

# Marshnotes<sup>®</sup>



**BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY  
SUMMER 2011**



# BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY

Managers of The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary since 1963

*~ dedicated to the study and conservation of migratory waterfowl ~*

## Marshnotes:

Editor: Patricia M. Banning-Lover  
Produced at Minerva House

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Circulation: 2,400

Published four times a year by:  
**The British Columbia Waterfowl Society,**  
**5191 Robertson Road,**  
**Delta, British Columbia**  
**V4K 3N2**

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Submissions: articles, photographs and letters for publication may be sent to the above address marked for the attention of Marshnotes. Please include your telephone number and the Editor will contact you.

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE  
OF MARSHNOTES  
October 10th 2011**

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Hours of operation:	Sanctuary Gate:	9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. (all year round)
	Gift Shop:	9.00 a.m. - Noon 1.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.
Admission:	Members:	Free
	Non-members:	Adults: \$5.00 Children (2-14 years) and Seniors (60+): \$2.50
School group tours:	Adults: \$2.50	Children (2-14 years) and Seniors (60+): \$1.50

**The Sanctuary is wheelchair accessible**

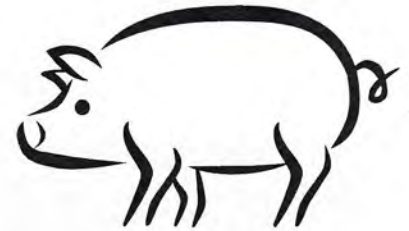
**School group tours by arrangement**

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# 23rd Annual PIG AND CORN ROAST

at the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary

**Saturday, September 10th 2011**



**Tickets are on sale at the Sanctuary Office**

Adults: \$20 each

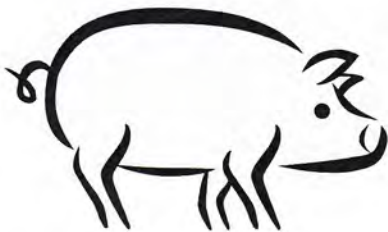
Kids: 6 years and under FREE

7-12 years \$10 each

**To order call 604 946 6980 (please pick up your tickets pre-event)**

Happy Hour 4-6 pm. Dinner 5.30-6.00 pm.

~ Raffle ~



**Volunteers are needed**

**to help with this fundraising event**

If you would like to help with food preparation,  
raffle ticket sales, event set up and tear down

**Please call Varri at 604 946 6980**

## About Our Covers

**Front Cover:**

Gadwall © Jim Martin

**Back Cover:**

Female Wood Duck with young at the Sanctuary © Jim Martin

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Back Cover:	Female Wood Duck with young at the Sanctuary	Jim Martin



## Sanctuary Manager's Report



Kathleen Fry

*Young Raccoon delights visitors to the Sanctuary*

The summer has been off to a slow start but is finally here. We had 20,476 visitors in April, May and June, slightly down from 2010 (21,168) and 2009 (22,328). April was cold, May was wet and June has been about average, mostly warm and dry. Peaks in visitor numbers seem to be primarily associated with long weekends (880 visitors on April 22nd, 790 visitors on April 23rd, 1,000 visitors on May 23rd), plus the feature events such as the first ducklings and goslings and the successful hatch of the Sandhill Crane nest May 17th/18th. It has been one of the busier school program periods (103 classes), as teachers and students often have a focus on nesting and life cycles.

On May 11th, a very soggy day, we hosted some visiting dignitaries from the City of Shanghai, with a Sanctuary tour arranged through the City of Vancouver. Shanghai has a small sanctuary in the Dongtan area that they would like to develop for birds, and the group was seeking ideas on management of habitats and visitors. This is not the only connection we have had with other sanctuaries, as people who visit often write afterwards asking about bird blind construction, water controls or the Viewing Tower.

Some enquiries are international, as the Sanctuary and Alaksen National Wildlife Area are a "Ramsar Site" or a "Wetland of International Significance" as defined in a conference on wetland held in Ramsar Iran in 1971.

Nature centres on Ramsar sites around the world often network about common themes. Last year, for example, we sent photos for a display to a Ramsar site in Australia, and the Pakistani Wildlife News is regularly sent to us.

The somewhat cold and wet spring seems to have caused a delay of most ground nesting waterfowl and perhaps even the northwards migration of insectivorous birds such as the warblers and barn swallows into our area.

Warblers were scarce until the first half of May when suddenly the Sanctuary bushes were alive with hundreds of Wilson's, Yellow-rumped, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow Warblers.

One day I had the novel experience of having a wee Common Yellowthroat sitting on my hand for 20 minutes while it recovered from a stunning attempt to fly through the Warming Hut window.

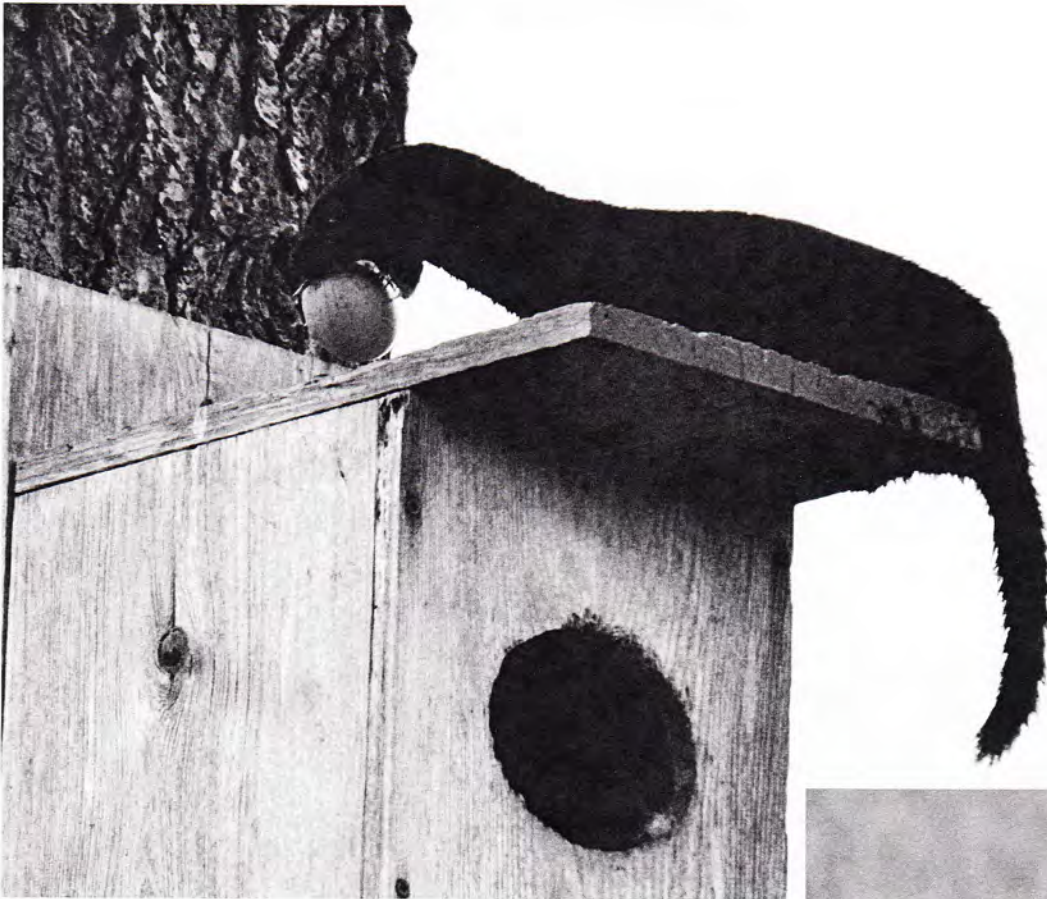
Barn Swallows seem scarcer this year or are late arriving in their usual numbers. Canadian Wildlife Service reports that Barred Owls may be the culprits for Barn Swallow nest destruction, as one was caught in action on a remote motion-sensitive video camera.

Ground nesters such as Mallards and Canada Geese were incubating throughout April, but many nests were either predated or abandoned, possibly due to a delay in nest cover growth and/or weather factors such as the light snow flurry in mid-April. Raccoons might have been responsible for the predations and nest destruction of all known mallard nests near the entrance gate, even the nest that had two hen mallards incubating it. Some waterfowl must have re-nested, with two main hatching dates for Mallards and Canada Geese being early May and early June, based on the ages of broods currently in the Sanctuary. Gadwall have not yet hatched, but there are more than 20 pairs present now at the beginning of July.

After all the jokes about the Wood Ducks that checked out the Barn Owl nest box at the Viewing Tower, we found it taken over in early May by a Raccoon, with the resulting young sometimes exploring the tree below by the end of June, to the delight of visitors.

The monitoring of Wood Ducks, as well as all the other species using the nest boxes, always provides some insights. Some of the early Wood Ducks hatched at about the same day as the first Canada Geese on April 29th. A Wood Duck census April 7th predicted as many as 23 pairs of Wood Ducks in the area, but some of these may have been young birds, or some nests might have been predated, as about 12 broods have been observed so far. As a follow-up to the Nest Box Inventory and maintenance by our volunteers, staff have kept records and some of our regular visitors have provided some observations and photographs of the little dramas occurring in the boxes. For example, Wood Duck box #19 was noticed in early April as a box with some duck use, but some disruption, as a mix of down (contributed by the duck) and wood shavings (contributed by us) was spread all over the ground at the base of the tree instead of in the box. However, some duck eggs were still in the nest.





Kathleen Fry

*Mink removing duck egg from a nest box*

The following week, a European Starling was seen going in and out of the box. Usually when this happens the duck abandons the nest, and Starlings take it over as a nest site. A few weeks later, Michelle Lamberson witnessed and photographed a Mink entering the same box and taking away three rather limp Starling chicks one at a time. On July 1st, another Mink was observed climbing into a nest box and removing a duck egg. Mink are active predators of eggs, young and adult ducks and can be a problem for a Wood Duck Nest Box Program, but then again, one was seen carting off a Grey Squirrel!

The Sandhill Crane family is several weeks ahead of last year. Unfortunately, the first chick which hatched on May 15th did not survive. The first surviving chick hatched overnight May 17th/18th compared to May 31st and June 2nd 2010. A section of trail was barricaded off for a few weeks right after the hatchling left the nest island. As usual, the parent birds have been very protective of the chick so warning signs now replace the barricades.

The chick (or "colt") will likely be flying by mid-July, and we should expect to see the family more sociable to other cranes and people at that point. Visitors spotted a banded Sandhill Crane off and on throughout May. This bird is likely the 2010 colt from the Sandhill Cranes nesting in Richmond, as when that pair began to re-nest, last year's colt departed, and a very similar bird showed up at David Hancock's Wildlife Centre in south Surrey, where the staff banded it.

*continued overleaf* .....



Jim Martin

*This year's Sandhill Crane Colt*





Kathleen Fry

*Dr. W. Sean Boyd monitors long term changes in the bulrush community offshore from the Sanctuary*

In late June, small flocks of cranes have also been spotted offshore of the Sanctuary, feeding in the tidal flats. I would anticipate that like last year, starting in mid-July, we would see Sandhill Cranes starting to congregate in small groups using the Sanctuary as a night roost.

Maintenance of trails and facilities is ongoing. The past few months have been spent making sure paths were clear and mowed, maintaining clearings, small structures such as benches, and a new gate for the admissions area and tending to transplanted native shrubs installed this spring. Many of our plantings are starting to be established, and we ask all visitors not to leave trails or pick wildflowers in these areas.

Our work team for the summer will consist of Varri Raffan and Laura Jordison in the Gift Shop, Dave McClue, newly hired Sanctuary intern biologist Shanna Fredericks, and our summer student David Bandiera.

We will be continuing to refurbish trail surfaces and widen some paths, to mow some areas where hand pruning is not workable, and to install some erosion protection on some shorelines. The latter is important, as the substrate of the Sanctuary is primarily sand and fine delta silts, and shoreline bracing or rock is required to prevent wave action from eroding or undercutting banks and slopes.

I had an opportunity to experience the cohesiveness of Delta's fine sediments up close on June 28th, when I joined Dr. Sean Boyd as part of his work crew monitoring his research plots that he uses to determine long-term changes in the bulrush (*Schoenoplectus americanus*) community offshore of the Sanctuary. This is the primary tidal food plant of Lesser Snow Geese from fall to spring, and its growth is monitored by counting plant stems.

The workday consisted of walking a kilometre through meadows of wildflowers and waist high sedge (*Carex lyngbeyi*) in the upper marsh, along tidal channels and out to the lower flats where bulrushes grow in the very soft sediments. Researchers become stuck in the mud here if they stand too long in one place.

Sean samples the plant community using a transect approach, taking distances from permanent wooden pegs out in the marsh to locate where the team should lay down a metal quadrant and count the stems. There was much laundry needed after kneeling in the mud, struggling to free feet from the mud, and slogging through the mud!

Enjoy the summer, everyone!

Text: Kathleen Fry, R. P Bio. Sanctuary Manager



# The Volunteer Corner

## *A Special Thank You to the following Volunteers*

- Mary Taitt, Murray MacDonald, Brian Self, Michelle Lamberson and Jim Martin for helping with the Sunday Bird Walk and with visitor orientation along trails on busy weekends in the past few months.
- Justin Malkonin, Eileen Axford and Eric Rossicci for their many hours spent bagging bird seed.
- Tom Anderson and Dan Paquette for helping with trail maintenance during these past months.
- Bill Topping for his dedicated Sunday mornings hosting visitors in the Lecture Hall (Museum).
- The Provincial Resource Program, through Delta Secondary School, for their assistance with firewood and general maintenance of feeders and blinds.
- All members who helped record Nest Box occupancy.

- The Marshnotes "mail-out" team and Virginia Hayes for her contributed cover images in the spring issue.
- The British Columbia Waterfowl Society would also like to acknowledge the kind donation of funds towards the purchase of a new loaner wheelchair in memory of Janet McCaque.

## *Volunteers are needed for the following*

- Members willing to host visitors in the Lecture Hall (Museum) and to show them interesting birds along trails during busy weekends this summer.
- Summertime is when we carry out maintenance on our trails. Those interested in helping should leave their name at the Gift Shop 604 946 6980 or watch for posted notices of upcoming work parties next to the weekly bird list.
- There is always room for more volunteers to help with regular items such as the Sunday Bird Walk, Marshnotes distribution and our annual Pig & Corn Roast.

Text: Kathleen Fry, R. P Bio. Sanctuary Manager

## Varri's Raffan's Quick Quiz

*Here is a list of bird emblems of the Provinces and Territories of Canada.  
Can you match the bird to the correct province or territory?*

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) British Columbia       | a) Rock Ptarmigan         |
| 2) Alberta                | b) Common Loon            |
| 3) Saskatchewan           | c) Raven                  |
| 4) Manitoba               | d) Blue Jay               |
| 5) Ontario                | e) Great Horned Owl       |
| 6) Quebec                 | f) Osprey                 |
| 7) Newfoundland           | g) Black-capped Chickadee |
| 8) Nova Scotia            | h) Steller's Jay          |
| 9) New Brunswick          | i) Great Gray Owl         |
| 10) Prince Edward Island  | j) Snowy Owl              |
| 11) Yukon                 | k) Gyrfalcon              |
| 12) Northwest Territories | l) Atlantic Puffin        |
| 13) Nunavut               | m) Sharp-tailed Grouse    |

Answers: 1=h, 2=e, 3=m, 4=i, 5=b, 6=j, 7=l, 8=f, 9=g, 10=d, 11,c, 12=k, 13=a.

### *A few amusing descriptions of groups of birds!*

- |                         |                          |                             |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Galaxy of Gulls         | Jubilee of Eagles        | Covert of Coots             |
| Aristocracy of Waxwings | Murmuration of Starlings | Annoyance of House Sparrows |
| Gang of Turkeys         | Stealth of Cowbirds      | Murder of Crows             |
| Pack of Grouse          | Decent of Woodpeckers    |                             |
| Bugle of Cranes         | Elegance of Terns        |                             |



# Sanctuary Highlights

*Thank you to all who take the time to input their sightings into our Bird Sightings Logbook on the Gift Shop deck. We appreciate this help in compiling the Sanctuary records.*

**APRIL:** April is typically "nesting month" at the Sanctuary when the sounds of singing birds looking for mates or establishing territory are heard. Trailside we begin to see Canada Geese standing guard over nest sites. Tree Swallows choose their nest boxes and at the end of the month shorebird species show up from their wintering grounds. During April a total count of 91 species was recorded.

## April 3rd—9th

Seven Canvasback (six female and one male) were here on the 3rd. These ducks are strong fast flyers and have been reported to reach up to speeds of 120 kilometres per hour. On April 5th two American Bitterns were reported.

On April 7th we spotted five Ring-necked Ducks (four female and one male) in the centre display ponds. Neither Canvasbacks or American Bitterns nest at the Sanctuary. Canvasback breed from Central Alaska to B.C. Interior to Western Alberta along vegetation-lined sloughs and lakes. Ring-necked Ducks head to California and Arizona.

On April 3rd we had the first spring report of six Greater Yellowlegs for the Sanctuary. One of the first sightings for the spring of a Savannah Sparrow came in this week. Some of the other highlights for the week were Northern Saw-whet Owl, Barn Owl, Northern Goshawk, Greater White-fronted Geese and a Mourning Dove.

A total count of 64 species was recorded this week.

## April 10th—16th

It was hard to imagine during this week's cool wet weather that at this time last year (April 11th) we had our first hatch of Mallards. Cooler weather this year will more than likely slow hatching.

On April 12th we saw one of the first Pied-billed Grebes (spotted on Fuller Slough). On April 14th we saw the first five Barn Swallows on the power lines at the front gate and also a flock of 12 Greater White-fronted Geese.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> we had the Sanctuary's first spring report of a Common Yellowthroat. The Common Yellowthroat and the Yellow-rumped Warbler are usually the first of the warblers to show up. A Common Snipe was seen this week. Some of the first Western Sandpipers began showing in the West Field. This area is generally the best place to find shorebirds especially on a high tide as high tides make it too deep for them to feed on the foreshore so they move in to the shallower waters.

A Bank Swallow was seen in amongst Tree and Violet-green Swallows. We are starting to notice more Brown-headed Cowbirds. Although nice to listen to and look at with their iridescent black bodies and dull brown heads, these birds are parasitic brooders which lay their eggs in other birds' nests letting them raise the young. A total count of 70 species was recorded this week.

## April 17th—23rd

On April 21st I noticed a Band-tailed Pigeon on top of the flowering cherry tree between the Gift Shop and the Warming Hut. The Band-tailed Pigeon is the largest dove in North America with a white ring at nape of neck and a dark terminal band on the upper and under parts of the tail. It is not every year we spot these birds at the Sanctuary. In this week we had the first sighting of a Red-breasted Sapsucker seen near the end of the East Dyke.

American Coots, Common Mergansers, Hooded Mergansers, Lesser Snow Geese, Varied Thrush, Trumpeter Swans, Northern Flickers, Black-crowned Night-Herons and Northern Saw-whet Owls now diminished in numbers as they headed back to their summer breeding grounds. A total count of 68 species for this week was recorded and posted at the front entrance of the Gift Shop.

## April 24th—30th

The main highlight was the first spring sighting in the Vancouver area of a Magnolia Warbler on April 24th. This sighting was made by our tour guides and attendees at our Sunday morning 10.00 am. guided Bird Walk. The Magnolia Warbler is a rare visitor to the west coast. It winters in the tropics and breeds along central Canada to North East United States.

On April 28th I counted a flock of 72 Greater White-fronted Geese flying high northward over the Gift Shop. Shorebird varieties are on the increase at this time of year with Western Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dowitcher species and Wilson's Snipe to name a few from this week's list. One of the first Lincoln's Sparrow, Belted Kingfisher, Orange-crowned Warbler and Hermit Thrush were reported this week. On April 29th we spotted the first hatch of Wood Ducks and Canada Geese. You may have noticed that towards the end of April we tend not to fill the songbird feeders as often because natural food sources become more plentiful. A high total count of 80 species was recorded this week.

**MAY:** the end of April until middle of May is typically the peak time for viewing spring migrants. May is also typically the second largest month for visitors at the Sanctuary. May 2011 was quite a bit cooler and wetter and attendance was down from last year by 15%. November is the highest count for visitors mainly because of the arrival of the Lesser Snow Geese from Wrangel Island, Russia. During May a total count of 102 species was recorded.

## May 1st—7th

By May 1st only about 200 Lesser Snow Geese were left in our area. In that flock four Blue-phase Snow Geese were seen.



On May 3rd a Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen near the Viewing Tower. This bird is very striking with its full yellow head and chest and a black body with white wing patches. Yellow-headed Blackbirds nest in fresh water marshes and can be found locally around Iona Island and Jericho.

On May 6th the first two Blue-winged Teal were seen on Robertson Slough. These are small dabbling ducks with a very noticeable white crescent on their face and they are only with us until approximately the end of August.

Orange-crowned Warblers, Wilson's Warblers, Black-throated Gray Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Common Yellowthroats were all being seen in this week.

Gulls are always a challenge to identify. We have 10 species of gulls on our Sanctuary checklist. Next time you see a flock of gulls see if you can find any different ones. This week we saw a Mew Gull and the most commonly spotted gull throughout the year, the Glaucous-winged Gull.

The Barn Swallows are started to build their mud nests under the eaves of some of our buildings. Six species of swallows have been recorded at the Sanctuary. This week we had Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow and Barn Swallow.

May 8th—14th

Good viewing started this week until the middle of June for watching Rufous Hummingbirds as they feed at feeders located in three different areas around the Front Entrance. The feeders are certainly a favourite area used by photographers who will patiently wait for just the right shot.

This week has also been spectacular for spotting large numbers of warblers particularly the Yellow-rumped and Wilson's Warblers. On May 8th the Sanctuary's first spring sighting of a Western Tanager was reported. On May 12th two Black-headed Grosbeaks were spotted along the East Dyke.

On May 14th a Pacific-slope Flycatcher was heard singing in the trees surrounding the picnic area. This year we have started to see more Mourning Doves and Eurasian Col-lared-Doves around the Sanctuary. Over the last two years they seem to be moving westward from Ladner to our area.

*continued overleaf ... ..*

## Why be a Member?

**As a Member, you receive the following benefits:**

- FREE admission to the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary 365 days a year
- Quarterly issue of the BCWS publication "Marshnotes".
- A 10% discount on purchases in the Sanctuary Gift Shop (please show your membership card at time of purchase).
- Membership in one of British Columbia's most respected conservation organizations.

**With your support the British Columbia Waterfowl Society is able to:**

- Staff, maintain and expand facilities at the Sanctuary for the benefit of its visitors and members (approximately 70,000 visitors in 2010).
- Provide interpretive and education programs, including guided tours for organized groups of all ages.
- Contribute towards important scientific research on waterfowl to determine their life cycle need for survival.
- Provide support for like-minded organizations who are working in waterfowl-related projects.

**Enclosed is my cheque or VISA/Mastercard number for:**

- |                           |                          |              |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| SINGLE Membership:        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>\$25</b>  |
| FAMILY Membership:        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>\$50</b>  |
| LIFE Membership:          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>\$500</b> |
| Donation (tax deductible) | <input type="checkbox"/> |              |

VISA  Mastercard  VISA or Mastercard # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: (Mr. Mrs. Miss Ms.) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail to: British Columbia Waterfowl Society, 5191 Robertson Road, Delta, BC, V4K 3N2**

Telephone: 604 946 6980 Facsimile: 604 946 6982  
Website: [www.reifelbirdsantuary.com](http://www.reifelbirdsantuary.com)



Seven species of shorebirds were reported this week: Black-bellied Plover, Killdeer, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher. Cinnamon Teal now moved into the area. The males are a beautiful rusty red colour all over with a red eye and blue shoulder patches. The Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teals are generally found feeding together in the southwest marsh and west fields. A group of teal are collectively known as a "seasoning" of teal.

Hammond's Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Swainson's Thrush and Varied Thrush were some of the other 74 species recorded this week.

#### May 15th—21st

This was the week for seeing lots of Wilson's Warblers. Three Purple Martins were seen flying with a flock of swallows on May 15th.

The big event for this week was the first Sandhill Crane egg which hatched on the 15th. Unfortunately the first colt did not survive. The second colt hatched overnight 17th/18th and survived.

On May 16th as I began work I spotted a Barred Owl perched in the willow tree by the picnic area. I might not have noticed it if not for the crows incessant loud cawing which gave the owl's presence away. A Warbling Vireo was seen in the front yard of the house on this same day. On May 21<sup>st</sup> a male Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen in the Crab apple tree by the Warming Hut.

One Barn Owl, Greater White-fronted Geese, Ring-necked Duck and Peregrine Falcon were some of the highlights for this week which led to a total count of 67 species recorded.

#### May 22nd—28th

The first spring reports came in of two Wilson's Phalaropes in the West Field. Purple Martins and a late-to-depart Canvasback were also seen on the 28th. On the 22nd a couple of Black Swift were seen and on the 28th a flock of 20—25 birds were counted flying over the parking lot. The weather on the 28th was overcast with low cloud. These conditions offer the best opportunity to view the swifts as the birds are pushed downward with low cloud whilst usually they soar high on thermals and updrafts.

During this week we recorded the first spring report of a Cedar Waxwing at the Sanctuary. The Yellow-headed Blackbird, Black-headed Grosbeaks and Western Tanagers were still being seen mainly along the East and North Dykes.

**JUNE: begins a quieter trend for bird watching during the summer months. Most birds have already migrated north. At this time of year the waterfowl go through a moult and take on a scruffy look. The drake mallards lose their nice green heads and chestnut brown fronts and end up looking like hen mallards. A lot of people comment as to where all the males have gone not realizing they are just in eclipse plumage. During June a total count of 86 species was recorded.**

#### May 29th—June 4th

Three Caspian Terns were seen flying over the Sanctuary this week. Usually you can hear them prior to spotting them as they have a very distinctive scratchy call which sounds much like cats fighting. Terns are commonly seen in summer along beaches and coastal lagoons. During the period June 1st—4th five Sandhill Cranes visited the Sanctuary. Our resident family group are still doing fine. Their young one is growing very fast. On June 3rd a Western Wood-Pee-wee was spotted. This flycatcher has no white eye ring or white wing bars like most of the other flycatcher species. Swainson's Thrush, Turkey Vulture, American Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, Dark-eyed Junco and American Kestrel were some of the highlights in this week.

#### June 5th—June 11th

We were lucky to find a Barn Owl this week. There are three nest boxes for them around the Sanctuary but we had no takers this spring. They tend to start nesting in early March. As you turn off Robertson Road on to the Sanctuary driveway look to your left to see a small barn structure on a pole. This was placed there to encourage Barn Owls to nest but we are not yet sure of its success. Our neighbour, Canadian Wildlife Service, collects the data for this box.

I found it interesting that Barn Owls were first recorded in British Columbia in 1909 near the mouth of the Fraser River.

On June 5th two male Ring-necked Ducks were still being seen at the Sanctuary. The Bullock's Oriole was still being seen this week. The males are bright orange with a black crown, black eye stripe and black throat and have white wing patches. They nest in southern parts of British Columbia and Alberta. On June 11th an American Bittern was reported. Wilson's Snipe, Ring-necked Pheasant, Caspian Tern, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Northern Flicker and Black-headed Grosbeak were a few others seen in this week with a list which totalled 52 species.

#### June 12th—June 18th

The Barred Owl was back again on the 14th. June 16th an Osprey was seen flying over. On the 17th a Great Horned Owl was seen in the northeast corner of the Sanctuary. MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Western Wood-Pee-wee, Pacific-slope Flycatcher and a Varied Thrush. Not very often do we see Varied Thrush around the Sanctuary in the summer as they breed in coastal to sub-alpine shady damp forests.

#### June 19th—June 25th

June 19th two Virginia Rails and four Purple Martins were reported. One male Ring-necked Duck was still at the Sanctuary. In this week we had a very early sighting of a Lincoln's Sparrow on June 23rd along the East Dyke. A pair of Cinnamon Teal was spotted in the southwest marsh near the Viewing Platform. The Great Horned Owl was seen again in the same area.



Shorebird numbers were on the increase now as some species moved southward. Willow Flycatcher, Vaux's Swift and Bullock's Oriole were other birds of note for this week that ended with a count of 62 species.

June 26th—July 3rd

Shorebirds seen this week were Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher and Killdeer. The Killdeer is the only shorebird that we see every month of the year at the Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. When the Killdeer feels there is a potential predator near its nest site or chicks it will feign injury by drooping its wing and hobbling away from the young in an attempt to draw attention from the nest site.

During this time of year the variety and number of ducks drop. We are now down to seven species from our peak of 17 species in February.

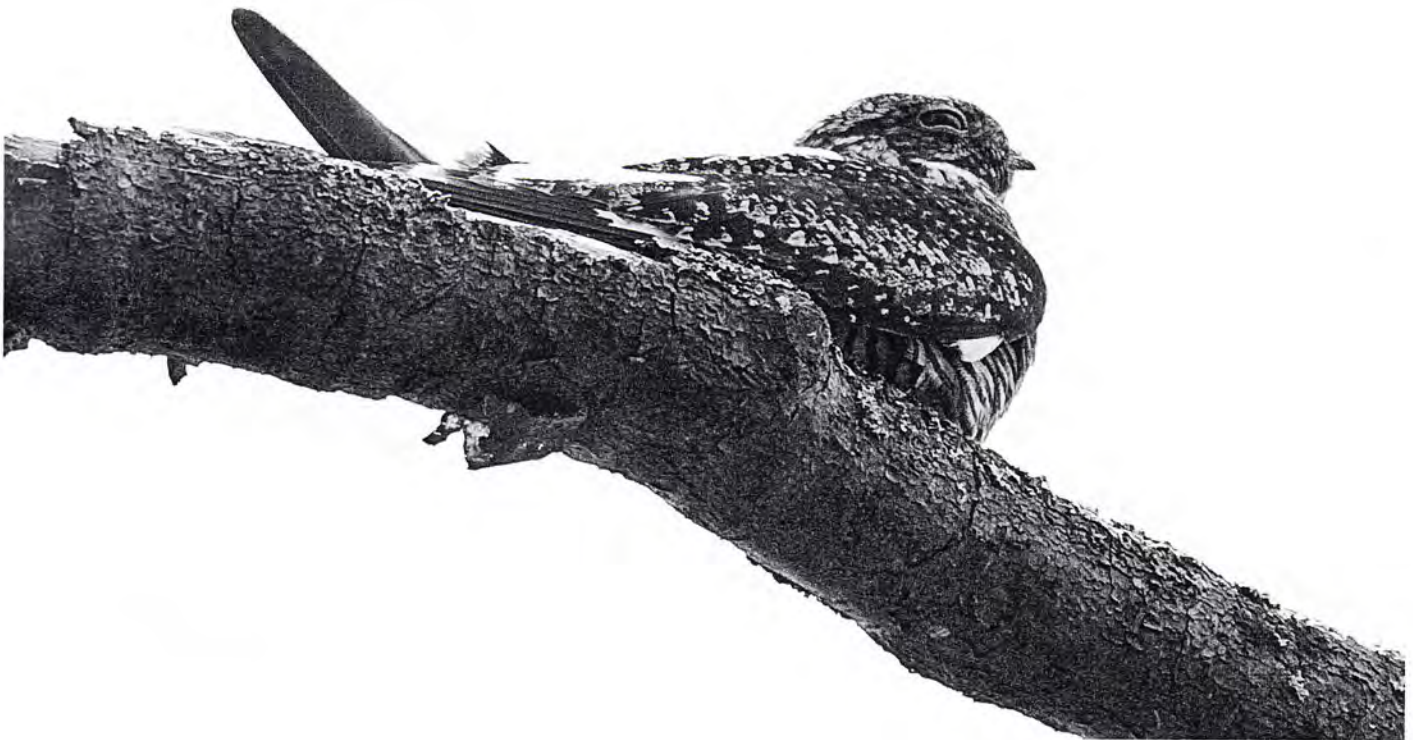
On June 26th while visitors were looking at the Great Horned Owl in the northeast corner a Common Nighthawk was spotted atop a tree. This high flying insect eater is a summer sighting usually at dusk. They have long slender pointed wings with a definite white patch and their tails are slightly forked.

When nighthawks come out of a nose dive you can hear a booming sound which is produced by their wings. Like Caspian Terns you usually hear nighthawks before you spot them. They breed all across southern Canada from Vancouver Island to Cape Breton Island. It is not every year we have reports of Common Nighthawks at the Sanctuary so this was a special sighting for those who were here that day.

References:

- The Birds of Canada** by W. Earl Godfrey  
**The Birder's Handbook—A field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds** by Ehrlich, Dobkin, Wheye.  
**The Birds of British Columbia (Volumes I-IV)** by R. Wayne Campbell, Neil K. Dawe, Ian McTaggart-Cowan, John M. Cooper, Gary W. Kaiser, Andrew C. Stewart, Michael C.E. McNall, G.E. John Smith.  
**The Bird Watching Answer Book** by Laura Erickson  
**Marshnotes (BCWS Archives)**  
[whatbird.com](http://whatbird.com)

Text: Varri Raffan, Gift Shop Manager



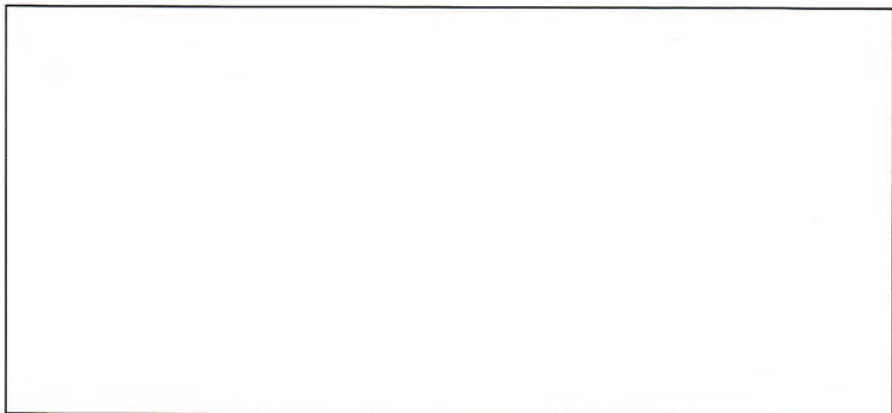
Michelle N. Lamberson

*Common Nighthawk at the Sanctuary*



# BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY

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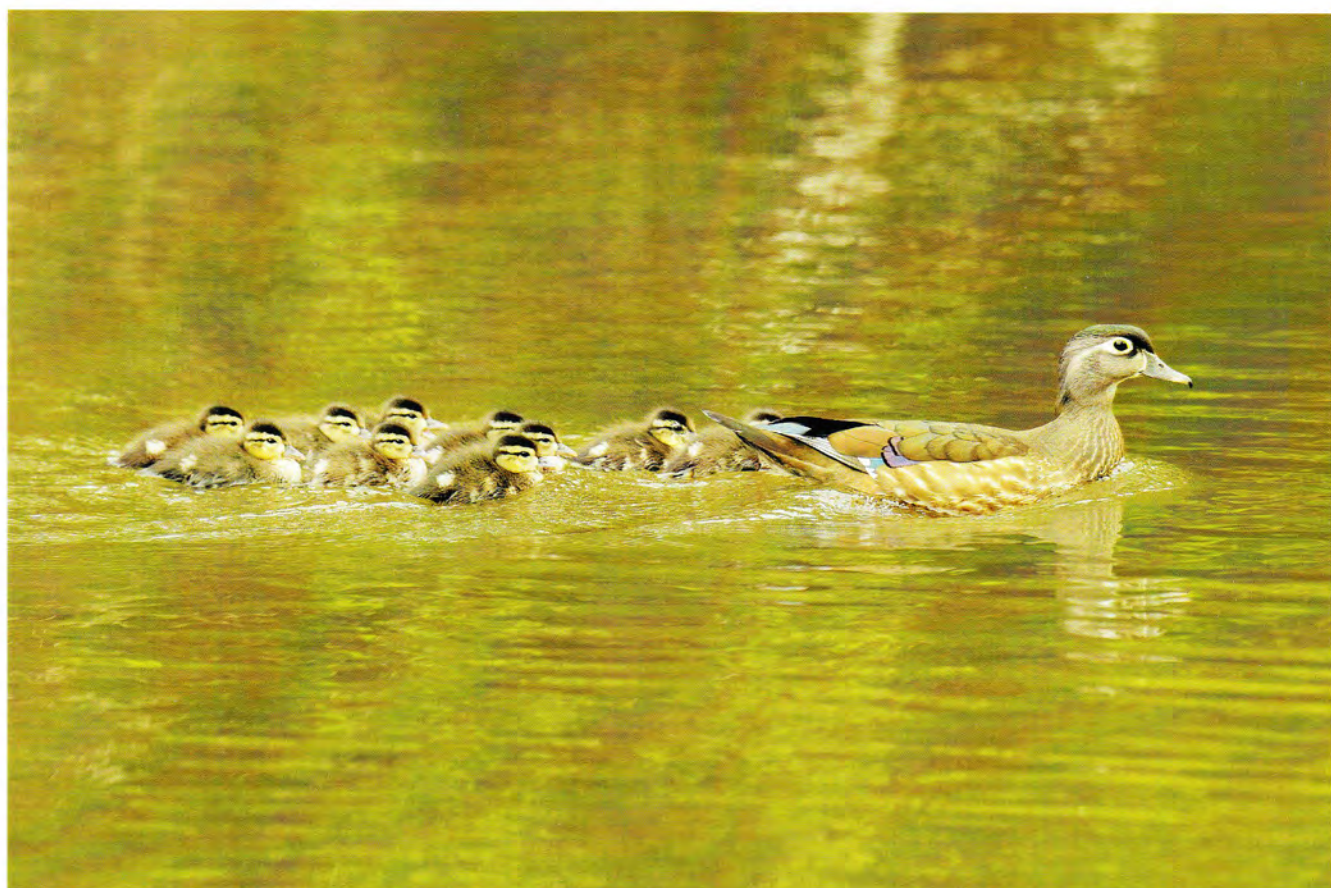
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*Female Wood Duck with young at the Sanctuary © Jim Martin*