

Marshnotes[®]



**BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY
WINTER 2023**

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: 1,800. Published four times a year.

Recommended citation for this issue:

Marshnotes Winter 2023, (K. Fry, Editor).

British Columbia Waterfowl Society. Published February 3rd 2023.

www.reifelbirdsanctuary.com/marshw2023.pdf.

Submissions for Marshnotes may be sent to the email and postal addresses below marked for attention of the Marshnotes Editor. **Deadline for the next edition: April 15th, 2023.**

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

Telephone: 604 946 6980

Facsimile: 604 946 6982

Website: www.reifelbirdsanctuary.com

Email: bcws@reifelbirdsanctuary.com

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

George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary:

Prices: (effective September 1st, 2022).

Daily Admission:

Adults: \$8.00

Seniors: \$6.00 (65+ years)

Children: \$6.00 (2-14 years)

Bird seed: \$2.00/bag

Annual Memberships:

Family: \$100.00

Individual: \$ 50.00

Life: \$1,000.00

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: Jean Zhang
Maintenance: Dave McClue
Field technician: Kristina Breit
Kiera Fritsch
Biologists: Evan Gogal
Marissa Sasaki

Hours of Operation:

Reservations are required for all visitors.
Open 9:00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. every day except Mondays. (Closed Mondays)

The Sanctuary is wheelchair accessible.



We now send out a tweet from our Twitter account @ReifelSanctuary when it looks like there is a weather alert, all reservation spots are full, or something interesting has been seen.

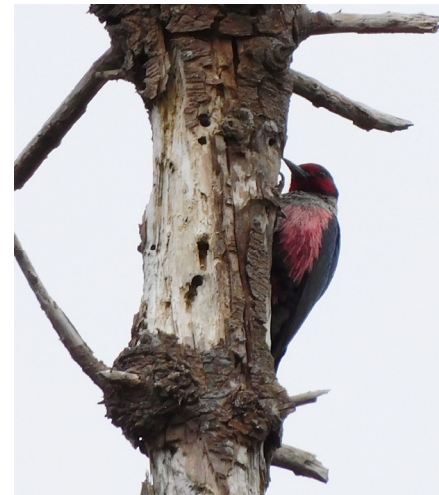
Bird of the Year 2022

Monthly Highlights

<i>January</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>
Red-breasted Sapsucker	Barn Swallow	Black-throated Gray Warbler	Calliope Hummingbird
<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>August</i>
Lewis's Woodpecker	Northern Waterthrush	American Golden Plover	American Avocet
<i>September</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>December</i>
Ruddy Duck	Tropical Kingbird	Red-breasted Sapsucker	Brewer's Blackbird

Total # Species seen in 2022: 167

Bird of the Year: Lewis's Woodpecker



Lewis's Woodpecker Photo: Kathleen Fry

Sanctuary Locations Map

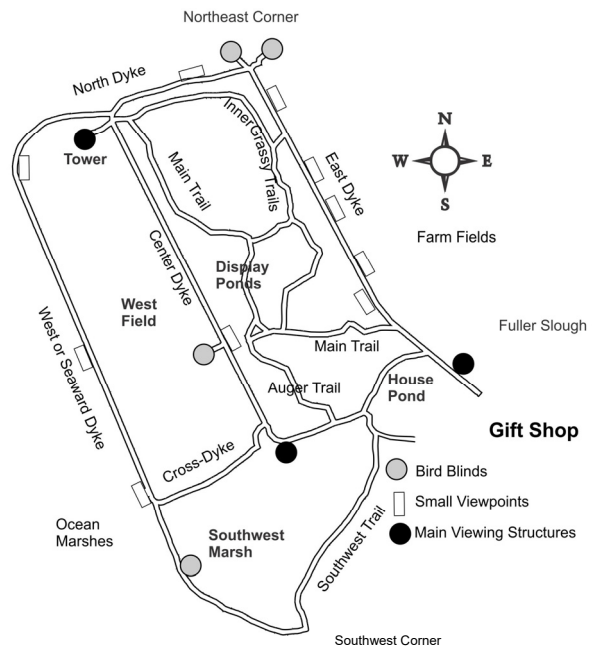
Please refer to the location map to the right to locate place names used in the Marshnotes articles.

About Our Covers

Front Cover: Snow Geese
© Tony Austin

Back Cover: Hooded Merganser
© John Whitmore

Marshnotes is issued four times a year but is now available only in electronic format on our "Archives" page at www.reifelbirdsantuary.com/archives.html. If you would like to be notified when a new edition is posted, email memberships@reifelbirdsantuary.com.



Contents

Page	3	Bird of The Year 2022
	4	Bird Highlights
	6	In Memorium– High Magee
	7	Notice of the 2023 Annual General Meeting
	8	Preliminary Plant Phenology Monitoring Summary 2022
	9	Volunteer Corner
	9	Why Be a Member
	10	Manager's Report
	11	Ladner Christmas Bird Count 2022 Results

Varri Raffan
Varri Raffan

Marissa Sasaki

Kathleen Fry
Yousif Attia

Bird Highlights

October 2022 ended with a total of 100 species recorded. This list was made possible by submissions from visitors, staff and bi-weekly bird surveys.

October 2 – October 8

As of October 8th, after a prolonged stay since September 3rd, the Wilson's Phalarope has now left the Sanctuary. It will be making its way to either Bolivia or northern Argentina and Peru for the winter, a very lengthy annual round trip. October 6th, a White-throated Sparrow was located along the North Dyke and a Northern Shrike found at the south end of the Seaward Dyke. On the 7th, in the trees above the picnic area 2 Western Meadowlarks were spotted. This week was one of the more active sighting periods with 83 species observed.

October 9 – October 15

The big news on the 9th was the sighting of a Tropical Kingbird along the front entrance just past the Warming Hut. Although this species is an annual visitor on the west coast of Vancouver Island it is a rare sighting elsewhere in British Columbia. The last Tropical Kingbird to be seen at the Sanctuary was October 2012. Near the north end of the East Dyke 1 Northern Waterthrush was found. If you are stopping by the Center Dyke bird blind keep an eye out for a Barred Owl who shows up sporadically on either the left or right side of the trail to the blind. Two Common Ravens have been seen daily flying over the Sanctuary. They certainly are distinguishable from the American Crow by the larger size and have very loud guttural calls. White-throated and Lincoln's Sparrows were also highlights in this reporting period.

October 16- October 22

Both Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers were spotted on the 16th, one along the Inner Grassy Trail and the other on the East Dyke. They are both a black and white woodpecker with a broad white stripe down the middle of the back and both males have a red spot on their nape. The Hairy Woodpecker is the larger of the two but hard to tell when not seen together. A useful method to tell them apart is the Hairy's beak is longer, nearly as long as its head, while the Downy's beak is stubby and obviously shorter than the head. This same method of using beak size also works for telling Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs apart. The Greater Yellowlegs beak is longer than its head while the Lesser Yellowlegs beak is equal to its head length. Of course if you are able to find them standing close to each other there is an obvious size difference. Two Tropical Kingbirds are now being reported in the area. Out of the 81 species recorded Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shrike, American Pipit and Western Meadowlark were other good finds.



Two Tropical Kingbirds Photo: John Whitmore

October 23 – October 29

On the 23rd an Osprey was noticed from the tower. On the 25th, 27th and 29th a Barred Owl was spotted around the Center Dyke bird blind and in the trees around the house. Staff and visitors are always on the lookout for a Northern Saw-Whet Owl but no luck since the report back on September 24th. We had a late sighting of a Black-throated Gray Warbler on the 28th. Warblers have now migrated south but you might see the odd Yellow-rumped Warbler still in the area. They are generally the first warbler to show up in the spring and the last to leave in the fall. A few Greater Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitchers still remain along with the American Avocet who continues to stay put in the West Field. The Northern Waterthrush turned up again in the North East Corner. The Sandhill Cranes returned to the Sanctuary on October 26th after a few weeks off visiting other cranes east of Deas Island Regional Park and west of Burns Bog.

November 2022 weekly bird sightings lists averaged 74 species with a total of 98 for the month.

October 30 – November 5

On the 30th we noticed 1 Black-crowned Night-Heron had returned to the "usual spot" and then on the 4th we were up to 2 in the same area. The first return of the Buffleheads and Common Mergansers were on the 5th along with a high count of 6 Common Ravens and 9 Sandhill Cranes. The heavy winds overnight on the 4th didn't blow the American Avocet away. It has been feeding and sleeping in West Field for 42 consecutive days now. In the spring you can see many pairs of Wood Ducks around the trails and making the nest boxes home, but finding a Wood Duck at this time of year is difficult. Some Wood Duck populations head to California for the winter but there are also year round residents that obviously have a different winter home than the Sanctuary.

November 6 – November 12

The Barred Owl popped up again on the 6th at the Center Dyke bird blind. A Short-eared Owl was seen flying along the outer marsh on the 6th and then on the 12th. As you walk along the outer Seaward Dyke, especially from October to middle of March, keep an eye out for these daytime hunting owls. Northern Harriers also use this area to hunt for their favorite prey the Townsend's Vole along with mice, frogs and snakes. Northern Harriers, like owls, have a curved sound-reflective facial ruff which enables them to locate prey by sound especially hunting low and slow to the ground. Of course Northern Harriers have that distinctive white rump patch that Short-eared Owls lack. Ewen Slough was the location for the first winter sighting of a Ruddy Duck. Throughout this month we were able to find 2 Ruddy Ducks in various spots around the Sanctuary.

November 13 – November 19

Out of the 79 bird species this week, Common Goldeneye, Horned Grebe, American Bittern, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hutton's Vireo and Pine Siskin were firsts for the fall. On the list, we see the last of the Orange-crowned Warblers, Warbling Vireos and Savannah Sparrows. Arriving at work on the cool, foggy morning of the 18th we were greeted by 17 Sandhill Cranes standing in House Pond below the Gift Shop. Trumpeter Swans are now showing up from Northern BC and the Yukon and can be heard out in the marshes trumpeting. These large bodied birds are the second heaviest flier in North America at 24 to 28 lbs. The heaviest flier is the California Condor at 28 to 31 lbs. Flocks of up to 200 Cackling Geese, a smaller version of the Canada Goose, have been spending time in the farm field behind the picnic area foraging on the winter cover crop grasses.

November 20 – November 26

By the middle of September most of the insect life has diminished and this is when the Swallow species leave



Red-breasted Sapsucker

Photo: Kathleen Fry

our area heading south. Although not unheard of, it was still quite a surprise to locate 2 Barn Swallows from the Observation Tower on November 24th. Each winter usually only a handful of Eurasian Wigeon are found at the Sanctuary. Two were seen on Fuller Slough on the 20th. Eurasian Wigeon are quite different looking with their rusty orange head and gray sides that the American Wigeon lack. Another bird best found in the winter is the Red-breasted Sapsucker who belongs in the woodpecker family. On the 24th a staff member was fortunate to notice one along the driveway to the house. As their name implies they drink sap from shallow holes they drill in tree bark. In the dull tones of winter habitats they show up well with their flaming red head, yellow belly and patches of white on black wings.

November 27 – December 3

On the 27th visitors watched 3 Short-eared Owls as they hunted over the outer marsh. This cold week left most of the inner waterways frozen except Fuller Slough which literally had hundreds of ducks enjoying the open water. On December 3rd after scanning the mass of waterfowl on Fuller Slough staff came up with a high count of 7 Eurasian Wigeon. Bald Eagles are abundant at this time of year along the coastline and major river systems. Adult pairs are busy putting finishing touches on their nests which will have to be ready to receive eggs by February. Other birds of note for this week included Rough-legged Hawk, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Merlin, Lincoln's Sparrow and Western Meadowlark. The American Avocet, that has spent just over 3 months with us, has finally moved on as of the end of the month. I'm sure one of the deciding factors was the cold snap that froze the West Field taking away access to its food.

December 2022 started off cold and ended up colder along with snow and frozen waterways. The total number of bird species observed for the month was 89.

December 4 – December 10

A Harris's Sparrow was located along the entrance driveway on the 9th. Hutton's Vireo, Purple Finch, Hermit Thrush and Greater White-fronted Geese were also worth mentioning from the 66 species observed.

December 11 – December 17

A big jump this week with a total of 75 species found. We continue to see the flock of 200 Cackling Geese foraging in the field behind the picnic area. There was another sighting of the Harris's Sparrow at the front gate on the 14th feeding with a flock of Golden-crowned Sparrows. December 15th a Townsend's Solitaire was found

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

around the House Pond and then again at the south end of the Seaward Dyke on the 16th. As many as 3 Northern Waterthrush are now being reported from the north end of the East Dyke and along the Inner Grassy Trail. On really windy days you can count more than 50 Great Blue Herons all sheltering on the left bank of Fuller Slough. To tell an adult Great Blue Heron from a juvenile bird you would notice the adults have a white and black crown, and long plumes coming from their breasts, flanks and backs while the juveniles have a gray crown, chestnut colored patches on the shoulders and no plumes. Telling a male from a female is very difficult as their plumage is the same.

December 18 – December 24

For most of this week ice and snow covered the ponds



Ruddy Duck

Photo: Kathleen Fry

which forced the waterfowl population out to the open waters of the Fraser River and the Strait of Georgia to feed. Keeping the hummingbird feeders thawed, filling songbird feeders and providing suet were daily and sometime hourly duties, especially with the hummingbird feeders freezing in under an hour. We had duplicates ready to trade out when that happened. This week included lots of snow and several days of Sanctuary closures.

December 25 – December 31

As the ice slowly melts in the ponds so is the return of dabbling ducks. Diving duck numbers are still to come back. December 27th 2 American Bitterns were seen at the north end of the Seaward Dyke by the big old rusty pipe that was washed ashore decades ago. The Sanctuary survey team was fortunate enough to see an elusive Swamp Sparrow outside the Seaward Dyke on the 31st. On the same day a White-throated Sparrow was seen along the edge of the Inner Grassy Trail and a small flock of Brewer's Blackbirds at the front gate. A nice highlight to wrap up the year was an American Tree Sparrow seen along the outer Seaward Dyke also on the 31st. They are not often seen at the Sanctuary and the last one was reported back in November 2019.

So ends the 2022 bird highlights. Over the last 37 years that I have worked here I always enjoy, and will do so for some time yet, talking with members as they visit and to see 2nd and even 3rd generations making their own traditions of visiting the Sanctuary. Hope you all have a great birding year in 2023.

Text: Varri Raffan
Gift Shop Manager

In Memoriam



Hugh Magee

Past Director Hugh Magee passed away peacefully on October 31st 2022. Hugh had a lifelong interest in conservation and was a passionate supporter of the Sanctuary. He served as a Director of the British Columbia Waterfowl Society from 1994 to 2016, and was very involved with the restructuring of the BCWS Constitution which resulted in the extension of the BCWS's present tenure to operate the Sanctuary. He will be sadly missed.

Apart from his involvement with the BCWS, Hugh was a prominent businessman and served on numerous national and international public and private corporate boards, for which he was inducted into the BC Business Laureates Hall of Fame.

Hugh's commitment to health care, community and nature conservation included co-founding the Cambie Surgery Centre, founding the Canada Diagnostic Center, serving as Chair of The Nature Trust of BC where he helped to secure over 170,000 acres of ecologically sensitive land, the Esperanza Society where he envisioned the relocation and redevelopment St. Paul's Hospital, Board member of BC Children's Hospital, and a Federally appointed Trustee for the Nisga'a Nations Fisheries Trust for 17 years.

Notice to all Members of the
BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY

The Bylaws of the Society provide for the election of six (6) Directors by the Society membership in addition to the appointment of six (6) Directors from Stakeholder groups. The six elected Directors each serve a two year term, with three to be elected at each Annual General Meeting.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held at the Lecture Hall at

The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary

5191 Robertson Road, Ladner British Columbia
of the Sanctuary at

7:00 p.m. on Wednesday April 19th, 2023.

The Board of Directors would like to take this opportunity to advise the membership that two incumbent Directors

Barney Reifel
Ken Thompson

will be seeking re-election for a further term.

A written nomination form has also been received for the nomination of Clayton Botkin for a two year term.

If you wish to nominate a candidate for election as a Director at the Annual General Meeting, please complete a nomination form which, in addition to the candidate's written consent, must include a written nomination by two Society members in good standing.

Nomination forms are available from the Sanctuary.

No member may nominate more than one candidate in any one year.
A family membership constitutes one vote at the meeting.

Please deliver the completed nomination form, by mail or fax by

4:00 p.m. March 19th, 2023 to
The Secretary, British Columbia Waterfowl Society,
5191 Robertson Road, Delta,
British Columbia V4K 3N2
Fax: 604 946 6982

If there are any further nominations received by the deadline, a list of all candidates will be posted on the Sanctuary's website.

Hawthorn by May 11th (Figure 1). Most of these species, except for Hawthorn, lost their blooms by the end of May. Snowberry and Himalayan Blackberry blooms were later with the first record of flowers recorded on May 31st and June 15th, respectively.

The earliest ripe fruits in the sanctuary were seen by June 15th, which included Salmonberry, Twinberry, and Red Elderberry. Since the preliminary survey ended in early August, we did not monitor fruits beyond this point, although Himalayan Blackberry was just producing ripened fruits. Salmonberry were one of the first shrubs to drop their fruit by July 19th, followed by Twinberry, Oregon grape, and Red Elderberry by August 6th. The remaining species held onto their fruit past the final survey day and were noted well into the winter, but were not documented.

During this preliminary survey, we found that the earliest plants blooming in March are native plants (i.e. Salmonberry, Osoberry, Red-flowering Currant and Oregon Grape). These native plants may be the earliest nectar sources within the Sanctuary. Although most of them also produced some of the earliest fruit, Red-flowering Currants and Snowberry did not produce fruit until August. The study did not fully document how long late summer fruits were available before they were dropped.

This study was preliminary in nature, and methods and efforts were sometimes inconsistent. Moving forward, we hope to repeat parts of this study but start earlier, establish monitoring plots with a good representation of all species of interest, and continue further into the fall. The scope of the study would benefit by the inclusion of more small fruit-producing tree species such as Mountain Ash, Cascara, English Holly, and Oceanspray, and some monitoring of actual bird use of the study plants.

There are many aspects of bird biology to consider before adjusting habitat conditions for songbirds. We plan to continue on modifying and adapting our methods and the scope of our monitoring plan as new challenges and questions arise. A special thank you to Dani McRobbie for her assistance with the initial data collection of phenology.

Text: Marissa Sasaki,
Sanctuary Biologist

References

Denny, E.G., K. L. Gerst, A. J. Miller-Rushing, G. L. Tierney, T. M. Crimmins, C.A. F. Enquist, P. Guertin, A. H. Rosemartin, M. D. Schwartz, K. A. Thomas, and J. F. Weltzin. 2014. Standardized phenology monitoring methods to track plant and animal activity for science and resource management applications. *International Journal of Biometeorology* 58(4): 591-601

Gillespie, C.R., S. Contreras-Martinez, C. A. Bishop and J. D. Alexander. 2020. State of the Rufous Hummingbird science and conservation. Western Hummingbird Partnership, Boulder CO.

Gogal, E., P. Staiger, and M. Sasaki. 2022. Landbird habitat enhancement plan for George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. British Columbia Institute of Technology, Burnaby BC.

Raffan, V. 2022. *Bird Highlights, Marshnotes Summer 2022.*, British Columbia Waterfowl Society.

The Volunteer Corner

Special thanks to:

- ◆ Mary Taitt for leading our regular Sunday Bird Walk.
- ◆ Brian Self, Jim Martin, John Chandler, Mary Taitt, Luca Santamaria, Dirk Fleming, Sue Cockroft, and Christine Barker for filling feeders and hosting visitors.
- ◆ Christine Barker, Eric Rossicci, and Eileen Axford for bagging seed.
- ◆ Brian Self, Peter Candido, Ben Lambert, Janice White, Sabine Jessen, and Moe Saeedbakht for helping with bi-weekly Sanctuary bird surveys.
- ◆ Margaret Gorham for hosting visitors at the Museum every Sunday.

If you are interested in volunteering, please leave your contact information at our office or send an email to kathleen@reifelbirds sanctuary.com.

For more information, ask at the Gift Shop or visit our website www.reifelbirds sanctuary.com and explore the Volunteer page.

Why be a Member?

As a Member, you receive the following benefits:

- FREE admission for a year to the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary .
- 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.

Manager's Report

The last three months had low visitor use (10,588), but in spite of rain and snow, visitors were non-stop in their enthusiasm to track down rarities such as the Wilson's Phalarope, a Ruff, an American Avocet, Tropical Kingbirds, and a Ruddy Duck. Owls are usually a draw for birders at this time of the year. There has been no sighting of a Northern Saw-whet Owl since September 24th., but numerous sightings of Barred Owls and Great Horned Owls and even Short-eared Owls. There was a brief glimpse of a Long-eared Owl a week before the Christmas Bird Count, but it could not be found during Count Week.

Migrant ducks were late returning here, and it was not until the end of October that we saw the usual big flocks of Mallards, American Wigeons and Northern Pintail starting to use our offshore marshes, sloughs and ponds. Snow Geese flocks colonized most of Westham Island for the last half of October, with flocks of up to 40,000 birds either offshore or in farms putting on spectacular displays. After wet and windy November weather fronts, diving ducks and large flocks of Cackling Geese were noticeable.

Our Sandhill Crane family was gone a few weeks in early October, and were in a flock of 78 socializing cranes October 22nd in a field west of Burns Bog. Our birds returned here on the 26th, bringing a few of their friends. Between late October and the snowfalls of early December, visiting birds came and went, with our family keeping company with two extra birds, but acting very territorial around another 4 and an additional group of 7. Some days we had 5, 7, 9, or 12, but the highest number was on November 18, when 17 of them were wading in House Pond. In a few days, this big flock disbanded leaving us with mainly our family group of three and two extras. One of the extra birds may be their offspring from 2018, as this bird is very familiar with the place and staff.

The first appearance of a Red-breasted Sapsucker on November 19th caused mixed reactions- ("Oh Cool!") versus ("Doesn't that mean snow?"). Sure enough, on the 29th we had snow, some more on December 2nd, and a real blizzard the day of the Christmas Bird Count December 18th. Then, Mother Nature outdid herself with a big dump of knee-deep snow awaiting us on the 20th. The only good thing about that was the invasion of hundreds of Varied Thrushes everywhere as we were plowing the snow. There were many Sanctuary closure days up until New Years because of snow, ice and general road conditions.

Water control structures and dykes have been hot topics in these past few months, given the many days of heavy rains, the ongoing need for repair work on pipes right at the entrance, and king tides in late

December. Ducks Unlimited Canada will be repairing the control at Fuller Slough and the culvert close to the washrooms this spring, but had originally planned for the work to be done in early November, but needed to reschedule it for this spring.

The king tides just after Christmas were surprisingly high. Although we did not have overtopping of dykes, it was close in some areas. When tide waters are really high against the dykes, birds such as Virginia Rails, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, and Short-eared Owls are deprived of good areas to perch or roost out their usual marshes offshore, and people can encounter them perched on the shoulders of the seaward dyke.

An update on Avian Flu

Avian Influenza concerns have not gone away yet as we approach the one year anniversary of the first report of the highly pathogenic version in BC. The more severe form of the "Avian Flu" virus is still circulating and is highly contagious in both wild and domestic flocks of birds. Most of the wild birds collected and testing positive in BC have been Canada Geese, Snow Geese, raptors such as Bald Eagles and Great Horned Owls, and more recently American Crows, (Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), January 2023 update).

Here at the Sanctuary, we have been working with the ECCC office next door to have suspect dead birds collected and tested, and have also sent several sick birds to Wildlife Rescue Association for assessments as sometimes they are suffering from other problems such as the fungal disease *Aspergillois*. We have watched mainly for lethargic or disoriented birds with mobility issues. The table on the next page shows results of testing of birds from the Sanctuary, Alaksen NWA and Westham Island since February 2022. So far, 5 birds collected from here tested positive (Cooper's Hawk, Wood Duck, Great Blue Heron, Gadwall, and Cackling Goose). Many specimens are still to be tested.

We received reports of dead Snow Geese in early November from local spots such as farms on Westham Island and nearby Brunswick Point. This was shortly after reports of the same thing from south of the border in the Skagit estuary, the linked winter habitat areas for the Fraser-Skagit population of these Arctic-nesting Geese. Although we can keep our visitors informed about restricted feeding of birds and keeping bird feeders clean, these efforts do not help to reduce this illness once it has spread in flocks of thousand of birds such as the Snow Geese. The public can help, though, by reporting any sick or dead birds. If they are in the Sanctuary, report them to us. If they are elsewhere, call the Avian Flu Wild Bird hotline **1-800-431-BIRD (2473)** to report what you see.

Date Died	Location	Species	CWS Cause final
7-Oct-21	Westham Is	Snow Goose	Hunter-killed
22-Feb-22	Reifel	Trumpeter Swan	Aspergillosis
21-Apr-22	Reifel	Cooper's Hawk	Avian Influenza (H5)
17-May-22	Reifel	Wood Duck	Avian Influenza (H5)
18-May-22	Reifel	Great Blue Heron	Avian Influenza (H5)
4-Jul-22	Westham Is	Canada Goose	Avian Influenza suspect
4-Jul-22	Westham Is	Canada Goose	Avian Influenza suspect
5-Jul-22	Reifel	Canada Goose	Avian Influenza suspect
6-Jul-22	Reifel	Canada Goose	Undetermined
6-Jul-22	Reifel	Mallard	Avian Influenza suspect
20-Jul-22	Reifel	Green-winged Teal	Aspergillosis
12-Aug-22	Reifel	Gadwall	Avian Influenza (H5)
27-Oct-22	Reifel	Cackling Goose	Avian Influenza (H5)
27-Nov-22	Westham Is	Snow Goose	Avian Influenza (H5)
3-Dec-22	Westham Is	Snow Goose	Avian Influenza suspect
9-Dec-22	Alaksen	Great Horned Owl	Avian Influenza (H5)
16-Dec-22	Reifel	Virginia Rail	Trauma

Table 1. Results of avian flu testing for birds turned in locally. (ECCC update January 2023).

Results of testing across Canada are shown on the “Avian Influenza Dashboard” of the Government of Canada’s Avian Influenza in Wild Birds webpage. www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-game-bird-hunting/avian-influenza-wild-birds.html

Reporting Banded Songbirds

Dr. Elizabeth Gow and her team from ECCC have been colour-banding some of our Oregon Juncos, Spotted Towhees and Golden-crowned Sparrows. If you see any birds with plastic leg bands, you can email her at Eizabethgow2@ec.gc.ca.

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

Just a Reminder
Visitors Need to Book Their Visit.
Visit our Planning Your Visit page for details.
www.reifelbirdsanctuary.com/planning.html

Even a snowstorm couldn't stop the Ladner Christmas Bird Count



Volunteers and staff at the Sanctuary. Photo: Sabine Jessen

The Ladner Christmas Bird Count is an annual survey of birds within a 24 km diameter circle around Delta, with areas extending into Point Roberts, Richmond, and Tsawwassen. Count Day on Sunday December 18, 2022 was shaping up to be a record year for participation but the weather had other plans. Snow, strong wind and sub-zero temperatures turned into white-out conditions by mid-day!

Many birders opted to stay home, and only a few were fortunate enough to contribute observations from their bird feeders inside the count circle. The remaining 68 people persevered with the surveys, but got a taste of weather conditions more typical of those experienced on bird counts outside of our mild Lower Mainland.

The birds of course were still out there, and inclement weather caused some uncommon species to congregate

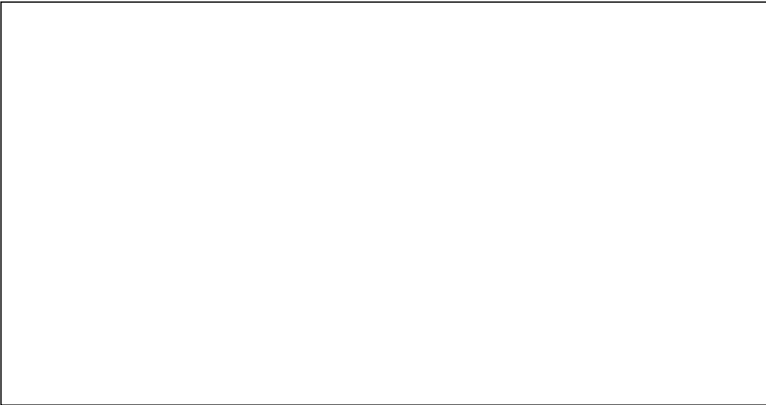
in high numbers. A total of 133 species of 146,825 individuals were found on Count Day, which was three species more than last year. Highlights were the long-staying American Avocet at the base of the Deltaport Causeway, a Redhead in Point Roberts, and seven California Scrub-Jays in Delta and Richmond, reflecting the ongoing irruption seen for this species in this region this year. Waterfowl in general, with the exception of Snow Geese, were detected in higher numbers probably due to the poor weather. Raptor and owl numbers were down hopefully as a result of reduced effort, and visibility. The same can be assumed for most songbirds, most of which were in lower numbers than in past years. The influx of Varied Thrushes was a treat all over the Lower Mainland. Other notable species not observed every year included Greater White-fronted Goose, Tundra Swan, Eared Grebe, Bonaparte’s Gull, Western Gull, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Townsend’s Solitaire, and Harris’s Sparrow.

This year, birders found seven additional species during Count Week (the three consecutive days prior to and three days following Count Day), which was three more species than last year. Some of the Count Week goodies included Ancient Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Snow Bunting, American Tree Sparrow, and Northern Waterthrush. The most surprising species missed on Count Day were Lesser Scaup, Mourning Dove, Hutton’s Vireo, and Lincoln’s Sparrow.

Text: Yousif Attia
Birds Canada

**BRITISH COLUMBIA
WATERFOWL SOCIETY**

5191 Robertson Road, Delta, British Columbia V4K 3N2



Hooded Merganser © John Whitmore