



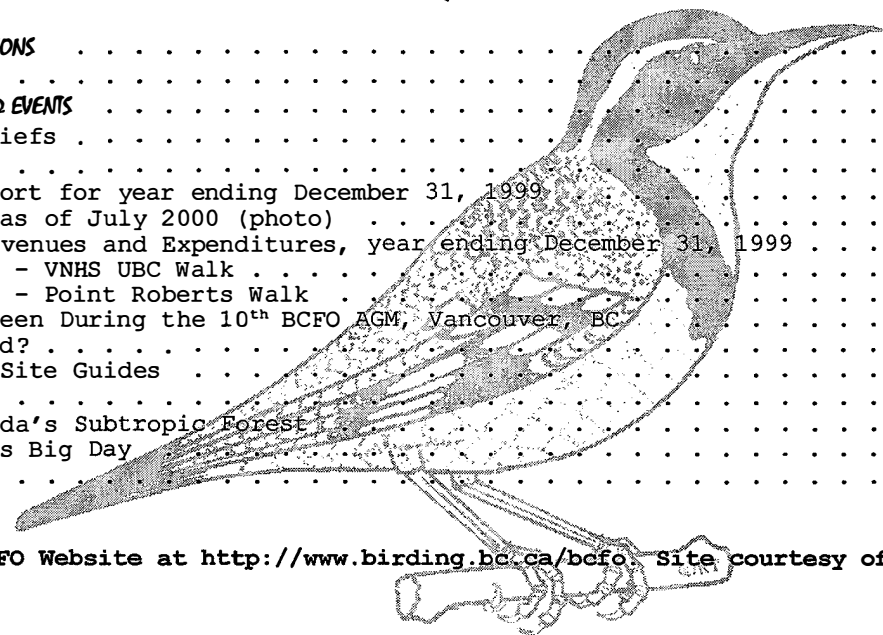
# BIRDING

ISSN 1206-1611

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS  
Volume 10 Number 3

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Check Out BCFO Website at <http://www.birding.bc.ca/bcfo> Site courtesy of Kevin Slagboom.

**B.C. BIRDING** is published four times a year by **British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO)**, P.O. Box 8059, Victoria, BC V8W 3R7.

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

Membership in BCFO is open to anyone interested in the study and 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.

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**BCFO Website:** <http://www.birding.bc.ca/bcfo>

**Membership Dues:**

Individual memberships	\$25.00
Library subscriptions	\$25.00
Junior memberships (age under 18)	\$10.00
U.S. and foreign memberships	(US)\$25.00

Memberships are for the calendar year.

For further information, or to join, write to:

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Victoria, BC V8W 3R7

Send material for publication in any format to the editors. We especially welcome bird-finding information for our "Site Guide" series and any articles about birding experiences, preferably but not necessarily, in British Columbia.

**Deadline for receipt of material for publication is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the March, June, September & December issues.**

Advertising rates available upon request.

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**EDITORS' NOTES & NOTIONS**

On behalf of the members and directors we would like to thank everyone, committee members, volunteers, speakers, leaders, and attendees who made the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual BCFO AGM such a success. Further we would like to thank outgoing board members [Tony Greenfield, Martin McNicholl, Prue Spitman] who have given BCFO so much of their time, energy and expertise. A hearty welcome to the new directors who have stepped forward [Sandra Kinsey, Laurie Rockwell, Brian Scott] in order to help keep this organization moving forward. A final round of thanks must go to John Morton, Dannie Carsen and Bird Studies Canada for providing the draw prizes for the AGM. We really appreciate your support.

Remember that the next issue is the CBC issue so please get us your CBC dates as soon as you know them. Thanks Guy Monty for providing us with Nanaimo's date during the AGM. Back issues of both the newsletter and the journal are available for purchase. Contact the Editors for details.

Members nearly did not get this issue. We had a computer crash and lost the hard drive (with all its files) and the mother board. Some material was safely in storage but we have lost all of the e-mail messages. If there was something which should have been in this issue but was not there - we're sorry!

Look for a membership renewal form and a membership list along with this issue. This Membership List is for the private use of BCFO Members. It is not to be used for any commercial purpose. We hope you like the format. Comments?? Please send both Russ Tkachuk and the Editors any errors, omissions or corrections. We will publish the changes in the December newsletter. Hank will be moving to Kelowna. This will be his last issue to mail out [Thanks for your help Hank] and Sheila Mosher has kindly offered to continue the mailout duties.

There are a whole lot of interesting letters in this issue. David recounts his catalyst bird, Don and his young birders crew 'swiftly' tell us of their Big Day achievements, John takes us to the subtropics of Canada, and Kyle provides us with several birding reports from the AGM. The AGM Minutes and Financial Statements have been printed in this issue so keep it readily available for the AGM next year [one suggestion was to hold it in the Dawson Creek area!]. Warblers for next year?!!

There is a new BCFO website at <http://www.birding.bc.ca/bcfo>. Kevin Slagboom of KS Design in Victoria has offered to host and update the website for us. Send Russ Tkachuk or the Editors any suggestions for items which you would like to see included on the site.

We better get this to the printers before our new computer gets ideas of rebellion.

Good Birding. Andy & Marilyn

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Let's keep going and growing! Let's make British Columbia Field Ornithologists a voice to be heard, a source of data and information, and a conduit for communication about bird resources.

As your new President, I have three major objectives in mind. The first is to increase our membership. I know there are many diverse organizations competing for members and dollars. However, we can offer something that can last a lifetime: a challenge, a sense of achievement, and the satisfaction that one is involved with bird conservation at the basic level. We must start with young people, especially the university students and graduate ornithologists who are embarking on their first field studies, and the young people who have developed a questioning interest in birds. We must also attract more of our established professional ornithologists. We currently boast over 200 members. If each of us convinces just one other person to join, we can double our strength in a year. The bodies are out there; it is a matter of offering tangible benefits and making people feel welcome.

The second objective is to bring professional and amateur ornithologists together. Indeed, that is one of the purposes listed in our Constitution. Professional researchers and managers can benefit greatly from those who devote some of their leisure time to the recreational observation of birds. The two groups have a common goal - conservation - and they can achieve that goal if they work together.

At our recent Annual General Meeting, Wayne Campbell offered a challenge to BCFO - for our members to be principal contributors of bird observation data in the province. We have been given an opportunity to ensure that our personal records are put to good use. Under the wing of the BC Wild Bird Trust, a new wildlife centre has been established in Victoria. It will serve as a repository of sight-records, photographs, sound recordings, and scientific literature. It will be accessible to all, including BCFO members. At the same meeting, Dick Cannings challenged us to continue our efforts in support of Bird Studies Canada by participating in surveys of breeding birds, waterbirds, and owls. We should accept both challenges on the basis that the two programs can and must compliment each other.

And that brings up my third objective: to ensure that protocols are established between governments, professional ornithologists, private consultants, non-profit societies and dedicated birders - protocols that ensure the smooth exchange of BC bird data between these groups. Such exchange is essential if we are to build a solid base from which to manage birds and their habitats.

The fourth volume of *Birds of British Columbia* is now at the press. Wayne Campbell and his fellow co-authors deserve tremendous credit for dedicating more than eight years of their lives to this magnificent publication. But is the work finished? No! New information continues to pour in. A revision of these volumes will be warranted before we know it - a task that may very well be taken on by members of BCFO. They will need our support. Professionals and amateurs alike can contribute valuable information simply by recording their observations diligently, and then, under the protocols that I mention, making them available to others.

So, start now. Keep accurate and detailed field notes of every bird you observe, no matter where you are in the province. Make your leisure time both satisfying and productive.

Bryan Gates  
President  
BCFO

## UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

by Martin K. McNicholl

- Sept. 8-10 2000 **WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION 75<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**, Fairbanks, Alaska. Contact: Andrea Swingey, Alaska Bird Observatory, Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK 99708-0505, USA; phone (907)451-7059.
- Sept. 21-24 2000 **FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS FALL GENERAL MEETING**, Chilliwack, BC. Contact: Heather Larstone, 4483 Wilson Road, Yarrow, BC V2R 5C5; phone (604)823-6039 or Hazel Cannings; phone (604)858-0803.
- Oct. 11-15 2000 **2<sup>nd</sup> NORTH AMERICAN DUCK CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP**, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Contact: Bob Clark, Canadian Wildlife Service, 115 Perimeter Road, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X4.
- Oct. 24-25 2000 **THE ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION OF THE WILLOW FLYCATCHER**, Tempe, Arizona. Contact: Mark Sogge, U.S.G.S. Biological Resources Division, Colorado Plateau Research Station, Box 5614/N, Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, USA; phone (520)556-7311, extension 232.
- Nov. 1-5 2000 **WATERBIRD SOCIETY 24<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKSHOPS**, Plymouth, Massachusetts. Contact: Katharine Parsons, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, Box 1770, 81 Stage Point Road, Manomet, MA 02345, USA; phone (508)224-6521, extension 228.
- Nov. 8-12 2000 **RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING**, Jonesboro, Arkansas. Contact: Jim Bednarz, Department of Biological Sciences, Box 599, State University, AR 72467, USA; phone (870)802-0824.
- Nov. 24-26 2000 **NORTH AMERICAN GULL CONFERENCE 2000**, Niagara Falls, Ontario. Contact: *Birders['] Journal*, Suite 393, 701 Rossland Road East, Whitby, ON L1N 9K3.
- August 2001 **119<sup>th</sup> STATED MEETING, AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION**, Seattle, Washington. Contacts and exact dates not yet announced.
- Aug. 11-17 2002 **23<sup>rd</sup> INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS**, Beijing, China. Contact: Professor Xu Weishu, Secretary-General of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Beijing Natural History Museum, 1-1-302, Beijing Science and Technology Commission Apt., Balizhuang, Haidian District, Beijing 100037, China; phone +86-10-6846-5605.



## BC BIRDING NEWS BRIEFS

compiled by Martin K. McNicholl

**Grasses & Pastricks Honoured** -At their 10 May 2000 meeting, the executive of the Langley Field Naturalists decided to confer Honorary membership on the club's founding President, Al Grass, and his wife, Jude, for their many contributions to nature study and environmental education in British Columbia. Both are well known for their work with the Burke Mountain Naturalists, Federation of B.C. Naturalists, Langley Field Naturalists, Vancouver Natural History Society and Wild Bird Trust of B.C. Al has published numerous bird articles and notes in various newsletters and journals, including both *B.C. BIRDING* and *B.C. Birds*. He is also an outstanding nature photographer and entertaining and informative lecturer. Jude's contributions to B.C. ornithology include many years of service as compiler for the Ladner Christmas Bird Count, co-ordinator of a raptor survey in the lower mainland, former chair and current member of the Birding Section Committee of the Vancouver Naturalist History Society, and founding Editor of the *Wandering Tattler*. Honorary Memberships were also conferred on another early LFN President, Mary Pastrick, and her husband Herb.

Their contributions to natural history study and conservation in the Langley area are wide-ranging. Of particular interest to ornithologists, is their participation in local raptor surveys for over 25 years and their monitoring of bluebird trails in interior B.C. -announcement in Anonymous. 2000. *Langley Field Nat. Newsletter* June 2000:1.

**Whittington Appointed** -Readers who were saddened to learn of the closing of "The Field-Naturalist" this spring (*BC BIRDING* 10(2):2, 2000), will be delighted to learn that its owner, Bruce Whittington, has been appointed Executive Director of the Habitat Acquisition Trust in Victoria. As human population pressures increasingly encroach on the remnants of natural habitat, it is reassuring to have somebody with Bruce's energy and talents at the helm of efforts to preserve habitat on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. -based partly on personal comm. B. Whittington to MKM 11 June 2000.

**Wandering Bluebird** -The latest compilation of "Significant Encounters" of birds banded in North America includes a Mountain Bluebird banded by Rachel Holt near Golden, B.C. in June 1994 and found in a nest box about 800 km. farther south in Idaho in June 1996 -based on J. B. Dunning, Jr. *North. Amer. Bird Bander* 25:23-27, 2000.

**Efforts of Lower Mainland Birders Recognized** -Most of the naturalists presented with awards at the 26 April 2000 annual general meeting of the Vancouver Natural History Society are at least casual birders. Awards that went to more prominent birders included the Ney Award to Eric Greenwood, a former Treasurer, former member of the Birding Section Committee and initiator of bird surveys at Terra Nova in Richmond and a Garibaldi Award to BCFO Secretary Jo Ann MacKenzie for her long service to the Vancouver Bird Records Committee and as an operator of Vancouver's Rare Bird Alert. -based on Anonymous. *Vancouver Nat.* 2(2):13-14, 2000.

**Posthumous Award to Brooks** -At its 2000 annual general meeting, the Federation of B.C. Naturalists awarded its Elton Anderson Award for contributions to the federation to the late Alan Brooks, who was also a member of BCFO -based on Anonymous. *B.C. Nat.* 38(3):17, 2000.

**Burnaby Awards Grasses** -In addition to being named Honorary Members of the Langley Field Naturalists (see above), Al and Jude Grass have recently received the City of Burnaby Environmental Education Award -Anonymous. *B.C. Nat.* 38(3):27, 2000.

**Latest Changes to Official Bird Names** -The check-list committee of the American Ornithologists' Union has published its first supplement since the publication of the seventh edition of the check-list of North American birds in 1998 (*Auk* 117:847-858, 2000). The number of species now officially recognized as having occurred in North and Central America and the Caribbean is 2,023, up from 2,008. The increase results from straying of some species into the check-list area and some splitting of previously recognized species into two or more species. As usual, there are also some name changes. Changes to species on British Columbia's check-list are:

- 1) The English name of *Clangula hyemalis* is now Long-tailed Duck (as long used in Europe) instead of Oldsquaw.
- 2) The English name of *Centrocercus urophasianus* is now Greater Sage-Grouse, one of two species split from the former Sage Grouse.
- 3) The Latin name of South Polar Skua is now *Stercorarius maccormicki* instead of *Catharacta maccormicki*, resulting from the merging of two genera.
- 4) The latin name of Black-billed Magpie is now *Pica hudsonia* instead of *Pica pica*, as these are now considered two species (i.e., readers who have seen magpies in both B.C. and Europe can add a new "tick" to their life lists).
- 5) The Latin name of Black-capped Chickadee is now *Poecile atricapilla* (a spelling correction from *Poecile atricapillus*).
- 6) The Latin name of Boreal Chickadee is now *Poecile hudsonica* (a spelling correction from *Poecile hudsonicus*).



## SOCIETY NEWS

**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS  
MINUTES OF THE 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 12 AUGUST 2000  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER, B.C.**

**1. Introduction**

President Tony Greenfield called the meeting of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists (BCFO) to order at 12:15 p.m.

**2. Minutes of the 1999 Annual General Meeting**

The meeting was held 19 June, in Oliver. The Minutes (published in the September 1999 issue of *BC Birding*), were read by Tony. *Motion: To approve the Minutes as published; by Bryan Gates, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Laurie Rockwell. Carried.*

**3. Business Arising from the Minutes of the 1999 AGM**

None.

**4. Treasurer's Report**

Jim Fliczuk distributed copies of the Statement of Revenues and Expenditures, and presented his report.

There was a small surplus of \$331.00, unlike 1998 and 1997 when the Society had surpluses of \$7,660 and \$3,972 respectively. The near "break-even" amount in 1999 was due to primarily to reduced membership revenues, and not having an AGM Extension field trip last year. At 31 December 1999, the Balance was \$18,651.00. *Motion: To accept the Treasurer's Report; by Russ Tkachuk, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ian Robertson. Carried.*

**5. Membership Report**

Russ Tkachuk distributed copies, and presented his report. The paid-up membership as of 12 August 2000 was 214. At the time of the previous Annual General Meeting,, there were 185 members. A list of current members will be distributed with the September the newsletter.

**6. Newsletter Report**

**BC BIRDING** co-editor Marilyn Buhler asked for a show of hands of those who had access to internet web sites, to determine the value of reprinting articles of interest. Although the editors were able to produce four full issues of the newsletter last year, members were reminded of the on-going need for articles, especially birding site guides. Marilyn thanked all those who contributed articles. She also thanked Hank VanderPol for taking care of newsletter distribution; this task will pass to Sheila Mosher after the next issue.

**7. Journal Report**

**BRITISH COLUMBIA BIRDS** editor Martin McNicholl reported recent progress. The 1999 issue (#9) is not quite ready; more submissions are needed. While that is being completed, he is working on volumes #10 and #11.

**8. President's Report**

Tony Greenfield, out-going President, introduced and thanked the 1999/2000 Directors: Bryan Gates (Vice-President), Jim Fliczuk (Treasurer) Jo Ann MacKenzie (Secretary), Russ Tkachuk (Membership), Martin McNicholl, Hank VanderPol, and Ian Robertson (Directors-at-Large). He also thanked Prue Spitmann, who had served previously, and resigned as a Director during the year. He also introduced the Society's first Archivist, Hue MacKenzie, who has been busy collecting complete sets of the publications, Minutes, Personal Profiles

of the society's officers, preparing a list of past officers, a "Record of BCFO Support to Non-BCFO Organizations", and a statement of what the Society does.

Publication editors Andy and Marilyn Buhler (newsletter) and Martin McNicholl (journal) were thanked for their on-going dedication to their tasks.

Gary Davidson was thanked for chairing the Bird Records Committee for 7 years, since its inception; he will further be thanked with an expression of our appreciation in the amount of \$100. Chris Siddle also thanked Gary for his efforts in attempting to keep the Committee going. Gary resigned as Chair at the end of 1999. The committee had faced several problems, and is presently "on hold"; the situation regarding rare bird reports is uncertain at present.

Ev Miyasaki was thanked for serving as the Society's Constitutional expert, and as Conference Planning Coordinator. Local conference committee members Ian Robertson (Chair), Jude Grass, Larry Cowan, Hue and Jo Ann MacKenzie, and Martin McNicholl were also thanked.

Marian Porter was thanked for leading the Spotted Owl field trip. Members have shown an interest in having more field trips. A pelagic trip is scheduled to take place September 23, 2000. A trip to search for White-tailed Ptarmigan has been discussed; a trip to look for Rock Ptarmigan would be fraught with difficulties.

Tony reported that the Board has adopted a policy of budgeting \$1,000 per annum, or an amount otherwise affordable, for contribution to an individual or organization that is conducting research or acquiring habitat important to birds in British Columbia. Guy Monty thanked BCFO for the \$750 contribution to the Nanaimo Estuary Study Group.

Tony went on to remind us that our members participate in many surveys during the year; that BCFO is the organization of the active ornithologists and birders of the province. Membership has been static for the past few years; perhaps the number of enthusiastic field birders in B.C. is limited. The Society should strive to become more involved with the Wild Bird Trust's new study centre in Victoria.

Regarding future Annual General Meetings, Tony asked members to suggest locations which have local clubs and suitable facilities. He thanked those present for attending this meeting, and expressed particular thanks to our young members, who represent the future of the organization.

On behalf of the members, Bryan Gates thanked Tony for his service and contribution to the society.

#### **9. Election of Directors 2000-2001**

Three new Directors were sought to replace Tony Greenfield and Martin McNicholl whose terms of office have expired, and Prue Spitmann who resigned during the year. Nominees Brian Scott (Langley) and Laurie Rockwell (Summerland) agreed to serve and were elected by acclamation. Shortly thereafter, Sandra Kinsey (Prince George) agreed to serve, followed by: *Motion to Acclaim; by Dick Cannings, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ian Robertson. Carried.* The three new Directors were welcomed to the Board.

#### **10. Other Business**

Wayne Weber asked for the floor to clarify a misunderstanding regarding some correspondence having to do with Delta Council's new parking restrictions on the north shore of Boundary Bay. Bryan Gates responded on behalf of the Directors.

Bryan next announced that there are a few spaces still available for the pelagic trip out of Ucluelet on Saturday, 23 September.

Russ Tkachuk reminded members of the BCFO website, maintained by Kevin Slagboom of KS Design. The site is: <http://www.birding.bc.ca/bcfo>

Tony asked for a show of hands regarding holding the next annual meeting in Dawson Creek, in June, 2001; 2/3 of those present indicated willingness to travel there for the event.

There was no other business from the floor.

### 11. Adjournment

*Motion to adjourn; by Ian Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Robyn Abear. Carried.*

The meeting was adjourned by Tony Greenfield at 2:36 p.m.

Jo Ann MacKenzie  
Secretary



### Treasurer's Report For the year ending December 31, 1999

The year ending December 31, 1999, was essentially a break-even year with a small surplus of \$331, unlike the previous two years when our Society had surpluses of \$7,660 in 1998 and \$3,972 in 1997. This turnaround from surpluses in 1998 and 97 to breaking even in 1999 came about primarily from lesser membership revenues, down \$931 and \$498 respectively from our 1998 and 97 membership revenues, and from discontinuing our AGM extension field trips. These extension trips contributed \$3,365 and \$273 to our 1998 and 97 surpluses. Donation revenue came primarily from Directors; their donations were equal to amounts paid to reimburse them for travel expenses incurred to attend Board meetings. The remaining donation revenue came from our general membership. Our Society is a registered charitable organization and we issue tax-deductible receipts for your donations.

The turnaround from surpluses in 1998 and 97 to a break-even position in 1999 also came about from increases in our printing and postage expenditures and from increases to donation expenditures made to support worthy ornithological projects. Your Board of Directors approved donations of \$500 to the Conference on Biology and Management of Species and Habitats at Risk, and of \$750 to the Nanaimo Estuary Study Group. These donations helped to underwrite conference costs and bird survey data analysis costs in the Nanaimo River estuary.

The 2000 Budget reflects your Directors' view that the British Columbia Field Ornithologists will likely break even again next year so long as membership numbers increase and our operating expenses remain approximately neutral.

Jim Fliczuk, Treasurer



**BCFO Directors, July 2000**

L-R: Bryan Gates, Tony Greenfield,  
Martin McNichol, Russ Tkachuk,  
Jim Fliczuk, Ian Robertson,  
Hank VanderPol, Jo Ann MacKenzie



**British Columbia Field Ornithologist  
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures  
Year Ended December 31, 1999**

REVENUES			BUDGET
	1999	1998	2000
Membership	\$ 5,306	\$ 6,237	\$ 6,000
AGM extension	-	10,270	-
AGM fees	3,360	2,337	1,000
Donations	529	-	1,000
Field trips	-	450	1,000
Advertising	115	270	200
Interest & other income	593	295	700
	9,572	12,199	11,000
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	\$ 331	\$ 7,660	\$ 900

**BALANCE SHEET  
At December 31, 1999**

	1999	1998
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current Assets		
Cash	\$ 2,850	\$ 20,119
Term Deposit 4.45%, Jan 4, 2001	15,523	-
Receivables	278	381
	\$ 18,651	\$ 20,500
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>		
Current Liabilities		
Payables & accrued liabilities	\$ 1,200	\$ 3,179
Deferred revenue	1,475	1,676
Members' Equity		
Accumulated surplus		
Opening balance	15,645	7,985
Surplus for the year	331	7,660
	15,976	15,645
	\$ 18,651	\$ 20,500

Signed by:

Tony Greenfield, Director

Jim Fliczuk, Director

**Birding Reports - VNHS UBC Walk**

by Marian Coope  
4635 Bellevue Drive  
Vancouver, BC V6R 1E7

Kyle Elliott led his walk at 8 am on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2000 around the Museum of Anthropology grounds. When I arrived there were 35 birders, which is a very large group, so I offered to take some of them in a reverse circle as I knew the area well. Some eight people joined me. [Species list is combined with Kyle's species list below.]

**Birding Reports - VNHS UBC Walk**

by Kyle H. Elliott  
11701 Cascade Drive  
Delta, BC V4E 3C3

Saturday, August 12:

This was a Vancouver Natural History Society field trip that happened to coincide with the BCFO Annual General Meeting. Fortunately, the field trip was to the Museum of Anthropology which is a five minute walk from where the conference was taking place. This is a well-known migrant trap, and we were hoping for something rare! So many people showed up (30+) that we split into two groups, with Marian Coope taking the second group. Our group chased (unsuccessfully!) after a hummer that flew by. This lead us into the deciduous woodlot at the south edge of the museum grounds. After being led astray by several Gray Squirrel calls, we heard an odd squealing noise. I was sure that I had heard it before, so passed it off as a Gray Squirrel. However, a sharp pair of eyes picked out a begging young Barred Owl (the down was still visible on the head). Crows mobbed another Barred Owl (possibly a parent coming to feed the youngster). We followed these two into a ravine where they passed out of our sight.

Shortly thereafter we met up with Marian's group which had been birding the fence-line behind the museum. They had several migrants, including a Western Tanager and several warblers. We pointed out an owl sitting quietly in the open back in the forested area they had just walked through. That made three for the day! Unfortunately, we were not able to locate any migrants although someone saw a Swainson's Thrush (more often heard than seen!)

The walk wound its way back through the Rose Gardens to the Gage Centre, where people were able to do a little 'movie-watching' through their binoculars. Along the way we picked up a Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker and Cedar Waxwings. All in all, a nice start to the morning.

## Species List (35 species)

Glaucous-winged Gull	Cliff Swallow	Cedar Waxwing
Rock Dove	Barn Swallow	Orange-crowned Warbler
Barred Owl (2)	Black-capped Chickadee	Yellow Warbler
Vaux's Swift	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Rufous Hummingbird	Bushtit	MacGillivray's Warbler
Northern Flicker	Brown Creeper	Western Tanager
Pacific Slope Flycatcher	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Song Sparrow
Warbling Vireo	Winter Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Steller's Jay	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Spotted Towhee
Northwestern Crow	Swainson's Thrush	House Finch
Tree Swallow	American Robin	House Sparrow
Violet-Green Swallow	European Starling	

## Birding Reports - Point Roberts Walk

by Kyle H. Elliott  
11701 Cascade Drive  
Delta, BC V4E 3C3

Sunday, August 13:

We started with beautiful weather at Lighthouse Marine Park. Many Pelagic and a few Brandt's and Double-crested Cormorants, as well as Surf Scoters, flew by every few minutes. A Caspian Tern visited for a while. Bonaparte Gulls, California Gulls and a few Common Terns fished off the point. Around the corner we saw both a Heermann's Gull and Harlequin Duck in the kelp forest. Back at the parking lot, Heather Pratt spotted a Western Kingbird on a wire. Despite a concerted effort to turn this into a Tropical Kingbird, several birders noted white outer tail feathers when it flew off.

A short stop by the marina produced Killdeer and Sanderling. Next, over to Lily Point. From the vista overlooking Boundary Bay, we had Hutton's and Warbling Vireo, Pacific Slope Flycatcher and Bewick's Wren, as well as Red-necked Grebe below. The trail towards the point yielded Band-tailed Pigeon, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak and another, tailless, Hutton's Vireo. Overlooking the Harbour Seals at the point, we got a taste of what being a bird is like, both because of our height and because we shared some elderberry jam.

Finally, we ended the day (down a few people as some had left for Victoria!) at the Tsawwassen ferry jetty. Willet and, further out, Black Oystercatcher, made their usual appearance on the south side. Thanks to everyone who made the trip (especially Marian Porter who missed us at Lily Point!) I thoroughly enjoyed the day and hope everyone else did as well.

### Species List, in no particular order (56 species)

Common Loon	Ring-billed Gull	Tree Swallow
Red-necked Grebe	California Gull	Violet-Green Swallow
Pelagic Cormorant	GW X Western Gull (hybrid)	Barn Swallow
Double-crested Cormorant	Glaucous-winged Gull	Black-capped Chickadee
Brandt's Cormorant	Common Tern	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Great Blue Heron	Caspian Tern	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Harlequin Duck	Rufous Hummingbird	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Surf Scoter	alcid sp. (poss. Rhino Auklet)	Bewick's Wren
White-winged Scoter	Rock Dove	Winter Wren
Bald Eagle	Band-tailed Pigeon	Bushtit
Cooper's Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	European Starling
Red-tailed Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing
Killdeer	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Black-throated Grey Warbler
Black Oystercatcher	Pacific Slope Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Willet	Western Kingbird	Black-headed Grosbeak
Sanderling	Hutton's Vireo	Savannah Sparrow
peeps (likely Westerns)	Warbling Vireo	Spotted Towhee
Bonaparte's Gull	Northwestern Crow	Brewer's Blackbird
Heermann's Gull	Common Raven	House Finch
Mew Gull		American Goldfinch

## List of Birds Seen During the 10<sup>th</sup> BCFO AGM, Vancouver, BC

compiled by Larry Cowan  
1988 Campbell Avenue  
Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 4T2

### Species List (125 species)

Common Loon	Sanderling	Barn Swallow
Pied-billed Grebe	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Steller's Jay
Red-necked Grebe	Western Sandpiper	Northwestern Crow
Double-crested Cormorant	Least Sandpiper	Common Raven
Brandt's Cormorant	Baird's Sandpiper	Black-capped Chickadee
Pelagic Cormorant	Pectoral Sandpiper	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Great Blue Heron	Short-billed Dowitcher	Bushtit
Green Heron	Long-billed Dowitcher	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Canada Goose	Red-necked Phalarope	Brown Creeper
Wood Duck	Bonaparte's Gull	Bewick's Wren
Green-winged Teal	Heermann's Gull	Winter Wren
Mallard	Mew Gull	Marsh Wren
Northern Pintail	Ring-billed Gull	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Blue-winged Teal	California Gull	Swainson's Thrush
Cinnamon Teal	Glaucous-winged Gull	American Robin
Northern Shoveler	Caspian Tern	Cedar Waxwing
Gadwall	Common Tern	European Starling
American Wigeon	<i>alcid species</i>	Cassin's Vireo
Canvasback	( <i>Rhinoceros Auklet?</i> )	Hutton's Vireo
Harlequin Duck	Rock Dove	Warbling Vireo
Surf Scoter	Band-tailed Pigeon	Red-eyed Vireo
White-winged Scoter	Barred Owl	Orange-crowned Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Black Swift	Yellow Warbler
Common Merganser	Vaux's Swift	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Rufous Hummingbird	Black-throated Gray Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Belted Kingfisher	MacGillivray's Warbler
Osprey	Red-breasted Sapsucker	Common Yellowthroat
Bald Eagle	Downy Woodpecker	Wilson's Warbler
Northern Harrier	Hairy Woodpecker	Western Tanager
Cooper's Hawk	Northern Flicker	Black-headed Grosbeak
Red-tailed Hawk	Pileated Woodpecker	Spotted Towhee
Peregrine Falcon	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Savannah Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Western Wood-Pewee	Song Sparrow
American Coot	Least Flycatcher	White-crowned Sparrow
Black-bellied Plover	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Red-winged Blackbird
<i>Golden-Plover species</i>	Western Kingbird	Brewer's Blackbird
Semipalmated Plover	Eastern Kingbird	Brown-headed Cowbird
Killdeer	Purple Martin	Bullock's Oriole
Black Oystercatcher	Tree Swallow	House Finch
Greater Yellowlegs	Violet-green Swallow	Pine Siskin
Lesser Yellowlegs	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	American Goldfinch
Willet	Bank Swallow	House Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Cliff Swallow	

### Birding in Canada's Subtropic Forest (continued from page 18)

As May and June progress we can look forward to Hooded Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Summer Tanager, Carolina Wren and Acadian Flycatcher. Rondeau's Tulip Tree Trail presents opportunities for: American Redstart, Carolina Chickadees, White-eyed Vireo and Wood Duck. King Rail, Sandhill Crane and Least Bittern in the Big Creek Marsh at Long Point, will add another dimension to our birding experience in Canada's 'Deep South'.

EDITORS' NOTE: John has an audio CD of **Bird Songs of the Great Lakes** in progress.

## My Catalyst Bird?

by David Stirling  
330-1870 McKenzie Avenue  
Victoria, BC V8N 4X3

I don't remember my exact catalyst bird. I think I was always interested in birds as well as mammals, plants, butterflies and frogs. One winter when I was twelve I really got into birdwatching [the term 'birding' was not yet invented.] It was -30°F. While peering out through a hole in a frosted window I saw fluffed-out Black-capped Chickadees peeling the hulls from oat kernels and a flock of Snow Buntings drifting over the farm yard cracking seeds from pig weed plants sticking above the snow. The birds' looked so cold and hungry. Why not help our "feathered friends" by increasing their food supply - and I wanted to get closer looks.

I scattered buckets of weed seeds, of which we had plenty, on the hard packed snow on my daily rounds to feed the chickens and other livestock. On a board near the house I put out oats and kitchen scraps. By March I had hundreds of Snow Buntings and as many Redpolls underfoot at feeding time. Blue Jays, Magpies, Gray Jays and chickadees were daily visitors for the other offerings. Flocks of Sharp-tailed Grouse would walk in. They, always wary, would land in a field some distance away then creep slowly to the grain with frequent stops to check for enemies. Ruffed Grouse arrived in the crepuscular hours. Once I saw one knocked over and carried off by a Great Horned Owl. A Northern Shrike took up residence stirring up some consternation among the Redpolls.

At last it was spring. How to identify the new birds that were flying in? I didn't have a field guide or binoculars. Local people weren't helpful either. Sandhill Cranes gliding over at great height were turkeys, Pine Grosbeaks were muskeg robins, juncos were Java sparrows, flickers were sapsuckers. Fortunately, my father, a roll-your-own smoker, bought Imperial Tobacco that had several bird cards in each can [tobacco may have some educational value]. These cards featured Allan Brooks illustrations from P.A. Taverner's Birds of Canada. Another id. goody was a series of cards, 'Useful Birds of North America', obtainable from Arm & Hammer brand baking soda for "one box top and ten cents in coin or stamps." The Family Herald and Weekly Star had a natural history column and a series called "Our Furred and Feathered Friends." With these aids I waded into the wonderful but often frustrating fun of birdwatching. I made a few mistakes such as calling my first Black Tern a Black-bellied Plover. I learned a lot of bird lore too. The Peregrine Falcon "... is a true sportsman ... captures game in straight pursuit instead of crafty surprise." "Redpolls should be hailed with pleasure for the good they do in destroying weed seeds." The Great Horned Owl is "the evil genius of the woods ... He is an aerial pirate and a highway robber."

The snow melted. The free range chickens, were out foraging. Tilting their heads, they peered up with one eye and froze in a crouch position. Natural hawkwatchers, they were spotting migrating raptors, some of them only dots in the crisp blue sky. There were Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, groups of Rough-legged Hawks, Redtails, Harlan's Hawks. The sun, shining through the wings of lower birds, made them translucent. And the patterns! Like flying Cowichan sweaters. I am hooked! Perhaps, a chicken, variety White Leghorn or var. Barred Rock, was my catalyst bird.



### GUIDELINES FOR SITE GUIDES

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



**LETTERS TO THE EDITORS**

Barbara Begg: **Catalyst Birds - Remembrances**

Although I had always been happier outdoors, studying and identifying what I saw around me wasn't important. I just was comfortable with the warm, fuzzy feeling of being surrounded by things natural.

I do remember names, whether correct, or not, being applied to some animals and plants. Great Blue herons were 'cranes', American Goldfinches were 'wild canaries'. Perhaps the fir needles we chewed to try to cover the smell of a stolen cigarette were correctly identified - I can't remember. I do, however, recall listening to Meadowlarks singing in the summer on southern Vancouver Island, where I have always lived, and Sky Larks larking over the airport, though at that time the airport was on Lansdowne Road, bordering Victoria city. But the Sky Lark wasn't my catalyst bird.

Many years later, the airport had been moved to North Saanich, much 'water had run under the bridge', and I had somehow come into possession of a hummingbird feeder. It was filled and hung outside the livingroom window. It was drawn to my attention that there was a pretty, pink bird at the feeder and what on earth was it? A search through an old Peterson bird guide helped me identify the pink-breasted bird, which of course, was a House Finch. I wondered how I could have lived so long in this area and not noticed such a lovely bird! So the House Finch kindled in me new ways of enjoying nature, from the sport of listing to serious amateur study and travel.

Barbara Begg  
North Saanich, BC

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Larry Cowan: **Comments on the June 2000 edition of BC Birding**

First a lot of 'Somebody's' in the BCFO read the newsletter from cover to cover the day they receive it. This is a credit to the job you do and have done for the publication and the BCFO over the years. Having participated in such an undertaking in a previous hobby I know the amount of time and commitment involved.

Concerning Adrian's views on 'listers' and the space taken by the once a year intrusion in our newsletter. I must first confess that I am a '**lister**' but I also enjoy yearly trips to places like the Okanagan to once again hear a Meadowlark or a Canyon Wren. No new 'ticks' here. I guess he's not going to be too pleased about Ken's additional postscript of my listings in this issue. There was a time when remarks such as his would have raised my blood pressure a little but I have long since taken the attitude 'to each his own'. We all derive different pleasures from any hobby that we happen to become involved in. I except his opinions because as he says 'that is all they are'. Believe it or not there are a few articles during a years' publication of BC Birding that I have little interest in so I just 'read on'. There is no publication in print that satisfies every reader with every article.

His comments on the four letter codes hopefully come from not realizing the benefits of 'birding shorthand' during a CBC or breeding bird survey. Having taken part in many of each and also lengthy local surveys to inventory such areas as Colony Farm, and the Burrard Inlet, I can personally attest to it's convenience. Its use in newsletter articles normally occurs only when the species has been previously mentioned using its full name.

Well hopefully I'm not the only feedback you receive confirming that members actually do read BC Birding.

Keep up the good work.

Larry Cowan  
Port Coquitlam

**Calvin Gehlen: On Listers and Listing**

After reading the latest issue of *BC Birding*, specifically Adrian Leather's letter and your reply, I am compelled to write my own 'Letter to the Editor'.

Initially, what struck me was Adrian's distaste for 'listing' birders. Next, I was puzzled by the oxymoronic closing of the letter that stated "...I should know only too well that the politically correct stance is that all bird enthusiasts should be able to enjoy the hobby in whichever form they choose."

That statement is one I can agree with, but as for the rest of the letter, I would encourage Adrian to have a more open mind.

To the point:

First: people who keep lists and endeavor to increase them (herein called 'listers') are not trying to change the way a casual observer watches birds.

Second: birding is not exactly a "simple and wonderful hobby". Wonderful, yes; simple, I don't think so, especially when one ventures beyond the basic species. I'm sure ornithologists and biologists appreciate this scientific approach to birding.

Third: I must heartily disagree that "almost anybody can see any bird they wish so long as they have the relevant info, or local guide, a stack of money, and a profession that allows lots of free time to chase down birds". Birds are seen and identified by competence and diligence, not with travel, money or free time.

Listers share a love for seeing a new species as much as a casual birder. They are simply more eager to see it. Listers brag about their counts to encourage others to see something new. Listers add to the excitement by adding friendly competition to an already rewarding hobby. As a devout lister, I cannot tell you how many times I have gone birding, had a great day, and added nothing new to my list. I have also had those special days when I have added something new. It's a bonus. I had a pleasant day of birding and I added something to my list.

A particular event recently comes to mind. While competing in the Okanagan Big Day Challenge, we came upon a nesting Black-backed Woodpecker. Our entire group stopped for several minutes to admire this beautiful bird.

You see, us listers have not forgotten the simple pleasures of birding, we just want to see and experience more of it.

Calvin Gehlen, Vancouver, BC

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**Doug Cooper: Thoughts on Bird-Listers' Corner and Catalyst Birds**

I, too, had a response to the Bird-Listers' Corner article in the March 2000 issue. Whenever an article like this appears I read it with mixed emotions. Envy is always there as I marvel at the incredible number of birds that people have seen. I also feel guilty as I am forced to face, once again, that fact that I do not really know how many world, North American, Canada, British Columbia, etc. birds I have seen. (The reasons behind this are varied and I will get back to this later in this letter). I also like to seek out the hidden human nature stories behind the stark numbers. In particular, Hue and Jo Ann MacKenzie's statistics invariably prompt me to wonder: What birds has Jo Ann seen that Hue has not, and vice versa? Do either of them have secret plots to overcome those differences? Does one of them ever sneak off without the other to do some covert birding?

Regarding your request for the 'Catalyst Bird' that triggered off an interest in birding, my bird was not actually a bird, it was a muskrat. It was in the summer of 1973. I had moved to Ottawa from Calgary to my first real job. I did not know too many people and found myself with a lot of free time on my hands. I was living in the eastern part of Ottawa, not too far from a wild area surrounding the Britannia Water Purification Plant. I was out wandering around my neighborhood when I stumbled across the area and was drawn to the paths that lead into it. There was a pond and my attention was drawn to a dark object moving on the surface of the water. I couldn't get close enough to see what it was. A

friend of mine (Thanks, Chris) had (presciently) given me a pair of binoculars the previous Christmas. I raced back to my apartment, got the binos and got back in time to discover that the dark object in the water was the shiny wet head of a muskrat. There were also some ducks on the water and, as I began to become more aware of the various noises and movements surrounding me, I saw that there were many other birds, few of which I could identify. As there are many more varieties of birds than there are muskrats, this led me to get my first bird identification book, a Peterson guide to the Birds of Eastern North America. I began to fill my free hours with birding, going out nearly every day. The rest, as they say, is history.

This leads me back to the slightly shameful fact of the vagueness of my life list. In that first flush of my birding life, I would carefully document the place and date of each 'new' bird beside its name in the index of my Eastern field guide. That was pretty well the extent my documentation.

The rise in number of my life-list was exponential. The exact number, unfortunately, became less than exact when I had the misfortune of losing my field guide. This happened in the spring of 1974. By that time I had decided to return to Calgary, so, as a replacement for my Eastern bird field guide, I purchased a Peterson Western Bird field guide. I also began to write down the sightings from my birding outings in the first of a series of small notebooks, in order to avoid another documentation disaster.

I have just leafed through that first notebook. The listings begin in April of 1974. Other than the date and a list of the birds I saw, there is not much more written down but there are a few clues as to the excitement of those early days. I had adopted the habit of putting an asterisk beside the name of any birds I had seen that were new to me. From the entry for Wednesday, May 15, I have listed seven warblers, five of which have asterisks beside their names. The next entry is dated May 17. At the top I have written "What a day!" There follows a list of fourteen warbler names.

Reading that list brings back a strong visual memory of that day of May 17, 1974. I was on the south bank of the Ottawa River. The trees and bushes around me were alive with warblers resting up for their flight across the river. I would focus my binos on one warbler when another one would enter into the view. Often this would be a species I had never seen before. Before I could recover from the thrill there would appear another newcomer. I have never had another birding day like it.

I have another story from my early birding years that involves beginner's luck, serendipity and the thorny issue of 'lumping' vs 'splitting' of species. One of the thrills some of us birders live for is to spot a bird that is worthy of inclusion on the local birder's hot line or in the birder's corner of the newspaper. Such events in my birding life have been few and far between. The first occurred during that spring of 1974 in Ottawa. I was out birding in the Britannia area with my Western field guide. I spotted a warbler that looked like a Myrtle Warbler but had a yellow throat. This was in the days just before the lumping of Audubon and Myrtle warblers into 'Yellow-rumped Warblers' and a search of my Western field guide showed it to be a male Audubon's Warbler. This was another new species to me but I was a bit jaded by new warblers by then and had failed to look closely at the range map of the Audubon Warbler. I was pleased, but not much more, at the addition to my life-list. As I was leaving for home, I ran across another birder who was just arriving. In the way birders often have, he asked me what I had seen. I ran through the list of birds I thought were noteworthy, casually including the Audubon's Warbler. The fellow leaped into the air and asked me where I had seen it. I led him back to the spot where I remembered seeing it. To my lasting relief, it was still there.

At that time in Ottawa, there were two newspapers with birding columns and both mentioned me and my find, one kindly omitting and one accurately noting the facts that I was a beginner and that I was using a Western field guide. I still have carefully preserved the yellowing newspaper cuttings. My find was verified by more experienced birders, including Roger Foxall. Having my name mentioned in the same paragraph as that of Roger Foxall, who at that time was the Wayne Gretzky of the Ottawa birding fraternity/sorority, was almost too much for me to bear. I have never again reached such glorious birding heights, even though that relegation of the Audubon Warbler to that of a mere 'subspecies' has dimmed the shining light of my achievement somewhat.



Which leads me to the end of this rather long-winded note. My birding outings these days are neither as frequent nor as exciting (and too often are of the 'accidental' (\*) variety) as those heady days of May 1974, with a good day for warblers totaling two or three species. But my times spent birding remain very pleasurable, relaxing and rewarding. And I still am unsure of the exact number of my life-list. Put my Canada number down as somewhere between one hundred and five hundred.

(\*)Note: When I write of 'accidental birding', I don't mean the sighting of 'accidental' species, but rather birding that occurs by accident. As I do not have the free time I had when I was in my early twenties, much of my birding happens when I am driving somewhere, much to the worry of my family when I suddenly look away from the road ahead and shout out: "There is a ...!"

Doug Cooper  
Langley, BC

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#### Carlo Pavan: Teen Birder at the BCFO AGM

This past August I attended the BCFO AGM at UBC and had an excellent time, such a great time that I felt inspired to write about it.

I took the Duke Point-Tsawassen ferry and arrived in Vancouver early Friday morning with Guy Monty and his wife Donna. Guy and I had been hoping to see a 'certain bird' on the jetty on our arrival. We both knew it was there. The Vancouver RBA had reported it there just recently. However, neither of us had the courage to mention its name. This bird had been a jinxed bird for Guy for the past few years, and we didn't want to jinx it any further. As we drove off of the boat both Guy and I went into a panic trying to figure out how we were going to stop. We knew the bird had been reported in the compensation lagoon which was next to the terminal and we didn't want to waste any time driving back and forth along the jetty. Luckily, an exit to the parking lot appeared and we had a chance to duck out of the traffic. While we walked out towards the compensation lagoon we observed many Caspian Terns. Upon reaching the lagoon, we began our search. There was no sign of the bird. We walked along further and spotted a few peeps at the base of the lagoon. This was our last hope for the bird. I looked over the peeps carefully and decided there were both Least and Western Sandpipers picking about. After scanning the lagoon I resumed scanning further along the jetty. Just as I took a few steps to get a better view of the beach along the jetty Guy called out, "I've got it! I've got the Godwit!". You can imagine my response. There it was, a Marbled Godwit! It was much smaller than I had anticipated. It blended in perfectly with its surroundings. I had expected the bird to be much more conspicuous, although that is probably why I missed it in the first place. Don't chalk this up to disappointment though. This was still a stunning bird (camouflaged or not).

Just as we were finishing gawking at our life bird, Don Wilson and Ryan Tomlinson pulled up on to the side of the highway calling out "What are you seeing?" (the traditional birders' greeting). I couldn't believe my eyes! I thought, "Another teen birder? Here? Now? This is going to be a good weekend!". Was I right or what? Guy and I birded for a better part of that day with Ryan and Don, getting to know one another and watching Ryan rake in a legion of lifers (A Kelowna lad, this was Ryan's first time to the coast). We visited Blackie Spit but did not find the Whimbrel, much to Ryan's chagrin. Actually, I should say a Whimbrel was found but, upon closer inspection, it became a Long-billed Curlew much to Guy's and my chagrin (Oops! I have no excuse for a misidentification of that one). We then proceeded on to the Serpentine Fen where little other than a few misleading ducks and a Willow Flycatcher behaving like a kingfisher were found .

Guy and I continued on to Iona where we met other birders who would be attending the AGM and where we found more interesting birds. That night at the registration and social hour I met birders from all over the province - exactly what I had come to do. The next day I met more birders and learned about Dunlin, Boreal Owls and Harlequin Ducks.

I wasn't able to attend the field trips. On Saturday afternoon, just after the technical sessions, I caught the first bus from UBC to downtown Vancouver and then another

bus to Horseshoe Bay (this was my afternoon field trip, but I was looking at a different type of 'bird'). The ferry was late (typical) which enabled me to catch it and thus gave the perfect ending to the perfect weekend. A lifer was found, a friendship was born and, I didn't have to wait for the ferry.

Everyone who had a part in organizing the AGM this year really did a great job. I think the AGM is a particularly important event for the BCFO as it brings together both neophytes and birders who have some 'savoir faire' around the province. For those of us who may know only a few birders in our home locales, the AGM provides us with a great venue to meet with other like minded individuals, learn a few birding tips, find a few 'good birds' and enjoy the camaraderie that BC birders are so famous for.

Carlo Pavan  
Nanaimo, BC



### **Birding in Canada's Subtropic Forest**

by John Neville  
138 Castle Cross Road  
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2G2

Most North Americans do not look for, or expect to find Subtropical Forest in Canada. The Carolinian Woodland reaches westward from The Carolinas into Southern Ontario. Unfortunately, much of this forest has been lost to human settlement, intensive agriculture and logging. Remnants of this woodland can be found as far north as Toronto. It is not so hard to understand the presence of Carolinian Forest in Ontario when we consider geographically where the southern point of Point Pelee lies. It rests on the 42<sup>nd</sup> parallel. This is level with northern California to the west, and the Mediterranean Sea to the east. All or part of seventeen states are situated to the north of this location!

Thousands of humans migrate to Point Pelee National Park each May and autumn: to witness movement of huge numbers of birds. These avians are migrating to and from the great northern Boreal Forest. Our first walk to the tip of Point Pelee was on April 30<sup>th</sup>, a full two weeks ahead of the major songbird arrivals. We were rewarded to see several female Pine Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers resting in the deciduous trees. Some of these birds have just completed a one thousand (1,000) kilometer flight and all seemed, not surprisingly, to be asleep. As we progressed south over the sand and gravel bar we witnessed the hardship that wildlife encounters. The carcass of a dead swan lay in the shallows. The hind quarter of a deer and several gulls lay amongst driftwood and many white feathers. Close to the famous 'tip' of the Point, scattered amongst mussel shells were myriad tiny white sticks of detritus. On closer examination, we found that they were the fragile little bones of small birds! These warblers, vireos, flycatchers and many more had reached land too exhausted to sustain life. By the middle of May birders can expect to count at least 25 species of warbler per day.

However, these migrants are just a bonus if you are looking for Carolinian birds along the north shore of Lake Erie. Point Pelee National Park, Rondeau Provincial Park and Long Point are favoured places for this scarce habitat. The checklist for Long Point names 367 birds for a single year! Roaming the woods amongst hickory, three oak species, white pine and beech, I have been delighted to record the songs and calls of: Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Pine Warblers, Northern Cardinals and Brown Thrashers. The American Woodcock doing her 'distraction display' and the soft, sad, mournful sounds of the Mourning Dove are memorable to someone who lives west of the Rockies. At night I have recorded Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl and Whip-poor-will.

The cool winds off Lake Erie slow the advancing season. Sassafras, witch hazel and deciduous hardwood trees are only just developing buds. The carpet of dry leaves creates many sounds when disturbed: by soft breezes, Eastern Towhee (double foot scratching), or foraging Eastern gray squirrels. Sitting on an old beech log we were just enchanted by the insistent calls of the White-breasted Nuthatch, three kinds of woodpecker and Eastern chipmunks in Backus Woods. One white pine rose perfectly straight, high into the canopy. These trees were once coveted as masts by Nelson's navy two hundred years ago.

Continued on page 12

## The Three Swifts Big Day

by Don Wilson  
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Kelowna BC V1W 3L7

Now in its fifteenth year, the Okanagan Big Day Challenge was a special one for three of BC's young birders. I had the pleasure of driving a team consisting of 13 year old Russell Cannings of Naramata, Gabriel David, 15, of Victoria and Ryan Tomlinson, 15, of Kelowna. Credit for forming this team goes to Chris Charlesworth who paved the way for these keen birders to meet each other by telephone.

Ryan and I left Kelowna, May 29 at 10pm, picked up Russell in Penticton, and Gabriel in Okanagan Falls. Gabriel and his parents were spending a week at Vaseux Lake. It was agreed that I would only do the driving so any success the boys had would be theirs alone. That settled we headed up the White Lake Road to search for the team's first two target birds, Poorwill and Western Screech-Owl. Right on cue at midnight a gentle, but short-lived rain began falling and only the Poorwill was heard. Not to worry though, two more good locations for Screech-Owl remain.

It is traditional for challenge teams to think up a name for their group, so as we headed south for Irrigation Creek Road, the boys brain-stormed. For a while they thought 'Flawless Fledglings' would do but when they dipped out a staked-out Northern Saw-whet Owl, this name was quickly dropped. Nevertheless, Great Horned, Flammulated and Western Screech-Owls performed on cue, responding to Russell's vocal and recorder-flute imitations. With excitement mounting, Russell suggested we try for Barn Owl on the channel dike roads at the north end of Osoyoos Lake. Success again as Russell spot-lighted a Barn Owl perched on a fence post. A bonus was watching it gulp down a hapless mouse. It is 3 am, still without a team name and no Saw-whet Owl, but it was time to move to Mount Baldy to await the dawn chorus. Three teams were already there, silently waiting for first light. Shadowy figures moved away from the warmth of vehicles and, fortified by hot coffee, began hearing American Robins, Fox Sparrows, Boreal Chickadees, Hermit Thrushes, and Townsend's Warblers.

It was during our drive back down the mountain that the boys' enthusiasm at chasing down bird songs suggested the team's name, 'The Young and the Swift'. Spotting their third swift species, some Black Swifts flying low over Vernon's Swan Lake much later that day clinched the name.

This twenty-four birding challenge was additionally special for both Ryan and Gabriel. With less than two years of serious birding under his belt, Ryan had not made any trips to the South Okanagan until this year. Likewise for Gabriel who was making his first Okanagan birding trip. Russell, at 13, was already a veteran having accompanied his dad, Dick Cannings, on earlier years. Both Ryan and Gabriel took the time to get some quality looks at 'lifers'. This cost them some valuable time in the North Okanagan later on that evening, but as far as they were concerned it was worth it.

High and lows abound on Big Days. I heard expressions like, "OH! WOW!", as they had first ever looks at Lewis's Woodpeckers, Yellow-breasted Chats, Lark Sparrows, and Bobolinks. There were some low points. They missed Clay-colored Sparrows because late day strong winds suppressed this high-pitched songster. Amazingly, they also missed hearing or seeing either Sora or Virginia Rails, an omission for which they were duly awarded the annual Sour Grapes Trophy. Arguably, they missed what could have been the best bird of the day, a rare for the Okanagan Band-tailed Pigeon. This bird had been spotted by a visiting British birder while on a local birding trip led by a member of the Central Okanagan Naturalists. Despite knowing that he was going to be birding for about twenty-four hours starting at midnight, Ryan had joined this Saturday morning outing. The group was leaving the site when the visitor casually said, "Oh, there's a pigeon on the feeder". When Ryan took a look he said, "That's no regular pigeon, it's a Band-tailed". Ryan has just IDed a 'lifer' from studying his guides. Adding insult, Ryan, Chris Charlesworth, and I relocated the Band-tailed Pigeon at the same feeders the next afternoon.

Following a late evening supper at the Vernon A&W, the boys were still keen to find that elusive Saw-whet. It would be their seventh owl species for the day as both Pygmy and

Short-eared Owls had been tallied earlier. However, our luck ran out as the high winds continued and the normally very reliable stretch between kilometre 6 and 9 on the Beaver Lake Road was quiet. So, at 11 pm they reluctantly gave in having amassed a very credible 156. Homeward bound my car became strangely silent for the first time in twenty-three hours as three very tired birders fell fast asleep.

They wrote down some impressions the next day which I will include verbatim. Ryan "...didn't think it (24 hours) would go by so fast...a great feeling and experience and I would be happy to do it again". Russell "...did very well considering it was our first Bid Day and we didn't get some key birds". And Gabriel "...we felt as though we could keep birding forever, but I was surprised to collapse into a sleeping coma within minutes."

The traditional Monday morning count up in Penticton included hilariously told stories of the previous day's best birds and worst misses. I would be remiss if I did not mention that Chris Charlesworth's team of Calvin Gehlin of Vancouver, and Trevor Fodor and Jim Anderson of Kelowna narrowly edged out multi-year winner Dick Cannings and his team by one species, counting 164.

However, the real winners in this enjoyable, if sleepless, weekend are the birds and their vital habitat. This challenge day was run as a Baillie Birdathon with funds pledged to participants going to programs administered by Bird Studies Canada. Thank yous go to the organizing committee of the Big Day and the annual Meadowlark Festival of which it is a part.

So, next May, why don't some more of you set this Victoria Day weekend aside for some great Okanagan birding? How about bringing up a youth team or two from the coast as well?



### AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

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Kyle is a student at the University of BC and is on the VNHS's Birding Section Committee. He edits the *Wandering Tattler* and is working on a five-year update to *Vancouver Birds in 1995*. His goal for this winter is to track down the Slaty-backed Gull that never seems to be around when he is there.

#### John Neville

John, a naturalist living on Salt Spring Island, is interested in the recording of bird songs. He currently has five audio CDs to his credit and is working on a sixth. The Neville Recording website is at: <http://www.nevillerecording.com>.

#### David Sterling

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.

#### Don Wilson

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**EDITORS' NOTES:** Thanks also to everyone who sent **Letters to the Editors** for this issue. Your input was very much appreciated.