

BRITISH COLUMBIA

FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

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CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS	2
BCFO Officers and Directors	2
SOCIETY NEWS	
President's Notes	3
BCFO Fifth AGM Minutes	3-5
BCFO 1994 Financial Statement	5
UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS	6-7
Volunteers Needed: Black Tern Survey	7
Nesting Behavior of the Common Nighthawk	8-11
Volunteers Needed: Double-crested Cormorant Survey	11
The Aesthetics of Birding	12-13
1995 -- An Amazing Year...	13-14
AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE	14
SITE GUIDE: Birding in the Quesnel Area	15-18
LETTERS TO THE EDITORS	19-20
1996 BCFO AGM Notice	3 & 20

BCFO Sixth Annual General Meeting
14-16 June, 1996
Manning Provincial Park

The **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** is published four times a year by **British Columbia Field Ornithologists, PO Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7**. 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**.

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, \$25.00; junior memberships (age under 18), \$10.00; U.S. and foreign memberships, \$25.00 (\$US). Memberships are for the calendar year. For further information, or to join, write: **Allen Wisely, Membership, British Columbia Field Ornithologists, PO Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7**.

Send material for publication in any format to the BCFO Newsletter Editors (see page 2). We especially welcome bird-finding information for the "Site Guide" series and any articles about birdwatching experiences, preferably (but not necessarily) in British Columbia. **Deadline for receipt of material for publication is the 15th of the month preceding the March, June, September and December issues.**

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

EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS

Caught out while sitting at a recent Victoria Naturalists' meeting were two prime specimens of the Red-faced Editors (*Mea culpa oopsis*). We pulled up an older front page and modified it without "critically" rechecking all the information. Our apologies for any inconvenience caused to members, prospective members or directors.

Our thanks to all, members and non-members, who responded to our requests for articles. We can again offer 20 pages chock-full of information, anecdotes and other good birding stuff. But first -- the BIG NEWS is that the 1996 Annual General Meeting of the BCFO will be held in Manning Park in June. See Marian's announcement in the SOCIETY NEWS on page 3. We look forward to seeing everyone there. Remember this is your organization. Please consider ways in which you might be able to assist the organization grow and develop. More members should step forward as directors; the upcoming AGM will require many willing hands; our publications could use some regular columnists; BCFO birding trips need leaders; bird-related projects?; ...

In this issue we have another great SITE GUIDE. Manfred takes us to some of his special areas around Quesnel. Check out what both Dannie and Jeremy have to say. There is more to birding than listing. We have been asked to include projects we learn about which have volunteer opportunities. Read the issue carefully because there are at least four requests for assistance. Doug has given us a detailed account of nighthawk nesting behavior. His article illustrates the knowledge and pleasure someone can gain by observing even a single species closely. In LETTERS TO THE EDITORS David suggests yet another interesting name for our publication. Letters from both Derrick and Don discuss the finer points of Jaeger identification and Don also demonstrates the utility of good field documentation.

Time has flown by and BCFO is now in its sixth year. The editors have prepared an index for the first five years of the newsletter articles. We will have a draft copy available at the AGM. Extra funding is still needed to publish a final copy.

If members would like to read a full June issue of this newsletter, please provide the editors with articles, SITE GUIDES, anecdotes, etc. by, OR BEFORE, April 15th. We will be away this spring and we would like to have the June issue all "camera ready" before we go on holidays. We thank you all in advance for your assistance. Finally, good birding despite this unusual spring weather. See you at Manning Park!

BCFO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 1993-1994

<u>President:</u>	Marian Porter	531-5747 14831 Buena Vista Ave, White Rock, BC V4B 1X3
<u>Vice-President:</u>	Tony Greenfield	885-5539 P.O. Box 319, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0
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<u>Membership:</u>	Allen Wiseley	477-4593 1881 Grandview Drive, Victoria, BC V8N 2T8
<u>Directors:</u>	Mike McGrenere	658-8624 1178 Sunnygrove Terrace, Victoria, BC V8Y 2V9
	Martin McNicholl	294-2072 4735 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1L3
	Ken Morgan	655-1987 9604 Barnes Place, Sidney, BC V8L 4W9
	
<u>Newsletter Editors:</u>	Andy & Marilyn Buhler	744-2521 (Home) 1132 Loenholm Road 952-2196 (Work)/952-2180 (FAX) Victoria, BC V8Z 2Z6
<u>Newsletter Distribution:</u>	Allen Wiseley	477-4593

SOCIETY NEWS

President's Notes from the BCFO Directors' Meeting, 14 January 1996

by Marian Porter

The Directors are pleased to announce that the 1996 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held at Manning Provincial Park during the third weekend of June. This year's AGM is being held to coincide with the annual Manning Park Bird Blitz. Events get under way with a reception and registration on the evening of Friday, June 14. Saturday, June 15, will be a full day with field trips in the morning, a speakers' program and Annual General Meeting in the afternoon, a post-count gathering, a banquet, and a special owling excursion in the evening. Sunday, June 16 will feature field trips.

Members may reserve rooms in the Manning Park Lodge for the nights of June 14 and 15. Campsites may be reserved individually through the new BC Parks Reservation System that is due to start March 1, 1996. [\$6 surcharge to reserve] The Little Muddy group campsite has been set aside for those participating in the Bird Blitz. [See notice on page 20 of this issue for Manning Provincial Park phone numbers]

Manning Park has a fascinating variety of habitat types from coastal old growth forest and native rhododendron groves to high alpine meadows and drier interior forests east of the Cascade Divide. Birding should be at it's best during mid-June, and records collected during the field trips will be added to the permanent records of the park. The Lodge has been newly renovated to accommodate conferences and we look forward to another informative and successful AGM.

In other matters, the BCFO has recently achieved charitable organization status due to the efforts of John Dorsey. All donations are now tax deductible and BCFO can now issue a receipt showing a charitable organization number.

Additional directors are needed. Although nominations will be taken at the 1996 AGM interested members should contact the Board before that date. With an infusion of more people with energy and new ideas, many ambitious projects can be initiated. Now is the time to become a team player. Join a board of directors that would like to see this organization become more actively involved with birding issues and projects throughout the Province. ◀

**British Columbia Field Ornithologists
Fifth Annual General Meeting, September 16, 1995
Dunsmuir Lodge, Sydney, BC**

by Lloyd Esralson, Secretary

The Fifth Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO) was held at Dunsmuir Lodge in Sydney on September 16, 1995. The meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm with Marian Porter in the chair. The following is a summary of the meeting.

Introduction

The president, Marian Porter, welcomed the members to the business meeting. Thanks were given to all the current board members for their efforts and special thanks for all the efforts in making this a very enjoyable Annual General Meeting.

Marian noted that the 1994 motion relating to BCFO awards has been deferred by the Board because of other priorities, in particular, problems related to the journal. A committee is needed to work on this and the next meeting will address the topic.

Minutes

The minutes for the 1994 Annual General Meeting that was held in Kamloops were printed and distributed in the September 1994 edition of the BCFO (1994, 4(3): 4-5). Don Wilson moved acceptance of the minutes, Paul Wadden seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

Fifth Annual General Meeting (continued)Financial Report

The financial report was presented by the treasurer, John Dorsey. A review of the 1994 statement of revenue and expenses showed that expenses were \$400.00 over budget while revenue was \$24.00 over. The 1995 budget was based on a revenue from 225 members while the actual membership is 215. The 1993 journal expenses were \$2600.00 rather than the projected amount of \$2000.00. The current account balance is approximately \$7700.00 but does not include the revenues and expenses of this AGM. Journal expenses for 1993, 1994, and 1995 are currently \$2600.00, \$2000.00 and \$2000.00 respectively. The December 1995 Newsletter is projected at \$600.00 and an auditor's expense of \$600.00 is included.

The expenses related to the BCFO Newsletter were a definite highlight to the treasurer. The December BCFO Newsletter will contain the next budget. There was a request from the floor that each member receive a copy of the financial report.

Marilyn Buhler moved acceptance of the 1994 financial report, David Allinson seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

Membership Report

The membership report of Allen Wiseley was presented by Marian Porter. A new software program has been purchased and is being used to bring our membership lists up to date. It is hoped that past problems have been corrected but if any discrepancies occur please contact Allen. Two issues of the Newsletter will be distributed before a membership is cancelled. The membership totals for 1994 and 1995 are 241 and 215. A special vote of thanks was given to Allen Wiseley for his efforts.

Hue MacKenzie wanted to know the number of members who have ceased membership due to the publication problems of the journal. These numbers were not available but it was noted that the journal was a major priority of the Board of Directors. It was also suggested that a slip be bound into the BCFO Newsletter for membership applications. In addition it was suggested that we make our presence known at various meetings throughout the province. Marian noted that this has been done in the past and will continue. An updated brochure is being prepared that could be distributed.

Newsletter Report

The report on the Newsletter was presented by Marilyn Buhler on behalf of Andy and herself. During the five years of publication the Newsletter has contained 86 articles of general interest, 19 site guide articles, 14 letters to the editor, 6 articles on listing statistics and 4 BCFO field trip reports. The total number of contributors has been 76. Marilyn stressed the continued need for input throughout the year if it is to be truly a members' newsletter. A special vote of thanks was extended to Andy and Marilyn Buhler for their efforts on our behalf.

Journal Report

Martin McNicholl presented an updated report on the status of our journals. Volumes 1 and 2 are in the field. The disc for Volume 3 was received from Wayne Weber this spring and is now at the printer and should be mailed out shortly after this meeting. Volume 4 is nearing completion. The decision to have articles more formally reviewed will delay publication slightly but this will only be a temporary problem as we gradually build up a file of material on hand. Ken Morgan has agreed to join the editorial board, as of Volume 4, and currently alternates with Mary Taitt in reviewing submissions. There is currently enough material for Volume 4 and for half of Volume 5. The book reviews are the same. An active search for authors is being undertaken and submissions are greatly appreciated. The sightings have now been split off from the journal and an editor is now needed for this. Having split the sightings has greatly increased the production rate. A special vote of thanks was given for the efforts in reaching our publication goals.

President's Report

Marian, in her reflections of the past year, compared it to the search for the Spotted Owl. The short periods of contact between members at meetings such as this

Fifth Annual General Meeting (continued)

help to sustain us throughout the year. Her appreciation of the work on the Newsletter and journal were definitely noted with appreciative thanks to Andy and Marilyn Buhler and Martin McNicholl. Thanks were also extended to Ken Morgan, Allen Wiseley, Mike McGrenere and Hank VanderPol for their work on the AGM. Thanks were also extended to Allen Wiseley for his work as membership secretary, Lloyd Esralson as recording secretary and to John Dorsey for his work as treasurer. A continual need exists for more volunteers and with this hopefully our problems with declining membership can be overcome. Future work will include efforts related to funding and efforts to do positive things for birds.

Election of Directors for 1995/96

Andy Buhler assumed the chair for the election of the Directors. The following members indicated a willingness to serve as directors for 1995/96 and were elected by acclamation. They are Marian Porter, Tony Greenfield, Lloyd Esralson, John Dorsey, Mike McGrenere, Martin McNicholl, Ken Morgan, and Allen Wiseley.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm with thanks to all those attending. ◀

**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
BALANCE SHEET, DECEMBER 31, 1994**

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Cash in savings account	\$2375.66
Cash in checking account	<u>\$1979.64</u>
	\$4355.30
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	
1993 Journal expense	\$2440.30
1994 Journal expense	<u>\$1915.00</u>
	\$4355.30

**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS
STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1994**

	ACTUAL	BUDGETED
REVENUE		
Membership dues	\$4520.00	\$5250.00
Advertising	80.00	---
Interest	54.76	---
A.G.M. profit	642.44	---
	=====	=====
	\$5297.20	\$5250.00
EXPENSES		
Newsletter - printing/mailing	\$2479.62	\$2460.00
Advertising	122.00	200.00
Meeting Rooms	14.00	60.00
Rare Bird Committee	119.22	100.00
Journal (1994)*	1915.00	1915.00
Sighting supplement (1994)*	400.00	---
PO Box and Society Act fees	178.42	60.00
Audit expense	---	375.00
Miscellaneous supplies	---	80.00
	=====	=====
	\$5228.26	\$5250.00

* projection

NET POSITION FOR 1994 **\$68.94**

Signatures: John J. Dorsey, Director and Michael McGrenere, Director ◀

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

compiled by Martin K. McNicholl & BCFO Editors

- March 17-22 1996 **SECOND INTERNATIONAL SHRIKE SYMPOSIUM**, Eilat, Israel. Contact Reuven Yosef, I.B.C.E., Box 774, Eilat, 88000, Israel.
- March 27-31 1996 **66TH COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING**, San Diego, California. Contact Barbara Kus or Abby Powell, Department of Biology, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182, USA; phone (619) 594-4357 or (619) 594-1685.
- April 8-10, 1996 **SIXTH ALASKA BIRD CONFERENCE**. Anyone, professional or amateur, with an interest in Alaska's birds is invited to Fairbanks Princess Hotel, Fairbanks, AK. Special sessions are planned on Bering Sea Birds, Species of Concern, and Passerine Monitoring. Contact Philip Martin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 101 12th Avenue, Box 19, Fairbanks, AK 99701. Phone (907) 456-0325, Fax (917) 456-0208, or e-mail Philip_Martin@mail.fws.gov.
- April 11-14, 1996 **77th STATED MEETING, WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**, Cape May, NJ. Contact Pete Dunne, Cape May Bird Observatory, Box 3, 707 East Lake Dr., Cape May Point, NJ 08212, USA; phone (609) 884-2736.
- April 25-28 1996 **FEDERATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA NATURALISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**, Matsqui Centennial Auditorium, Abbotsford. Contact Central Valley Naturalists, c/o 2396 Farrant Crescent, Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 1V3; phone Morleene Buirs (604) 859-5376 or Johanna Saaltink (604) 856-4982.
- May 6-19, 1996 **POINT PELEE AND DURHAM REGION, ONTARIO**. Ten people needed for a fully escorted trip. Fly from Victoria/Vancouver. Total cost \$1675 including taxes. Possible 30 species of warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Whip-poor-will, Upland Sandpiper, Little and Iceland Gulls, etc. Contact Derrick Marven, 1887 Frances St., Duncan, BC V9L 4Z9. Phone (604) 748-8504 for itinerary.
- May 25, 1996 **OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN CRITTER COUNT**. Saturday, May 25, is the date for the fourth annual count of flora and fauna (critters!) in Okanagan Mountain Park. This year the South Okanagan Club is organizing the event with the help of the Central Okanagan Club and BC Parks staff. Count goes most of the day with the count-up and a tasty catered barbeque (about \$7 each) at Okanagan Lake Provincial Park north of Summerland starting at 5:00pm. Count terrain varies from easy walking to mountain hiking. If you are interested in taking part call Eileen Dillabough (604) 862-8254 or Brenda Thompson (604) 764-4296 for the Kelowna end of the Park and Eva Durance (604) 492-3158 or Laurie Rockwell (604) 494-7558 for the Penticton end. (Suggestion: come down for the Big Day Challenge the long weekend before and stay over!)
- May 26, 1996 **A REALLY BIG DAY**. Big Days are for the birds! Really Big Days look at much more. Join us in Victoria on May 26, 1996 in a search for the highest number of vertebrate species that you can see in 10 hours (5am to 3pm) in the Victoria Checklist area. Categories include Open, Beginner, Green Team ("shanks" or cycles), and "The Big Sit". Donations and pledges, through the Victoria NHS, will support the Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) and the Purple Martin Conservation Effort. For more information and to register call (604) 479-6622. [Goldstream Nature Centre]
- June 2-15, 1996 **SOUTHERN ALBERTA AND CALGARY REGION**. Ten people needed for a fully escorted trip. Fly from Victoria/Vancouver. Total cost \$1525 including taxes. Looking for Baird's & Le Conte's Sparrow, McCown's & Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Sharp-tailed & Sage Grouse, poss. Mountain Plover, etc. Itinerary: contact Derrick Marven, 1887 Frances St, Duncan, BC V9L 4Z9. (604) 748-8504.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS (continued)

- June 14-16, 1996 **BCFO 1996 Annual General Meeting**, will be held at Manning Park Lodge in conjunction with the Manning Provincial Park Bird Blitz. Make your plans right now to attend this annual get-together of birders from throughout the province. See pp 3 & 20, this issue!
- June 22-28, 1996 **OKANAGAN REGION**. Six people needed for fully escorted trip. Leaving Victoria. Total cost \$925 including taxes. Looking for Chukar, Gray Partridge, Black-backed & Northern Three-toed Woodpeckers, Williamson's Sapsucker, Gray Flycatcher, possible White-headed Woodpecker, Sage Thrasher, etc. Contact Derrick Marven, 1887 Frances St, Duncan, BC V9L 4Z9. (604) 748-8504.
- Aug. 2-7 1996 **SOCIETY OF CARIBBEAN ORNITHOLOGY ANNUAL MEETING**, Nassau, Bahama Islands. Contact James Wiley, 2201 Ashland St., Ruston, LA 71270, USA, phone (318) 274-2499.
- Aug 13-17, 1996 **114TH STATED MEETING, AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION & RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING**, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho. Contacts not yet announced.
- Aug. 15-18 1996 **CANADIAN NATURE FEDERATION CONFERENCE 1996**, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Contact CNF Conference Registrar, 401-63 Albert St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1G4. Phone (204) 261-1966.☐

**A NOTICE FROM SIRIUS ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH
Volunteer Field-Ornithologists Needed
for a Survey of Black Tern Colonies.**

In October 1996, the Colonial Waterbird Society will be holding a symposium entitled: *The Black Tern: its current status, biology and conservation concerns*. In order to contribute to this symposium I have volunteered to organize a survey of significant colonies of Black Terns in British Columbia. These colonies occur mainly in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Prince George region, Creston Valley, and Peace River. Ideally all known significant colonies and additional unknown colonies would be surveyed once during the peak nesting period. The information would be summarized, compared with previous surveys, and presented to the symposium as a paper. Ultimately the proceedings of the symposium will be published by the Society or Canadian Wildlife Service.

Interested field-ornithologists are invited to join this project. If you enjoy pulling on chestwaders and wading through swampy marshes, or paddling a canoe while birding, then you will have fun with this project. Besides fun, you will be contributing to a continent-wide research project. I think this is the kind of project where the BCFO can make a real contribution to conservation.

Participants will be asked to survey one or more colonies in the region of their choice. As the coordinator, I will provide information on timing of the surveys, locations of colonies, survey techniques, data forms, and encouragement. Participants should be experienced birders, have some knowledge of marsh habitats (including the hazards of muddy bottoms), and will need to supply their own transportation and gear.

Interested field-ornithologists can contact me (John Cooper) at any time up to mid-May to reserve their favourite swamp and, if we have sufficient interest, we will all go marsh walking in early June. Hope to hear from you!

For further information please contact:

John Cooper
1278 Laurel Road, RR #3
Sidney, BC V8L 5K8
Phone/FAX (604) 656-7669
or via e-mail to jcooper@islandnet.com☐

Nesting Behaviour of the Common Nighthawk

by Doug Innes
2267 Stewart Ave.
Courtenay, BC V9N 3J1

I had just made myself comfortable on a tree stump when I heard the familiar "peenk" call of the Common Nighthawk. In the clear evening sky to the east an adult Common Nighthawk was flying about after insects. Its slender, pointed wings were silhouetted here and there as it wheeled about in the chase. Occasionally the nighthawk shifted its wings above its back in a 'V' shape and went into a dive. The air forced through the ends of the primary flight feathers produced an equally familiar "voom" sound. The sun had just set. Not far from where I sat, a second nighthawk was incubating two eggs on the bare ground. The discovery of this nest gave me the opportunity I was looking for to learn, first hand, about the nesting behaviour of this member of the Nightjar family.

Until this opportunity presented itself I had had to be satisfied with what brief information was to be found in various field guides to bird's nests.* From these books I learned about the nighthawk's nesting habits: incubation of 19 to 20 days; nest sites usually in open areas, even gravelled roofs of buildings; eggs usually two in number; nestlings semi-precocial and downy; nestlings tended by both parents; feathers replacing down from 10 to 20 days; young start making short flights at 23 days; young feed themselves at 25 days and are independent by 30 days. Any accounts or details of specific behaviour were found mainly within specialty magazines devoted to natural history topics or in researcher's manuscripts. These accounts were not readily available to the general public.

The logged area where the nest was found was in the Comox Valley, Vancouver Island, BC, and had been replanted with fir and cedar in 1984.

On this particular evening of August 1, 1990, I came prepared to record the sounds the nighthawk makes and I waited for the newly sighted adult to come closer. Within a few minutes the approaching nighthawk was above me and the microphone was quickly aligned in order to record any sounds the bird made. I was not disappointed. The nighthawk called several times and occasionally went into a dive.

After a few minutes the nighthawk flew east and out of sight. For the next fifteen minutes only the trill of a White-crowned Sparrow disturbed the evening silence. Then the nighthawk returned. It flew an erratic flight pattern, sometimes high and sometimes low over the area where the other nighthawk was incubating. No additional nighthawks were in the immediate vicinity so I guessed they were mates.

I watched this performance for a few minutes then I caught sight of a second nighthawk flying close above the grasses and ferns, coming from the direction of the nest site. This nighthawk flew higher and joined the first nighthawk flying above. They flew together, separated, then back together, almost touching it seemed. I was kept busy following their flight in the now dim light as I recorded their calls. The call of one was slightly different from the call of the other.

While the two nighthawks continued to fly above, I made my way to the nest site to confirm this second nighthawk was the one which had been incubating the eggs. I cautiously made my way toward the nest keeping an eye on the adults above, but no change in their behaviour occurred that might suggest concern on their part.

On my arrival at the nest site I stared down at one egg and one recently hatched chick. The fluffy, creamy-white down of the chick was spotted with dark markings. The egg beside the chick was also extensively covered with dark blotches. There was no sign of any materials having been used to create a nest. Surrounding vegetation of ferns, grasses, pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*), and young alder (*Alnus* sp.) plants provided a boundary about the open patch of bare ground that contained the egg and chick. Although I was standing only two feet away from the chick it remained motionless. I learned during my observations that not moving until the last moment was a survival strategy practised by both chick and adult.

Satisfied with the events of the evening I made my way out of the woodcut reviewing in my mind what I had observed and heard. Was it a habit of the mate of the incubating adult to return to the area just after sunset? Would the incubating

Nesting Behaviour of the Common Nighthawk (continued)

adult join its mate and together would they fly an aerial performance similar to that which I had just witnessed?

My questions were answered following further evening observations. There was definitely a change in behaviour. I did see and hear the mate east of the woodcut the next evening. It did fly over the nest site and, as expected, fly away as it did the night of August 1st. However, it did not return to fly with the mate that was incubating and/or brooding. Soon after it was out of sight the mate at the nest site flew off and headed in the same direction, east, and out of sight. Later, and just before dark, both adults returned to the nest site and fed the young. This became the routine for the adult at the nest site. Its mate, however, now stopped flying over just after sunset, and would only be seen at feeding time.

Coincidentally, the discovery of a second nest site in the same woodcut provided an opportunity to compare such behaviour. The two eggs of this second nest were, as it turned out, at the same stage of development. It was at this second nest that I made most of my subsequent observations.

The routine seen at site one was confirmed at the second nest site. The absence of adults in the vicinity would last from 20-30 minutes. I was left with further unanswered questions. Was there some connection between the unusual aerial performance of both adults and the hatching of the first egg? Was the departure of both adults from the woodcut a survival strategy?

The return of the adults after the short absence signalled the beginning of the feeding schedule, which I was able to observe until it was too dark to see anything. The final location of my blind was about 14' (4 m) away. Both adults shared the responsibility of feeding the young nighthawks. By now I was spending most of my time at the second nest site where both eggs had hatched. From what I could see only one chick was fed when an adult flew in. After performing the feeding the adult immediately left. About five minutes later a second adult would arrive and again a chick would be fed. At times, especially when the chicks were over 14 days old, I suspected the same chick received the benefit of both early feedings. The chick fed must have received quite a mouthful because I could observe it gulping to get the mass of insects further down its gullet.

The older the chicks, the greater the effort they made to be first to the incoming adult. The chicks' ability to move about was well developed from the time they were hatched. It was interesting to try and understand why they moved about. Within twenty-four hours of hatching the chicks could be found resting beside the adult next to the breast feathers. Later they would move under the feathers of the adult where they could escape the heat of the day or get protection from any showers that might occur. On day three after hatching the two chicks and the adult had moved from the centre of the open area to the shade of a nearby stump. As the open area measured about 3'-5' (1-1.5 m) they had moved about 18" (0.5 m). They favoured resting in the centre of the opening in the mornings. By day nine they would often be found 4' (1.2 m) away among surrounding vegetation which offered more shade than the stump. On August 18 (day 16), the two chicks were in another open area 17' (5 m) away. Why they had moved that far was a puzzle. Until they could fly they never again went that far away from the nest site.

Moving about on the ground was not connected to finding food. It would be necessary for the young nighthawks to learn to fly in order to learn to find food for themselves. Moving on the ground was connected to finding shade and avoiding an intruder, such as myself. In which case, movement was delayed until the last second. It was startling, when looking for their presence among the neighbouring vegetation, to have a nighthawk suddenly move at my feet. I learned to move very slowly and look very carefully if I was to see them at a more comfortable distance, for both of us, and so not disturb them.

The first evidence of their ability to fly was on day 18 when one lifted off the ground about 4" (0.1 m). This was after a feeding, at the nest site. I never saw a feeding anywhere else, only at the nest site. No matter where they were in the daytime they would move into the nest site about five minutes before the first adult arrived. Only once did I see an adult arrive in the centre of the nest site before the chicks. This was a time when the chicks were only 4' (1.2 m) away. On this occasion the chicks immediately walked to the adult to be fed. This indicated to me that it was up to the chicks to be in the centre of the nest site to be fed,

Nesting Behaviour of the Common Nighthawk (continued)

and that the adult had no intentions to fly to where they were. Perhaps the openness of the area was the key for the adult's behaviour.

The walking movement was different from anything I had seen before with other birds. Usually when either the chicks or the adult moved to another location they began a rocking movement from side to side before raising further up on their toes. They only rose high enough to get the body feathers off the ground. With head lowered horizontal to the ground, they moved forward with a slight rocking movement from side to side, as if balancing first on one foot, then obviously shifting the balance to the other foot. At the new spot they lowered to the ground and again became motionless. Invariably they kept their head in an upright position, but sometimes the head would also rest on the ground. When they learned to fly only one chick might be waiting close to the nest site and the other was nowhere to be seen.

Such was the case on the evening of August 27 (day 25). Only one chick was to be seen as I entered my blind. This chick was resting among the thistles about 4' (1.2 m) away from the centre of the nest site. It sat, head up, waiting quietly with very little movement. It once stretched out a wing and later shifted its position slightly. Occasionally it cocked its head to one side to better view the darkening sky. Not surprisingly it got up about five minutes before the first adult arrived, and with the typical rocking movement walked into the centre of the nest site. I could hear low sounds of begging calls, or so I interpreted the calls. It was hungry. The adult flew in as if on a schedule, accompanied by the other young nighthawk. Then began what could best be described as a frenzied scramble as each chick tried to be the first to be fed. After feeding one of the chicks, the adult left, to be followed in flight by one of the chicks. This chick was hardly out of sight when it returned and settled down, side by side, with the chick that had been left behind. They did not have long to wait for the second adult to arrive and another scramble to be the first to be fed took place, accompanied by high pitched screech-like calls.

It was after this feeding that I observed both chicks practising short flights, although short flights had taken place about a week before. Each flight took them about 15' (5 m) away and about 8'-10' (2.5-3.5 m) up in the air, circling before landing back in the open nest site. That my blind was not a threat was confirmed when one of the young nighthawks landed on top of the blind a few inches above my head. It paused there a moment, then flew back to the nest site below.

I did not altogether neglect the first nest site but checked from time to time and saw similar routines. Where there was a difference at this nest, was that only one of the two eggs hatched. This gave me an opportunity to learn how the adult would behave in this situation.

I learned the second egg was incubated for an additional nine days. During this time the adult moved little from the centre of its nest site. The surrounding vegetation did give some shade. By noon the adult would be fully exposed to the sun's rays. As if to minimize the effect the adult shifted its position gradually until the sun would be shining onto its back rather than broadside. On such clear days the temperature would be in the high 20°C or low 30°C. The hatched chick, during this period, would settle outside near the breast feathers of the adult taking advantage of the small shadow. To help lose heat both birds would open their bills and pant. Once I even noticed the adult trembling ever so slightly. As the afternoon progressed vegetation on the west side of the open area gave some shade.

The adult finally gave up incubating the egg on August 10. The egg was about 18" (0.5 m) away from the adult which was resting in the shade of the surrounding plants. The chick was in the same shade patch, about 4" (0.1 m) away from the adult. From then on the egg was ignored by the adult and left exposed.

The routines of the chick at the first nest site were similar to those at the second nest site. If I found the first nest site empty in the daytime, the chick would be there in the evening waiting to be fed. As with the nest two chicks, one day I found the single chick about 10' (3 m) away from the nest in another open area.

This single chick was not to be seen after September 2nd. It was then 32 days old. I had gone to the nest site that evening and found the chick waiting. I settled down near a stump about 75' (23 m) away to await, as I thought, the arrival of the adult. The time was about eight pm. About twenty past I saw the immature

Nesting Behaviour of the Common Nighthawk (continued)

nighthawk fly from the nest area, gain height, and fly alone easterly out of the woodcut and out of sight. Checks at the site for the next three days drew blanks and I concluded the chick would not return.

At the second nest site the two chicks remained until September 6th, at which time they were 35 days old. On this day I checked them at twenty past one in the afternoon. One was resting in the centre of the nest site, the other was at the edge of the opening in the shade of the stump. While I was there one decided to move and with the customary rocking motion walked 3' (1 m) away. At the thistle patch it settled down and became motionless. Here it was joined shortly by the other young nighthawk.

On September 7th, during the daytime, I checked their whereabouts but they were nowhere to be seen. This was not unusual. That evening I went back and found that they were not to be seen. Following the same routine as at the first nest September 2nd, I settled down to wait to see if the chicks would appear for a feeding. When darkness fell I realized there would be no show of the young birds or the adults. I concluded they were starting the next phase of their lives, the journey towards South America where the Common Nighthawk is known to winter.

This left me with a final question. Would the adult nighthawks continue to use this woodcut and would they nest in the same open areas? I hoped to find the answer next nesting season.☐

[We phoned the author: The nighthawks did return to the woodcut the next season.]

* EDITORS' NOTE: Two field guides with Common Nighthawk nesting information are:

Harrison, Hal H. A Field Guide to Western Birds' Nests. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1979.

Harrison, Colin. A Field Guide to the Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of North American Birds. Toronto, ON: Collins, 1984.

Sightings Wanted Colour-banded Double-crested Cormorants

As part of a project to document the seasonal movement patterns of Double-crested Cormorants, the Canadian Wildlife Service has placed coloured, numbered leg bands on approximately 400 cormorant chicks from southern Vancouver Island / Strait of Georgia area. Colour bands are red, orange, yellow, blue, green and white to correspond with breeding colonies. Most bands are numbered alphanumerically (A00, A01 ... B99 -- for red, orange, yellow and green bands), a few older bands are numbered numerically (1, 2, 3 ... 50, etc. -- for orange, yellow, blue and white). **Bands are read sideways and downwards toward the foot.** Bands are most easily read while birds are perched on rocks, logbooms or pilings. We are interested in any sightings from throughout the Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound and beyond.

All assistance will be gratefully acknowledged.

Please report any and all sightings to:

Ian Moul
Foul Bay Ecological Research Limited
317 Irving Road
Victoria, BC V8S 4A1
Phone (604) 598-3141 : Fax (604) 598-3120
or via e-mail foulbay@islandnet.com

In addition, we have attached radio transmitters (164-165 MHz range) to six adults and 14 chicks. Persons working with radio receivers and interested in listening for birds, please call for exact frequencies.☐

The Aesthetics of Birding

by Dannie Carsen
Victoria, BC V8X 3R7

Let's look at our birding behaviour. Take a moment to think about why we do it. Consider our expectations in birding and how that affects our satisfaction. We may find that we have forgotten the small thrills we had when we began birding. There was a time when every bird was worth looking at. Everything was exciting.

Many motivations for birding emerge. Birding is about the thrill of the chase. We get enjoyment from acquiring the recognition skills and understanding of bird life. We are outside, enjoying the sun, wind or rain on our face as we hold the binoculars to our eyes. Some of us are moved by the beauty of the experience, the minute details of feather patterns, a bright flash of colour begging to be observed and enjoyed. Our ears get pleasure from the clarity and brilliance of song that surrounds us in the spring.

We become more proficient. Our list of birds includes all the common species. Just a flicker, we say. Now, we pine for something rare. Our eyes flick over the landscape during spring and fall. We examine, discard; examine, discard; through the flock of shorebirds or fallout of warblers. Perhaps we "grouse" a little when we talk to birding friends.

"Not much around, eh."

"Haven't seen anything since that Loggerhead Shrike."

"You get that Tropical Kingbird last week? Neither did I."

One-upmanship creeps in. Our talks with our birding friends and acquaintances turn into brag sheets and stories of our birding prowess. My favourite of these is the post Christmas Bird Count gathering when everyone is giving their reports. Everyone is looking forward to having the biggest score, the most rarities in their area. Big day count gatherings such as the Brant Festival are enjoyable but tinges of birding snobbery and one-upmanship colour the air.

Perhaps our expectations are at fault. Birding has become the fastest growing recreational pursuit in North America. We see it as an entertainment, a game, a way to impress our friends. We practice birding like golf, trying to improve our game.

Part of birding's appeal is the fun of pooling our resources. Four or six sets of experienced eyes comb the landscape for birds and see more. We learn a lot by going out with good birders. The art of seeing birds by distinguishing them from the landscape is the key.

Birding as a solitary pursuit is what I find fascinating. Sure, there are moments rich with shared understanding when you watch the light glint off the rich brown of a Northern Harrier. But, the singular experience of the dive of a brilliant white Osprey into a lake, water droplets gleaming, and its emergence with a fish in its talons is riveting. Watching a dipper dive for aquatic insects five feet (2 m) away and its spring loaded dance of success is a flash of pleasure.

If you let all your senses work, there is more to know. Cool fall air tingles against your skin as you scan the estuaries and mudflats for shorebirds and ducks. The morning light from the hill near my house is my special reward for getting up to hear the dawn chorus. The clear calls of each towhee and wren on its territory maps the terrain. You touch the cool, hard binoculars to your eyes as you look.

The best reward for solitary birding is the amount of time you can spend just looking. I love watching the Anna's Hummingbird fly up and return to its perch. Get close, the purple iridescence of its feathers shines against the morning light. Listen to the whispery song. You can take as long as you like.

I still look at all the common birds. It amazes me how many shapes hawks can take in trees. Sometimes they are hunched down in the rain. Sometimes they are erect and looking at you with yellow eyes. Sometimes, they turn out to be flickers or crows! It is rewarding to just watch. Sure, I write down what I have seen during that day. More and more I enjoy going back to my field notes where I described a behaviour or sketched a field mark. Lists are lifeless alone.

Aesthetics of Birding (continued)

Marsh life is especially rich. Marsh Wrens cackle and scold from cattails. Great Blue Herons unfold gracefully at your approach. Sometimes, a glimpse of a red-legged rail slipping into the reeds will catch your eye. Blackbird calls provide the chorus and Common Yellowthroats sing along with Northern Orioles.

Birding is lots of things. Expand your experiences into the richness of feeling, experiencing, observing as you watch. The nuances of behaviour from the flight patterns of swallows to the hunting style of flycatchers both delight and inform. It is the art of seeing, the delight of hearing, the wonder of observing birds that counts. There is more to this than just a listing game. ◻

1995 -- AN AMAZING YEAR...

by Jamie Fenneman
2593 Cathy Crescent
Courtenay, BC V9N 7G2

In all my seven years of birding none have compared to 1995, a year full of travelling, rarities, and new species. Although I am still a high-school student, I spend as much time as possible pursuing this fascinating hobby. It has become a passion of mine. Every day of the year I can be found doing something that relates to the subject, whether reading books, taking trips, or just keeping an eye out as I walk home from school. I have participated in 20 bird counts in the past five years, with another three in December of 1995 (Comox, Deep Bay, and Campbell River Christmas Counts). These experiences have led to countless hours of enjoyment plus two prestigious awards and an excellent year of birding in 1995.

My early trips of the year were to Victoria, once in February and again in May, where I was able to add a few uncommon species to my yearly list of birds (which I have kept for the past two years). Birds such as Brandt's Cormorant, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, and Black Oystercatcher, which are uncommon farther north on Vancouver Island, could be found in relative abundance here. Also, in May, I participated in the Victoria Spring Bird Count, which led to my first American Pipit. In early April I participated in the Brant Festival's Big Day, where my team tallied a total of 93 species, including my first Glaucous Gull and Tree Swallow in addition to several other interesting species (Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Eurasian Wigeon, etc.). This was also around the time that I was notified that I had won the Barbara Chapman Award for Young Naturalists. To receive this award I travelled to Naramata, near Penticton, for an outstanding weekend of birding and communication with interesting and important people. Even though it was late April and many spring migrants had not yet arrived I was still able to see a number of interesting species, many unique to the Okanagan. Some highlights of the trip included 16 species new for me, including Prairie Falcon, Long-billed Curlew, White-throated Swift, Say's Phoebe, Western Bluebird, Canyon Wren, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Cassin's Finch. Another noteworthy species was a nesting Common Barn Owl near Oliver. Overall, it was an excellent trip and I am extremely grateful both for the award and to all those who led the birding expeditions which I was a part of.

Once back from Naramata, I had a few weeks of rest before, once again, I was off on another trip. This time it was a trip to Williams Lake on the May long weekend. There I saw my first Western Wood-Pewee, Ruddy Duck, Western Kingbird, and Mountain Bluebird, as well as Black Tern, Red-necked Phalarope (in breeding plumage), and excellent views of a dark-phase Red-tailed Hawk. In June I also participated in the Strathcona Park Bird Search. There I saw my first Golden Eagle and got excellent views of Olive-sided Flycatchers near Myra Falls. These trips made for an exciting spring, but they would soon be eclipsed by my next major trip.

In February I had applied for the Doug Tarrey Bird Study Award for Young Ornithologists and in May I received a letter notifying me that I had won. I was one of six recipients between the ages of 13 and 18 in Canada who were chosen to attend the week-long course in southern Ontario.* On July 1st I landed in Toronto and was soon on my way to the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO), where the course

AN AMAZING YEAR... (continued)

would be held. It was the most spectacular week of birding that I had ever had. The first day yielded several new species, such as Broad-winged Hawk, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Bluebird, and Swamp Sparrow. On the second day the course's core material, bird banding, had begun. From the nets I got my first Least Flycatcher and Tennessee Warbler, the latter an unusually early fall migrant. During the week we caught and banded more than 100 birds of over 20 species, many of them, such as Carolina Wren, unique to southern Ontario. In addition to banding, we also took several trips to the surrounding area and saw many rare or unusual species, such as Hooded and Cerulean Warblers, Acadian Flycatcher, Chuck-will's-widow, plus an accidental Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, just the second for the Long Point area. We were also shown how to prepare bird skins; we took part in a Tree Swallow nesting project; and we were introduced to many foreign birding areas through the collection of books available to us. The amazing week led to 104 species, 39 new to me, including four new flycatchers and nine new warblers. This was a trip that will never be forgotten and in the future I hope to return, or even work, at the Long Point Bird Observatory.

The rest of the summer yielded no new species, but a trip to Cape Scott on northern Vancouver Island led to my first Black Swift, Red-throated Loon, and Sanderling of the year. An August trip to Vernon led to my first White-winged Crossbill of 1995. On an October trip to Prince George I was presented with my first Bohemian Waxwing as well as spectacular views of Three-toed Woodpeckers and an immature Northern Goshawk. In mid-October, my first Barred Owl landed on our back lawn and, in late November, the Comox Valley's first recorded Blue Jay was using a feeder down the road from me. Several days later the same bird showed up at my own feeder. Seeing these birds just illustrates that you do not even need to leave your house to find something rare. In early November, I was also fortunate enough to track down a Tropical Kingbird that had been at Courtenay Airpark several days earlier. 1995 was, by far, the most amazing year for all aspects of birding for me. I hope that future years will, at least, come close to equalling my success in this spectacular year. ◀

* EDITORS' NOTE: Greg Kubica, another recipient of the 1995 Doug Tarry Award, has written an article about his LPBO trip in the winter 1995 issue of Yukon Warbler. Enclosed with Jamie's article was a very impressive listing of the 245 species of birds he had seen between January 1 and November 30 -- 66 were new species for him.

AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

Dannie Carsen

Dannie is a Victoria naturalist who has been interested in birds and outdoor recreation since his university years. He likes to combine his interest in natural history with an adjunct interest in science fiction.

Jamie Fenneman

A high-school student in Courtenay, Jamie has been birding for seven years and this hobby has become a passion with him. In 1995 he was recipient of several natural history awards plus he had an exceptional year of birding.

Doug Innes

Doug, a member of the Comox-Strathcona Natural History Society, has had a lifelong interest in birding. Currently his interest centres around bird photography and the recording of nature sounds, especially bird sounds.

Manfred Roschitz

Manfred, who "apprenticed" birding in his native Austria, has recorded species, in migration and nesting, in the North Cariboo since 1980. He also shows slides on the natural history of the area and leads nature tours. ◀

SITE GUIDE: Birding in the Quesnel Area

by Manfred Roschitz
RR #3 Box 8, Peterson Site
Quesnel, BC V2J 3H7

Quesnel lies at the transition point between the Sub-Boreal Ecoprovince and Central Interior Ecoprovince and is thus of special interest to naturalist-birders. Our vast, yet sparsely peopled, region is blessed with a diverse flora and fauna.

If you plan to travel to our area, I suggest a visit to any of these sites: **Dragon Lake, Cinema Bog, Pantage Lake** or the **Upper Nazko Valley**. For the purpose of this report I will describe two sites: **Dragon Lake** which is, in my opinion, our best birding site; and my all-time favourite place, the **Upper Nazko Valley**.

Dragon Lake

"Something just moved in those bulrushes", I whispered into my wife's ear. "Try calling again", I suggested. "Wak, wak, wak", Mary called in a descending, almost mallard-like voice.

We stood at the edge of the marsh, scanning the reeds for movement. Suddenly the rushes parted and a long-billed, cinnamon coloured bird stepped out, looked at us and answered Mary's call. We knew instantly, that were looking at a Virginia Rail for the first time in our lives. What an overwhelming feeling!

The preceding was an excerpt from my field notes, entered on May 24, 1986, at Dragon Lake, just south of Quesnel. Between 1981 and 1992, I did an extensive study of birds in the Dragon Lake area, and the Virginia Rail is just one of many species I recorded.

Highlights

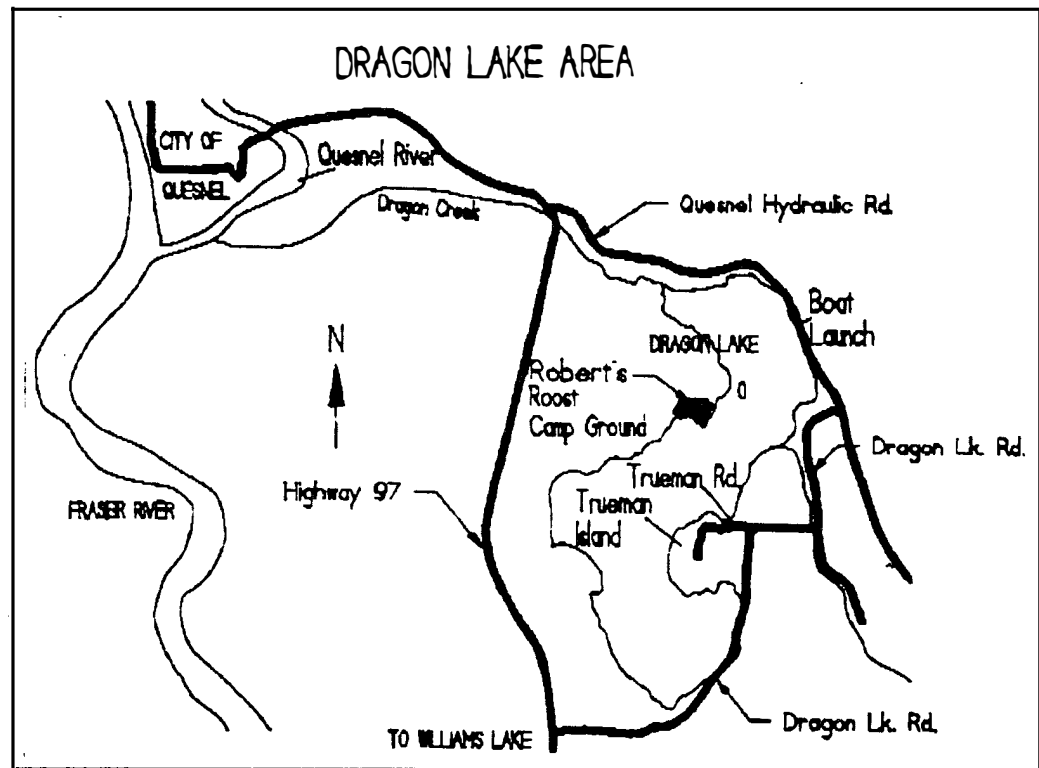
185 species
69 breeders
27 sp waterfowl

Rare Breeders

Cinnamon Teal
Virginia Rail
Mourning Dove
Bobolink
Northern Harrier
Horned Grebe

Rare Visitors

Ross' Goose
Tufted Duck
White Pelican
L-billed Curlew
Gray Catbird



Dragon Lake Area

Despite human encroachment (homes, farms, etc.), and pressure from water skiing and sea-dooing, the area still supports a large bird population. The water of the lake and the surrounding marshes teems with shrimp and snails, dragon- and damselflies, caddis and may flies, and tons of chironomids.

Birding in the Quesnel Area (continued)

At the south-east side of the lake is a peninsula, commonly known as Trueman Island, where a high quality bulrush and cattail marsh stretches from end to end and provides ideal breeding habitat and shelter for waterfowl, shorebirds, rails and many passerine species.

How to get there

Drive to the Dragon Lake boat launch on the Quesnel Hydraulic Road and park. Walk south along the road and look for warblers, flycatchers, sparrows, etc. in the willows and for ducks, geese, coots, and blackbirds in the reeds and the open water beyond. Next, drive to Trueman Road, park, and walk down to Trueman Island. The bird watching is excellent anywhere along the cattail marsh, willows, ditches and meadows. You have a good chance to spot quite a large number of waterfowl species, several types of blackbirds (there are quite a few Yellow-headed Blackbirds), wrens, warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, swallows (six species) and rails. Look also for gulls and terns. Eagle, Osprey and other birds of prey abound. For Long-billed Curlew and Bobolink look in the meadows surrounding the marshes.

The best time to visit is between May 1 and July 31. If you wish to camp near the lake, Robert's Roost is a full service campsite on the west side of Dragon Lake.

The Upper Nazko Valley

Drained by the largest tributary of the Blackwater River, and nestled in the Fraser Plateau, this lovely valley lies about 100 km west of Quesnel. When, nearly two decades ago, my family and I saw the valley for the first time, we instantly fell in love with its natural beauty. Many campfires later, the valley still captivates us with its magic spell. Let me share some of this magic with you and be your guide to "our" Nazko Valley.

Allow at least two days for the trip and bring your own accommodation (tent, camper, etc.) Any vehicle will do, but if you want to explore beyond the Nazko Valley, a van or truck with camper unit would be best. Bring a canoe for extra birding opportunities. If you enjoy fly fishing, pack your rod to test the feisty Nazko River trout.

Starting in Quesnel, cross the Fraser River bridge (Kilometre 0), and turn right onto North Fraser Drive which at the edge of town, turns into Nazko Road. Past the golf course, Six Mile Hill takes you up to the Bouchie Lake level, where gas and food are available. At 12.6 km Merz's Swamp lies on your left, where a huge Osprey nest is silhouetted against the southern sky. In 1991 I counted 31 Osprey nests in a 20 km radius around Quesnel. Up next is Nine Mile Hill; you have now climbed out of the Fraser Valley and have reached the Fraser Plateau at 1000 m elevation. This is logging country and you drive through an endless mosaic of forests in varying stages of maturity. Watch for moose, deer and bear on the road.

This gently rolling, friendly country is part of the Sub-Boreal Pine-Spruce zone. Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga taxifolia*) grow on drier, south facing slopes, while Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and Black Cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) provide most of the deciduous mix, that makes these forests so appealing. Wild meadows, willow, Dwarf Birch (*Betula pumila*) and numerous wetlands offer excellent habitat for waterfowl and other birds and also lend character to the landscape.

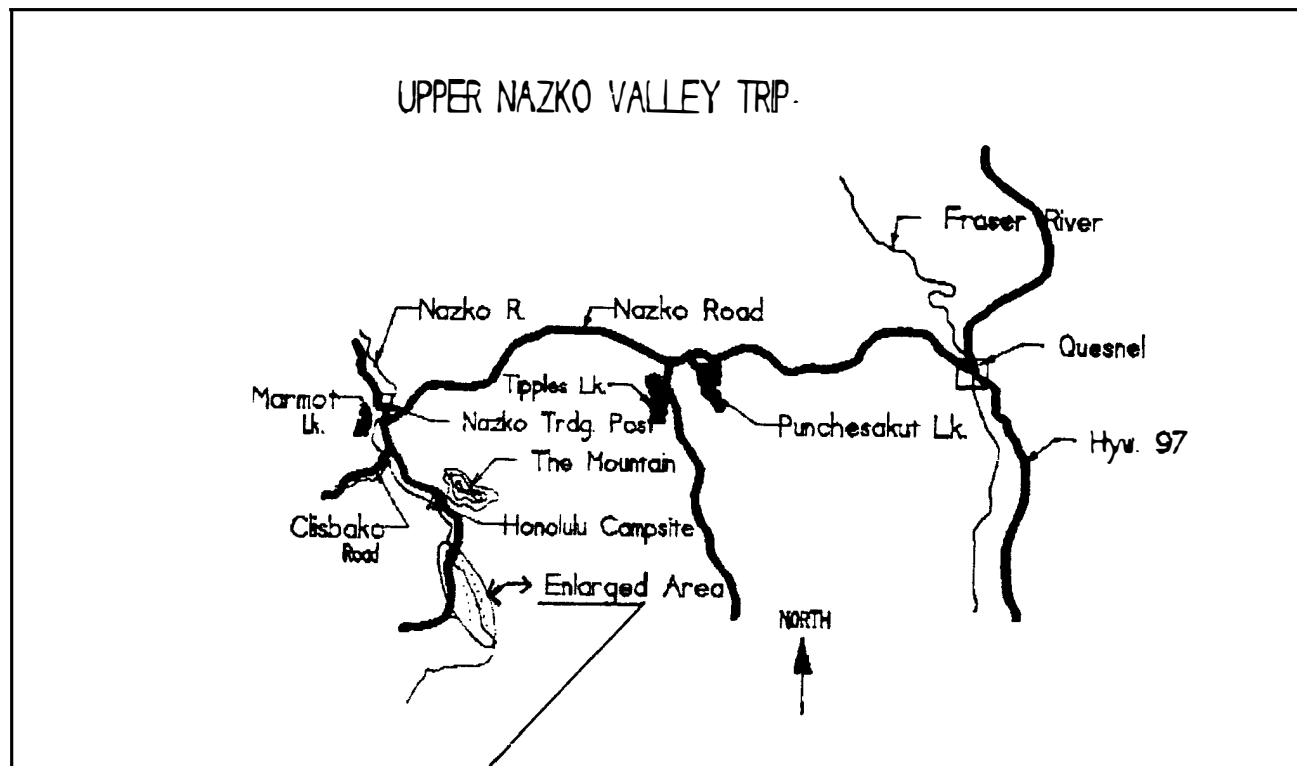
Hawks (mostly Sharp-shinned and Goshawks), grouse (four species), owls (five), woodpeckers (five), jays (two), Common Ravens, chickadees (three), nuthatches (two), Brown Creepers, finches (three), grosbeaks, crossbills and sparrows reside all year around in this zone.

At the 41 km mark, Panchesakut Lake peeks through the trees on your left. If you want to see an active Bald Eagle's nest (between May and August), drive into the lakeside ranch yard and ask for directions.

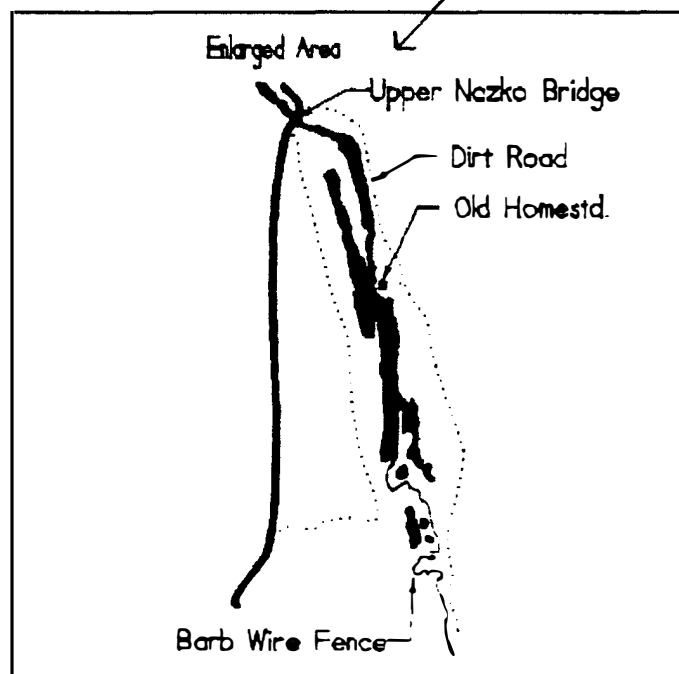
Farther on, at Sylvia's Cafe, you can buy gas, groceries and good food before resuming your trip. The road winds westward over rolling country, passes Canyon Lake deep below, and crosses Udy Creek before reaching Summit Meadow, the highest point on Nazko Road. From here you can see the high country beyond Nazko which

Birding in the Quesnel Area (continued)

appears to be farther away than it actually is. At about the 95 km mark the road descends into the Nazko Valley and, at the bottom, our destination, Honolulu Road, branches off to the left. The main road carries on to the Nazko Trading Post, which is only minutes away. The store sells gas, food and groceries and also has a laundromat and hot showers. Across the road from it is the entrance to Marmot Lake Campground, a good overnight facility. We, however, turn south onto Honolulu Road which, for the next 34 km, meanders through some of the loveliest scenery this area has to offer.



Upper Nazko Valley Trip



Enlarged area: Upper Nazko Valley

[EDS' NOTE: For distances noted in the following paragraphs reset your odometer to zero at this junction.]

The valley runs north-south and forms an excellent migration corridor for birds in general and songbirds specifically. In previous years, I have counted up to 4000 Robins and 2000 Dark-eyed Juncos during a long weekend in the Fall. Warblers and flycatchers are also very plentiful, but they are more difficult to count, as they move in the streamside bushes and trees. Some of the warblers we see quite regularly in the willows along the bank are Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Waterthrush, Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, Wilson's Warbler, MacGillivray's and Nashville Warbler.

Birding in the Quesnel Area (continued)

For our first stop, we turn right on Clisbako Forest Service Road at 13 km, cross the Nazko River bridge and park in the meadow on the left. From here you can walk to the confluence of the Nazko and Clisbako Rivers, or explore along the grassy trail on the north side of the main road. Because of the greatly varying habitat you should have no problem in seeing many different species of birds. If, for example, you enter a dark, mature section of forest, you can expect to find thrushes, nuthatches, creepers, wood warblers, sparrows and, if you are lucky, owls. The best way to find owls is by calling them after dark. My wife and I have, on many occasions, called owls right up to our camp. We imitate the smaller ones first (Pygmy, Saw-whet, Screech or Barred Owls), and if any are in the vicinity, they will respond to our call. We call Great Gray and Great Horned Owls last, because when they show up, the small ones leave in a hurry. Some owls land on branches above and scold you, while others may take low passes over your head -- so be alert.

Back on the road, our next stop is the Honolulu Forest Service Camp Site at km 23. This small campspot by the river offers not only good birding walks up and down the river, but also a hike up the beautiful mountain across the road for a spectacular view. The grassy, sparsely treed slopes with rock outcroppings and cliffs, create excellent thermal updrafts and quite often, eagles and hawks soar around the top. Pipits, Horned Larks and various sparrows go about their business in the grass. Blue and Sharp-tailed Grouse may startle you there as well. Once on top, loop through the thick timber and hike back down on the north side of the cliffs. This hike on the steep, sometimes slippery, slopes should only be undertaken by strong hikers with solid footwear. Make plenty of noise while hiking on this mountain or any other place in the valley, because this is bear and cougar country.

Our final stop is the "Upper Nazko Bridge" at 34.5 km, where major wetlands start just above the bridge and stretch south for at least 5 km [see enlargement on map on page 17]. This area should definitely be the highlight of your trip. If you brought your canoe, you are in for a real treat -- if not, do not worry, you can walk on a small dirt road along the east side to view some, but not all, of this section. If you canoe the area, you may have to get out a few times to pull your craft over beaver dams or through shallow river sections, or to navigate around shallow mud flats in order to find the river again. The rest is easy paddling through very beautiful scenery, where the waters teem with coarse fish and trout, and salmon in season. Eagle, Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, American Bittern, merganser, heron and loon come to feast on the abundance of food. In recent years, more and more White Pelicans fly in from the Stum Lake Reserve and we have counted as many as 60 in one flock -- what a sight! Among the fur bearers, mink and river otters are plentiful and if you are lucky, they will swim right up to your canoe to take a closer look. Muskrat and beaver leave evidence of their dams or push-ups throughout the marshes and in some years, beavers raise the water level high enough to cover most shallow spots.

Many species of waterfowl and shore birds breed in this valley, and many more show up during migration. Along the reeds, shoreline bushes and trees, many birds, such as flycatchers, warblers, sparrows, vireos, waxwings and blackbirds feed on the abundant insect supply.

An abandoned homestead, surrounded by a lush, green meadow, beckons the canoeist and wanderer to stop for a rest. Look at swallow nests in the old farm house. If you stay away from the water for some time and sneak back to the shoreline slowly, you will probably see pelicans, herons or waterfowl close to shore.

Farther on, the river meanders through dense willow stands and, for a canoeist, it feels like paddling through a tunnel. Move slowly or stop to give nature around you a chance to come to life. The first half of your canoe trip comes to an end where a barbed wire fence crosses the river. You can go on land and explore on foot or turn back. Enjoy the gorgeous view on your return trip -- perhaps you will see moose, deer or bear on the slopes.

Tips: - camp wherever it suits you (Marmot Lake and Honolulu Forest Service Site are the only two official camp grounds),
- start your canoe trip early in the day for best viewing,
- take sunscreen and bug repellent, and do not forget your camera

For more detailed information, phone Manfred Roschitz at (604) 991-7628 (work) or (604) 249-5640 (home) or the Quesnel Tourist Information Centre at (604) 992-8716. ◻

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

From Derrick Marven:

I feel I must write concerning the article by Don Wilson in the December issue of the BC Field Ornithologist. Not to rain on Don's great day I must query the sighting of the Pomarine Jaeger in Active Pass. If you were basing your ID on tail extensions, diffuse barring on the upper flank and deep powerful wingbeats this could easily be a Parasitic Jaeger which is common in this area in September. Were no field notes taken of these birds in the field or the ocean?

Having had such a close view by so many birders, why no mention of the bulkier size, big broad wings, the big barrel chest of a Pomarine Jaeger and the two white flashes in the wings caused by the pale primary and primary coverts? Also, I query what the Pomarine Jaeger was doing. It would be very rare and unlikely for a Pomarine Jaeger to go after Bonaparte's Gulls. Bony's are much too fast for a Pomarine Jaeger to chase. It would be more likely to be a Parasitic Jaeger chasing them. Pomarine Jaegers more often than not attack larger gulls, landing on the gull's back and forcing them into the water.

Regarding the Long-tailed Jaeger's tail streamers, sometimes Parasitic Jaegers can show quite long tail streamers. As you do not mention the size, small bill and the very slim wings and profile of a Long-tailed Jaeger, I wonder if the birders on the ferry were not caught up in the excitement of the day.

Jaegers are very hard to ID. Even people with lots of experience with Jaegers sometimes have problems. More notice should be taken of the jizz and also the behaviour. Good field notes should also be taken.

Another matter which concerns me is that having been treated to a great weekend and good hospitality by Victoria birders why did no one bother to phone the above jaegers into the Victoria Bird Alert? There are plenty of phones on the ferry and between Vancouver and Kelowna. Maybe if someone would have bothered, some Victoria birders could have spent \$7.00, walked on the ferry and possibly got a lifer.

Having said the above I hope Don does not take offence as none is intended. ☐

Response from Don Wilson:

A measure of the maturity of the BCFO is healthy questioning and fair debate. Derrick Marven's letter elsewhere in this issue [above] is such an example.

Readers of my article will know that the intent of the piece was primarily human interest and, to achieve brevity, some ID points were not included. I hope the following expanded description will serve to answer Derrick's concerns.

I contacted five of the twelve who shared the rail that late afternoon and the following is a compilation of unprompted recollection and in two cases verbatim from field notes made that afternoon.

The bird ID as a Pomarine was seen by Brian Self to have the 'jizz' to which Derrick refers long before it came closer to the ferry. Then, as it approached, its large size and heavy flight was noted. This adult bird had tail extensions with clearly seen twists (noted by all I contacted). Nancy Krueger from Prince George remembers hearing twisted tail extensions mentioned a number of times. Both Brian and Chris Charlesworth recorded in their notes that definite white flashes in the wing were visible.

Chris writes -- "Pom. quite large about Heermann Gull size, tail broad, no point. Pale below with dark breast band. Dark cap with white flashes in primaries." He, like me, recalls this bird and the other unID Jaeger were chasing the Bonapartes. Brian wasn't certain there was actual chasing occurring within the group of approx. 70 Bonapartes. My thought was that perhaps this Jaeger was merely investigating a very actively feeding group at the entrance to Active Pass as it passed south.

The Long-tailed Jaeger seen only minutes later showed a totally different 'jizz'. This adult bird had no breast band, was noticeably slimmer and flew more buoyantly. The tail extensions were extremely long -- my recollection was that they were about 1/3 the body length. Brian Self has observed Long-tailed Jaegers on their breeding grounds and was very confident of this ID. Unfortunately, no one recalled the size of the bill -- a point of ID that Derrick makes.

Response from Don Wilson (continued)

As to phoning the Victoria Bird Alert (or Vancouver's for that matter), I think we can all be taken to task, but if we had phoned from the ferry the next boat from either side would have made the crossing in total darkness. For myself, I assumed, perhaps incorrectly, that these migrating birds would be long gone by Monday morning. This was my first ever September crossing as it was, I believe, for five others, so our familiarity with migration patterns could use some work.

I hope that the above clarifies what we dozen lucky birders saw that afternoon. ☺

From David Allinson:

I am responding to the call for naming the BCFO newsletter.

In fact, I sent in this same suggestion to the directors some two years ago! However, I still feel strongly about it, and wish to bring it forth once again for scrutiny.

I would like to offer The Varied Thrush as an ample name since, not only is this species nicely distributed (almost) exclusively in British Columbia (check your field guide's range maps), but the name is also a nice play on words. When I first moved here, one of the first species I sought out was indeed the Varied Thrush. This thrush seems to epitomize the allure of the West Coast, both in its vivid patterns and in its haunting call. Finally, while I myself am not artistically inclined, I believe a drawing of a pair of Varied Thrush in suitable habitat would make a handsome BCFO emblem. ☺

EDITORS' NOTE: Thanks, David, a good suggestion. For members' further reading check the Vancouver Natural History's Publication, Discovery 2(3): 99-101, 1973 where Allen Poynter put forward detailed reasons why the Varied Thrush should become our provincial bird emblem. An earlier readers' survey by Discovery had the Varied Thrush win 8:4 over the Steller's Jay. In an AGM report in The Federation of British Columbia Naturalists Newsletter 10(2): [2nd page], 1972 there was a resolution stating that "It was decided to ask that the Varied Thrush be proclaimed as the official provincial bird." Comments anyone??

Question for the Quarterly

1. Why do some cormorants stand with their wings outstretched? 2. Do all species of cormorants exhibit this behavior? (Which ones do?) Thanks to Bryan Gates for asking these questions at a Victoria Natural History Society birders' meeting. ☺

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See **SOCIETY NEWS** on page 3 of this issue for additional details.