lagoon on the roadway or walk past it to the next lagoon or mill effluent

**SITE GUIDE: SHOEMAKER BAY, PORT ALBERNI Continued**

pond. When you come to it, you will see that the road divides and also goes around the pond. I generally go to the right here, toward the wooded area. This pond is the best place I know of in this valley to see shoveler. You will also find both scaup. The bulrushes lining the pond harbour Song Sparrows and Winter Wrens. Marsh Wrens are also found in the area but generally outside the lagoon.

As you approach the woods, be on the lookout for raptors in the tall spruce or passerines in the alders by the road. Almost anything may turn up there. Finches, chickadees, warblers, Bushtits and juncos are all possible. Just past the wood you will come to an area of bulrushes outside the pond. This is a very reliable location for Virginia Rails. Sora have also been found here.

Continuing around the mill pond you will find an area on your right where there is a lot of broom mixed with a few alder. This is where the sludge from the dredging of the harbour was deposited years ago. Don't turn your nose up at this because this area has produced shrikes, Ring-necked Pheasants and Lincoln's Sparrows regularly. There is a short muddy road out to the south end of this area. At the end of the road is a big rusty log loader. From here you have a very good view of the mud flats if the tide is out. You may see a wide variety of water and shore birds from this point. In winter and early spring, Gadwall, White-winged Scoter, Ruddy Duck and Canvasback, Barrow's Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser would be good sightings. In the winter Common Murre are often seen, even quite far up the river.

The return trip is basically retracing your steps to your vehicle. You can continue around the mill effluent pond as there are good viewing opportunities along the river. You may be rewarded with Trumpeter Swans or Canada Geese. Look carefully among the geese to see if there is a Greater White-fronted Goose with them.

**AN AFTERTHOUGHT**

When you do get back into your vehicle do not consider your day finished. There are more good opportunities on the other side of Shoemaker Bay. Drive back out to the main road by Sproat Division's Yard. Turn left, and go by the Sproat Divisional offices on the left. The road will change to dirt and come out on the opposite side of the Alberni Inlet from the town. At low tide, the mud flats visible from this road stretch out to a small island in the inlet. During migration many shorebirds and ducks use this area.

If you don't have time to check out Shoemaker Bay and it is lunch or supper time, an alternative is to have lunch at Harbour Quay and scope out the inlet while you are there. Here, besides the local crows and Rock Doves, you can find Western & Red-necked Grebe, Surf Scoter, scaup, Common Goldeneye, Double-crested & Pelagic Cormorants, Common Loon, Common Murre, etc. There are a couple of restaurants and a gourmet coffee shop among the gift shops on the quay. To get there, turn left off Johnston at the lights at Gertrude. Follow this street past the pulp mill, past the stop lights at Redford & on to the lights at Argyle Street. Turn right and go right to the bottom of the hill where the road ends in a cul-de-sac.

Whichever option you choose, enjoy your stay in Port Alberni and "Good Birding".

**Conservation Note by S. McRuer**

Much of the area around the J.V. Clyne Bird Sanctuary has been abused in the past and continues to suffer a lack of respect by some of the locals. Despite this, some of the estuary's highly unusual character has remained intact but whether it will remain so is very uncertain. I can't help but wonder if all the effort put into setting aside the Englishman River Estuary was not a bit misplaced. Perhaps a similar campaign should be mounted to secure what remains of this estuary. ◀



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 BIRD FEEDER TALK
 

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Elsie Nykyfork  
7461 Fleming Road, Vernon, B.C.

My husband and I left the Shuswap Lake area in March 1989. We had been there 15 years and had built up a large bird feeding station on our acre of land. There were times, of each year, when our acre had literally "talked" with birds.

On arrival at our new home in the Okanagan Landing area, (known for its birds), we found a Say's Phoebe nesting on the rafters of the sundeck. That looked to us like a good start, but we soon found that there wasn't too much in the new yard to attract other birds. We set out to change that!

Across the front of the property is a 150' bank of junipers which sets a light blue berry. In the fall we were delighted to see wave after wave of 600+ Bohemian Waxwings drop in for a feast. The California Quail and Ring-necked Pheasant also used the area for cover and food. We decided to plant an area, between our house and our neighbour's, with a 75' long hedgerow of food-bearing trees and shrubs.

OUR PLANTINGS

VIRGINIA CREEPER -- About 30' of vine now grows along the fence. It has a crop of berries like little blue grapes. After the leaves fall, and expose the fruit, I have to watch the starlings or they will clean them all off. It is fun to see the pheasant, quail, robin or flicker perched on the vines to feed. Many others eat the dropped fruit.

NATIVE BLUE & NELLIE MOSER CLEMATIS -- These adorn the fence and hummingbirds like them.

BUSH HONEYSUCKLE (3) -- Hummingbirds use the flowers and robins, flickers and many other birds use the early berries. Some berries dry up and stay for winter food.

RED CURRENT (a few) -- California Quail eat the lower berries and pheasants eat the next layer up. Some berries get knocked off for ground feeders.

BLACK ELDERBERRY (6) & HIGH-BUSH CRANBERRY (a few) -- Many species enjoy the fruit. Cranberry fruit hangs on a little longer than does the elderberry.

BARBERRY (2) -- This fruit stays on all winter. I waited a long time to see anything eat it. However, after we had a big snowfall, I saw a male Pheasant stand and dine on the berries. A flicker landed on a branch, bobbed up & down, then settled to eat his fill.

PYRACANTHA & LOW COTONEASTER (a few) -- These provide bright winter berries which stay on all winter. Just wait and see who eats them!

BRIDAL WREATH SPIREA (2 groupings) -- These provide cover and lots of bloom. The accompanying bugs are useful for nestling feeding. The House Wren really uses this shrub.

MOCK-ORANGE BUSH (1) -- Hummingbirds use this bush, extracting nectar from the blooms and cleaning up on the accompanying bugs.

MOUNTAIN ASH TREES (5) -- I keep these trees trimmed to size. The Bohemian Waxwings are the main ones to clean them off but robins and flickers eat them also. Pheasant, quail, towhee and many small birds peck at the berries which have fallen to the ground.

BIRCH TREES (a group) & JACK PINES (3) -- These are all still quite small in our yard but many birds already use them for cover. Soon they can also use the pines for their cones.

**BIRD FEEDER TALK** Continued

FIR TREE & AUSTRIAN PINE (one each) -- These are mature trees and they provide cover, nesting places and cones.

SUNBURST HONEY LOCUST (2) -- This is a nice open tree and in the spring many birds eat the new growth. It provides perching and a good place to hang up two tube feeders and a fat feeder. A Sharp-shinned Hawk, Merlin and a shrike, in their turn, often perch here in hopes of getting a meal. It is amazing how quickly everything disappears when these predators come around.

**SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING**

We feed about 400 pounds of seed a year. We mix hen scratch and chick scratch together as this combination will feed all the ground feeders and many other species. It's also relatively cheap. Black oil sunflower seed, wild bird seed and suet round out the menu. I buy some black niger seed for a treat and use hard boiled egg now and again. Recently I read of using cooked squash in the shell as a feed. I put some out, but no one has taken it yet. Only the male pheasant eat the dried squash seed, the female pheasant don't.

We have two large tray feeders along the window ledge. These are sectioned off, with baffles, so we can put different feed into each one. There are two bin feeders on the ground for the twelve hen & five cock pheasants plus the twenty odd quail that come regularly. When snow is on the ground we often put some grit into the feeder as the birds need it in their crops to help grind up the seed.

In summer the Calliope and Rufus-sided Hummingbirds have a field day in the flowers of the garden and the hanging baskets.

Three liquid feeders are put up, as well as an oriole feeder. The oriole come and bring their young but, alas, have not learned to use the liquid feeder. I plant black oil sunflower seeds on the bank behind the house and the American Goldfinch, House Finch and House Sparrow are the most visible feeders here.

**BIRD BATHS AND NEST BOXES**

Four bird baths attract countless small birds; Lazuli Bunting, Northern Oriole, Harris' Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, Golden-crowned Sparrow, American Robin, Gray Partridge & California Quail to name a few.

There are 4 nest boxes along our fence. They house Violet-green Swallow, Tree Swallow and House Wren. Up on Bellavista Hill behind me I have seven boxes. I am fortunate to have a pair of Western Bluebirds use one of the nest boxes for they regularly bring their family to our bird baths.

**THE RESULTS** -- Next Issue, a glimpse of the 96 species seen in and "from" Elsie's bird-yard. She welcomes birders to call (549-8415) or drop by if in the area. ◀

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**SOME NOTES ON BIRDLISTING SOFTWARE**

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Ruth Travers, a BCFO member from Tatla Lake, has just written us an informative article about AviSys software for our next issue.

J. Cam Finlay, editor of A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada, recently telephoned the EDITORS to let our members and readers know that he has written an article reviewing eleven computer software programs for birders for the forthcoming issue of B.C. Naturalist.

We're certain many members who have computerized, or are now considering computerization of their records, will be interested to read what Ruth and Cam will have to say about the software programs. ◀

**LETTERS TO THE EDITORS**

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From: Bruce Bennett

As the compiler of the Manning Park Bird Checklist, I recently received a sighting of a new addition to the list. I thought that the sighting of a Clark's Grebe would be of interest to Society members.

Inez and Tom Weston have given permission to pass on the following field notes:

My husband & I were camping at Lightning Lake Campground on 5 and 6 October 1992. The weather was fine and warm. At 5:45 pm I went for a walk to Spruce Bay to check out the birds at the end of Lightning Lake. Close in, about 30 yards away and opposite the first set of picnic tables was a Clark's Grebe. The orange bill was so noticeable that I didn't need my binoculars, (ours are 8 X 40 Leitz). I then checked out the other obvious, the white face, white well above the eye, etc. (We are quite familiar with Clark's Grebe from birding in the U.S.A. and our first sighting of one in B.C. near Laurel Point Inn many years ago).

I raced back to the campsite and called to my husband. When we returned the Clark's Grebe was still there, slightly further out and down a little. Tom had no trouble at all identifying the Clark's Grebe. We watched it until 6:15 and left it, still gently moving down the lake, occasionally diving and feeding.

My notes read that the white areas seemed very white, and there appeared to be less black on the head. Similarly the black down the back of the neck seemed narrower. The neck seemed slightly more upright than the Western and I always think the Clark's Grebe looks out at the world in a different manner (more alert look) -- the way some hawks seem to have a different look. The patches of grey on the flanks seemed more noticeable. Maybe all this was because we were so close to the Grebe and the light was behind us.

I hope this sighting is of some interest to you.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Thanks Bruce for forwarding this sighting. It brings to mind two important points for all birders to remember. The first point is that sightings of species new to an area can occur at any time so be alert. A second important point is to document sightings and take good field notes. If field notes with field marks confirming the identity of the above sighting and the time, date and lighting conditions had not been written down then this sighting of a Clark's Grebe might not have been used for the checklist area. Document any and all new sightings to an area and forward them to the appropriate authorities. Get into the "Field Note" habit and you will find it improves both your observational skills and your enjoyment of birding. See also Gary Davidson's BCFO Rare Bird Report on pg 6-7 this issue. A Rare Bird Report Form is also available (Check for insert).

From: Jerry & Kim Herzig

During the period of severe winter weather, with temperatures to -28°C in January 1993, our feeders became the hunting territory of a Northern Pygmy Owl. Numerous attacks were made on Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees with what appeared to be a low success ratio. A flock of Mourning Doves became the victims with 3 successive kills made. All the doves proved to be too heavy for the owl to lift to an elevated perch and were eaten on the ground. The interesting observation we made was that the owl returned to feed on each dove carcass for up to 4 days even though they were frozen and regardless if we moved the remains between feedings.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Thanks for your note. There seem to be a lot of owl sightings reported this year. Rick Howie wrote in a Jan. 16, 1993 Kamloops Daily News article that "Pygmy owls are noteworthy this year as several were found. Numerous feeder operators have reported losing small birds to these day hunting owls that feed on birds quite regularly. But apparently not often enough as one Westside watcher saw a Pygmy Owl fall over dead in front of him recently. One immediately thinks of starvation in these very cold and taxing conditions when you see a death like that."

**LETTERS TO THE EDITORS** Continued

From: I. Laurie Rockwell

Greetings from Summerland. I was prompted to write to you, to see if you would consider including a regular (new) article in the BCFO, by a letter from Robert Harris in the Jan/Feb '93 issue of the B.C. Naturalist. Mr Harris suggests regularly tracking sightings of the Long-billed Curlew -- possibly even an annual census as with swans & eagles. Every year we have people studying several species in the Okanagan, usually under contract to the Ministry of Environment, et al. I would like to see all such studies and requests published in each issue so that we can all be aware of who is studying what in the hope that we can contribute the desired information to the respective party.

Another suggestion, started by Gerry Bennett in Canadian Birding (and with it's successor's apparent demise) how about a regular feature for all neophytes in this field on the 5 W's of identifying birds?

Keep up the good work! (p.s. Where does one find a MELT? an OMAO?)

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Thanks for your comments and suggestions.

With regard to your first suggestion: if study groups or independent researchers send us information on regional studies for which they require observer input we would be very glad to publish the information for members. However, as EDITORS we rely heavily upon member input for our information. We are aware of the studies currently being done within our local Naturalist Society for which only local observers are required. We open it to the membership to keep us, your EDITORS, aware of studies needing extra assistance.

With regard to your second suggestion: would someone like to write a regular column for us? Surely there are a few authors out there who are both knowledgeable birders and willing educators. We will provide the space, you provide the text, the neophytes get the training and all members gain in the end.

The OMAO (Hawaiian Thrush -- *Phaeornis obscurus*) is local on Hawaii, scarce on Kaua'i and extinct on other Hawaiian islands. (A Field Guide to Western Birds / R T Peterson, 2nd ed. 1961, pg 267). The MELT is a Chinese cage bird that escaped on Hawaii's Isles in 1900. It is called Hwamei or Hwa-Mei (Chinese Thrush or Melodious Laughing-thrush -- *Garrulax canorus*) and is common on Kaua'i. (Hawaii's Birds by Hawai'i Audubon Society, 4th ed. 1989, pg 82). Peterson suggests that this "Laughing-thrush" is really a Babbler, and not a true thrush. (R T Peterson as above, see pg 273-274). ◀

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**AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE:**

Alan E. Burger 479-9833 (W)

University of Victoria professor and Beached Bird Survey coordinator, Alan Burger provides an interesting analysis and update of beached bird sightings to date.

Sandy McRuer

Currently a Forester with the BC government, Sandy has lived in Port Alberni for eight years. He has taught a course on birding and is involved with the newly formed Alberni Valley Naturalist Society.

Elsie Nykyforuk

A true naturalist, Elsie has compiled a plant species Herbarium for Shuswap Lake Provincial Park Nature House, monitors bluebird & duck nest boxes and has been an Ecological Reserve Warden, a volunteer park Naturalist and an FBCN Camp Director.

Inez Weston

A person with an "enthusiasm for birds" and with over thirty years of tropical birding experience, Inez currently lives in Mill Bay. She is a member of the Victoria Natural History Society. ◀