

BRITISH COLUMBIA

FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

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The **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** is published four times a year by British Columbia Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 34081, 5790-175th Street, Surrey, B.C., Canada V3S 8C4. A subscription to this periodical is a benefit of membership in the society. Members will also receive a copy of the annual journal, **BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS**.

Send material for publication in any format (mail, phone, FAX, print, IBM WordPerfect files on discs, etc.) to the Editors (name, address and phone no. page 2). We especially welcome bird-finding information for the "Site Guide" series & 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 & enjoyment of wild birds in British Columbia. Our 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 dues: Individual memberships or library subscriptions, \$20.00; junior memberships (age under 18), \$10.00; Family memberships (two 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 to Michael Shepard, Membership, **British Columbia Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 34081, 5790-175th Street, Surrey, B.C. V3S 8C4.**

Editors for the **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST:** A. & M. Buhler
Distribution of **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST:** Allen Wiseley

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS

Well, it has been a busy year for birders. Your editors would like to thank all those who contributed articles and observations to the newsletter in the past year. Your efforts are appreciated both by the editors and, more importantly, by the British Columbia Field Ornithologists members who read & enjoy this newsletter.

If you have been a contributor in the past or if you have not yet submitted an article to the **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**, please consider sending in something in the upcoming year. This is YOUR newsletter. Tell us about your area, the experience of your local Christmas Bird Count, a local hot spot that visiting birders must see, or just write us a letter expressing your opinion about what you find in these pages.

In this issue you will find a listing of all the Christmas Bird Counts across the province for which we were able to obtain dates and contact names. Thank you to all of those who wrote or phoned this information to us & to those who willingly provided the information when we phoned them. We would encourage all members to take part in a local Christmas Bird Count, either in your own area or if you will be travelling this Christmas Season, join the count in the area you visit. Many of the coordinators we spoke to this year said they would welcome assistance.

Although there are no site guides in this issue we hope you will enjoy the mix of articles which we have published. The reports range from the Gulf of Alaska to the crests of Manning Park, from trips to see owls and raptors to the enjoyments found in urban birding, from the challenge of shipboard species identification to the successful fulfillment for several years of study, plus Brown Pelicans in BC. Read, enjoy and keep putting pens to paper and then put that paper in an envelope.

Your editors, Marilyn and Andy Buhler would like to take this opportunity to wish all our BCFO members a Joyous Festive Season and Terrific Birding in '94. We look forward to seeing you all at the Annual General Meeting in Kamloops in May. ☺

CORRECTION NOTE: In October we met Laurie Rockwell while birding up at the golf course in Summerland. He got his tutelege in birding from Jim Grant in the Vernon area, not the 100 Mile House area as we stated on his bio. Apologies for the error.

BCFO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 1992-1993

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| | Marian Porter | 531-5747 | |
| | Chris Siddle | 542-1034 | |

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

compiled by Wayne C Weber

- Dec 18, 1993
to Jan 8, 1994 **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS.** A detailed listing of counts, with dates, contacts and phone numbers, appears on pages 10-11 in this issue. Data was current to **November 21, 1993** so check with local contacts for any last minute changes.
- Jan 2-31, 1994 **BRACKENDALE WINTER EAGLE FESTIVAL.** Features an eagle count on Jan 9, an eagle art show all month, an eagle photography workshop on Jan 15-16, & other events. Write Thor Frosley, Brackendale Art Gallery, Box 100, Brackendale, BC V0N 1H0, or check notice in Nov 1993 issue of the **BC Naturalist**.
- Jan 16, 1994 **SOUTHERN INTERIOR SWAN & EAGLE COUNTS.** Contact Rick Howie, (604) 578-7542, for further information on these counts.
- Jan 16, 1994 **LOWER MAINLAND BALD EAGLE AND SWAN COUNT.** Hope to Squamish area. New participants should contact Dave Dunbar, Ministry of Environment, Lower Mainland Region, at 582-5221.
- Jan 25-29, 1994 **PACIFIC SEABIRD GROUP (PSG)** annual meeting, Sacramento, CA. For further details, write George Divoky, 10535 Interlake Ave N, Seattle, WA 98133 (phone or fax (206) 525-2131).
- March 7-8, 1994 **SYMPOSIUM ON FOREST GROUSE OF WESTERN NORTH AMERICA,** Corvallis, Oregon. For information, write John Crawford, Department of Fish & Wildlife, Nash 104, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331-3803; phone (503) 737-1971.
- March 13, 1993 **BCFO FIELD TRIP, BOUNDARY BAY AREA.** This trip will focus on birds of prey, but we will also look for gulls, waterfowl, and any unusual species that happen to be in the area. Meet at 8:30 A.M. in the parking lot of the East Delta Hall at Highway 10 and 104th St, Delta. Phone leader Wayne Weber (597-7201) for details.
- March 18-23, 1994 **NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONFERENCE,** Anchorage, Alaska. For information, write L.L. Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 725, Washington, DC, 20005, or phone (202) 371-1808.
- March 23-26, 1994 **NORTHWEST SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION & SOCIETY FOR NORTHWESTERN VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY** joint meeting, Ellensburg, Washington, featuring a Sage Grouse field trip and plant ecology field trips. For details, contact Bill Barker or David Darda, Department of Biological Sciences, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, WA 98926, or phone (509) 963-2731.
- April 6-10, 1994 **B.C. WILDLIFE FEDERATION** annual general meeting, Courtenay, BC. For information, write the B.C. Wildlife Federation, 102-6070 200th Street, Langley, BC V3A 1N4; phone 533-2293.
- April 8-10, 1994 **BRANT FESTIVAL,** Parksville-Qualicum, featuring Big Day birding competition, wildlife art show, children's activities. For information, contact Brant Festival 94, PO Box 99, Parksville, BC V9P 2G3; phone 248-4117 or 248-4347.
- April 21-24, 1994 **FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS** Annual General Meeting, Chilliwack, BC. For information, write the FBCN at 321-1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V6H 4A9; phone 737-3057.
- April 24-May 1, 1994 **AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION REGIONAL CONFERENCE,** Key Largo, Florida. Write the ABA at PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, or phone (toll-free) 1-800-835-2473.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS (Continued)

- May 4-6, 1994 **FIFTH ALASKA BIRD CONFERENCE**, Cordova, Alaska, featuring contributed papers, workshops, and field trips. For further information, write Mary Anne Bishop, Copper River Delta Institute, U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box 1460, Cordova, AK 99574, or phone (907) 424-7212.
- May 12-15, 1994 **B.C. FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS 4TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**, Kamloops, B.C. Preliminary information given in NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS on page 5 of this issue. Complete details will be included either with the March 1994 issue or in a separate mailing.
- May 14, 1994 **SPRING BIRD COUNT, VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**, from midnight to 12:00 noon. Phone David Pearce (477-2664).
- May 22, 1994 **OKANAGAN BIG DAY CHALLENGE**. Contact Dick Cannings, 3007 West 7th Ave, Vancouver, BC V6K 1Z7 (phone 734-9489). ◀

SOCIETY NEWS

President's Notes

by Mike McGrenere

The major item on the agenda of the last two BCFO board meetings has been the production of our journal, **BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS**.

The board has taken a long look at the timelines and cost of the first issue of the journal and has made some decisions regarding future issues of the journal. It was decided that there will be only **ONE** issue of the journal for the years 1992, 1993 and 1994. Our membership forms had previously indicated that members would receive two journal issues for these years.

The production of the first issue of the journal [December 1991, 1(1)] was very costly and required the use of some 1992 revenue to pay for the printing and mailing of that issue. The journal was sent to all 1991 and 1992 members of BCFO. The reduction in the 1992 revenue has left only sufficient funds for one issue of the journal for 1992.

In reviewing our financial situation for 1993 and in preparing a budget for 1994, it became obvious to the board that we did not have sufficient funds for two journals in 1993 and that we should include only one journal issue in our budget for 1994. Our membership numbers have simply not been high enough at our current fees to provide sufficient revenue for two journals in one year.

The goal of the BCFO is to produce two journal issues per year. By producing single issues for 1992, 1993 and 1994, we intend to have the production of the journal caught up by the end of 1994. Members should be receiving the 1992 issue by January, the 1993 issue in June and the 1994 issue in December of next year. This will allow us to get on a schedule to produce the 1995 issues of the journal in 1995. It is the intention of the BCFO to produce two journal issues in 1995 which will likely require an increase in the membership fees.

An editorial board will be established to oversee the production and content of the journal and to ensure it is produced in a timely and cost efficient manner. We would like to have at least three people on this board. If you are interested in assisting with the journal, please contact Marian Porter (531-5747), Wayne Weber (597-7201) or Mike McGrenere (658-8624). The journal will be produced in the Vancouver area; therefore, editorial board meetings will be held at that location.

In other matters, the board prepared a budget for 1994 which provides funds for an audit of our finances for 1991-93 years. This will not take place until after our 1993 journal has been produced. The board also decided to hold our 1994 Annual General Meeting in Kamloops. See page 5 for a preliminary notice. ◀

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
1994 Annual General Meeting
Kamloops, B.C.**

DATES: May 12 to 15, 1994

LOCATION: University College of the Cariboo

PROGRAM: Forest bird communities in managed & unmanaged stands:
measuring biodiversity in a changing landscape.

Friday, May 13 a workshop will be scheduled to formulate a set of guidelines to standardize methodologies for researchers studying forest birds.

Saturday, May 14 will feature early morning birding trips, guest speakers & business meeting; and an evening banquet.

Sunday, May 15 will be dedicated to field trips.

The meeting will be co-hosted by the Kamloops Naturalists, with Tom Dickenson and Rick Howie acting as local contacts.

For further information, write to:

**Marian Porter
14831 Buena Vista Avenue
White Rock, B.C. V4B 1X3
Phone: (604) 531-5747**

March '94 issue of B C FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST will have further details.

THE NEXT BCFO FIELD TRIP is scheduled for Sunday, March 13, 1994, in Delta, and will focus on wintering birds of prey of the Fraser Delta area. Please meet at 8:30 A.M. in the parking lot of the East Delta Hall at Highway 10 (Ladner Trunk Road) and 104th Street in East Delta. Some of the species we hope to see include Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tailed, and Rough-legged Hawks, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and Snowy and Short-eared Owls. We should also see a good variety of waterfowl and gulls, and will look for any rarities that may happen to be in the area. The trip is planned to wind up about 1:00 P.M., but may continue into the afternoon if enough participants are interested. The leader will be Wayne Weber; for further details, please phone Wayne at 597-7201 (home) or 576-5607 (office).

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH is a continent-wide program, operating since 1987, which is designed to measure changes in numbers of birds visiting feeding stations. It is organized in Canada by the Long Point Bird Observatory. There is a small annual registration fee, which helps cover data analysis costs; participants receive a twice-yearly newsletter. To take part in Project FeederWatch, write the Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario NOE 1M0.

For additional details, see the announcement on page 5 of the last [September 1993; 3(3)] issue of the **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**.

THE B.C. BEACHED BIRD SURVEY is still interested in recruiting additional volunteers to survey shorelines for bird carcasses, especially in the Queen Charlotte Islands and northern mainland coast. If interested, contact the coordinator, Dr. Alan Burger, 5012 Old West Saanich Road, RR 3, Victoria, BC V8X 3X1 (phone 479-2446).

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS (Continued)

WINTER AND SPRING PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM WESTPORT, WASHINGTON -- winter pelagic trip off Westport, Washington is scheduled for January 15, 1994. If enough people sign up, a second trip will be scheduled on January 16. Weather may be inclement and cancellation is quite likely, but January and February trips from 1991 through 1993 produced Short-tailed (!) and Laysan Albatrosses, Red-legged Kittiwake, and Thick-billed Murre, as well as commoner species.

In addition, two special "deep-water" pelagic trips from Westport have been scheduled for April 16 and 30, 1994. Possible species include Mottled and Murphy's Petrels, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Laysan Albatross, & Parakeet Auklet. The destination will be waters 60-70 miles offshore, and the trip will take about 14 hours.

For more information on these trips, contact Terence R. Wahl, 3041 Eldridge, Bellingham, WA 98225, U.S.A. (phone (206) 733-8255).

SPRING PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM UCLUELET. There will be two separate pelagic trips originating out of Ucluelet, one Feb 12 & one April 23, '94. Contact Michael Shepard at (604) 388-4227 for further information and/or bookings.

POINT PELEE AND DURHAM REGION, ONTARIO, May 9 - 24, 1994. We need eleven people to cost-share a fully escorted trip. Fly from Victoria/Vancouver. Total cost \$1490.84 including taxes and insurance. Thirty-four species of warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, breeding Woodcock, Loggerhead Shrike, Upland Sandpiper, Little Gull, Whip-poor-will are possible. Contact Derrick Marven, 1887 Frances Street, Duncan, BC V9L 4Z9, phone (604) 748-8504 for itinerary.

EXPENSE-SHARED TRIP, GAMBELL-NOME. Some Victoria birders are planning a trip to Alaska, May 28 - June 10, 1994. We need a few more birders to cut down on cost. Itinerary available upon request from Hank Vander Pol, (604) 658-1924.

STRAIT OF GEORGIA BRANT SURVEY -- The Canadian Wildlife Service is coordinating a Brant survey of spring staging areas along the Strait of Georgia. The object of these is to identify key staging areas, determine the timing of migration, and possibly to detect changes in numbers from year to year. In addition, thousands of Brant have been banded with coloured, coded leg bands, which can be read in the field. This makes it possible to tell which migration and wintering areas are used by birds from specific breeding areas.

Volunteer observers to make counts of Brant between late February and late May, and to read band numbers by telescope, are needed. The east coast of Vancouver Island is generally well covered, but additional observers are needed to cover staging areas in the Lower Mainland, the west coast of Vancouver Island, and the Queen Charlotte Islands. If you can help, please contact Neil K. Dawe, Canadian Wildlife Service, Site 12, Comp. 4, RR 1, Qualicum Beach, BC VOR 2T0 (phone 752-9611).

A report on results of the Strait of Georgia Brant Survey for 1991 was published in the **BC Naturalist** of May/June 1992 [30(3): 10-11].

EAGLE AND SWAN COUNTS will be taking place in both the Lower Mainland and the Thompson/Shuswap/Okanagan (Southern Interior) areas on January 16, 1994. These counts are an enjoyable opportunity to take part in efforts to track annual changes in numbers of these important bird species.

The Lower Mainland count focuses on Bald Eagles, and covers the area from Squamish to Hope; if interested, please phone Dave Dunbar at the Surrey office of the Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks (phone 582-5221).

The Southern Interior count features mainly Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, but also attempts to count the smaller number of eagles which winter in that area. For more information phone the coordinator, Rick Howie, at 578-7542.

Received late: Margo Hearne, Project Coordinator of the Delkatla Wildlife Sanctuary in Masset sent a notice of a "bird-a-thon" on Haida Gwaii (QCI), on 11 Sept, 1993. Contact Margo (1-626-5015) / PO Box 38, Masset, QCI for information on possible bird-a-thons in 1994. Some great birds were seen in recent years! ☺

There's a Body in the Bilge!!!

by Andrew D. MacDonald
Victoria, BC

What are you supposed to say if you're a birder and the chief engineer of your ship finds a headless bird in the engine room? If there's any etiquette for this kind of situation, I'd like to know it. The engineer seemed to think I would have some sort of explanation and, possibly, that I was somehow involved just because I watched birds. I began by just trying to identify the decapitated cadaver.

It was the summer of 1988 and I was a cook aboard a fly-in, salmon fishing, charter vessel anchored at the northern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands. In the short time I had been there (before Wim, our Dutch engineer had brought me the body), I was lucky enough to add a few new birds to my life list. Pigeon Guillemots, Tufted Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklets and Peale's Peregrine Falcons were almost daily visitors to our bay at the south end of Langara Island. Bald Eagles soon became ubiquitous with up to fifty just hanging around. Ravens daily gave new definition to aerial acrobatics. Still, nothing I had seen looked anything like the remains Wim had given me. My unknown bird looked like an overweight swift with webbed feet.

The mystery deepened when more headless birds were found, both by Wim and myself. During my 10:00 pm to 10:00 am shift, part of my responsibility, besides cooking breakfast and baking cookies, was an hourly watch. Carrying a flashlight, I would make rounds of the ship on the lookout for anything from fires, to naked and drunken guests running around on the decks (trust me -- it happens!).

On my 2:00 am watch one morning, I slid down the ladder into the engine room. On the floor next to the water makers and directly under the stack, I found another headless body. I looked above the carcass into the stack and flicked on my flashlight. It reflected on the steel blades of a fan that drew fumes out of the engine room. That, at least, solved the mystery of why all the bodies were headless. All I had to do was figure out WHAT bird was getting decapitated.

The problem gave me a new respect for the people who try and figure out what kind of bird may have flown into a jet engine over runways. The mystery was solved on that same night as our ship seemed to be lifted out of the water by a visit of a few billion krill. Shining my flashlight out onto the water, there were so many krill that it seemed like I could walk out upon the saltchuck. A hand dipped into the water brought back a few dozen of the transparent crustaceans. Shining my light out over the water I discovered the birds which had been flying down the ship's stack. I was literally surrounded by Leach's Storm-petrels.

Oceanodroma leucorhoa, from the Greek *leukos* for white and *orrhos* for rump, is from the Family Hydrobatidae (from the Greek *hydros* for water & *batien* to tread). The name Petrel is actually in reference to the story of Peter walking on the water [Matthew 14:29]. [1] With their webbed feet, the petrels actually tread, or walk, on the surface of the water with the aid of quickly beating wings as they search for fish, squid, crustaceans or floating oil from the carcasses of large dead marine mammals. [2] That night, at Henslung Cove, the petrels were after krill, which are small shrimp-like crustaceans of the genus *Euphausia*. [3] The krill remained in the bay for the next few nights and so did the Leach's Storm-petrels.

The term 'tubenose', a name given to various petrels, albatrosses, shearwaters and fulmars in the Order Procellariiformes, is in reference to the tube on the top of their beaks which looks a lot like the air induction unit on the hood of some muscle cars from the sixties. Tubenoses have very highly developed senses of smell in the bird world. They may use this sense of smell to find other individuals, good foraging areas, food, breeding areas, and/or nest sites by smell alone. [2]

I quickly found out that the lights of our ship seemed to confuse the birds. They would fly right into the hull then slide down the side into the water. In the mornings the deckhands would find them everywhere; along the decks, in the skiffs, even in the hot tub. It turned out that once they were wet they could not take off again. On my watches, I would often stand out on deck to catch them in mid-air and turn them back toward sea. They were also attracted to the bright white of my chef jacket so I'd have one or two of them try to land on me while I walked the decks. I realized later that they must have mistaken me for the world's largest baby Storm-petrel because they would often regurgitate the contents of their stomachs onto me.

There's a Body in the Bilge!!! (Continued)

As birds which often feed far from shore, these petrels convert "... the oil-rich prey in their stomachs into a store of oil and partially digested flesh. The birds regurgitate the mix for their young when they return to their nests." [2] It's bright orange and, believe me, it doesn't smell very good.

The warmest place in the ship is the galley so the crew and I would bring stranded petrels down to dry out. One morning, a bleary-eyed guest came into the galley to see what I was cooking. He lifted the towel off of one of the dozen or so containers I had spread around and found himself eye-to-eye with a soggy and squinting Leach's Storm-petrel. I think he actually believed me when I told him our Cornish Game Hens were as fresh as they could be because all the guests passed on dinner that night.

When I finished my shift the crew and I would carry all the birds up to the highest point on the ship and release them. I felt like Jim Fowler on Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom thinking, "OK, I've brought these Leach's Storm-petrels back from the brink; now bring on the anacondas." All I needed was Marlin Perkins flying over in a helicopter on his way back to the studio. Of course Lorne Greene would have had his New Wilderness crew on hand with a voice-over that might have gone like this: "Returned back to the wild, the Leach's Storm-petrels flapped their wings briskly against the cool, morning breeze of British Columbia's magnificent Queen Charlotte Islands in search of the sea's bounty and another ship's chef to christen in their never-ending struggle in the New Wilderness".

When the krill left so did the Storm-petrels. They certainly helped break the monotony of the season. The crew felt great about helping a few birds get back home and Wim, the engineer, was very happy to have a carcass-free engine room again.

Technical references:

1. Terres, John K. (1980) The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds. New York, NY: Alfred P. Knopf.
2. Ehrlich, Paul R; et al. (1988) Birder's Handbook: the Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster
3. Charton, Barbara. (1988) The Facts on File Dictionary of Marine Science. New York, NY: Facts on File. ◀

BC FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST SITE GUIDES

| TITLE | AUTHOR | VOLUME(#) & DATE |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Duck Lake, Creston, BC | Gary S. Davidson | 1(2) July 1991 |
| Blackie Spit, Surrey, BC | Jo Ann & Hue MacKenzie | 1(2) July 1991 |
| Mckinney Road, Oliver, BC | Richard J. Cannings | 1(3) Oct 1991 |
| Cowichan Bay & Duncan, BC | Keith Taylor | 1(4) Feb 1992 |
| Monck Provincial Park & area, BC | Wayne C. Weber | 1(4) Feb 1992 |
| Princeton "Outback", BC | R.J. Herzig, M. Schouten | 2(1) & 2(2) 1992 |
| Hecate Strait, BC | D.V. (Val) George | 2(3/4) Dec 1992 |
| Island View Beach, Saanich, BC | Bruce Whittington | 2(3/4) Dec 1992 |
| Lower Sunshine Coast, BC | A.G. (Tony) Greenfield | 2(3/4) Dec 1992 |
| Shoemaker Bay, Port Alberni, BC | Sandy McRuer | 3(1) Mar 1993 |
| Vernon Area Hotspots, Vernon, BC | Elsie Nykyfork | 3(2) June 1993 |
| Fort St. John area, BC | D.V. (Val) George | 3(3) Sept 1993 |
| Lighthouse Park, W. Vancouver, BC | Danny Tyson | 3(3) Sept 1993 |

[EDITORS' NOTE: This is a special note to 'Kamloopsians' or members who have birded the Kamloops area -- we have no SITE GUIDES from there. The nearest is Monck Park. Even we have found Mountain Bluebirds on the Pritchard backroad, Horned Larks at Tranquille, Snow Buntings at the airport, Lewis Woodpeckers on the Barnhartvale Road, Wilson's Phalaropes on the Afton ponds, Eared Grebes on Highway 5A and, of course, Flammulated Owls near Lac du Bois. Since BCFO's 4th AGM will be in Kamloops please help out the visitors by sending us Site Guides to publish. THANKS! A&M]

BIRDING FOR STAY-AT-HOME TIMES

by Jack Williams
302 - 15070 Roper Avenue
White Rock, BC V4B 2E6

While most of us like to visit such exotic birding spots as Churchill, Point Pelee, the tropics and Muckle Flugga (yes, we were there too), let's face it, a lot of our time is spent at home, so we should all make the most of it birdwise.

Now that we have grown a little bit older than we want to admit to and have 45 years of birding behind us, we have moved to a condo. (Horrors! -- we thought no more birds but it was not so!) Although situated in the midst of the apartment block neighbourhood of White Rock we have listed 46 species seen from our third floor suite. We have got fairly unobstructed views to the south, west and north plus we have quite a lot of trees and bushes nearby.

Few of the birds are rarities but we have had some of interest. Glaucous-winged Gulls nested this year on the roof of the apartment house opposite, it was quite interesting to watch them although, of course, we could not see the nest. A Steller's Jay played games with the watchful crows by pretending to build a dummy nest in a nearby evergreen.

In February we noticed a small flock of waxwings which seemed to tour the neighbourhood. One day they settled in a small tree about 20 metres away. One appeared a little more robust than the others so I put the scope on it and, sure enough, there was a 'Bohemian' in the flock.

I put out a feeder in our front area which has several large trees. We get the usual sparrows, juncos and chickadees but we also have the local Sharp-shinned Hawk which comes and sits on the phone wires, oblivious to cars or people, as he checks over what he wants for supper.

Birding here is not quite as exciting as it was at the house where we lived previously in Ocean Park. Although it was only a 60'x120' suburban lot we managed to rack up 109 species there, seen on or from our property. Among some of the more interesting birds who visited were eight species of warblers, including Nashville and Tennessee, plus seven sparrow species, including a Harris' among them. (This reminds me of the time we had three Dutch birders sit at our dining room table for three hours hoping to get to see the Harris' Sparrow, which they did, eventually.) We spent every meal time at our dining room window, and many meals were interrupted for birding.

Other special times which come to mind include: our apple tree snow-covered, decorated by ten Robins with a Varied Thrush sitting on the top like a puffed-up Christmas angel; and our pear tree nearby which once held three Northern Orioles on their migratory way.

Nine species of hawks were spotted at various times flying over or sometimes stopping for a short visit. A Gyrfalcon was not one of the 'stayers' but we did get a good view. Northern Shrikes, Townsend's Solitaires, Pine Grosbeaks, Mountain Chickadees, Anna's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, and both Black & Vaux's Swift were among the more unusual visitors.

Although there is really nothing like going afield chasing a rarity or seeing what is around in some new area, there is no sense wasting time when you have to be home. Just keep on birding wherever you are, you never know what might turn up. ◀

[EDITORS' NOTE: We were in the Wild Birds Nature Shop in Victoria today and Randy Cooper gave us this bit of advice for birders who wish to enjoy winter birds at home: "All the birds are getting ready for winter, are you? Even with a climate as mild as Victoria, winter is a hard time for our feathered friends. Birds need to choose their feeding territories well before the severe weather arrives. You can help by keeping seed and suet feeders full and clean. AND don't forget about those birdbaths -- water in winter is just as important to birds as food."] ◀

B.C. Christmas Bird Count Details, 1993/94

This listing of Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) in B.C. is published as a service to BCFO members who would like to take part in CBCs in their local area or nearby areas. It includes counts listed for B.C. last winter with the name and telephone number of the organizer(s) and the scheduled date, if known at press time. This year we also include a couple of CBC dates from just across our southern border. We apologize for any errors in these details. Data were accurate as known to the EDS to **November 21, 1993**. Check with area organizers for any late-breaking changes.

Best of luck to everyone during the 1993/94 Christmas Bird Counts!

| LOCALITY | DATE | ORGANIZER(S) | PHONE NO. |
|------------------------|--|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Bamfield | DEC 29 | Nigel Mathews | 479-2446 |
| Bowen Island | JAN 2, 94 | Allan Shatwell | 947-2133 |
| Burns Lk.-Francois Lk. | Date and contact unknown at press time | | |
| Campbell River | DEC 18 | Heather Asplin | 923-4112 |
| | | or Howard Telowsky | 923-2183 |
| Chilliwack | DEC 18 | Gladys Brown | 858-4032 |
| Comox | DEC 19 | Barbara Sedgwick | 335-0064 |
| Cranbrook | DEC 27 | Greg Ross | 489-2566 |
| Creston | Jan 2, 94 | Bob Purdy | 428-3554 |
| Deep Bay | DEC 30 | Barbara Sedgwick | 335-0064 |
| Duncan | DEC 27 | Derrick Marven | 748-8504 |
| Fauquier | DEC 30 | Jim Prentice | 269-7685 |
| Fort St. James | Jan 2, 94 | Joanne Vinnedge | 996-7357 |
| Fort St. John | Date and contact unknown at press time | | |
| Galiano Island | DEC 30 | Mike Hoebel | 539-2003 (H) 652-0396 (W) |
| Golden | Date and contact unknown at press time | | |
| Grand Forks | DEC 27 | Joan Grant | 442-2261 |
| Kamloops | DEC 18 | Rick Howie | 578-7542 |
| Kelowna | DEC 18 | Don Wilson | 763-8036 |
| Kimberly | JAN 3, 94 | Mildred White | 427-3605 |
| Kitimat | DEC 18 | Dennis Horwood | 632-2004 |
| Ladner | DEC 27 | Jude Grass | 520-3706 (H) 432-6393 (W) |
| Lake Windermere | Date and contact unknown at press time | | |
| Masset | DEC 18 | Margo Hearne | 626-5015 |
| Nakusp | JAN 2, 94 | Gary Davidson | 265-4456 |
| Nanaimo | DEC 26 | Peter Van Kerkoerle | 245-2530 |
| Oliver-Osoyoos | DEC 28 | Syd Cannings | 721-0338 |
| | | or Joan King | 495-6907 |
| Parksville-Qualicum | JAN 2, 94 | Terri Martin | 752-1285 |
| Pender Harbour | DEC 21/22? | Tony Greenfield | 885-5539 |
| Pender Islands | DEC 19 | Mary Roddick | 629-3308 |
| Penticton | DEC 27 | Steve Cannings | 492-2303 |
| | | or Dick Cannings | 734-9489 |
| | | or Anthia Bryan | 492-0312 |
| Pitt Meadows | DEC 19 | Kees van den Berg | 463-8743 |
| Port Alberni | JAN 2, 94 | Chuck Schmidt | 723-0907 |
| Port Clements | DEC 20 | Margo Hearne | 626-5015 |
| Prince George | DEC 19 | Nancy Krueger | 563-7896 |
| | | or Sandra Kinsey | 963-8381 |
| Prince Rupert | DEC 18 | Robin Weber | 627-1129 (H) 624-3207 (W) |
| Princeton | DEC 18 | Madelon Schouten | 295-7078 |
| Revelstoke | DEC 18 | John Woods | 837-7500 (W) |
| Rose Spit | DEC 17 | Margo Hearne | 626-5015 |

B.C. Christmas Bird Count Details, 1993/94 (Continued)

| LOCALITY | DATE | ORGANIZER(S) | PHONE NO. |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Salmon Arm | DEC 18 | Frank Kime | 835-8537 |
| Saltspring Island | DEC 12 | Glen Moores | 537-4306 |
| Shuswap Lake | JAN 2, 94 | Rick Howie | 578-7542 |
| Skidegate/Sandspit Area | DEC 19 | Margo Hearne | 626-5015 |
| Smithers | DEC 27 | Rosamund Pojar | 847-9784 |
| Sooke | DEC 19 | Michael Shepard | 388-4227 |
| Squamish | Date and contact unknown at press time | | |
| Sunshine Coast | DEC 18 | Tony Greenfield | 885-5539 |
| Terrace | DEC 26 | Diane Weismiller | 635-6984 |
| Vancouver | DEC 19 | Wayne Weber | 597-7201 (H) 576-5607 (W) |
| Vaseux Lake | JAN 1, 94 | Dick Cannings or Steve Cannings | 734-9489 492-2303 |
| Vernon | DEC 19 | Mary Collins or Chris Siddle | 542-5673 542-1034 |
| Victoria | DEC 18 | David Pearce | 477-2664 |
| Wells Gray Park | Count cancelled for 1993 | | |
| West Kootenay | JAN 8, 94 | Dorothy Beetstra | 368-9716 |
| Whistler | DEC 18 | Max Gotz or | 932-7247 682-5248 |
| White Rock & Surrey | JAN 2, 94 | Jim Previer | 531-1774 |
| Williams Lake | JAN 2, 94 | Anna Roberts | 392-5000 |
| Yoho National Park | Date and contact unknown at press time | | |

WASHINGTON STATE BORDER AREAS

| LOCALITY | DATE | ORGANIZER(S) | PHONE NO. |
|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------|
| Bellingham | DEC 19 | Terry Wahl | (206) 733-8355 |
| Padilla Bay | DEC 26 | H & T Armstrong | (206) 766-8521 |

NEW PUBLICATIONS TO WATCH FOR

AN OUTSTANDING NEW BOOK ON SHOREBIRDS is SHOREBIRDS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, by Dennis R. Paulson, recently published by the University of Washington Press and Seattle Audubon Society. This 406-page book, which is full of outstanding colour photos of shorebirds, has been "in the works" for more than a decade. It covers plumages, identification, behaviour, and seasonal occurrence of all species of shorebirds known and expected to occur in the Northwest. It is published in Canada by the University of B.C. Press [about \$49.95 retail]. It is a "must" for all shorebird enthusiasts! [Submitted by Wayne C. Weber.]

THE INK'S STILL WET it's so new. Checklist of Cariboo Birds is a 12 page booklet providing the status for Cariboo birds. "The area covered by this checklist extends from Quesnel south to Clinton, and from the Cariboo Mountains near Quesnel Lake west to the Coast Mountains near Anahim Lake." It was compiled by Anna Roberts and Martin Gebauer of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists, Box 4575, Williams Lake, BC V2G 2V6 and is available through that address or through select naturalist bookstores. [Submitted by Anna Roberts.]

A CHILDREN'S BOOK ON MARBLED MURRELETS is available from Friends of Caren, Box 272, Madeira Park, BC V0N 2H0 for \$5.00 (including postage). Marbled Murrelets, Mysterious Seabirds is an attractive 24 page booklet with very good black-and-white drawings and text which is both readable and informative for the young reader. [EDITORS]

BCFO Field Trip to East Sooke Regional Park

by David Allinson
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Victoria, BC V9C 3K5

On Sunday, September 26, 1993 the second annual BCFO field trip to East Sooke Regional Park near Victoria was timed to view the peak of the fall hawk migration. Impressive numbers of Turkey Vultures (up to 1000 on one day) and thirteen other species of diurnal raptor, including the locally rare Broad-winged Hawk, have been recorded at the Beechey Head lookout in the park. [See EDS' NOTE 1 below]

Some twenty BCFO members came out to view the spectacle during what has historically been the best weekend. Observers with the Victoria Natural History Society and a Capital Regional District Parks program boosted attendance to over 100 people during the day. It's great to see that viewer popularity for this migration has increased dramatically since 1990. Since 1990, Broad-winged Hawks have appeared consistently on the 27th or 28th of September. However, this year three single observer sightings of an adult were recorded earlier in the month between September 10th and 15th.

Our trip highlights included nine species of raptor: 250 Turkey Vulture, 2 Osprey, 2 Bald Eagle, 1 Northern Harrier, 30+ Sharp-shinned Hawk, 3 Cooper's Hawk, 39 Red-tailed Hawk, 2 American Kestrel, and 1 Merlin. Many of these birds provided observers with wonderful, close-up flybys, especially the Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks. Over 80 Band-tailed Pigeon were seen circling over the park and about 80 Vaux's Swift were seen up close on their migration southward. Other highlights were a Northern Flicker of the yellow-shafted race, plus 12 late Violet-green Swallows. All told some 45 species were tallied during our stay at the lookout.

Although these numbers are impressive, overall numbers were down during the 1993 fall hawk migration in spite of increased coverage. However, while some species such as Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, and Red-tailed Hawk were down, others, like Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Kestrel, were up sharply. The following day those BCFO members who stayed on were able to add Northern Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon to their Beechey Head raptor list, as well as a half dozen Red-necked Phalarope in the Juan de Fuca waters below the lookout. A total of over 105 species have been tallied at the lookout since 1990.

For those interested, the fall migration of hawks begins the first week of September and slows to a trickle by the third week in October. Mark your calendars now for late September 1994 and come over to Victoria to view the passage of hawks on Vancouver Island. ◀

[EDS' NOTE 1: detailed directions to 'Hawk Ridge' at Beechey Head in East Sooke Park are available in **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**, 1992 Dec; 2(3/4):17.]

[EDS' NOTE 2: Thanks to David for again reporting on our BCFO HawkWatch field trip and for you 'raptor-holics' out there who need an Eastern perspective there is an article about hawkwatching at Holiday Beach Conservation Area in ABA's newsletter, **Winging It**, 1993 November; 5(11):1,4-6.]

[EDS' NOTE 3: We were out to this particular hawkwatch, our first. We found it both enjoyable and informative to have around us knowledgeable and helpful birders who took the time to assist with our uncertain identifications, who spotted and pointed out less common species, and who explained some of the difficulties these birds experience as they try getting over the water hazard to the mainland. We appreciated the sharing of knowledge, the camaraderie of folks enjoying nature and the excitement of seeing raptors in a new light. Thank you all. That's what we think birding should be all about, birders helping birders so that everyone can get a better appreciation of both the birds and their remarkable annual migration!]

Birding in Manning Provincial Park

by Mike McGrenere
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Victoria, BC V8Y 2V9

Birding in the alpine and subalpine areas of British Columbia is an excellent way to spend part of your vacation or weekend time. It allows the combination of my two favourite activities -- hiking at relatively high altitudes with spectacular mountain views and birding in areas which often provide rewarding sightings of resident and migrant species at these altitudes.

This year, as we have done the past four years, Barb, Graham and I spent part of our annual vacation in late August 1993 at Manning Provincial Park. The weather cooperated giving us sunny days for our entire time in the park. We camped at Lightning Lake campground in a site overlooking Spruce Bay. This is an excellent location from which to do day trips to the alpine areas in the park. The campground is also an excellent place to hear owls. We heard Northern Pygmy Owls calling every morning at dawn and a Barred Owl on our first morning in the park.

Graham had his sixth birthday in July so we were hoping that he would be able to do some longer hikes. Our first hike was along the Heather Trail towards Three Brothers Mountain. As we started along the trail, a mixed flock of Horned Larks and American Pipits landed on the grassy slopes near the parking lot. We were also able to pick out the rattling call of a Lapland Longspur in the flock but we were not able to locate this bird as the flock fed in the long grass.

Alpine birding is so enjoyable because the common birds are now Gray Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers and Mountain Chickadees. The Heather Trail, through large subalpine meadows, is an excellent place for raptor viewing at this time of the year. We saw Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Northern Harrier, an immature Golden Eagle and several American Kestrels.

In three previous hikes to Three Brothers Mountain, I have found White-tailed Ptarmigan on the slopes of the First and Second Brother. However, after stopping for lunch at the base of the mountain, we decided not to climb up the slopes of the mountain to look for ptarmigan. This was Graham's first long hike and we did not want to push our luck since we wanted him to enjoy the hike and we also intended to go on more long hikes in the park. White-tailed Ptarmigan would have to wait until next year.

After a day of rest canoeing on Lightning Lake and attending the naturalists' programs, we decided to hike up to Snow Camp Mountain along the Skyline Trail. BC Parks is rebuilding portions of this trail so the first three km from Strawberry Flats were very easy hiking. Approximately three-quarters of this hike is in the coniferous forest. The interesting birding is in the small meadow areas which occur after four km. We observed Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers in the first small meadow as well as two Pine Grosbeaks calling from the top of a snag. A Blue Grouse rested on a log below the trail.

After hiking steadily uphill for 5.5 km, we reached the junction of the original Skyline Trail and the trail to Snow Camp Mountain. We could see the mountain from this junction but now the trail started to descend into Despair Pass, which meant walking downhill when we really wanted to continue uphill. However, much to our delight, the descent was brief and we were once again hiking up the trail. Both Hermit and Varied Thrushes were observed along this stretch of the trail as well as a Cooper's Hawk which kept the Dark-eyed Juncos and Mountain Chickadees alert.

We finally made it to the top of Snow Camp Mountain where we rested and had our lunch at the 1980 metre elevation. Townsend's Solitaire, American Pipits and Yellow-rumped Warblers were observed in the meadow area below the summit but we saw very few birds while we had our lunch. Our one highlight was a Barn Swallow that searched for insects below the cliff on the west side of the mountain.

Our last two days were spent in the Lightning Lake area where, due to a sore knee on my part, we could only look up to Frosty Mountain with its larch forest. This limited our birding to the lower elevation areas. We walked on some of the shorter trails where we observed a mixed flock of Black and Vaux's Swifts, White-

Birding in Manning Provincial Park (Continued)

winged Crossbill, Red-naped Sapsucker, Three-toed Woodpecker (at our campsite), Red-eyed Vireo and two Green-winged Teal (on Lightning Lake).

The summer and autumn seasons are the best times of the year for birding in the subalpine and alpine areas (snow shoes or cross country skis would be necessary in the winter or spring). Species numbers are usually highest during fall migration. Whether you are planning a camping trip or just stopping briefly while passing through the park, birding is always delightful in Manning Provincial Park. ◀

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night ...

by Elsie Nykyfork
RR #4, Site 11, Comp C-29
Vernon, BC V1T 6L7

It was a dark and stormy night ... Actually it had rained heavily off and on all day as well. Phil Gehlen arrived to pick me up at 6:30 pm. He said, "Don't you think we should phone Rick Howie and see if the trip is still on?" The answer -- all signals go, but we will have to use four wheel drive vehicles and trucks only.

We arrived at the Esso Station, corner of Halston and #5 Highway, at 8:30 pm. This trip was co-sponsored by the British Columbia Field Ornithologists and the Kamloops Naturalists. Seventeen people turned out. We all drove out to an old corral at the base of Wheeler Mountain. Rick gave us a very interesting talk, as the mosquitoes ate us alive. While we were there two Burrowing Owls came and sat on the fence. They knew this was an owling trip.

We pooled vehicles into three 4x4's and one pick-up truck and took off for the wooded area of Wheeler Mountain.

The rain had left the road impassable by anyone's standards but Rick's. On we went, into one side of the rut and out the other, sometimes turning almost sideways on the road, but we don't stop. The vehicle behind us was in trouble so Rick wheeled around, went back and attached a rope, and slowly drew him along. Onward and upward! That was the "worst" spot said leader Rick. However, it wasn't long until there were no lights coming behind us. Rick stopped and went back to make the decision to "leave the truck and we will deal with it on the way out". We shared the truck's passengers and the last three 4x4's went on to our destination.

We all stood silently looking and listening. Finally we heard a low hooting sound. We all trudged into the forest until we came to a leaning snag about 25 feet tall. Rick knew there was a nest in this snag. He shone the light on the nest hole, then scratched at the bottom of the snag. We all had our binnies trained on the hole. Out popped a FLAMMULATED OWL with a very inquiring look on her face. What a thrill! We waited around to see if the male would bring food to the nest. He just stayed on the outer circle of his territory and called softly. Finally we left as we still had to "unstick" the pick-up from the mud. It didn't take too long with the aid of a winch on one of the 4x4's.

Some of us had coffee at the all night Halston Diner on Highway #5, then took off for home. Phil and I still had 1.5 hours to drive. I fell into bed at 3:45 am, not even taking the time to put the tick into my book that would give me Lifer #1964. Isn't birding fun? ◀

[EDS' NOTE: Elsie's letter arrived just after the June issue went to press but as you can easily tell from the two reports, she was on the same owling trip as we were. However, she got to ride in Rick's 4x4 while we started out in the back of that pick-up which got stuck! We're certain the roads to Wheeler Mountain won't be that bad at AGM time -- will they Rick? Whatever, we found the Kamloops Naturalists members to be very helpful as we know they will be for our BCFO AGM in May 1994.]

[EDS' NOTE #2: For a good discussion of Flammulated Owls check The Owls of North America / by Eckert, Allan W & Karl E Karalus. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, c1973]

**Seabirds and Marine Mammals Observed During
a Crossing of the Gulf of Alaska, 14 - 19 July, 1993**

by Ken H. Morgan
9604 Barnes Place
Sidney, BC V8L 4W9

I recently accomplished (in part) a long-held dream, to see the Aleutian Islands & the Bering Sea. The adventure began three weeks earlier when I learned that a Canadian Hydrographic vessel, the John P. Tully, was bound for the Arctic. The proposed route was to sail up the inside passage to Prince Rupert, cross Hecate Strait to the Queen Charlotte Islands, out through Dixon Entrance and then across the Gulf of Alaska to Dutch Harbor, Unalaska Island. After refuelling at Dutch Harbor, she would continue north past the Pribilof Islands, skirt the east coasts of St. Matthew and St. Lawrence Islands, on through the Bering Strait, and once in the Beaufort Sea, head more-or-less east for approximately 2000 km until Coronation Gulf. I told myself that no matter what, I was going to be on board the 'Tully' when she left the dock of the Institute of Ocean Sciences.

Part of my work with the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) involves locating & monitoring areas (near and offshore) that are important to migratory seabirds. With that in mind, I began to plan how to convince CWS management that the trip was worth pursuing. When I learned a CWS colleague was interested in determining the route that southbound Western Sandpipers, and other shorebirds took from their Alaskan breeding grounds, I figured that management had to let me go. I would not only collect data on seabirds (thereby increasing our knowledge of their densities and distributions), but would also be able to survey shorebirds.

Surprisingly, management agreed, with a caveat that I could only take part in the first leg of the trip, ie. Vancouver Island to Dutch Harbor. While this meant I wasn't going to see the huge seabird colonies of the Bering Sea, I was happy -- finally, the Aleutians! Exciting visions of Red-legged Kittiwakes; Crested, Least, and Whiskered Auklets; Thick-billed Murres; Red-faced Cormorants and Aleutian Terns drifted before my minds-eye.

Trip Log

Due to minor mechanical problems, we didn't leave Patricia Bay until about 7 PM on the 13th of July.

July 14 -- I awake to heavy drizzle, fog patches and the announcement that during the night, the ship's main radar system died. Not particularly perturbed by the weather or the lack of radar, I don my rain gear and position myself above the ship's bridge for a morning of observation. Within 20 minutes, as we make our way through Seymour Narrows, near Campbell River, I spot my first shorebirds - a small flock of Dunlin.

During the next three hours, between rain squalls, I survey about 50 km in a 500 metre wide strip. The marine birds I encounter include Double-crested and Pelagic Cormorants; Surf Scoters; Black Oystercatchers; Red-necked Phalaropes; California, Herring, and Glaucous-winged Gulls; Common Murres; Pigeon Guillemots; Marbled Murrelets; and Rhinoceros Auklets - Rhinos are by far the most numerous species.

As we head north past Port Hardy, I spot a flock of Surf-birds, and then three flocks of 'peeps' -- probably Westerns, but visibility is poor. Continuing on through Queen Charlotte Strait, past the Duke of Edinburgh Ecological Reserve, (breeding site of approx. 140,000 pairs of Rhino's, 274,600 pairs of Leach's Storm-petrels and 60,000 pairs of Fork-tailed Storm-petrels) we encounter small groups of Cassin's Auklets, Ancient Murrelets, Least & Fork-tailed Storm-petrels, as well as hundred's of Sooty Shearwaters and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Common Murres and perhaps a thousand Rhinos. We are also accompanied by several pods of Dall's Porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*) and Pacific White-sided Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*). After logging a total of 163 km of transects and 20 species, I quit for the day -- wet, but feeling good.

Seabirds and Marine Mammals ... (Continued)

July 15 -- The morning dawns wetter and greyer than the previous day. As we approach Prince Rupert, I manage to make out a group of Black Turnstones huddled together on a rock, in what appears to be a futile attempt to remain dry. Seven hours later, with a healthy radar system again, we leave Rupert and head across Hecate Strait. Compared with two other crossings that I have made of the Strait, this leg is surprisingly dead, and I fail to add to my species list. About 25 km northeast of Rose Spit, we hit solid fog, ending any further observations. I am beginning to get a bit ticked-off with the weather! I managed to survey only 65 km today.

July 16 -- The day begins with the ship approx. 145 km west of Graham Island and the sky is overcast, but IT ISN'T RAINING! I survey for an hour before breakfast and although I pick up a Long-tailed Jaeger, (species # 22), I encounter a grand total of only 27 birds. After breakfast, I resume observing, and within minutes I add Tufted Puffin (#23), Black-footed Albatross (#24) and Northern Fulmar (#25) to the trip list.

As the day progresses, the weather continues to improve, and I actually see patches of blue sky. Despite better visibility, I spot only Leach's and Fork-tailed Storm-petrels, Northern Fulmars and Sooty Shearwaters.

Finally, at 3:50 PM a Mottled Petrel (#26). A lifer! Only, it turns out to be 369 km (about 230 miles) away from the nearest land. I can't add it to my B.C., Canada, or U.S. lists. Although Mottled Petrels are regular visitors to the Gulf of Alaska (Harrison 1983), they are irregular off the B.C. coast (Campbell et al. 1990, Morgan et al. 1991). By the end of the day, I have surveyed 155 km, seen Northern Fur-seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) and a Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and have added Parasitic Jaeger (#27) to the list.

July 17 -- We are now 650 km from land, heading due west and it is raining again! During the first 50 km of transects, I observe more than 60 Mottled Petrels - in fact, they are the most abundant species.

Between 9 & 11 AM, the weather begins to improve, as does the birding; at 9:15 I pick up the first Horned Puffin (#28). Approximately 90 minutes later, I spot a flock of large shorebirds flying directly towards the ship. My notes read: "13 Whimbrel-sized birds; long, decurved bill; cinnamon upperwings; rich brownish uppertail and rump; breast and belly buff-brown; brown streaking on breast and flanks."

After consulting Marchant et al. (1986), I determine that they were Bristle-thighed Curlews (#29 and another lifer). They were 570 km from the nearest land & heading southwest towards their polynesian wintering grounds.

Less than an hour later, I notice a different gadfly petrel amongst the larger and darker Mottled Petrels. This bird lacks the dark grey belly patch of the Mottled, the underwings appear almost entirely white other than narrow black borders and wingtips, and the head is noticeably lighter than the Mottled. A careful look at Harrison (1983) indicates that I had just spotted a Cook's Petrel (#30 and another lifer).

Shortly after lunch we encounter three Sperm Whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), looking like boxcars as they swim along at the surface; as well as a Northern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*), and I pick up the first Sabine's Gull (#31). As we head further west, Short-tailed Shearwaters become more numerous, gradually replacing Sooties. Not thinking about the extended daylight, I work until 11:15 PM. Today I surveyed more than 200 km and picked up two lifers -- life is good!

July 18 -- The day dawns grey, but no rain -- at first. We are heading southwest, paralleling the Alaskan Peninsula, approximately 175 km from land. For the next 11 hours, between heavy showers, I observe primarily Fulmars, Leach's Storm-petrels, and Short-tailed Shearwaters, with the occasional appearance

Seabirds and Marine Mammals ... (Continued)

of Tufted Puffins, Black-footed Albatrosses, and even less frequently, Mottled Petrels. I survey about 135 km today, and other than a fleeting glimpse of a small, black and white shearwater, there is no excitement.

July 19 -- During the night, we alter course, and are now headed northwest towards Unalaska Island, approximately 150 km away. The wind, which had been blowing directly into my face almost continuously, is now astern, and we are surfing along driven by 25 to 35 knot winds. At least I am not constantly drying off my binoculars. For the first few hours, the same species as yesterday, only higher numbers. Finally, shortly before lunch, and after a grand total of 775 km of observations, a Laysan Albatross shows up, (#32). I rank this as one of my favourite pelagic birds -- they are magnificent to watch in high winds.

It is now mid-afternoon and we are less than 65 km from land. Again, I spot a small, black and white shearwater, only this time it cooperates. The bird flies right in front of the bow, and at one point, it is less than 30 metre away. I instantly think that I've seen my first Black-vented Shearwater, but soon after, comparing my notes with Harrison's description, I realize that I am wrong. The bird was noticeably smaller than the nearby Short-tailed Shearwaters, it appeared uniformly black/brown on top and bright white underneath. There were blackish trailing edges & tips to the underside of the wings. The underwing coverts were white, and there was a strong demarcation between the dark upper & the white underparts -- this eliminates Black-vented Shearwaters. Also, there were no conspicuous white sides to the rump, as occurs in Newell's Shearwater. I recheck my notes and Harrison's description several times before I am convinced that the bird was a Manx Shearwater -- but what is it doing off Alaska? It belongs in the Atlantic! Harrison provides the answer on page 262:

"White-vented *P. puffinus* ssp. have recently been observed off western USA ... and it has been suggested that these might be nominate *P. p. puffinus* which have wandered west of Cape Horn and subsequently migrated north in the wrong ocean."

Although, Harrison continues, suggesting that these are actually mis-identified Newell's, the bird that I saw could not have been anything other than a Manx Shearwater. This bird (species #33) is without a doubt, the bird of the trip, and another lifer.

As the day progresses, the rain increases & the seas continue to build. The 6 to 8 metre swells are making it impossible to get a good look at the countless small alcids fleeing the approaching ship. We are close to Crested Auklet colonies, but I never get a good enough look to convince myself that they are anything other than Cassin's Auklets.

We eventually enter the protected waters of Unimak Pass, between Unimak Island and the Krenitzin Islands. I stop my CWS surveys here, but not my hunt for lifers. The number of birds is unbelievable -- in spite of less than ideal visibility, I can see thousands of birds in any direction. I pick out groups of Red Phalaropes (#34) among the huge rafts of Red-necks. Black-legged Kittiwakes (#35) are everywhere, even a few land on the ship, but no matter how I try, I can't turn one into a Red-legged Kittiwake. The ship is surrounded by groups of Cassin's Auklets, Ancient Murrelets, Tufted & Horned Puffins and Common Murres. Wait a minute -- that murre looks darker and the white of the neck extends upward to a pronounced point. Finally, a Thick-billed Murre (#36); a species that has long eluded me! Just before it gets too dark, two large, pale gulls come in close to inspect us; Glaucous Gulls (#37).

July 20 -- We are now in Dutch Harbour, a small fishing community of approx. 3500 people -- this swells to more than 20,000 during the height of the fishing season. At 1 PM, I am onboard an Alaska Airlines jet, and nine hours later, after stopping in Anchorage and Seattle, I am back in Victoria.

Seabirds and Marine Mammals ... (Continued)

Overall, I surveyed slightly less than 860 km, encountered 81 marine mammals (6 species), picked up five new bird species and tallied 6590 birds, plus an estimated 5000 additional birds from Unimak Pass onward. A total of 37 species in six days, is not high by most birding standards. However, in my mind, it is the most exciting form of birding. It is the ever changing sea and sky conditions, the beauty of the albatrosses, shearwaters & petrels as they ride the winds, the "inquisitiveness" of the dolphins and porpoises as they come in to hitch a free ride on the bow wave, and the adrenalin rush you get at the arrival of a new species. They all combine to make pelagic birding the ultimate form of this engaging, addictive, pursuit. I recommend it to everyone!

Sincere thanks go to R.C.H. Wilson (Institute of Ocean Sciences) who cut through considerable bureaucratic red tape, and to B. Lusk (Canadian Hydrographic Service) and R. Currie (Pacific Geoscience Centre) for allowing me to take part in the trip.

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Notes from Cortes and Mitlenatch Islands

Fred Zwickel and George Sirk

More Marbled Murrelets

We noted with interest the confirmation of a Marbled Murrelet nest in the Sunshine Coast (Sechelt) area in the last issue of the BCFO newsletter. We thought it would be of interest to Marbled Murrelet watchers that a freshly dead, fledged chick with egg-tooth was found floating by Sirk between Cortes Island and its near-shore Twin Islands on 8 July 1992. This bird was turned over to the Royal BC Museum.

Travelling Trumpeters

On 24 May 1993, Zwickel and wife Ruth read the numbered codes on green neckbands of two Trumpeter Swans that were with an unmarked swan in Manson's Lagoon on the west side of Cortes Island. We have just received word from US Fish and Wildlife Service that these birds were captured as cygnets in December 1992 at Harriman State Park, Idaho, a few miles west of Yellowstone Park, and were transplanted to the Summer Lake Management Area in south-central Oregon. One is known to have moved south from Summer Lake and wintered near Richvale, California. Both were seen in the Harney Basin, eastern Oregon, from March 29 to April 7, 1993. The next sighting of these birds was at Manson's Lagoon.

BROWN PELICAN !!!

A new record for Mitlenatch! While our new checklist, Birds of Cortes and Mitlenatch Islands, was in press, Sirk and a small group of bird watchers saw a Brown Pelican perched on shore at Mitlenatch, 5 August 1993, a photograph was taken. According to a distribution map* for this species in The Birds of British Columbia (R. W. Campbell; et al. 1990) this is the second most northerly record for this species along our coast. The most northerly record was at Round Island near Alert Bay, 18 July 1913. *[EDS' NOTE: This map is in Volume 1, page 214]. ↩

Marbled Murrelet Active Nest Find on Sunshine Coast

by Paul H. Jones
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[EDITORS' NOTE: In response to the News Flash in the September issue of **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST**, V.3 #3, regarding the discovery of a Marbled Murrelet nest on the Sunshine Coast we have received the following report from Paul Jones. We regret that credit was not provided in our original article for all participants in this important discovery. Paul Jones also has an article published in the November/ December issue of the **BC Naturalist**, 31(6):8, which should be referred to for more complete observations on chick feeding and development. See also a note by Fred Zwickel and George Sirk on page 18 of this issue.]

The author, a BCFO member, has been studying Marbled Murrelets on the Sunshine Coast in their marine and forest environment for more than three years. He first found the colony in June 1991 in the sub-alpine old growth forests of the Caren Range and began studies which eventually led to the nest find. From his cabin on Malaspina Strait he has maintained accurate records of murrelet numbers and marine activities of this mysterious alcid since March 1991. His studies include fixed point surveys as well as sea transects from Middlepoint to Pender Harbour on a regular basis. He has been interested in trying to correlate marine and forest activities including tracking the number of young that reach the water, fishing habits of these birds, population densities and behavior related to pair bonding and nesting.

The author is a member of the Marbled Murrelet Technical Committee of the International Pacific Seabird Group (PSG). His studies and those of others who have been associated with him are along the lines of the protocols established by the PSG. This summer, just prior to the nest find, Ms. Kim Nelson, chair of the Marbled Murrelet Technical Committee, the person who has found some seven Marbled Murrelet nests in Oregon, paid a visit to the Caren Range and gave encouragement to the efforts of the Friends of Caren to make the nest find a reality.

The nest, the first active Marbled Murrelet nest for Canada, was found on August 7, 1993 at 7:20 am. On site that morning were the author, John Field, his son Jordan and Volker Bahn, a biology student from Germany who was working with the Friends of Caren. The nest was 18 m from the ground in a Yellow Cedar tree at an altitude of 1100 m. For the next thirteen and a half days, until the chick fledged and left the nest successfully, the nest was monitored from a safe distance. Careful observations were made, including sketches of the birds at the nest, of the adults and the chick. The author, John Field and Volker Bahn did the monitoring on behalf of Friends of Caren.

An excellent video was made of the nest find and several articles are in preparation for popular and scientific journals.

This find showed that most feedings occurred in broad daylight (usually bright sunlight), there were many feedings per day (up to a maximum one day of eight), and that murrelets are fast and excellent fliers.

The forest in which the nest was found is a sub-alpine mountain/western hemlock, yellow cedar, Amabilis fir forest only eight hundred hectares (three square miles) in size under threat of logging. As a result of Friends of Caren proposals this area and an adjacent buffer zone is now being considered by the Provincial Government for Protected Area Status.

If you wish to lend your support to having the Caren Range old growth and an appropriate buffer zone around it set aside for the murrelets and as many as eight pairs of Vaux's Swift (the author found a Vaux's Swift nest as well this summer), please write to Moe Sihota the Minister of the Environment or to the Premier, Mike Harcourt, with a copy of your letter to Friends of Caren, Box 272, Madeira Park, BC, V0N 2H0. From the same address you can obtain a copy of Friends of Caren's newly published children's book Marbled Murrelets, Mysterious Seabirds for \$5.00 including postage. ↵ [EDS' NOTE: This is an informative and enjoyable little book and the drawings are well done. Children should enjoy reading it.]

AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

David Allinson

An avid and active birder, David Allinson is vice-president of the Victoria Natural History Society and is a self-proclaimed "raptor-holic".

Paul H. Jones

Paul Jones, an active member of the Marbeled Murrelet Technical Committee, has been detailing murrelet activity on the Sunshine Coast since early 1991.

Andrew D. MacDonald

Andrew MacDonald is a recent graduate in creative writing from the University of Victoria. In between writing contracts & working at the Field-Naturalist, he tries to get in as much birding as possible.

M. F. (Mike) McGrenere

President of the BCFO, Mike has been an active member of the Victoria Natural History Society & enjoys many types of birding, especially the alpine trips.

Ken H. Morgan

Ken Morgan, a member of the Victoria Natural History Society, started birding as a youngster in Ontario. Although he only birded off-and-on in his teens, he now 'birds' seriously with a primary interest in pelagic birding.

Elsie Nykyfork

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.

Jack Williams

Jack & his wife are presently members of the White Rock & Surrey Naturalists. When he lived in Sidney, Jack was an ornithology leader with the Victoria Natural History Society. He was also a member of the Vancouver Natural History Society for several years and has been birding for about 45 years. ◀

GUIDELINES FOR SITE GUIDES

Site Guides should be about 2-3 pages in length. They should include a map (hand-drawn is fine) with distances to viewing areas clearly indicated from the starting point. Landmarks and terrain should be noted, along with the birds seen in season. Any unusual or special species should be given and a local contact person is always helpful information. Hazards and closed areas should also be indicated so that we may all experience safe birding. Items of historical or geological interest along the route should also be noted. Many birders are interested in a broad range of natural history areas and it is nice to be able to stimulate the grey cells while patiently and quietly awaiting the possible appearance of an elusive lifebird. ◀

[EDITORS' NOTE: Speaking of Site Guides, members will note that there are NONE in this issue. Sorry people we don't write them, we just edit them and get them to press. So if there are NO site guides it means that NO ONE has sent us any. Please do try to get us some for the next issue. Kamloops area is a logical area for a site guide as the AGM will be there but we need them for many parts of the province. We have another reason for asking for site guides. The map sizes are flexible and take up those areas of the newsletter which are lacking in text. As you see we're having some difficulty filling those areas in a very useful fashion. So send more text and more site guides (with maps) and you'll have less of this editorial filler.

For those of you who still need a "Site Guide" fix, Robert W. Butler was able to get Vancouver in as the birding hot spot of the month in the December Issue of *Birder's World* [7(6): 50-54]. Fraser delta, Stanley Park, Iona Island and Boundary Bay all get some positive coverage by Rob and it was nice to see a BC hotspot in a journal which usually spotlights birding hot spots in American states that we, the editors, are unlikely to get to without winning a major lottery prize.] ◀