

# BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

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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 Wiseley, 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

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**EDITORS' NOTES AND NOTIONS**


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With the Christmas season fast approaching it was time once again to reacquaint ourselves with the many birders who volunteer to coordinate the Christmas Bird Counts in their areas. Out came our lists of names and phone numbers plus a map of BC (Quick Q&A: Who knows where Broughton Strait is? Well, according to the Canadian Geographic web site it is two miles from Sointula -- right you are!) and once again we networked around the province and with our neighbour to the south. It was great to touch base with so many birders and to share their excitements -- Wild Turkeys in Cranbrook; Northern Parula at Port Alberni; Eyebrow Thrush, Red-throated Pipit plus 24 Snowy Owls at Masset -- what a province to bird in! In fact, B.C. Birding has to be what everyone here is in to. So, with that lead in, starting next year BCFO members will all be reading B.C. Birding (ISSN 1206-1611). Our thanks to the many creative ideas from members. We discussed all suggestions with the directors but ultimately decided we needed a title which stated who we are and what we do. Russ Tkachuk has kindly contributed two drawings of a Varied Thrush to B.C. Birding and we will use them within the publication. We hope you will enjoy the new look.

We also hope that you enjoy this issue. Martin has written us an article clarifying the many recent name changes; Tony asked that we reprint an article on Ted Parker, birder extraordinaire; Eva gives us observations and useful records from her hide-away in the Okanagan; Jerry, Kenneth and John all demonstrate how amateur birders can make a difference to research projects; Lorna and Gavin allow us to enjoy their special birds and provide us insight into the little known nesting lives of swifts; David updates us on the nature and growth of the ABA; Gwynneth sent us back to the books with her question; and we fill in white space as necessary.

Remember to reserve 13, 14 & 15 June 1997 for another great BCFO AGM. It will be held in Prince George and, having lived in "northern" BC, we can vouch for northern hospitality. We are certain that Jack and his crew will show us all a great time and lots of good birds. Members might want to reread the BCFO site guides for Dawson Creek [BCFO 5(4):8-10] and for Fort St. John [BCFO 3(3):16-17], or the article by Charles Helm [BCFO 5(4):16-17] on Tumbler Ridge in case side trips are anticipated.

Participate in a CBC; reflect upon the good things from 1996; perform at least one random act of kindness; and good birding. Seasons Greetings from the Buhlers. ☺

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**SOCIETY NEWS**


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**President's Report**

An executive meeting of BCFO was held on 16th November 1996. Despite the first snowstorm of the winter making for difficult travel conditions, there was 100% attendance as the directors converged from Victoria (3), Lower Mainland (3), Sunshine Coast (2) and Prince George (1).

Wayne Campbell, the doyen of BC ornithology, was invited to speak to the meeting and bring BCFO up to date on a number of initiatives underway in the world of BC birds. Firstly, Volume 3 of **The Birds of British Columbia** is slated for publication in the spring of 1997, and Volume 4 is "in progress." Speaking personally, I cannot wait for the completion of this baseline reference work on the birds of our province.

The most exciting news that Wayne had to convey was the outline of a major series of publishing projects under the umbrella title "BC Birds in the New Millennium." This project, initiated and co-sponsored by The Wild Bird Trust of BC, and MacMillan-Bloedel Limited, is intended to be a proactive first strike in the conservation of BC birds in the next century. The underlying thesis is that a well-informed public and a proactive program to protect the land base is the optimum contribution that we as ornithologists can make to the well-being of BC birds in the twenty-first century.

The intended list of publications is:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1) A field guide to BC birds            | 5) Seabird Colonies of BC         |
| 2) A checklist of BC birds              | 6) Freshwater Bird Colonies of BC |
| 3) Birds of the Queen Charlotte Islands | 7) Birds of Prey of BC            |
| 4) Birds of Vancouver Island            | 8) BC Birds -- a Bi-annual Review |

All royalties from publications will be returned to The Wild Bird Trust of BC for provincial conservation activities and co-operative efforts in establishing a "Voice for Birds in BC."

This whole undertaking is in its infancy right now, but BCFO has been asked for our support. The directors were excited about the scope and significance of the project and willingly endorsed it. More later. Good Birding. Tony Greenfield. ♣

**Important Bird Areas**

Winter weather inspires memories of warmer spring days filled with birdsong and time spent at favourite birding locations. Some of those familiar sites may be eligible for consideration as an Important Bird Area, recognized as a site providing essential habitat for birds by the Canadian Important Bird Area Program. It is part of a global partnership of Birdlife International, with the Canadian co-partners including Bird Studies Canada and The Canadian Nature Federation. A site meeting one or more of the following four categories may qualify as an "IBA":

- 1). Sites regularly holding significant numbers of an endangered, threatened, or vulnerable species.
- 2). Sites regularly holding endemic species, or species with restricted ranges.
- 3). Sites regularly holding an assemblage of species restricted to a biome or a unique or threatened community type.
- 4). Sites where birds congregate in significant numbers when breeding, in winter or during migration. Population thresholds are on a global, continental, or a national scale where data are available (as in actual counts or estimates based on amount of suitable habitat).

A two-day workshop was held in Vancouver on November 15-16, 1996 to introduce the concepts of the program and receive recommendations on areas throughout the province that should be identified as Important Bird Areas. It is critical that we have as much input as possible from our membership to ensure all relevant areas are included in a report that will be published next year. Please contact me if you want an information package on the Important Bird Areas Program.

Marian Porter, 14831 Buena Vista Avenue, White Rock, BC V4B 1X3.  
Phone (604) 531-5747 Fax (604) 535-9049 ♣

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**Notes from the BCFO Bird Records Committee**

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by Gary Davidson  
P.O. Box 294  
Nakusp, BC V0G 1R0

The BCFO Bird Records Committee has just reached its fourth anniversary. The road has been a little bumpy at times, but we are still on it and moving forward. Initially, we were faced with the dual task of defining our objectives and establishing the rules and procedures necessary to achieve these goals. Completing these tasks with members scattered around the province certainly caused a few headaches!

Although we did not begin operation until the fall of 1992, we made the decision to review records retro-actively to the beginning of 1992. In that first year we reviewed eighteen records and found fourteen of them to be acceptable. [see **British Columbia Birds** 3(1): 18-19]. The following year saw twenty-eight records reviewed of which twenty-one were accepted [see **British Columbia Birds** 4(1): 18-20]. Reasons for non-acceptance varied, but quite often resulted from key points of identification being omitted or wrongly described. In other cases the committee felt that similar species had not been satisfactorily dismissed. It is the committee's belief that records must stand the "test of time". That is, will someone reading these reports in the future come to the same conclusion that we did. For example, we have seen an increasing number of Tropical Kingbird reports in recent years. At this point in time it is fairly easy to conclude they are Tropical and not the very similar Couch's since the latter occurs in southern Texas and does not have a history of vagrancy. But if a Couch's Kingbird arrives in Oregon or Washington next year, will our Tropical Kingbird records withstand the scrutiny they will undoubtedly get? Will observers have done enough to distinguish these two troublesome species?

On the whole, the reports we have received have been well written and the committee encourages birders to continue to submit their rare bird sightings. Some consideration is now being given to producing a BCFO-sponsored provincial checklist [**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** 6(3): 3]. Clearly, the Bird Records Committee files will be invaluable in such an endeavour. ☐

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

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**COSTA RICA Birding at it's Best!** RANCHO NATURALISTA, at 3000' elevation on the Caribbean slope & TARCOL LODGE, Pacific Ocean river mouth, near Carara Reserve, offer a Full Ground Package with resident guides, transportation, meals and lodging, etc. at a 10% discount to BCFO members, from April 1 to Dec. 15, 1997. For further information please call toll free 1-800-593-3305 or write: John W. Erb, Dept. 1425, Box 025216, Miami, Florida 33102-5216 or call/fax Costa Rica 011-506-267-7138.

NOTE: Groups of eight (8) or more paying guests have a group leader free of charge. More than 400 species of birds have been recorded at each lodge.

**Attention Bird Listers!!** Soon I will be preparing the 1997 issue of **Listers' Corner**. This annual newsletter costs \$5.00 and reports lists from birders all across Canada. Categories include life, year, day, winter and local lists from all provinces and territories, the ABA area and the world. If you would like registration materials sent to you please contact: Burke Korol, 2021B Pandosy St., Kelowna, BC V1Y 1S2 ph (250) 717-1646.

**April 6-19th 1997 Spring in South Texas.** Regal Whooping Cranes, as many as forty of the South Texas species and, during the height of spring migration, 330 species possible. Very good accommodations, easy terrain, warm to fairly hot climate. Price [based upon seven (7) participants] 14 days @ \$2,750 per person (excluding meals) for double-occupancy, from Victoria. Contact: Derrick Marven, 1887 Frances St, Duncan BC V9L 4Z9. (250) 748-8504 ☐

## Changes in the "Official" Names of British Columbia Bird Species 1983-1995

by Martin K. McNicholl  
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Those of us who used to include Baldpates and Marsh Hawks in our bird lists have seen many changes to the names of birds since we started watching birds. Although there are numerous colloquial English names, most major regions of the world have officially recognized names in English (and sometimes other languages) and official "scientific" names. The latter are written in Latin style, whether or not they are based on Latin words. One of the earliest projects of the American Ornithologists' Union (A.O.U.) was to adopt a standard set of English and scientific names for all species known to occur in North America. To this end, they published the first official checklist in 1886 and have published six editions to date, the latest in 1983.

Although names are now standardized, they change more frequently than most observers can follow. The most biologically sound reason for name changes results from studies that indicate that two "species" are more likely one or that one "species" really constitutes two or three. Other changes result from attempts to standardize names used in North America with those used elsewhere (e.g. the change from Common Gallinule to Common Moorhen), an attempt that is far from complete, as exemplified by the continued use of "divers" vs. "loons", Horned Grebe vs. Slavonian Grebe, etc., etc., etc. Some changes attempt to bring North America into line with practice elsewhere around the world, such as changing Sparrow Hawk to American Kestrel and Marsh Hawk to Northern Harrier. In the latter case, the new name reflected the relationship of this species to the numerous other harriers around the World, but the European name for the same species (Hen Harrier) was not adopted. Another reason for change, especially in Latin names, is historical research showing that a particular name has "priority" because of earlier publication than the name currently in vogue.

This article was prompted by a suggestion written by Laurie Rockwell on his submission to our membership survey for **British Columbia Birds** [see **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** 5(2):3-5, 1995] that we include an article on the latest changes by the A.O.U. to bird names. As the A.O.U. has been publishing supplements to their checklists at two-year intervals in recent years, it seemed prudent to wait for the next supplement that I suspected would be in the July 1995 issue of the **Auk**, an issue actually published in February 1996. As this is the sixth supplement published since 1983's "sixth edition," I thought readers might find a cumulative list of all changes since 1983 useful. R. Wayne Campbell has published a list of B.C. species with name changes in the 1995 (40th) supplement (**B.C. Naturalist** 34(3):20, 1996). Complete details of post 1983 changes were published in the 35th through 40th supplements (**Auk** 102:680-686, 1985; 104:591-596, 1987; 106:532-538, 1989; 108:750-754, 1991; 110:675-682, 1993; 112:819-830, 1995). Each supplement covers numerous species that have not yet been documented in B.C. In the following summary, I have listed only those species that occur in B.C. but in cases of former species split into two, I have included both (or all) new species, with square brackets indicating species that are not found in B.C. This may help some readers determine whether or not the splits have added additional species to their lists.

<u>1983 Names</u>	<u>Newer Names</u>	<u>Year Changed</u>
Arctic Loon <i>Gavia arctica</i>	[Arctic Loon <i>Gavia arctica</i> ] & Pacific Loon <i>Gavia pacifica</i>	1985
Western Grebe <i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	Western Grebe <i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i> & Clark's Grebe <i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>	1985
Great Egret <i>Casmerodius albus</i>	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	1995

**"Official" Name Changes** (continued)

Green-backed Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	Green Heron <i>Butorides virescens</i> & [Striated Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i> ]	1993
Black-shouldered Kite <i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	[Black-winged Kite <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> ,] White-tailed Kite <i>Elanus leucurus</i> , & [Black-shouldered Kite <i>Elanus notatus</i> ]	1993
Lesser Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	American Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i> * & Pacific Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	1993
* further spelling change	<i>Pluvialis dominicus</i>	1995
American Black Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus bachmani</i>	Black Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus bachmani</i>	1985
Rufous-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	1995
Common Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	1995
Common Barn-Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	1989
Northern Hawk-Owl <i>Surnia ulula</i>	Northern Hawk Owl <i>Surnia ulula</i>	1989
Burrowing Owl <i>Athene cunicularia</i>	Burrowing Owl <i>Speotyto cunicularia</i>	1991
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i> & Red-naped Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>	1985
[Note: The Red-breasted Sapsucker, <i>Sphyrapicus ruber</i> , was split off from the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the 1983 checklist.]		
Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i> & [Gilded Flicker <i>Colaptes chrysoides</i> ]	1995
Western Flycatcher <i>Empidonax difficilis</i>	Pacific-slope Flycatcher <i>Empidonax difficilis</i> & Cordilleran Flycatcher <i>Empidonax occidentalis</i>	1989
Eurasian Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1995
Scrub Jay <i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>	[Florida Scrub-Jay <i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i> ], [Island Scrub-Jay <i>Aphelocoma insularis</i> ], & Western Scrub-Jay <i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	1995

**"Official" Name Changes** (continued)

Gray-cheeked Thrush <i>Catharus minimus</i>	Gray-cheeked Thrush <i>Catharus minimus</i> & [Bicknell's Thrush <i>Catharus bicknelli</i> ]	1995
Water Pipit <i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	[Water Pipit <i>Anthus spinoletta</i> & American Pipit <i>Anthus rubescens</i>	1989
Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Red-eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i> & [Yellow-green Vireo <i>Vireo flavoviridis</i> ]	1987
Rufous-sided Towhee <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>	[Eastern Towhee <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i> ] & Spotted Towhee <i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	1995
Sharp-tailed Sparrow <i>Ammodramus caudacutus</i>	[Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow <i>Ammodramus caudacutus</i> ] & Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow <i>Ammodramus nelsoni</i>	1995
Northern Oriole <i>Icterus galbula</i>	Baltimore Oriole <i>Icterus galbula</i> , Bullock's Oriole, <i>Icterus bullockii</i> , & [Black-backed Oriole <i>Icterus abeillei</i> ]	1995
Rosy Finch <i>Leucosticte arctoa</i>	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch <i>Leucosticte tephrocotis</i> , [Black Rosy-Finch <i>Leucosticte atrata</i> ], [Brown-capped Rosy-Finch <i>Leucosticte australis</i> ], & [Asian Rosy-Finch <i>Leucosticte arctoa</i> ]	1993

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**Society Membership Listings**


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At the 1996 Annual General Meeting in Manning Park a suggestion was made to circulate current membership lists to the members. That suggestion was accepted by the Directors and it is intended that a copy of the Membership List accompany the March 1997 newsletter mailing. However, some members may not wish to have their name, address and telephone number published. **If you wish to keep your information off of the Membership List, please notify Allen Wiseley by or before 31 January 1997.** It must be added that the BCFO executive does not intend this list be used for any purpose other than as an assistance toward networking among our members. We will not be sending the list to anyone other than the current members nor will we be sending the list to libraries with subscriptions. However, since we can not guarantee that the list will not fall into other than the desired hands we are providing members with this opportunity to make their own decision regarding the publication of their own personal information. ☐

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**Missing in Action**


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Copies of the Journal sent to the following members were returned. If any member knows their current address please contact Allen Wiseley. Missing are: Lydia Smedley (Chilliwack); Arnie Simpson (Coquitlam); Kevin MacPherson (Richmond); Gary Boos (Francois Lake); Allison Watt (Nanaimo); Gayle Brown (Mountlake Terrace, WA); and Scott Ray (Port Orchard, WA). Thank you for your assistance. The Editors. ☐

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## The American Birding Association and the 1996 Utah Convention

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by David Stirling  
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The air was stiff with White-faced Ibis speeding hither and yon, dropping like black sticks into the marshes, probing, flapping off again, always in a hurry -- or so it seemed. Hundreds of tricolor American Avocets, heads down, beaks sweeping, marched in military formation belly deep in open glades. Marsh wrens, part of what must be America's densest wren population, sang from every yard along the reedy shores. In the intense blue sky, squadrons of White Pelicans soared, sometimes only visible on the turns when the sun caught their white bulks. At Antelope Island, Chukars, Barn, Short-eared and Burrowing Owls, numerous Sage Thrashers and dozens of Black-tailed Jack Rabbits dozed in the shade of the Big Sage Bush. Shore to shore Eared Grebes, Cliff Swallows everywhere, Snowy Egrets, Forster's Terns, thick columns of humming marsh flies.... Multitudes! I watched these mind-boggling wild-life spectacles on the shores of Great Salt Lake. If you think I am exaggerating [wrong] or was overcome with "rapture of the marshes" [right] here are some official statistics: White-faced Ibis, 7,500 breeding adults; *USFWS Status Report 1982*; American Avocet, 250,000, *Shuford 1994*; White Pelican, 18,000 breeding adults, *Paul 1994*; And some others just for emphasis: Wilson's Phalaropes, 500,000, largest staging concentration in North America, *Jehl 1988*; Eared Grebe, 400,000, *Jehl 1994*; Snowy Plover, 10,000, the world's largest assemblage representing 55% of the entire breeding population west of the Rocky Mountains, *Paton 1992*.

Another memorable field trip was one that eventually took us to the 10,000 foot mark in the Uinta Mountains. Here, amid the melting snow drifts we had excellent views of the Black Rosy Finch, much sought after by 'twitchers' and a lifer for many including the writer [just trying to keep Keith Taylor in sight.]

In June 1996, I attended the American Birding Association's week long thirteenth biennial convention in Park City, Utah, a ski and summer recreation town in the Wasatch Mountains above the Great Salt Lake. The ABA began as a small organization of birders whose members had in common the desire to pursue the "joy and sport of bird finding and listing." Listers often get the 'bird' from other naturalists who think this activity frivolous. They should be engaged in serious scientific activities such as 'ringing and flinging' or pressing plants. Perhaps it is just envy because, to use an old cliché, birders like blondes, have more fun. Oops, politically incorrect again!

The ABA's membership is now over 16,000. Some members are big bore professional ornithologists. Most birders have a high level of environmental awareness. Many are members of national and international conservation organizations and some are active in that line of work. Officially, "The American Birding Association exists to promote recreational birding, to contribute to the development of bird identification and population study, and to help foster public appreciation of birds and their vital role in the environment. All of this depends on a diverse and viable avifauna; thus the ABA strongly supports and encourages efforts to protect wild birds and their habitats." Habitat preservation is good for lichens, butterflies, bats and nematodes, too. We have a Conservation Committee and recently an Education-Conservation Director has joined the staff. In conservation, the ABA tries to avoid merely duplicating the efforts of other organizations.

We joined *Partners in Flight* to help monitor and, perhaps, slow the destruction of forests in the Neotropics. In cooperation with VENT Tours we sponsor birding camps for "boys and girls, 12 to 17, who want to expand their birding skills and natural history horizons...." At recent conventions the ABA has assisted a local conservation project. At Minot, in 1994, the ABA joined the National Wildlife Foundation in providing funds for an ongoing study of the Piping Plovers at the Lostwood Refuge. At the Utah convention the organization is providing funds to help monitor the Snowy Plover population as the shoreline of the Great Salt Lake is receding rapidly after the historically high waters of the 1980's.

Membership services include revising and bringing up-to-date the classic *Lanes' Guides*, compiling a *Guide to the National Forests and Grasslands* and a 1996



**ABA Utah Convention 1996** (continued)

directory of *Volunteer Opportunities for Birders* in Canada, the USA, Mexico and Puerto Rico. [EDS' NOTE: see also address on pg. 14, this issue, for Canada only]

For ABA members the convention is a week of scheduled programs, workshops, day field trips, panels and meeting old friends. The Utah banquet program, *Bird Conservation in the Caribbean and South Pacific* with Paul Butler was outstanding. Butler demonstrated how a few dedicated individuals, by focusing national pride, can get the cooperation of such diverse groups as the local brewery, a popular rock band, and the community church. The enthusiasm generated over one endangered species, usually a parrot or a pigeon, unique to that particular island, provided an important reason to help preserve the country's forests.

The convention provides a venue for purveyors of optical equipment, computer software and the ubiquitous birding tours. There are bird books galore and activities, such as door prizes, a bird slide contest, photo and sound quizzes and of course the evening happy hour.

Canadians have had a prominent place in the ABA hierarchy. Blake Maybank from Nova Scotia, compiler of the *Birding Code of Ethics* [see short version below], guidelines for all ABA sponsored tours, is a current director. Five British Columbians were at the Utah convention. This was my ninth. I have been a member since the beginning, a director for a while and the coordinator of the 1984 Richmond, BC, convention. I am now on the Tours Committee.

In 1998, the ABA convention will kick off in Halifax, perhaps in early August. This will be a wonderful opportunity to see Canada's beautiful east coast. You can test your identifying skills on those confusing fall warblers, marvel at acres of shorebirds, add eiders, razorbills and puffins to your lists. If you want variety beyond birds, there are magnificent maritime forests, lunge-feeding Humpback Whales and the Bay of Fundy's world champion tidal bores. Farther afield, you might visit Bonaventure's gannet bazaar or go for Blue Whales and Belugas on the Saint Lawrence River at Riviere du Loup and Tadousac. At the close of a super, natural day you can enjoy a two-lobster feast.

So -- check your free air miles. See you in Nova Scotia! ❏

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**AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION CODE OF BIRDING ETHICS \***

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*Respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others.*

1. **Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.**
  - Support the protection of important bird habitat.
  - Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger.
  - Limit methods of attracting birds.
  - Remain well back from nests, roosts, display areas, and feeding sites.
  - Keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.
2. **Respect the law and the rights of others.**
3. **Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.**
  - Maintain and clean feeders and nest structures regularly.
  - Keep birds safe from predation from cats and other domestic animals.
4. **Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.**
  - Respect fellow birders. Share your knowledge, especially with beginners.
  - Document unethical birding behavior, intervene if prudent, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.
  - Leaders should teach ethics through word and example.
  - Limit group impact on birds and their environment, and others using the same area.

\* Abbreviated ABA Code of Ethics. From wrapper of June 1996 issue of *Birding*. ❏

## A HomePlace Record: Birds of Farleigh Lake & Marron Valley, 1991-96

by Eva Durance  
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Box #5 on the gnarled Douglas fir topping the hill behind my house held seven House Wrens on July 11. It was now July 20. As I approached the tree, the male chattered excitedly nearby; no wonder, for when I was about ten feet away, first one, then another, then a third, fourth, fifth tiny fledgling scrambled to the box opening and whirled off! I had just been witness to a common miracle. Two late bloomers remained crouched in the nest for a later emergence. That brought to 14 the House Wrens fledged this season from HomePlace, my 13-acre property west of Penticton.

House Wrens are only one of over 60 bird species I have found evidence of nesting on or within a couple of kilometres of my farm. They seem, however, the most eclectic in their nesting locations having produced their usual seven to nine young from nests under the pole roof of my water filter house, in the rafters of the workshop (along with the usual complement of a dozen or so starlings), in the kitchen fan outlet (two broods that time with the predictable mess of bits of nest dripping down behind the stove), and in bluebird nest boxes. They are a delight and a constant noisy presence from their arrival, usually about the first week of May, to their departure in early to mid September.

Bluebird nesting at HomePlace has been another fascinating saga over the past five years I have lived on this farm. The first year, 1991, I saw Mountain Bluebirds in the area, but no nesting evidence. The next year, Vern Johnston of the Southern Interior Bluebird Trail, installed five boxes on my property. Number 1 was promptly occupied by a Mountain pair which produced three young, who also obliged by fledging before my eyes on May 28. Two other boxes produced a brood each of Tree Swallows and House Wrens. The bluebirds, with the feeding assistance of the first three young, went on to produce five more babies. In 1993, the Mountains produced seven eggs in late June. On August 5, two eggs were still there, but no other evidence of young.

In 1994, I saw no nesting bluebirds on my property; however, I was not at home a lot that summer and the bluebirds were possibly around, quietly going about their business as usual. In 1995, the Mountains were back in Box #1. On May 19, the female was sitting on six eggs; however, by mid June, all eggs had disappeared within one week. The conclusion I and others came to was that a snake had slipped up the Ponderosa and into the box. I did not observe the adults re-nesting, but in April of this year, I found a bluebird-type nest in Box #2, the closest to #1, so perhaps they succeeded after all.

This year was the bumper one for bluebirds. Not only did a pair of Mountains occupy Box #4 and produce four young; Box #1 housed two broods of Westerns, the first fledged six, the second five. (I took the precaution of nailing metal sheeting around the pine under the nest box.) This was the first time I had seen Westerns in this area other than in migration, and even then only a couple of times. The fledglings of both broods are now, July 24, feeding over my pasture and flitting through the pines above the house.

The following is my record of five and a half years birding on the 13 acres of HomePlace, along the two km of Farleigh Lake Road, and about two km up Marron Valley Road directly south. The area is 14 km west of Penticton off Green Mountain Road towards Apex Ski Resort and is at 2200-2500 feet elevation. Farleigh Lake Valley is a narrow strip running generally east-west with the lake, a 60-year-old reservoir, at the western end; Marron Valley is wider and runs generally north-south with hay fields on the western side. HomePlace is on the north side of Farleigh Lake Valley below the lake with about two acres of level farmland (organic from the first owner on) and the rest steep pine-bunchgrass and scree slopes with Interior Douglas fir and upright juniper (*J. scopulorum*) in the upper reaches.

The two valleys comprise a variety of habitats with Ponderosa pine-bunchgrass on the lower, south-facing slopes, Ponderosa pine-Interior Douglas fir on the higher and on north-facing slopes, a few aspen and groves in Marron Valley, and thick

**HomePlace Record** (continued)

riparian vegetation along Shingle Creek and the Shatford Creek irrigation ditch for the ranch in Marron Valley. As both Valleys border and are partly in Indian Reserve #1, there are few dwellings; Farleigh Lake has 18 sites of 24 built upon (rural residential/hobby farms) and Marron Valley's northern end has only the one ranch and one Reserve dwelling.

Aside from the specifically aquatic species, virtually all in the following list have been seen at HomePlace and most of the breeding records are from this property.

c - common resident                      c-mig. - common in migration only  
 uc - resident, but seen only occasionally in these six years  
 uc-mig. - uncommon in migration, seen only 2-3 times  
 r - rare, seen only once or twice in time period  
 h - heard only                              br - breeding in area confirmed

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 sp - spring                      s - summer    f - fall              w - winter    yr - year-round

COLO - r, h, (8/5/95)	COPO - c, b, sp-f	VATH - c-mig.
RNGR - c, b, sp-f	VASW - c, b, sp-f	GRCA - c, b, sp-f
TUSW/TRUS - r-mig, [seen by neighbour, 5/96]	CAHU - c, b, sp-f	WAPI - r-mig. (5/91)
CAGO - c, b, sp-f	RUHU - c, b, sp-f	CEWA - c, b, s-f
WODU - r-mig,	BEKI - c, b, sp-f	NOSH - c, w
MALL - c, b, sp-f	RNSA - c, b, sp-f	EUST - c, b, late w-f
AMWI - r-mig.	DOWO - uc, w	SOVI - uc, sp-f
RNDU - c-mig.	HAWO - uc, w-sp	OCWA - r-mig. (5/91)
LESC - r-mig.	NOFL - c, b, yr	AUWA - c-mig.
COGO - c, b, sp-f	WWPE - c, b, sp-f	NOWA - r-mig. (30/5/96)
HOME - r-mig.	WIFL - c, b, sp-f	MGWA - c, b, sp-f
BUFF - c-mig.	HAFI - c, b, sp-f	WIWA - c-mig.
COME - c-mig.	DUFL - c, b, sp-f	WETA - c, b, sp-f
GWTE - r-mig. (2/4/93)	COFL - r-mig.	LZBU - uc, sp-f
BAGO - r-mig. (4/91)	SAPH - c, b, sp-s	SPTO - uc, sp-f
OSPR - r, (16/4/920)	WEKI - c, b, sp-f	CHSP - c, b, sp-f
BAEA - uc, yr	EAKI - c, b, sp-f	VESP - c, b, sp-f
GOEA - r, s	TRSW - c, b, sp-f	SAVS - c, b, sp-f
SWHA - r, (11/4/94)	VGSW - c, b, sp-f	SOSP - c, b, yr
SSHA - uc, sp-s	NRWS - c, b, sp-f	GCSP - r-mig.
COHA - uc, sp-s	BASW - c, b, sp-f	WCSP - c-mig.
RTHA - c, b, yr	STJA - c, b, yr	DEJU - c, f-sp
RLHA - uc, w	CLNU - c, b, yr	SCJU - r,w (2/94)
AMKE - c, b, sp-f	BEBA - c, b, yr	RWBL - c, b, sp-f
SPGR - c, b, yr	AMCR - c, b, yr	WEME - c, b, sp-f
RUGR - c, b, yr	CORA - c, f-w	BRBL - c, b, sp-f
BLGR - uc, b, sp-f	BCCH - c, w	BHCO - c, b, sp-f
CAQU - c, b, yr	MOCH - c, b, yr	BUOR - c, b, sp-f
KILL - c, b, sp-f	RBNU - c, b, yr	PIGR - r-mig.
SDSA - c, b, sp-s	WBNU - c, b, yr	CAFI - c, b, yr
SACR - c-mig	PYNU - c, b, yr	HOFI - c, b, yr
MODO - c, b, sp-f	HOWR - c, b, yr	ROFI - r-mig. (3/93)
FLOW - [h] c, b, sp-f	RCKI - c-mig.	RECR - uc-mig.
GHOW - c, b, yr	GCKI - uc-mig.	PISI - c, b, yr
NPOW - uc, w	WEBL - c, b, sp-f	AMGO - c, b, yr
BAOW - [h], c, w	MOBL - c, b, sp-f	EVGR - uc-c, b, late w-f
NSWO - c, b, yr	VEER - c, b, sp-f	HOSP - r (4/91)
CONI - c, b, s-f	HETH - r-mig. (13/5/93)	
	AMRO - c, b, sp-f	Total - 115 sp

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**Volunteer-based Ornithological Programs in Canada**


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**Bird Trends**, fall 1996, 5:30. "... For a complete listing of programs that monitor landbirds, you may obtain a copy of a national monitoring strategy for birds from: C. Downes, Migratory Bird Populations Division, National Wildlife Research Centre, Environment Canada, Ottawa, K1A 0H3".

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## Ted Parker Remembered

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by Kevin J. Zimmer

The birding world lost a true giant on 3 August 1993 when Theodore (Ted) A. Parker III was killed at the all-too-early age of forty in a plane crash in the forests of western Ecuador.

Even before meeting Ted for the first time, I had already been aware of his exploits for many years, both through mutual friends and through the numerous scientific papers he had authored or co-authored. When our paths finally crossed, we found that we shared very similar philosophies of birding, science, and life in general, as well as a propensity for staying up late, a Coca Cola habit, a special interest in antbirds, and an avid love of sports. On many a morning we'd drag ourselves early out of bed to co-lead tours for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, swearing that "tonight we have to get to bed early." And each night would find us engrossed in another marathon conversation. This scenario was repeated through the years.

Ted first came to national prominence in the birding world in 1971, when, while still in high school, he broke the Big Year record for North America. Shortly thereafter he moved to Arizona to attend college, and began his forays into the neotropics. Participation in a number of pioneering Louisiana State University expeditions was followed by a move to Baton Rouge and an association with the University that would last for the rest of his life. As his trips to South America became more frequent and longer in duration, he spent less and less time birding in North America, and hence moved out of the local birding spotlight. Even after becoming a tour leader, Ted remained obscure to many ABA Area birders who did not venture out of the US and Canada. With few exceptions, Ted's tours were to Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and other South American countries. What fame he lacked among the general birding public was eclipsed by his growing stature among the scientific community and among those who had discovered the joys of neotropical birding.

Ted was widely considered the finest field birder/ornithologist that the world had ever seen. He had a mastery of the world's most diverse and complex avifauna that few birders ever achieve in the relatively simple environs of North America and Europe. What's more, he reached this level without benefit of the many fine field guides and distributional works on neotropical birds that now exist. Many field problems that took weeks of patient effort for Ted to work out for himself (vocalizations of canopy species that follow mixed-species flocks, for example) are now easily absorbed in minutes by a new generation of neotropical birders who have access to his tapes and the many field guides now available. Ted's ability to go into a region and find everything known to be there, as well as species whose presence was not even suspected, were legendary. Steve Hilty, himself one of the top field men in South America called Ted "a human vacuum cleaner" for his ability to suck birds out of every nook and cranny. Although Ted lost interest in listing early in his career, his Peru list of more than 1675 of the country's 1700 species would have to rank as one of the most awesome listing accomplishments to date. People who birded with Ted only in the United States missed out on the full extent of his genius. When you went with him to South America you checked your ego at the door.

What made Ted so good? It was a combination of factors. His ability with bird vocalizations was without peer. Impressive hearing acuity, together with an unparalleled ability to retain a vocalization once heard, made for an unbeatable combination in the forests of Amazonia, where hearing is everything. Ted once said to me (only partly in jest) that the most important thing that you need your eyes for when birding South America is to see where to put your feet on the trail. When Ted led tours to Manu and Explorers Inn, Peru (where over 400 species of birds occur daily in a square mile of forest), he was juggling well over 1200 bird vocalizations in his head at once (estimating conservatively that each species has at least three different vocalizations). This does not even take into account the numerous amphibians, insects, and primates present, many of which sound more bird-like than the birds themselves.

But Ted's abilities with vocalizations went far beyond the mere retention of those that he had heard before. He had the ability to take the known and extrapolate to the unknown. A few examples should suffice to illustrate the point. On his first

**Ted Parker Remembered** (continued)

trip to Panama, surrounded by crack birders with a fair amount of Panamanian field experience, Ted beat everyone to the punch in identifying a Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant -- a bird that he had never seen nor heard -- by voice alone. The pygmy-tyrant is a tiny bird of the canopy with a voice not unlike a weak cricket, and is probably passed off as such by most birders who hear it. But Ted knew the voice of the closely related Short-tailed Pygmy-Tyrant of South America, and by extrapolation was able to instantly identify it. Likewise, Ted recognized the voice of the Rufous-fronted Antthrush the first time he heard it (a bird at that time known only from the original two specimens taken in another part of Peru some thirty years earlier) by realizing that the voice was that of a *Formicarius* antthrush unfamiliar to him, and by knowing intimately the voices of all the other species in that genus!

Ted's powers of concentration were no doubt a key to his ability. No matter what was going on around him, Ted seemed to reserve part of his concentration for scanning background sounds. Time and again I witnessed him picking up hard-to-find birds calling at the outer limits of human hearing, even when dealing with the chaos of sorting out a fast-moving mixed-species flock for a dozen tour participants. It was a humbling experience to have Ted listen to a mystery bird that you had taped and not only identify it, but two or three other species calling in the background that you had totally missed. Not long ago Ted was listening to a tape of the dawn chorus made by a colleague in a remote site in Bolivia. In the midst of the other sounds on the tape, he picked out one that was different, and announced that it had to be an undescribed species of *Herpsilochmus* antwren (one member of which is already named in Ted's honor). Within the year, a European worker visiting the site found Ted's antwren, and sure enough, it was a *Herpsilochmus* species that was previously unknown to science! Ted could listen to a one-minute cut of tape and not only tell you what you had recorded, but where you had recorded it (e.g. south bank of the Amazon between the Rios Madeira and Tapajos), simply by listening to other birds in the background.

Ted knew birds because he really watched them. Identification was not an endpoint for him. He watched how birds moved, how and where they foraged, their degree of sociality, and other aspects of their behavior. He long ago realized that the techniques for sorting out difficult identification problems in North America and Europe -- attention to minute details of feather edges, tertial markings, and molt condition -- did not work in South America, where the diversity was several times more complex, and where the viewing conditions inherent in rain-forest birding made such field marks nearly impossible to discern. If you came to him with a description of a mystery tyrannulet to sort out, he always asked first what it was doing (such as hover-gleaning fruits, foliage-gleaning insects, sallying) and where it was (e.g., in the canopy, at mid-heights, in the understory), rather than inquiring about the color of the wingbars or the contrast between the crown and the back. Voice, microhabitat, and behavior are the keys in neotropical forests, and Ted was not only the first to recognize this (his seminal paper on foliage-gleaner identification that appeared in the April 1979 issue of **Continental Birdlife** should be required reading for all students of tropical birding), but also honed his discrimination of these essential cues to a finer degree than anyone else. He was whole levels ahead of the rest of us in his understanding of birds, and was the first one to point out gaps in his own understanding.

Ted's field notes could serve as a model for all field biologists -- so wide in breadth and meticulous in detail. Indeed, he shared freely of his notes and observations with others (see **Birding** 22: 16-22). Hardly a paper on neotropical birds appeared in the last decade that did not acknowledge some contribution from Ted. Jon Fjeldsa and Niels Krabbe in the monumental work *Birds of the High Andes* (1990) had this acknowledgment: "In particular we thank Theodore A. Parker III for an enormous amount of life-history data. As he is by far the greatest specialist on the life histories of neotropical birds there ever was, his contribution to our knowledge of neotropical birds can not be stressed strongly enough." Likewise, Ted made Cornell's Library of Natural Sounds the repository of his unrivalled collection of bird recordings, many of which represented the first known recordings of a species, or even the only ones. More than 10,000 of Cornell's total collection of 90,000 recordings come from him alone. His exploits in the discovery of species new to science, as well as the rediscovery of many more species that had gone unseen for decades, have been widely circulated.

**Ted Parker Remembered** (continued)

Ironically, it was not until the relatively recent publication of the book *A Parrot Without A Name* (1990) by Don Stap, that Ted's achievements first gained popular recognition among much of the general birding public. It is fitting that in the final days before his death, Ted discovered one, and possibly two species of tapaculos new to science in the remote mountains of southern Ecuador. As usual, it was his recognition of vocal differences that first drew his attention to the uniqueness of these nearly impossible-to-see birds.

If Ted was without peer in his ability to find and sort out the birds of the neotropics, he was equally matchless in his ability to show them to others. He was a magician with a tape recorder, combining it with his knowledge of bird behavior to produce outstanding views of some of the most difficult-to-see birds in the world for every participant in the group. Any participant who has been with Ted in the neotropics can recall numerous occasions where he would arrange his group in just the right spots, tell them exactly where he would draw the bird with his recorder, and then proceed to do it as surely as if it had been scripted by a master choreographer. Most impressive to me was his ability to identify an approaching flock of screeching macaws, parrots, or parakeets by voice (before they were visible), tape them, rewind the tape, play it back, and suck the on-rushing flock out of the sky and into the nearest treetop in the time it took most people to get their binoculars on the birds.

Countless were the hours Ted spent in the field working remote areas for days, weeks, and even months on end. Greatness comes to those who pay their dues. Ted certainly paid his, for his years of field work in the Andes and in the lowlands of Amazonia came at the sacrifice of most creature comforts and of many trappings of a "normal" life.

In the last few years of his life Ted turned from full-time tour-leading to work with the organization Conservation International. He conceived and implemented a program that would utilize a team of highly skilled field-biologists of all specializations (such as botany, mammalogy, plant ecology) to rapidly survey the flora and fauna of remote South American wilderness areas. This team (RAP, for Rapid Assessment Program) would then make recommendations to local governments and to other conservation organizations regarding appropriate conservation measures. In just a few short years, their impact on the preservation of biodiversity in South America has already been immense, and has resulted in the creation of many new parks and reserves. It was during a low-level survey flight that Ted and his fellow RAP member Al Gentry (botany's Ted Parker) lost their lives. Theirs was a race against time, against the chain-saws and the bulldozers, against the miners and the loggers, and against the ever-expanding human population that threatens to engulf the last vestiges of wilderness in South America. They were true heroes.

Some people have called Ted the Michael Jordan of field ornithology, a rare talent who clearly stood on a higher plane than his contemporaries. Although the comparison is flattering, to me it is not entirely accurate. If Jordan were to elevate his game another notch, he might be worthy of being called the Ted Parker of basketball. That is the measure of respect I hold for Ted. He was both a dear friend and a valued mentor, and a mere litany of his skills and accomplishments fail to capture his personal value, the twinkle in his eyes, his infectious laugh, or his way of making each person whose path he crossed feel important. His was the kind of star that blazes a bright path through the sky and passes our way but once. There will never be another like him. ◀

EDITORS' NOTE: Reprinted with permission from *Birding* 25(6): 377-380

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**Invitation to join the Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO)**

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SCO, incorporated in 1988 to promote knowledge and conservation of birds in Canada, is having a membership drive and invites all professional and amateur ornithologists to join. Membership: \$10.00 a year (\$25 sustaining). Members receive the journal *Picoides*. Contact: Alan Burger, ph (250) 479-2446, email aburger@uvvm.uvic.ca or the membership secretary: Dr. Nancy Flood, Department of Biological Sciences, University College of the Cariboo, 900 McGill Rd (Box 3010), Kamloops, BC V2C 5N3. ◀

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## Status of Sandhill Crane in British Columbia

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by John Cooper, Sirius Environmental Research  
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Recent reviews of the status of Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) in western North America have all noted a lack of information from British Columbia. During 1994-95, I conducted a review of information available and prepared a status report on the Sandhill Crane in British Columbia for the BC Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks. Several BCFO members contributed important information for the report. The complete report is available from the BC Wildlife Branch, 780 Blanshard St, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4.

EDITORS' NOTE: John has kindly offered to write us an article on this topic for a future issue. However, he would like to acknowledge the assistance of BCFO members who provided data for his research. It is in projects such as these that BCFO members can make a real contribution to the improvement of our knowledge about birds in British Columbia. The following article by Jerry Herzig illustrates how Jerry and Kim's survey for John contributed to enjoyment, enlightenment and useful data.

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## Black Tern Survey

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by Jerry Herzig  
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While reading the March 1996 BC Field Ornithologist newsletter, I noticed an article by John Cooper requesting volunteers to help in a nesting survey of Black Terns. A request for more information was quickly returned by John, and it appeared that the nesting times in our area would coincide with holiday time from work, and that my wife, Kim, and I would be able to participate.

The last week of May was spent travelling to all the lakes and marshes in the Princeton area that Black Terns were known to frequent. We travelled north on the Merritt Highway to Aspen Grove and west through the Kane and Voight Valleys.

Black Terns, according to the information from John, nest in marshes, lakes and even wet meadows. Nest sites are usually accessible with use of waders and John made sure to caution against wading in water over your waist. Another bit of information advised us that terns can be quite aggressive and that protective headgear should be worn.

On June 7 our first stop was at Blackstone Lake, a Ducks Unlimited conservation project, 41.5 km north of Princeton. This area consists of a string of lakes and wetlands extending east from Highway 5A. The larger bodies of water are used for feeding with the nesting colony located on a bulrush covered lake adjacent to the highway. Using our canoe, we entered the lake behind the shelter of a small island, out of sight of the nesting colony. Even the few terns that we saw returning from other areas simply passed us by apparently with little concern. Entering the main body of water we could now see the first terns that had nests on a large raft of floating vegetation. As we drew near the volume of calls increased but only a few of the birds flew in our direction, and none of these seemed to be the least bit aggressive. One thing that amazed us was just how tolerant the birds were. As we approached a nest the adult incubating would call, but remain on the eggs and not leave until we were very close. As we counted the eggs the adults would hover beside the canoe, and though very vocal, made no effort to dive bomb us as expected. However, when they were off the nests they would gang up on any of the Ravens flying over the area. This colony consisted of 16 nests, and was separated into three separate sections of the lake.

**Black Tern Survey** (continued)

The Voight and Kane Valley Lakes are formed along a road that loops west from Otter Lake Road and returns to Highway 5A at Corbet Lake. These lakes are popular with fishermen and have heavy boat traffic. However, there were nesting terns on Davis Lake in the Voight Valley. This colony consisted of three (3) nests, and was the only one surveyed that was in a cattail marsh. The behaviour was very different from the terns at Blackstone Lake with these birds being quite secretive, preferring to leave the nests and calling from a distance.

Englishman Lake in the Kane Valley had a strip of bulrush emerging in a line down the centre of the lake, and as we entered the lake we were immediately visible to the nesting terns. These terns must have been the ones that John had described, an in-your-face, dive bombing, screaming and all around abusive lot. As we canoed down the lake the whole colony of seven (7) nesting pairs followed us as a group, and only calmed down when we returned to our vehicle. This was the only location that a nest was found built on a floating log and the only location which had a single nest located a fair distance from the main colony.

A marsh located on the Otter Lake Road gave us our only opportunity to wade through a colony. As my wife watched from the shore I slowly made my way to the area where we had observed terns landing. Being at waist level gives you a very different view of the nests and produces a definite rush of adrenaline when a nesting duck explodes right in front of you. A trick I quickly learned was to watch as the adults circled the area I was in and mark the spot where they dropped down to water level. With this technique and the help of my wife on shore we located six (6) nests, and seemed to be quite well tolerated by the colony.

While locating the tern nests we also found Red-necked Grebes nesting either in or adjacent to all the tern colonies. We feel that the different behaviour from colony to colony was caused by the amount of human interference. All the nests we surveyed contained eggs and due to other commitments we were unable to return to check nesting success or to count young.

This opportunity to examine, close-up a bird usually only seen from a distance was certainly one of our most enjoyable experiences and we look forward perhaps with a little help from John to new adventures next year.☺

EDITORS' NOTE: For more on nesting Black Terns, birders may be interested to read Cameron Eckert's article "Blind Lake's Black Terns" in the Fall 1996 issue of **Yukon Warbler**. Blind Lake lies 25 km. east of Watson Lake.

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**Question for the Quarterly**

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*Why do some birds bathe in dust, some in water? Are the two mutually incompatible?*

We asked some birders and checked a few books. Here is a synopsis of what we found. Bathing with water or dust seems to be necessary for feather care. Both types of bathing are followed by serious preening. Water bathing seems to assist preening by facilitating the distribution of preening oils. A secondary role may involve cooling the body. Water bathing is often limited to moistening the feathers, rather than soaking them and, as such, water bathing includes rain bathing, dew bathing, plunge bathing, flight bathing and several forms of splash bathing. Soaking to clean the body is occasionally undertaken but birds become more vulnerable to predation until feathers are dried and preened for flight. Dust bathing may assist with the removal of excess/stale oils or excess moisture. It may also assist in ridding the body of parasites. Birds of the open country, or which inhabit very dry areas, more commonly take dust baths. Pheasants and allies take dust baths and do not seem to take water baths. Dust bathing is more commonly undertaken in the summer than in the winter. Both types of bathing may put birds at greater risk for predation while they bathe and until their feathers are properly preened. Most land birds take water baths but some will take either water or dust baths. Bathing may involve a degree of bodily comfort as well as utility for preening so some birds may utilize what feels good at the time. For greater depth members might consult: 1). **The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ornithology**/Brooke & Moorehead, 2). **The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds**/Terres, or 3). **A New Dictionary of Birds**/Landsborough.☺



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## Harlequin Duck Research Activities in British Columbia

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by Kenneth G. Wright  
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In response to recent indications of a population decline of the Harlequin Duck in coastal British Columbia, the Canadian Wildlife Service has initiated an intensive banding program utilizing unique colour alpha-numeric leg bands to monitor population trends. Currently the east coast population is endangered with between 1000 and 2000 birds. The major aims of this effort are to, a) generate survival estimates through the resightings, b) investigate molting and wintering site fidelity, c) determine geographic range and, d) increase our understanding of other aspects of the harlequin's ecology. [EDS' NOTE: see **BC NATURALIST**, 1994 32(6): 8]

The research was founded and coordinated by Ian Goudie, Waterbird Ecologist with Environment Canada. Since 1992, the inaugural year of banding, over 2000 birds have been banded in coastal British Columbia (mostly in the northwestern Strait of Georgia, an area with high concentrations of molting birds). In 1995, 125 birds were banded in the Queen Charlotte Islands, representing a disjunct and possibly insular population. This year marks the first year of a survey of the breeding distribution in the interior of British Columbia. A joint project with the N'laka'pamux Tribal Nation under Forest Renewal of B.C. (FRBC) initiated studies on the Nahatlatch River system (NW of Boston Bar), a tributary of the Fraser River where 11 birds were individually banded.

Upon capture, each bird is fitted with a standard aluminum US Fish and Wildlife Service band and a colour tarsal band bearing a unique two digit alpha-numeric code. The latter bands can be deciphered through a spotting scope at distances up to 100 m or more, when birds are standing out of the water. The sex and age of all birds are recorded and if time and conditions allow, morphometrical and molt stage data are obtained.

Capturing Harlequin Ducks is timed with their annual flight feather molt on the coastal grounds, predictably between late July and late September. Males molt about one month earlier than females. A conventional drive trap is positioned on the shore in the intertidal zone during a rising tide and a shoreward and seaward wing is attached and extended to form a giant funnel. Once sufficient water has entered the trap, a team of kayakers 'drive' the molting flocks into the trap (if successful!). As many as 200 birds have been caught in one drive using this method. Recently, mist nets and a floating version of the drive trap have enabled researchers to catch birds on rocky islets and other previously inaccessible localities.

Preliminary results show that molting site fidelity is very strong, perhaps the strongest of any Anseriform studied. Resightings of BC birds have come from rivers in Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, Alberta (Banff and Jasper National Parks and Kananaskis Country) as well as coastal Washington and California. The long-lived nature of these birds has been documented with a recapture of 2 birds (banded in 1986) that were a minimum age of eleven years, constituting the longevity record for the species. This coupled with a very low recruitment rate means that these birds are very sensitive to adult mortality that can be accelerated by environmental perturbations such as heavy metals, oil spills, poor forestry practices, and/or hunting.

Naturalists can greatly assist in this research through resighting marked birds and recording band status of hauled out birds. A 20-60X spotting scope is recommended to decipher the coded bands (bands have been read from over 100 m in ideal circumstances). Harlequins have traditional haul-out sites that permit resightings. After locating a haul-out site, it is best to set-up before high tide to obtain readings, as birds are quite often displaced from haul-outs at peak tides. The code is usually read from the foot up, but may read down (some bands are upside down!). It is important to record the colour code of the band (ie. black on white) and other details like which leg it is on and what direction the code reads, whether or not it is paired, number of conspecifics, other birds present that are banded or not banded, etc. In BC you are most likely to encounter black on white, white on green and plain green (no code) bands, though be aware that colour differentiation

**Harlequin Duck Research** (continued)

can be difficult in poor lighting conditions. Good areas to band read are: Denman and Hornby Island, Cape Lazo (Comox), Campbell River, Quadra Island, Mittlenatch Island, Sunshine Coast, Howe Sound, White Rock and Burrard Inlet. This is just a list of the prime banding sites. It should not serve as a list of the only locations that you will see banded birds as there have been re-observations throughout the Strait of Georgia and the Victoria area.

Currently there is collaboration between agencies throughout the breeding and wintering range of the Pacific Harlequin Duck population and they are in the process of forming a charitable non-profit society dedicated to the preservation of healthy Harlequin Duck populations. For further information and to report observations, please contact Ian Goudie, Canadian Wildlife Service, 5421 Robertson Rd, Delta, BC, V4K 3N2, phone: (604) 946-8546; fax: (604) 946-7022; or e-mail: Ian.goudie@EC.gc.ca

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**Swifts and Their Chimneys**

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by Lorna & Gavin Young  
6014 Lakeshore Road  
Kelowna, BC V1W 4J5

It is early May, and we are eagerly anticipating the annual return of our "chimney" swifts. These ingenious birds have chosen to nest in our living room chimney flue. This is not unusual, except that the nest is located at the bottom of the clean-out, nearly 35 feet below the top of the chimney.

Each year our pair returns around mid-May and begins the incredible task of gathering twigs for their nest. The nest is fashioned over a period of days, with each adult adding its specially found piece of construction material.

We have not opened the clean-out to observe the nest (until after the fledglings have left), but rather listen closely until we hear the noisy chatter of our newly hatched family. The parents then begin the arduous task of finding enough food for their little ones. It seems as if they are constantly on the wing. Each "home" trip means a 35 foot dive straight down and then a return straight up seconds later to seek more food. The trips are constant as the little ones rarely seem to be satisfied. It is nearly dark, and at last there is quiet until the dawn when the rapid frenzy begins again.

Within three weeks the fledglings are ready to fly, and the parents help them up to the chimney top as they ready for their inaugural flight. They instinctively take flight and soar in graceful patterns over the garden and lake in search of food. Each night, for three or four days, they return to the nest but soon there is silence. Only once have we found a fledgling that failed to make its exit. We marvel at their ability to not only seek the safety of such a unique nesting site, but also to manoeuvre the depth of the flue to feed their brood, and then to guide them up to the freedom of the open sky. They are truly one of God's wonders, and our hearts soar with them as they take flight.

**FOOTNOTES:**

Our swifts failed to return this year [1996]. Perhaps being a late spring, they were forced to nest further south. For whatever reasons, they were truly missed.

In our discussions with other birders, some felt that we had Vaux's Swifts rather than Chimney Swifts. However, our observations would seem to indicate that these were Chimney Swifts. We hope that they return next year so that we can study them more closely.

I might add that my mother-in-law's house (approx. 300' from ours) was once again host to a resident family of swifts. They arrived very late (early June) and have not been observed on a daily basis. It is a difficult entry to view, and our timetable has not allowed us endless hours of observation of our feathered friends. We usually see them "on the wing". However, we trust that next year will allow us time for proper identification.☐

### B.C. Christmas Bird Count Details, 1996/97

This listing of Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) is published as a service to BCFO members who would like to take part in CBCs in their local area or in nearby areas. It includes counts with the name and telephone number of the organizer(s) and the scheduled date. A **DNA** indicates that the contact person is correct but **Date Not Available** at press time. We include three CBC dates from Washington State. Data were accurate as known to the Editors on **November 19, 1996**. Check with the area organizers for any late-breaking changes.

Best of luck to everyone during the 1996/97 Christmas Bird Counts!

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Bamfield	28 Dec 96	Alan Burger	479-2446
Bowen Island	29 Dec 96	Allan Shatwell	947-2133
Broughton Strait	...DNA...	Bob Waldon	974-2281
Castlegar/Trail (WKN)	4 Jan 97	Madge Hollington	365-2381
Chilliwack	21 Dec 96	Annabelle Rempel	823-6549
Clearwater	21 Dec 96	Helen Knight	587-6532
Comox/Courtenay	22 Dec 96	Barbara Sedgwick	335-0064
Cranbrook	28 Dec 96	Greg Ross	489-2566
Creston	...DNA...	Bob Purdy	428-3554
Deep Bay	27 Dec 96	Barbara Sedgwick	335-0064
Duncan	28 Dec 96	Derrick Marven	748-8504
Fauquier	...DNA...	Ruth Bumpus	269-7481
Fort St. James	28 Dec 96	Joanne Vinnedge	996-7357
Galiano Island	28 Dec 96	Mike Hoebel	539-2003 (H)
			or 652-0396 (H)
Golden	27 Dec 96	Ellen Zimmerman	348-2225
Kamloops	22 Dec 96	Rick Howie	578-7542
Kelowna	21 Dec 96	Don Wilson	763-8036
Kimberley	5 Jan 97	Mildred White	427-3605
Kitimat	21 Dec 96	Dennis Horwood	632-2004
Ladner	29 Dec 96	Jude Grass	520-3706
Lake Windermere District	26 Dec 96	Larry Halverson	342-3305
Masset	21 Dec 96	Peter Hamel	626-3585
Mackenzie	4 Jan 97	Derek Connelly	997-4001
Mayne Island	...DNA...	Michael Dunne	539-5745
Merritt	21 Dec 96	Wayne Weber	378-2654 (H)
			378-8400 (W)
Nakusp	4 Jan 97	Gary Davidson	265-4456
Nanaimo	29 Dec 96	Peter Van Kerkoerle	245-2530
Nelson	11 Jan 97	Linda van Damme	354-1182
Oliver-Osoyoos	4 Jan 97	Syd Cannings	721-0338
		or Joan King	495-6907
Parksville-Qualicum	21 Dec 96	Will Lemon	757-2387
Pender Harbour	18 Dec 96	Tony Greenfield	885-5539
Pender Islands	...DNA...	Mary Roddick	629-3308
Penticton	28 Dec 96	Steve Cannings	492-2303
		or Dick Cannings	496-4019
Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge	5 Jan 97	Kees van den Berg	463-8743
Port Alberni	4 Jan 97	Sandy McRuer	723-5436
Port Clements	29 Dec 96	Peter Hamel	626-3585
Prince George	5 Jan 97	Nancy Krueger	563-7896
Prince Rupert	4 Jan 97	Robin Weber	627-1129 (H)
			or 624-3207 (W)
Princeton	22 Dec 96	Madelon Schouten	295-7078
Quesnel	29 Dec 96	Adam Moss	747-3455
Revelstoke	21 Dec 96	George Winingder	837-3655
Rose Spit	23 Dec 96	Peter Hamel	626-3585
Salmon Arm	26 Dec 96	Frank Kime	835-8537
Saltspring Island	12 Jan 97	Nancy Braithwaite	537-9335
Shuswap Lake	4 or 5 Jan 97	Rick Howie	578-7542
Skidegate Inlet	28 Dec 96	Peter Hamel	626-3585
Smithers	29 Dec 96	Rosamund Pojar	847-9784
Sooke	...DNA...	Michael Shepard	380-9195

**Christmas Bird Count Details (continued)**

Squamish	21 Dec 96	Jim Wisnia	898-2000
Sunshine Coast	21 Dec 96	Tony Greenfield	885-5539
Terrace	26 Dec 96	Diane Weismiller	635-6984
Vancouver	22 Dec 96	George Clulow	438-7639
Vaseux Lake	24 Dec 96	Dick Cannings	496-4019
		or Steve Cannings	492-2303
Vernon	22 Dec 96	Mary Collins	542-5673
		or Phil Gehlen	542-8053
Victoria	21 Dec 96	David Pearce	658-0295
Wells Gray Park	28 Dec 96	Trevor Goward	674-2553
Whistler	22 Dec 96	Max Gotz	932-7247
White Rock and Surrey	4 Jan 97	Ian Robertson	530-1080
Williams Lake	4 Jan 97	Anna Roberts	392-5000

**WASHINGTON STATE BORDER AREAS**

LOCALITY	DATE	ORGANIZER(S)	PHONE NO.
Bellingham	22 Dec 96	Joe Meche	(360) 738-0641
Padilla Bay	28 Dec 96	Keith/Jan Wiggers	(360) 757-0772
San Juan Ferry (Anacortes to Victoria)	30 Dec 96	Jim Duemmel	(360) 733-3448

For you long distance travellers this was seen in the October 1996 **Winging It:**  
Midway Atoll 29 Dec/5 Jan 97 Robert Pyle (415) 441-1106

NOTE: Interior Swan and Eagle Counts 12 January 1997 Contact: Rick Howie 578-7542

**AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE****John Cooper**

A professional naturalist, John undertakes environmental impact assessment and wildlife management projects around BC. John occasionally has projects which encourage volunteer participation by amateur birders.

**Eva Durance**

Eva, president of South Okanagan Naturalists Club, is an avid birder, a farmer, and a technical writer in natural sciences, agriculture, and environmental topics.

**R. Jerry Hertzig**

Jerry, who hails originally from Langley, has had a lifelong interest in birding. In the early 1960's his interest took a great leap when he had an opportunity to bird with both Greg Ryder and Al Grass. Since 1974 Princeton has been home to Jerry, who is currently collaborating on a checklist of birds for the Princeton area.

**Martin K. McNicholl**

Martin, our present Journal editor, has had an interest in birds from early childhood. An author or co-author of over 200 publications, and board member of 28 organizations, Martin continues his work as an ornithological field researcher. [see **BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST** 4(4): 5, for details.]

**David Stirling**

A naturalist and enthusiastic birder, David was employed in the Nature Interpretation and Research Division of Provincial Parks for 20 years. He is involved in organizing and leading world nature tours and is an honorary life member of the Victoria Natural History Society.

**Wright, Kenneth G.**

Kenneth has been an active volunteer and seasonal employee involved in the Harlequin Duck conservation program of the Pacific Wildlife Research Centre.

**Young, Lorna and Gavin**

Lorna, Gavin & family live on an orchard adjacent to Okanagan Mountain Park. They are interested in, and observant of, the nature which surrounds them and have enjoyed many memorable moments with the birds who share their property.