

Marshnotes[®]



**BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY
SUMMER 2020**

BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY

Managers of the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary Since 1963

dedicated to the conservation and study of migratory waterfowl

Marshnotes:

Editor: Kathleen Fry

The contents of Marshnotes may not be reprinted without written permission of the Editor.

Circulation: 2,400.

Published four times a year.

**The British Columbia Waterfowl Society,
5191 Robertson Road,
Delta, British Columbia
V4K 3N2**

**Telephone: 604 946 6980
Facsimile: 604 946 6982**

**Website: www.reifelbirdsantuary.com
Email: bcws@reifelbirdsantuary.com**

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

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF MARSHNOTES

October 15th, 2020



*Planning a visit, but not sure if we are really busy?
We now send out a tweet from @ReifelSanctuary
when it looks like parking is going to be an issue.
That account is often inactive if not needed for this.*

Executive:

President: Jack Bates
Vice President: George C. Reifel
Treasurer: James A. Morrison
Secretary: Barney W. Reifel

Directors:

Jack Bates
F. Wayne Diakow
Kevin Husband
Mark McDonald
James A. Morrison
Gerald S. Oyen
Douglas B. Ransome
Barney W. Reifel
George C. Reifel
Liam Reifel
Kenneth I. Thompson

Committee Chairs:

Buildings/ Grounds: Barney W. Reifel
Community Relations: George C. Reifel
Interpretation/Education: F. Wayne Diakow
Outreach: George C. Reifel

Staff:

Sanctuary Manager: Kathleen Fry
Gift Shop Manager: Varri Raffan
Reception: Susan Norris
Maintenance: Dave McClue
Part-time Assistants: Kristina Breit
Cynthia Crumley
Evan Gogal
Marissa Sasaki

Hours of Operation: 9:00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Closed Mondays. The Sanctuary is wheelchair accessible.
See page 7 for how to book a visit

Admission: Members: Free
Non-Members: Adults: \$5 Children (2-14 yrs) and Seniors (60 years +): \$3
School Groups: Special discounts available; pre-booking is required.

**Marshnotes, Snow Goose Festival and the Snow Goose logo
are all registered trademarks of the British Columbia Waterfowl Society**

Welcome Back, Everyone!

Many thanks for your patience and understanding during this long closure. The Sanctuary re-opened July 14th after a four month closure due to the high risk of transmission of Covid-19 Coronavirus in March. This has been a cautious re-opening, with the goal of providing a good visitor experience but without the large visitor numbers. We are monitoring the re-opening carefully and will slowly increase the visitor levels if there are no issues arising from the current opening.

Covid-19 has not gone away. Close interactions, large gatherings and high touch areas are still high risk factors, so we have made some changes to keep everyone safe. Please note the following:

The Sanctuary is now closed Mondays.

Everyone will need to book their visit in advance using the new reservation system.

Front gates are closed to incoming visitors between 11 am and 1 pm and after 3 pm.

The Warming Hut and Picnic Area are closed right now as we are trying to avoid having large groups assemble anywhere on site. Enjoy your visit!

The washrooms are small, but we now have extra sinks in a new outdoor handwashing station.

Signs are on the trails indicating which ones are wide or narrow and a suggested strategy for maintaining space between visitors.

Visitors need to exit by 4 pm instead of 5 pm.

About Our Covers

Front Cover: Gadwall Ducklings

© *Jim Martin*

Back Cover: Pelicans Offshore

© *Gadwin Gan*

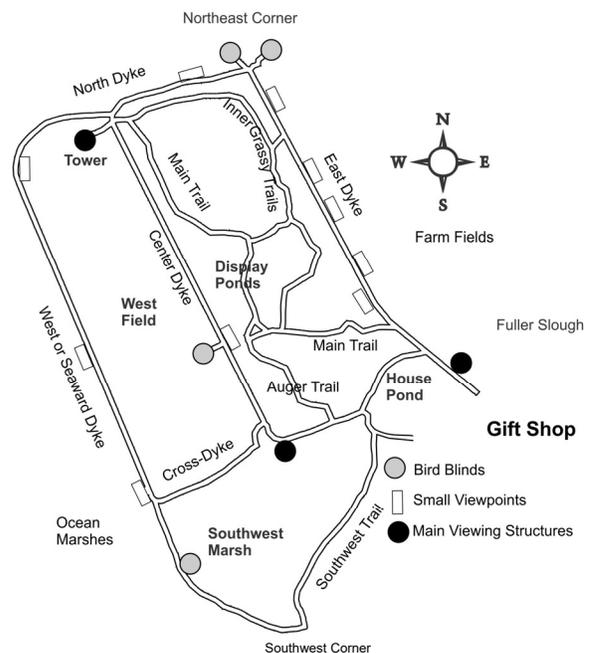
Editor's Note:

Please refer to the location map to the right to locate place names used in the Marshnotes articles.

Contents

Page	3	Welcome Back, Everyone!
	4	Bird Highlights
	7	How the New Reservation System Works
	7	Home Tweet Home
	8	Manager's Report
	11	Volunteer's Corner
	11	Why Be a Member

Sanctuary Locations Map



Varri Raffan

Varri Raffan
Kathleen Fry

Bird Highlights

Each weekly species list, which we now post on our website, is a compilation of birds observed from Sunday morning to Saturday afternoon. April 2020 had a grand total of 100 species. This is a month to expect to see Western Sandpipers, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitchers and both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs making a brief appearance as they continue their northern migration to breed in Alaska and the Yukon.

March 29 – April 4

Every year at this time there is a noticeable drop in the numbers and variety of waterfowl as they leave this wintering area and make their way back to nest where they were born. Songbirds are also less obvious, as you may have noticed in your own backyard. Winter feeding has taken a back seat, and attracting a mate and nesting is now a priority. For resident birds that nest here, it certainly has become a real bird sanctuary for them without the human interaction. No bags of food to distract them from their job of guarding nest sites from lurking predators. One of the first spring flowers to bloom is the Salmonberry and their pink flowers are one of the first nectar sources for hummingbirds. After flowering the highly edible berries are a favorite of American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Swainson's Thrushes. The last Black-crowned Night-Heron sighting was on the 4th.



Spotted Towhee nest

Photo: Kristina Breit

April 5 – April 11

This week, 73 species were recorded. March and April are the best months to use a scope from the tower, especially on a high tide, to spot fish-eating birds such as loons, cormorants and mergansers. They will likely be feeding on Eulachon, a small silvery fish, which are now migrating by the thousands near shorelines. April 5th we saw the first Brown-headed Cowbirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers of this spring. A Steller's Jay was also reported on the 5th. On the 9th the first

Wilson's Snipe was seen and then on the 11th we noticed the first few returning Purple Martins and Barn Swallows. This week saw the last of the Eurasian Wigeon, Pied-billed Grebes and Northern Saw-Whet Owls.

April 12 – April 18

This week, we had the first spring sightings of Cinnamon Teal, Lesser Yellowlegs, Townsend's Solitaire and Common Yellowthroat. Other highlights included Cackling Goose, Purple Martin, Wilson's Snipe, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Pine Siskin and Steller's Jay.

April 19 – April 25

The last 6 straggling Greater White-fronted Geese were spotted on the 21st. These geese are usually seen here in spring and fall. They are a bit smaller than Canada Geese and have a stubby pink or orange beak with white feathering between their eyes and beak. Years ago they were called "speckle bellies" due to the black barring on the breast of mature birds. Throughout the summer Greater White-fronted Geese will breed in the tundra of Alaska. After a lovely 2 week stretch of sunny warm weather, it rained on April 22, "Earth Day". Despite the weather we found the first hatch of 8 Canada Geese. A Hermit Thrush and Belted Kingfisher were reported on the 23rd and on the 25th we were still able to see 600 Lesser Snow Geese visible from the Observation Tower. All 3 species of Teal, Blue-winged, Green-winged and Cinnamon were present this week. Teal are dabbling ducks and like to feed in shallow muddy channels in the marshes that West Field offers. There were 78 species recorded this week.

April 26 – May 2

American Coot, Wilson's Snipe and Ruby-crowned Kinglet made their last appearance this week, and have now gone to their nesting grounds. As some birds make an exit, some species such as Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler and both Black and Vaux's Swift make an appearance. Viewing swifts is best between May and August and when weather gives us a low cloud day. During low pressure systems, insects are pushed lower down in the atmosphere, and the Swifts feeding on them are down closer to observers. Another insect eater is the Yellow-rumped Warbler for which we had many sightings throughout the Sanctuary over the last few days. An identifying trait is the quick glimpse of a yellow flash on the rump as they make their quick upward flight from a tree branch to catch an insect then back again. When watching Yellow-rumped Warblers also look at their throat color. If they have a yellow throat patch they are the "Audubon Warbler" from the western population. If they have a white throat patch they are the "Myrtle Warbler" from the

eastern population. We see both types at this time of year as their breeding ranges overlap here.

Through the month of May we continue with our closure in support of reducing the spread of the Covid-19 Virus. As we had 9683 visitors in May last year and 0 for this May, I've found this last 1 ½ months to be in no way similar to any of the other times in the past 35 years that I have worked here. Regardless of what was happening outside the Sanctuary, bird life carried on unfazed and the surrounding habitat has had a chance to bounce back. We ended with 99 species this month which was only 1 species less than May 2019.

May 3 – May 9

On the 6th the first brood of 12 Mallard ducklings was seen. May tends to be a good month to see warblers. On the 9th we experienced a “fall out” of dozens of warblers such as Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wilson’s Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warblers. After stormy weather warblers that are migrating “fall out” closer to the ground in order to feed on insects as there is so little food higher up. If you are in the right place at the right time it is quite a sight to see. Only a few White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows remain as the majority have now passed through heading to the Northern Boreal Forests to nest. The remaining resident nesting songbirds have already hatched their young who follow along closely behind them begging with mouths open in anticipation of an offering of a seed or an insect. Another way to tell some juvenile birds apart from adults is by their eye color. Take for example, the young or first year Cooper’s Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Northern Goshawks they all have golden yellow eyes and when mature they turn red. Young Northern Harriers eyes start out brown changing to yellow as an adult. Young American Crows (the new name for the Northwestern Crows) begin with a blue gray eye color maturing to dark brown. Dark-eyed Juncos are born with grayish brown eyes turning to reddish brown when grown-up.

May 10 – May 16

Viewing is still good for shorebirds as they continue migrating northward to nest. A single Osprey and a single Sharp-shinned Hawk were located overhead on the 16th. This was the last week we were able to spot any Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup or Fox Sparrow, but at the same time we found the first Least Sandpiper and Cedar Waxwings.

May 17 - May 23

Highlights this week were 1 Western Tanager on the 19th, 1 female Yellow-headed Blackbird and 1 Red-eyed Vireo on the 23rd. The first brood of 4 Wood Duck young showed up on the 23rd. The 17th we heard the first lovely song of the Swainsons’ Thrush.

An odd sighting on the 19th & 20th was that of 2 adult Black-crowned Night Herons in the Birch trees close to “Triangle Garden” in Display Pond. I’m sure we have never had Black-crowned Night Herons in May. We thought they might be looking for a nesting area but they were only around for 2 days.



Black-crowned Night-Heron Photo: Kristina Breit

Another odd sighting was of a male Hooded Merganser on the 20th. We have had a single female Hooded Merganser that can be seen most days through the summer but this was the first time we had spotted a male. Alas he was only here for 1 day...so much for striking up a relationship with the female. One pair of birds that were successful in having offspring was the Great Horned Owls. We have come across them along the lower grassy trail, seeing mainly one owlet with one of the adults. After owlets have fledged, both the male and female Great Horned Owls look after and feed their young. Hopefully the other adult is off with another sibling.

May 24 – May 30

There were 71 species recorded this week. Flycatchers now present include Western Wood Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hammond’s Flycatcher and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. In the shorebird department, new

(..... /continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

arrivals were Wilson's Phalarope and Red-necked Phalarope. A single Western Tanager was located on the 26th. In various locations throughout the Sanctuary we are still able to find the Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Black-headed Grosbeak and Bullock's Oriole. In May both Rufous Hummingbirds and Anna's Hummingbirds are plentiful. With all the newly hatched young hummingbirds and their parents feeding at the 4 feeders, I am kept very busy filling them up daily.

The bird list for June 2020 ended with 82 species. We continued to see additional hatchings of Canada Geese, Mallard and Wood Ducks. The early nesting songbirds who were able to have a second brood, such as Black-capped Chickadees, House Sparrows, Bushtits and Marsh Wrens did so. Staff have continued with improvements and upgrades in the Sanctuary. Susan and I have both been keeping up with the flower gardens and seeing to all membership renewals. We would like to thank you all very much for your continued support and donations throughout our time of closure.

May 31 – June 6

On the 1st of June a single Turkey Vulture was located in the sky above the Sanctuary. Seldom does a Turkey Vulture kill its own meal. They depend mainly on carrion in which they locate by smell. On June 6th, a cloudy day, we noticed a mixed flock of approximately 25 Black and Vaux's Swift flying above the front gate. Olive-sided Flycatchers and Pacific-slope Flycatchers are more numerous as they are moving through our area to nest in mature coniferous forests located around a water's edge.

June 7 – June 13

Well I don't think visitors would have minded missing the rather unpleasant smell coming off the algae that floats decomposing in certain slow moving waterways at this time of year. Broods of young mallards swimming through the algae do not seem to mind, as they skim pond scum and bugs off the top. Luckily their sense of smell is their least developed sense. June 10th one of our Westham Island residents reported having seen 37 to 40 American White Pelicans on a sand bar in the Fraser River. We searched off the Observation Tower for the next couple of days but didn't see any sign of them. In a flock of gulls, which is called a "galaxy", there were a few Bonaparte Gulls which ended up feeding in the shallow waters of the West Field. They will be here for a short stop over on their way to nest on small wooded islands in Alaska and northwestern Canada. Most gulls build their nest on the ground but Bonaparte Gulls build their nests between 5' and 20' above ground in coniferous trees. Along the inner grassy trail we are still seeing 1 adult and 1 juvenile Great Horned Owl.

June 14 – June 27

For this 2 week reporting period we ended up with 73 species. Until mid-August waterfowl will continue shedding or molting worn out feathers in order to grow healthy feathers in time for their fall migration. With summer months having the least variety and number of birds it's a great time to brush up on your wildflowers and butterflies. Trailside flowers such as the fragrant Wild Roses and frothy white Ocean Spray can be found along the trail past the Gift Shop, and Goldenrod, Peavine, Daisies and Lupines line the trail edges surrounding the ponds. Butterflies and Dragonflies are abundant from June to August. If you know your *Lepidoptera* expect to find up to 9 different types. As for Darners and Skimmers, part of the Dragonfly family, we have had 10 different species found throughout the Sanctuary. On the 20th far offshore we were pleased to catch a glimpse of 9 American White Pelicans and then a larger flock of 25 on the 21st.

Coming soon in July will be the southern return of shorebirds and additional flora and fauna but the main event will be welcoming back our patient visitors.

Text: Varri Raffan
Gift Shop Manager



Great Horned Owl Juvenile

Photo: Kristina Breit

How the New Reservation System Works

An on-line booking system is being used now to help schedule visitor arrivals at the Sanctuary. It helps reduce traffic congestion on Robertson Road, overcrowding in the Sanctuary, and uncertainty for visitors coming from any distance away that would like to be guaranteed a parking spot. Booking should only take a few minutes and it is free. On our website page “Planning Your Visit”, follow the link to a page where you can select the type of visit (morning or afternoon visitor or cyclist), then choose a date. It will give you options for the next three days but if a time slot is in less than 24 hrs or is full, you will not be able to book it, so plan ahead. For example, the following table shows what days of the week to check on-line to book a particular morning:

The day you want	The days to go on-line and book for that day *
Monday	Sanctuary closed
Tuesday	Check Saturday after 9 am, Sunday and Monday before 9 am
Wednesday	Check Sunday after 9 am, Monday and Tuesday before 9 am
Thursday	Check Monday after 9 am, Tuesday and Wednesday before 9am
Friday	Check Tuesday after 9 am, Wednesday and Thursday before 9 am
Saturday	Check Wednesday after 9 am, Thursday, and Friday before 9am
Sunday	Check Thursday after 9am, Friday, and Saturday before 9am

* **Note that time slots disappear when they are full.**

Home Tweet Home



House Sparrow feeding young.



Hummingbird nest in a pine tree.

After taking a walk around the Sanctuary I started to realize how many different styles and shapes of birds’ nests there are. From the Killdeer who makes a simple depression in the ground, to the intricately woven hanging nest of the Bushtit, to the manmade nest boxes, they are all diverse.

Some birds such as Brown-headed Cowbirds don’t even construct a nest of their own but lay eggs in other birds’ nests. Even abandoned empty nests make good homes and are often taken over by hawks, herons and owls. Ground nesters such as shorebirds, ducks, pheasants and geese will build up a ring of grass and other vegetation around them in order to form a structure to lay and incubate their eggs.

American Robins, House Finches, Cedar Waxwings, Stellar’s Jays and Hummingbirds build cup shaped nests attached to tree branches built of twigs, leaves, moss, grass, feathers, plant down and some mud. Barn Swallows will use mud, saliva and some grass which they adhere to wooden structures.

Great Blue Herons and Ospreys prefer high open tree tops or manmade constructed platforms giving them easy open access to their nest. Most nests are built with twigs interwoven together and lined with feathers.

As for all the birds that call nest boxes “Home Tweet Home” around the Sanctuary there are many. Wood Ducks take to the larger boxes attached to trees about 8’ from the ground. The smaller boxes surrounding the waterways mainly house Tree Swallows, House Sparrows and European Starlings. The many natural cavities in dead trees are appealing to Downy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, Northern Flickers, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Brown Creepers.

All the above birds do nest at the Sanctuary but it is just a matter of knowing what bird nests where and then locating their ingenious nest.

Text and Photos:
Varri Raffan
Gift Shop Manager

Manager's Report



One Hundred and Twenty Days of Solitude

As most of our members know, we were closed to the public from March 15th to July 14th this year because of concerns regarding large crowds and transmission of Covid-19. During this time, though the Sanctuary was not entirely devoid of people. Staff were in on a regular schedule to check on things or to repair structures, improve trails or prepare for re-opening. Initially we thought we might only be closed a short period, but by the time we were approaching the four month marker we were glad to be able to re-open and share the Sanctuary with people again. Visitors might notice the incomplete installations at the front gate. We were hoping to have our new gate opening mechanism by re-opening day but there were too many delays, so it will be completed when we finally get power and parts.

The wildlife went a little odd in the first few weeks. The ducks, for example, decided that the few humans present were suddenly dangerous and steered clear of us. The raccoons left a muddy trail along the window frames of the Gift Shop one day. Were they wondering where all the people went? Later though, they got into a habit of carefully searching the shorelines of all the ponds, and they may be the main reason for duck and goose nest failures in April. Turtles made secret nests in the lawn but we could always tell as a plate-sized compacted dirt area would be there where had been grass the day before. Bewick's wrens took over the two bat boxes by the washrooms. This was after one of them finished their first nesting attempt inside the gunwales of our canoe.

We kept up some bird monitoring, generating our usual weekly species lists from the bird survey crew, staff and volunteer Mary Taitt, who was invited in to start the species list for the week by going off on a solitary walk every Sunday. Many thanks, Mary. Some species we probably missed recording, as we usually rely upon contributions from many observant visitors as well as these other sources. We posted these lists on our website to make them accessible during the closure, but we will continue this practice now. Look for <https://reifelbirdsanctuary.com/bird2.html>.

Our closure disappointed many people initially, as we have never been closed for an indefinite period of time before. Once people arrived and encountered the locked gates they seemed to decide the outer area was nice for various activities. In the first month or so of closure, though, it was generally quiet at the end of Robertson Road. One family must have spent hours every day trying to lure in a pair of Canada Geese from several hundred meters down the driveway by throwing bird seed through the bars of the gate. Others periodically left treats on top of our mailbox. Parents taught their children to skateboard, play soccer or ride a bike, cyclists flaked out in the grass, and small groups picnicked. Later on into June and July, it was more like some sort of speedway, with hundreds of cars coming down the road just to turn around there. Around the July 1st holiday weekend, we encountered a large group picnic. Every day as we approached the gate to leave, we wondered what we would find in the way of activity on the other side.

Traffic on Westham Island was very busy in June and July, so when we developed our re-opening safety strategies, we considered how best to avoid adding any more traffic congestion on Robertson Road. We have been working closely with the Environment Canada Protected Areas staff that work from the office at Alaksen National Wildlife Area next to the Sanctuary. There has been a coordinated approach to the regulation of traffic entering our respective gates to minimize traffic congestion on Robertson Road. Their support in developing opening strategies, finding items such as hand sanitizer and masks and sharing some shade shelter at the gate areas has been very much appreciated.

Then we opened the gates July 14th and were back in business. It took only two days after re-opening to need to enlighten a child that was chasing around flightless ducks and geese. It took only four days to have a complaint from a visitor about a group of other visitors making a lot of noise in a bird blind and scaring away the birds she was watching. On the fifth day we had the first alarming report that visitors were picking up ducklings and petting them. It took six days for the first very large sack of bird seed to be confiscated from a well-meaning visitor and eight days for visitors to really look at the ripening blackberries and get the wrong idea. Yes, we are back to normal except for the reduced visitor numbers. We have aimed for 50% the usual visitors and seem to have achieved that with the reservation system based on the first three weeks of being open. As reported earlier, we are monitoring the re-opening carefully and will consider gradual adjustments to visitor levels as long as no issues develop.

So far, we have averaged about 1200 people a week since re-opening, which is about 50% that of last July.

Bird Sagas During the Closure

Every year, we keep track of some species more than others because of management concerns and this year was no different. For a more comprehensive review of bird highlights, refer to Varri's Bird Highlights article.

Most of the ducks and geese leave the Sanctuary for their nesting grounds and return in the fall. Our summer nesting population usually consists only of Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, Mallard and Gadwall. The first Canada Goose egg was seen March 29th, a highly entertaining observation, as this pair of geese comes every year and tries to nest in the daffodils over by the Museum. This egg was in their "salad nest" but the pair was unsuccessful in keeping their nest safe from predators. The first successful hatch of goslings was from another more secretive pair and the family showed up in the parking lot on April 22nd. There was a lot of nest predation and re-nesting activity in the Display Pond area. By the end of April, all 19 goslings from the first three nests were being treated as one overlarge brood. Additional broods were seen all throughout May, and by June 12th, 8 or 9 families were present, and only a few new broods were noted after that into July.

The first Mallard nest found in late March was found predated, as were many other early nests. Most Mallards re-nested a bit later, incubating throughout late April. The first brood showed up in the parking lot on May 6th and two more appeared on the 9th, then there was a long stretch until more broods started appearing in late May and early June. The brood tally was at 9 broods by June 12th and another 5 or 6 broods have been recorded since then. Gadwall broods are just hatching now in July.

For the past few years, we have noted many squirrels and mink interfering with Wood Duck nesting. We have only seen two broods so far. The first family showed up in Robertson Slough at the front gate May 23rd and seem to have fledged now. A much larger Wood Duck brood of 9 ducklings was seen over by the portable toilet on the 6th of June.

The Sandhill Cranes kept us company for the first month as we were their only humans. Then they claimed their usual nest island and laid their first egg on Easter Monday April 13th. The second egg was laid either on the 15th Wednesday evening or the 16th Thursday morning. The usual incubation period for this pair has been 31 days so we anticipated hatching around Mother's Day.

From April 18th and 20th the pair ended up constantly battling a pair of Canada Geese that wanted to squeeze their own nest in just a few feet from the incubating crane. It was clearly a one-bird nesting island, but the goose would wiggle down into the soil just out of

reach, then try to steal nest materials from the crane nest. This was all sorted out after a few days but having four adult birds squabbling and flapping about always puts crane eggs in jeopardy. Every few weeks during crane incubation, the geese would try this tactic again, each time to be evicted when both cranes were present on the island and able to remind the geese with sharp pokes.

From April 20th onwards, Louie, their 2018 colt, visited the Sanctuary with a "friend". Maybe a girlfriend, Louie? The nesting pair then spent most of three weeks trying to evict Louie and his friend every day (as well as the geese). Louie began making very aggressive male territorial displays and incurred the wrath of his father and got hunted down and chased away. Sometimes we could see just see one vocal high up crane in pursuit of another high up speck heading to Richmond.

On Mother's Day, May 10th, a few days before the predicted hatch, we found the pair off the nest and no eggs visible on the island either. We suspect predation or extreme disturbance of some kind to the nest. The day before this, a big Raccoon was checking out all shoreline areas in a nearby pond and gulls were swimming in the waters near the island. Hatching was due to start in just a few more days, so this was a disappointing outcome.

On May 20th, Louie and his girlfriend were back, but the reunion with his parents was not friendly. We then did not see him until the end of July. On May 23rd, our pair tried again, laying an egg on a small island off of Triangle Garden, lost that egg two days later and laid a second egg on the original nest island which was also lost by the 27th. In spite of us setting up night cameras, we did not find out what happened to any of these eggs. Every year, there is a mystery factor involved in nest failures.

Birds of prey nest here each summer but tend to go unnoticed. Barn owls were present since February at one of the old boxes and raised at least one chick. A Cooper's Hawk nest was active in the back woodlot, with the birds very vocal if anyone was nearby. Red-tailed Hawks re-used last year's nest along the driveway, starting to rebuild it in early March. On March 28th, both birds were observed sitting in the nest. One was on the nest presumably incubating April 11th. By late May it sounded like at least one juvenile was in the nest, but around that time, a large willow cracked and fell nearby and may have spooked the birds a bit as they went quiet for a few weeks. A Young Red-Tailed Hawk (presumably the fledged young) has been present in the area around the Sanctuary ever since.

(..... /continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Purple Martins were first seen April 10th, with one adult male on the top post of an older box, and one other male chasing two Bald Eagles. On April 18th, 9 birds were observed during regular Sanctuary surveys, all concentrated in the area with the older boxes. By June 12th there was a lot of activity at these boxes and it looked like some of this year's young might be fledged already, although we will defer to experts as to whether maybe some were last year's hatchlings acting like young. At the same time, some Martin activity started in the newer boxes closer to the Sanctuary outlet control with as yet undetermined success.

Barn Swallows are always monitored here, as they are designated a threatened species under the Species At Risk Act. First sightings on 2020 were of a single bird on January 29th and again on the 31st, followed by no records until a couple of birds April 11th then April 17th, when many arrived. On the next day there was signs of nest building under the Warming Hut, some activity around new Barn Swallow Shelter in Southwest Marsh, and on the pillars of the Viewing Platform. By the end of July, by visiting each potential nest building spot every two to four weeks since their arrival in April we have observed the following: There were at least 46 active nest sites this year; 7 of these are now being used to rear a second clutch; We found at least 35 other nests that were either built and abandoned this year, remained from last year or were finished but not used yet; and the nests being used twice this year mostly have had young fledge by the end of June before starting again.

The “Bird Fort” or Swallow Nest Shelter built last fall was specifically designed to provide barn swallow nesting locations to compensate for those lost when we removed the old bird blind that stood on the seaward side of the Southwest Marsh. The new shelter for the swallows has been well used by the birds this year, with 7 active nest sites built on the structure.

Staff Changes

Dan Dixon, our biologist was hired on in April 2014 and has been a key part of our Sanctuary team. He recently decided to go back to school to take an advanced course in GIS (Geographical Information System) programming. He left our employment at the end of May, but you may still encounter him along the trails helping as part of our volunteer bird survey team. During his employment here, he became the keeper of the nest structure records, an educator for the school classes, a foster “mom” to some Canada Geese, and part of the select group that watches over our Sandhill Cranes and their young. The photo included here shows Dan a few years ago out in the

Cattail Marsh of West Field before we decided that manual cutting the plants back was not sustainable and brought a machine in to do the job.



Dan Dixon (left) and summer staff Robert Keen and Kristina Breit in 2015.

Many of the recent trail improvements you see along East Dyke and older shoreline stabilization projects along pond edges in Display Ponds have been designed and carried out by Dan and Kristina Breit plus many willing helpers. Thanks for all of your help Dan, and good luck in your studies!

Just before we closed the Sanctuary in March, we had selected two promising recent graduates of BCIT's Fish, Wildlife and Recreation program to help us for the summer. Evan Gogal and Marissa Sasaki have been working here since their spring exams. Although it might have been a shock to have the Sanctuary closed, they have gamely tackled many maintenance projects during the closure with Dan and Kristina, Dave McClue and volunteers. Most recently, they have now become the primary traffic control people out at the front gate since we re-opened. In addition to Evan and Marissa, we have been assisted by two other BCIT students Gabby Thompson (from the same FWR class) and Morgan Dunne (in the Ecological Restoration Class of BCIT). They had all recently signed on to help with bird surveys, but also helped with trail maintenance and became a social group unto themselves. We really appreciated all of this youthful energy at this time!

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

The Volunteer Corner

Special thanks to Brian Self and Claire Melanson for their ongoing assistance with the surveys and trail upkeep, and to the team Debbie Carr, Jim Martin, Eric Rossicci and Eileen Axford that came out to help prepare the newsletters in May. Janna Peterson and Kelly Mitchell helped host our visitors during our first few weeks of being open. Bagging bird seed for our customers has been tackled by Eric Rossicci and Eileen Axford, Owen and Jamie Shutter, and Justin Makonin.

All of these volunteers, plus all of our Directors have provided us with support during the closure and re-opening process. In particular, Director Mark McDonald provided the very popular outdoor hand-washing station, and Barney Reifel tackled the management of projects such as the resurfacing of the parking lot and the front gate installations and guided us through the brainstorming required for the re-opening process.

Volunteers Wanted:

- ◆ Sanctuary trail hosts on weekends from late summer into the fall when we will likely have an increase in interest from the public due to the arrival of shorebirds then the Snow Geese.
- ◆ Helping with bird surveys every two weeks.
- ◆ Specific maintenance work parties.

For more information, ask at the Gift Shop or visit our website. www.reifelbirdsantuary.com and explore the Volunteer page for specific work parties.

Please leave your name and contact information at our office 604-946-6980 or send me an email.

Kathleen (kathleen@reifelbirdsantuary.com.)

About the Back Cover Photo

We anticipate that the upcoming fall edition of Marshnotes will include recent Snow Goose and Fraser River Estuary research and how Gadwyn Gan was able to take photos of American White Pelicans offshore.

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.

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; 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 needs for survival; and provide support for like-minded organizations who are working on waterfowl-related projects.

Enclosed is my cheque or VISA/MasterCard number for:

SINGLE Membership: **\$25**

FAMILY Membership: **\$50**

LIFE Membership: **\$500**

Donation (tax deductible)

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 Fax: 604 946 6982

Website: www.reifelbirdsantuary.com

BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY

5191 Robertson Road, Delta, British Columbia V4K 3N2



CANADA POSTES
POST CANADA

Postage paid Port payé
Publications Mail Poste-publications

40924050

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO 40924050
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
CIRCULATION DEPT.
330 - 123 MAIN STREET
TORONTO ON M5W 1A1
email: circdept@publisher.com



Pelicans Offshore © Gadwyn Gan