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The first confirmed record of Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* for British Columbia

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Abstract: A Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*), observed and photographed 52 km WSW of Tofino, B.C., on 2010 September 13, represents the first confirmed sighting of this species for the province.

Key words: British Columbia, extralimital occurrence, Great Shearwater, *Puffinus gravis*

On Monday 2010 September 13, we embarked on a pelagic trip from Tofino, Vancouver Island, B.C., in a vessel operated by "the Whale Centre". We steamed to a canyon at the shelf break at 48° 57'N 126°35'W, 52 km WSW of Tofino, where several trawlers were operating. Discards from these vessels had attracted large numbers of scavenging seabirds, principally Pink-footed Shearwaters (*Puffinus creatopus*), Black-footed Albatrosses (*Phoebastria nigripes*) and Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) that formed large rafts behind the fishing vessels. Among a raft of Pink-footed Shearwaters, NR sighted a bird he immediately recognised as a Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*), having seen many thousands previously during ship voyages around the Falklands and Tristan da Cunha. The bird exhibited all the classic features of a Great Shearwater: it was a large shearwater with dark brown feathers with paler fringing on the mantle, wing coverts and under-tail coverts creating a scaling effect. The remiges and retrices were darker plain brown. The pure white under-parts, breast and cheeks contrasted strikingly with the dark brown cap (which narrowed to a line on the nape) and the partial brown breast band. The bill and eye were black. The bird was watched as it rested on the water for over 10 minutes and at ranges down to 15m. For a photograph of the actual bird that was seen off Tofino, see Figure 1.



Figure 1. Great Shearwater seen off Tofino on 2010 September 13. Photo: Norman Ratcliffe.

A Great Shearwater, presumably the same individual, was observed in the same area a number of times on subsequent pelagic trips: it was inadvertently captured on a photograph and identified afterwards by Pep Arcos and was reported by Russell Cannings on the Seabird News Google group. There is one previous record of Great Shearwater for British Columbia on 2000 June 24, approxi-

mately 52 km southwest of Cape Beale (Toochin and Fenneman 2008), but this was not authenticated, so the sighting reported here represents the first confirmed sighting for the province. There are 14 previous records of Great Shearwaters in the north Pacific if one discounts the unconfirmed BC sighting: ten off California, two off Washington, one off Alaska and one off Oregon (Pearce 2002, Gilson 2010).

The Great Shearwater is an Atlantic species, breeding primarily on three islands in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago (c. 5 million breeding pairs) with a further 50-100 pairs on the Falklands Islands (Brooke 2004). Breeding occurs from late-September to mid-April (Brooke 2004). They are trans-Equatorial migrants, and satellite tracking of birds from Tristan da Cunha (Martin and Ronconi 2010) shows that birds move westwards to stage on the Patagonian shelf, before migrating rapidly north in May/June to reach the Grand Banks in July. There they stage before crossing the Atlantic in early September and migrating rapidly south along the West African coast to return to their colony to breed. Hence, it appears likely that the Tofino bird rounded Cape Horn during the first staging period before the migration instinct took it north to latitudes that would have been expected for Atlantic birds at this time of year.

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An endangered population and roadside mortality: three western Yellow-breasted Chat fatalities in the south Okanagan valley, British Columbia

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Abstract: During 2001-2008, three western Yellow-breasted Chats (*Icteria virens auricollis*) were found dead along roadsides in the south Okanagan valley, British Columbia. It is suspected that these were casualties of vehicular impacts but other causes of death cannot be ruled out. All were found within relatively close proximity to riparian habitat and in two cases within 50 m of known breeding territories. Two of the specimens were banded, one of which was found 15 km south of its banding location. Blood was observed on the mouth lining of one specimen and a broken tibiotarsus was detected in another specimen. No obvious trauma was noted on the third specimen. Despite the skulking nature of this species and their tendency to remain in thickets, this identifies roads as a potential threat to Yellow-breasted Chats.

Key words: Yellow-breasted Chat, *Icteria virens auricollis*, roadkill, habitat fragmentation, mortality, dispersal, Okanagan valley, British Columbia

Wildlife habitat fragmentation caused by increasing density of roads is recognized as problematic for survival of wildlife populations in an increasingly urbanized world

(Forman and Alexander 1998; Watts *et al.* 2007; Leu *et al.* 2008). One of the most common anthropogenic causes of avian mortality is collisions with vehicles (Harden 2002). In