

# Marshnotes<sup>®</sup>



**BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY  
FALL 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:

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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

January 15th, 2021



*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.*

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Hours of Operation:	9:00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. every day except Mondays. The Sanctuary is wheelchair accessible. Reservations are required.
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.

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## Reminder of Covid-19 Changes to Sanctuary Operations

On July 14th, we cautiously re-opened the Sanctuary to the public after a four month closure. Some procedures have been adjusted to avoid congestion at the entrance and parking lot and to reduce Westham Island traffic. We are maintaining a reservation system to set a daily quota for the Sanctuary and have been monitoring congestion issues as we slowly increase the quota to accommodate visitor demand. For those who have not visited since July, please note the following:

Please visit the *Planning Your Visit* page on our website to learn about booking visits, Monday closures, and scheduled times of each day when the gates are closed to incoming traffic. Saturdays and Sundays are often all booked by Friday so reservations are mandatory.

Please do not visit with the goal of having picnics or large gatherings here. The Picnic area will be closed over the winter as will the Warming Hut until further notice.

The washrooms are small, so we created an outdoor handwashing station. As colder weather moves in, though, we will need to adjust this, as the water supply comes via a garden hose and will not be workable over the winter. Please respect physical occupancy limits of our indoor washrooms.

The front gate is automated now. If it is closed when you are leaving, wait at the yellow line on the road for it to open. **It opens inwards toward your vehicle.** All visitors need to exit by 4 pm.

## About Our Covers

**Front Cover:** *Redhead*

© *Jim Martin*

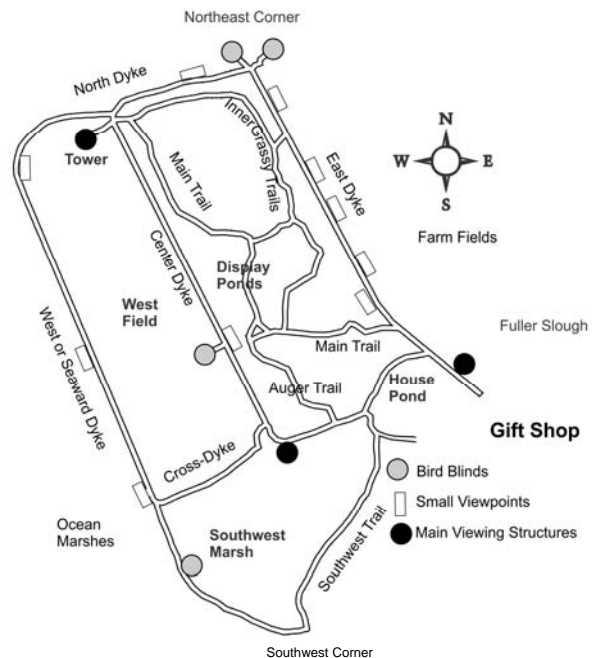
**Back Cover:** *Hooded Merganser Versus Prickly Sculpin*

© *Ted Gough*

### Editor's Note:

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

## Sanctuary Locations Map



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Kathleem Fry  
Gadwyn Gan  
Kathleen Fry  
Varri Raffan



# Manager's Report

I am sure that everyone would like to know what kind of attendance we have had using our new reservation system. When we first re-opened, we set a quota of 100 cars per day. We are now up to 130 plus extra parking spots for class or birding bookings or other educational groups. There are the same number of spots every day but now that people are working and children are in school, there is a higher demand for weekend spots. We are operating at about 65 to 70% of normal levels. Visitor totals for mid-July to the end of September came to 13,023, compared to 19,799 and 18,854 of 2019 and 2018 for that same period. We have been slowly increasing the number of spots.

Maintenance in the past few months has focussed on vegetation control and the repair and creation of shoreline protection of the Auger Trail. To address undercut banks and to keep shorelines stable, a series of logs and backfill materials has been installed.



*Our team creating some shoreline protection for the Auger Trail area. When the trail is open, please remain on the trail itself, and do not walk on the new fill materials as these areas will need to compact over the winter.*

*Photo: Kathleen Fry*

Most of August and September was good for scanning through diverse shorebird flocks for Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and other oddities. Fall is now definitely here, though. We had up to 49 Sandhill Cranes using the West Field as a night roost for most of late September and early October and are now seeing thousands of newly arrived waterfowl.

The first Lesser Snow Geese started to arrive at the end of September. The Snow Geese we see here now have spent the summer months nesting in the Arctic on Wrangel Island, Russia. Once the young are flying, the geese take a month and a half to migrate from this remote island to southern Alaska and then to move southwards along the BC Coast to the Fraser River estuary and the Skagit River estuary just south of the border in the State of Washington. We have Snow Geese in the Fraser delta from October to December and then again from February to April. The Fraser and

Skagit Rivers are only 1.5 hrs flight apart for a Snow Goose and there is some movement back and forth over the winter, so “our birds” are generally referred to as the Fraser-Skagit subpopulation from Wrangel Island. Another sub-population that nests on Wrangel Island goes further south to winter in California.

Dr Sean Boyd, wildlife researcher for Environment and Climate Change Canada provides an update on this nesting population every year and also studies long-term changes in their winter feeding areas in the Fraser River estuary. He has noted a few changes in recent years in both of these habitats. The Wrangel Island nesting population of this species has had some very low numbers in past decades after several consecutive years of total nesting failures. For the past 20 years, though, numbers have been steadily increasing, and this year the population is at an all time high, with an estimated 285K pairs nesting this year. They have spread out from their main nesting area, a sheltered “bowl” of tundra between low mountains and tributaries of the Tundra River, and are also now nesting in other island habitats usually only used as the young are older and learning to fly (the “Academy” region). Taking into account this year’s young for each nesting pair, close to a million birds left Wrangel Island to head south to wintering areas (including California) this fall. Some of the increase in the nesting population correlates with an increase in daily temperatures in the Arctic summers, making less snow to melt and allowing nesting as much as 2 weeks earlier with far fewer nest failures.

In their wintering areas such as the Fraser River estuary, their favoured food plant is *Schoenoplectus pungens* or three-square bulrush. They dig for energy rich rhizomes of this plant at mid-tide elevations in the marsh. Sean and others have monitored this food supply and have noticed a few changes. The vigor and regrowth of this plant community is reduced, and a shallow intertidal pond has developed in one area that keeps water now even at low tide. The far outer marshes are regenerating offshore, but inshore monitored areas are showing a decline in the spatial extent of this key plant. In Sturgeon Banks, offshore of Richmond, the leading edge of the marsh is now 500 m closer to the dyke.

In this next article, Gadwyn Gan talks about some of the factors influencing this, from sea level rise, changes in sedimentation, and obvious consumption of plants by Snow Geese, but also the need to determine whether local Canada Geese are having an impact as well.

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

## Monitoring Tidal Marshes

You might have seen large white PVC structures out in the marsh recently and wondered what they were for? They are a part of a BCIT/ SFU student Masters in Ecological Restoration project to try and protect the tidal marsh and keep them from receding any further. Tidal marshes are among the world's most productive and economically valuable ecosystems. They provide food and refuge habitat for fish and wildlife, store appreciable amounts of carbon, filter contaminants, supply organic matter to estuarine and marine environments, and protect shorelines (Boesch and Turner 1984; Bakker et al. 2002; Valiela et al. 2004; Loomis and Craft 2010).

The marsh surrounding Westham Island is one of these important ecosystems. However, urbanization impacts have converted tidal marshes into mudflats (Thorne et al. 2015) and the Fraser River Estuary has experienced appreciable amount of marsh recession. Many fish and wildlife species within the Fraser River watershed depend on tidal marshes for one or more stages of their life cycles (Levings et al. 1991). Throughout Sturgeon Bank, in the northern portion of the Fraser River delta front, at least 160 ha (30%) of marsh vegetation in the area died off from 1989 to 2011 (Boyd, unpubl. data; Balke, 2017). Several hypotheses have been proposed as reasons for the marsh recession, including sea-level rise, changes in sedimentation, changes in salinity, and goose herbivory.

Sea-level rise and shifts in salinity can cause marsh recession (Roman et al. 1984), and Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) herbivory plays a known role in the recession of bulrush in the Fraser Estuary (Boyd, 1995; Giroux and Bédard 1987). However, the role of Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) herbivory is still poorly understood and distinguishing between these two herbivory agents is likely necessary to determine appropriate management to mitigate and reverse marsh recession.

Snow Geese have predictable periods of herbivory, so anti-herbivory techniques can be focused during this short time period. Canada Geese, however, are mostly residents, and thus herbivory is continuous, and anti-herbivory methods must also be continuous and long-term. Thus, temporary damage-reduction techniques to reduce damage from Snow Geese may not effectively reduce chronic damage by Canada Geese. Resident Canada Geese on Vancouver Island and in the Fraser River Estuary have greatly increased in since the 1970's and are considered by many to be overabundant and damaging marshes in the Little Qualicum Estuary (Dawe et al. 2011) and in the Campbell River Estuary (Dawe et al. 2015).

I am using goose exclosures, wildlife camera traps ("trail cameras"), drone photography, and bird observational studies. I hope to determine the relative effects goose herbivory on tidal marsh vegetation, particularly *Schoenoplectus pungens*, the Common Three-square Bulrush. My study focuses on the role herbivory plays in tidal marsh recession, with a particular focus on contrasting the effects Canada Geese and Snow Geese on the Westham Island foreshore, and on management strategies to prevent goose herbivory on a large scale.

The trail cameras are triggered when something moves in front of them and document a time line of activity when I am not present. So far, images captured have included Sandhill Cranes, people in boats, White Pelicans, and a lot of moving water.

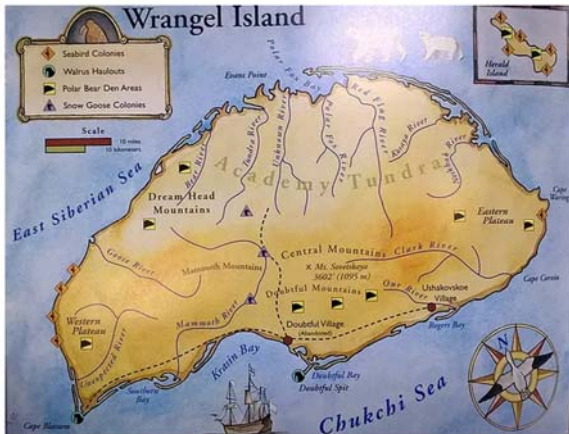
Thanks for your time,

Gadwyn Gan

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## A Closer look at Wrangel Island



Some of the place names and features of Wrangel Island from <https://www.skyecooley.com/single-post/2016/03/25/Map-of-Wrangel-Island-Russia>

Sean Boyd had an opportunity years ago to spend a few summers studying Wrangel Island Snow Geese, working out of a rustic cabin in the high Arctic tundra on Wrangel Island, Russia, along with American and Russian scientists. Sometimes, I envy this experience but other times, the risks associated with Arctic weather or losing blood to the two main extremes of predators (millions of biting insects and big Polar Bears) are all a bit daunting.

This island lies in the Chukchi Sea, northwest of the Bering Strait that separates Russia from Alaska. As with many other islands in the Arctic, Wrangel Island is covered in snow for most of the year, with a mean July temperature of a lowly 36 F (2.4 C). There is a “polar night” of 2 months when the sun doesn’t show at all, and there can be blizzards and high winds all throughout the year.

Most of us are not made of the sterner stuff shown by Arctic explorers of the past two centuries that mapped this part of the world (or died trying). Arctic ship captains generally ran into one problem or another. While mapping coastlines and even open ocean channels, they would meet a sudden cold spell, discover their ship locked into sea ice for the winter or fated to become crushed by the ice as it thickened, or they would run out of supplies and need to trek hundreds of kilometers across polar bear strewn sea ice to unknown islands or to the mainland of Russia.

Although Wrangel Island was glimpsed as early as 1764, and British and German ships may have briefly landed on it in the early 1800’s, it was not until 1867 that it was given its current name. An American sea captain Thomas Long in 1867 named it after Russian Baron Ferdinand von Wrangel who spent 4 years trying unsuccessfully to find the island between 1821

and 1824 while he was mapping the Chukchi Sea coastline. That must have been fun. In 1881 the island was claimed by Americans, in 1914, it became home base for 9 months for marooned explorers from the Canadian Arctic Expedition ship the Karluk. The island was reclaimed by Russia in 1916.

In 1924, Russia removed all non-Russians from the island and sent a team to live there with three years of supplies, only to have sea ice move in for three years thwarting all rescue attempts until the very last minute. In spite of all this, a small settlement was established at Ushakovskoy, then in the 1960’s, Zvyozdny was established near some military aircraft runways which were later dismantled by Russia. Apart from seasonal researchers, few if any people are now year-round residents of this island.

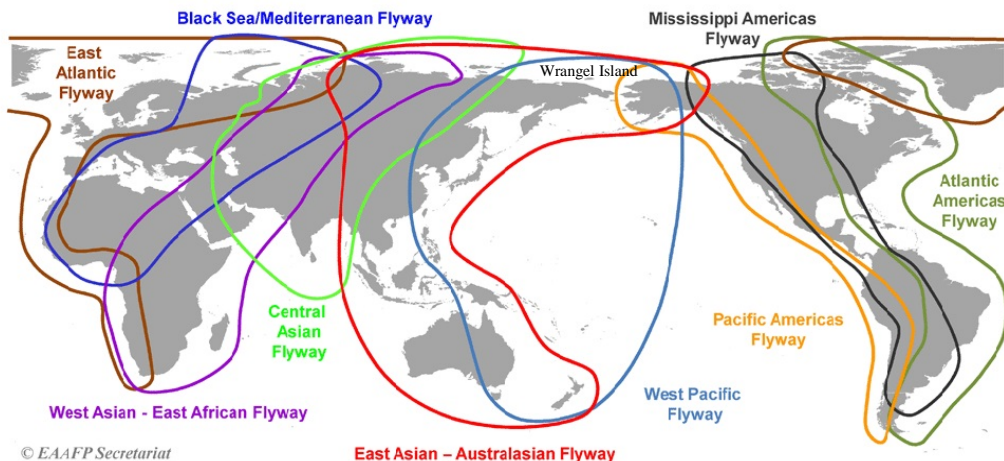
Since 1967, Russia has managed the island as a state Nature Reserve for the purpose of conserving the unique natural systems of both Wrangel and nearby Herald Islands plus the surrounding waters out to initially five nautical miles, increased recently to 24 nautical miles. The island is about 150 km long and 126 km wide, and the distance to the nearest mainland is 140 km. Human activity is generally restricted to seasonal research activities.



5th July 2001 Landsat Image of Wrangel Island from Wikipedia Commons.

In 2004, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site by the United Nations. The description on this Unesco website states: “ Located well above the Arctic Circle, the site includes the mountainous Wrangel Island (7,608 km<sup>2</sup>), Herald Island (11 km<sup>2</sup>) and surrounding waters. Wrangel was not glaciated during the Quaternary Ice Age, resulting in exceptionally high levels of biodiversity for this region. The island boasts the world’s largest population of Pacific walrus and the highest density of ancestral polar bear dens. It is a major feeding ground for the grey whale migrating from Mexico and the northernmost nesting ground for 100 migratory bird species, many endangered.





East Asia Australasian Flyway, as shown on <https://www.eaaflyway.net/the-flyway/>

*Currently, 417 species and subspecies of vascular plants have been identified on the island, double that of any other Arctic tundra territory of comparable size and more than any other Arctic island. Some species are derivative of widespread continental forms, others are the result of recent hybridization, and 23 are endemic."*

Locally we might mainly think of Wrangel Island as the nesting grounds for Pacific Flyway populations of Lesser Snow Geese and other species that migrate through Alaska and Yukon south along the Pacific coastline to wintering areas from here as far south as South America. However, Wrangel Island is also important to many species of the East Asian Australasian Flyway that migrate southwards along the other side of the Pacific from the eastern Siberian Arctic down through Japan, China, India, the Philippines and sometimes as far as New Zealand and Australia. Banded Black-bellied Plovers for example have been documented as nesting on Wrangel Island and wintering in Southeastern Australia. Several shorebird species that cause a stir when seen in the Vancouver area would normally be migrating along this other flyway (Curlew Sandpiper, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpipers) and some of these nest on Wrangel Island, as do many seabirds.

Apart from the island itself, the interrelationships between sea ice, "polynyas" (areas of open water, inconsistent with the surrounding sea ice) and plankton blooms around Wrangel Island are of considerable interest to scientists. They affect food supplies and access to foods for everything from fish to whales in this part of the Arctic. The annual formation of sea ice around the island provides an extension of shoreline haul out areas for hundreds of thousands of Walrus and serves as an extended "terrestrial hunting habitats" for Polar Bears to hunt

for Ringed and Bearded Seals. As recent warming trends are experienced in the Arctic, the ice presence, thickness and duration has been declining affecting these animals.

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

#### References:

1. The UNESCO website page about Wrangel Island (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1023/>)
2. The website "The Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve." <https://yichuans.github.io/datasheet/output/site/natural-system-of-wrangel-island-reserve/>



Thank you to all members who have excellent photos towards the well-received George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary calendar. This is the 17th year of production and the 2021 calendar is now available in the Gift Shop.

# Bird Highlights

*July 2020 finished with a total of 85 species, and an average of 65 per week. In these weekly reports I refer to locations around the Sanctuary and page 3 of this newsletter has a map with these locations labelled.*

## June 28 – July 4

Some shorebirds nest as early as the end of April and with an incubation time of approximately 3 weeks and approximately another 3 weeks for the young to fledge we are already starting to see juvenile birds making their way south from their breeding grounds. July 3<sup>rd</sup> the young Great Horned Owl, which was first seen in late May, is still present on most days and typically found along the Inner Grassy Trail. In the West Field 5 Bonaparte's Gulls were viewed as they picked up small fish and crustaceans. Bonaparte's Gulls are petite in size and look similar to a tern. In the summer adults have a black head, red legs and a small black bill. The first Semipalmated Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher returned this week.

## July 5 – July 11

Confirming that summer is not a prime time to view waterfowl, the Sunday morning 10:00am guided tour were only able to come across 2 American Wigeon, 2 Northern Pintail and 1 Northern Shoveler in addition to a few Mallards. These low numbers will pick up around mid September when we start to see waterfowl begin their southern migration. July 10<sup>th</sup> a young Band-tailed Pigeon was found in a small flock of Rock Pigeons on the roof of the workshop. Band-tailed Pigeons are stockier and a few inches larger than Rock Pigeons. Distinguishing features for Band-tailed Pigeons is the yellow bill and the broad pale band on their tail. On the 10<sup>th</sup> a single Turkey Vulture was also observed as it flew over the Sanctuary. Black-headed Grosbeaks and Bullock's Orioles are still being seen. Both of these birds are definitely summer birds and best seen between May and August.

## July 12 – July 18

As I wandered along the outer Seaward dyke on the 12<sup>th</sup> I was fortunate to spot 41 American White Pelicans as they flew along the marsh. These are probably the same ones that were reported from the surrounding area on June 10<sup>th</sup>. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, using a reservation system to book visits, we were very pleased to re-open for the public. It's great to see and talk to everyone again. July 18<sup>th</sup> a Western Tanager was seen along the East Dyke. This is another bird that is mostly seen between May and August. In breeding plumage male Western Tanagers have a red face, yellow body and black wings with one white wing bar and one yellow wing bar. Females, as in most bird species, are less colorful with a grayish yellow back and pale yellow belly. With the list numbering 66 different types of birds the highlights were Swainson's Thrush, Peregrine Falcon, Belted Kingfisher, Great Horned Owl and Barn Owl.

## July 19 – July 25

On July 19<sup>th</sup> we were pleased to find a female Gadwall with her brood of 6 ducklings. She was only able to raise 4 in the end and they starred on the front cover of the Summer Marshnotes. Over the years we have noticed lower and lower numbers of nesting Gadwalls. In the past, Gadwall were the number two nester behind Mallards. We are now lucky if we see 1 or 2 Gadwall families per summer. I am not sure what the underlying change is. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> we had the first arrival of a Pectoral Sandpiper. On the 24<sup>th</sup> the first Orange-crowned Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco were found. Although Dark-eyed Juncos have a widespread breeding range throughout most of British Columbia we have not yet been able to find a nesting pair at the Sanctuary.



Barred Owl

Photo: Marissa Sasaki

## July 26 – August 1

This week ended with a very respectable list of 71 species. On the 26<sup>th</sup> we had another Turkey Vulture sighting and on the 28<sup>th</sup> young Hooded Mergansers were located in Ewen Slough. This slough is one of the deeper waterways and is attractive to fish eating diving ducks. July 28<sup>th</sup> a Townsend's Warbler was spotted. On the 30<sup>th</sup> 4 Western Tanagers were found along the East Dyke and 1 Stellar's Jay at the front gate. At the front gate a Barred Owl perched on a wire nearby perhaps people watching as visitors drove in.



Barred Owls are classed as “diurnal” which means they are active and hunt through the day. Most other owls are “nocturnal” and hunt at night. Other birds making the highlight list were Virginia Rail, Sora, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson’s Phalarope, Ring-billed Gull, Lincoln’s Sparrow and 5 out of the 6 species of swallows.

*There were 108 species recorded for August 2020. This increase over July’s list was mainly due to the variety of shorebirds moving through our area.*

#### August 2 – August 8

Since 2012, Anna’s Hummingbirds are now present year round in this area, but before that they did not overwinter. Before that they were a rarity and only found once or twice a year. Over the years their range has extended northward, probably due to global warming and help from people providing feeders and planting more flower gardens to attract hummingbirds. On the 6<sup>th</sup> one of our first visitors walking along the Seaward Dyke noticed 1 Barn Swallow that really stood out in the flock as it was totally beige in color. Every so often we do spot birds that are very pale or washed out and don’t have the proper pigmentation. They are classed as “leucistic”, which is having a partial loss of pigment in the feathers due to environment changes instead of genetic abnormality like albinism. Not since August 2016 have we had a sighting of a Green Heron but this August 7<sup>th</sup> 1 Green Heron turned up in the overhanging trees off the east side of the Center Dyke. Then on the 8<sup>th</sup> a second Green Heron appeared. Green Herons are the smallest in the heron family. With a chestnut colored face and neck, glossy green back and greenish legs that turn yellow or orange in breeding season, to me, is one of the best looking herons. Green Herons are one of the few birds that use tools to attract food. Dropping something on the surface of the water will attract a fish to investigate. The heron is then able to grab a meal. The highlights for this week were Osprey, Red-necked Phalarope, Black Swift, Common Raven, McGillivray’s Warbler, Red Crossbill and Black-throated Gray Warbler.

#### August 9 – August 15

Pied-billed Grebe, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Coot and Merlin all returned this week after being away from the Sanctuary since April. On August 9<sup>th</sup> 1 Wilson’s Phalarope and 4 Red-necked Phalaropes were located at the north end of the West Field. August 12<sup>th</sup> a Stilt Sandpiper was spotted among a variety of shorebirds feeding in the West Field. August 15<sup>th</sup> Mew Gulls, California Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls and Glaucous-winged Gulls all made the week’s list. This gathering was mainly due to a hatch of flying ants erupting from the tree tops. An article I had read in the past, put out by the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), stated that ants produce an acid and when ingested by the gulls it gets them slightly drunk. It might explain some of the excitement from the seagulls and some very erratic flight maneuvers as they pick them off on the wing.

#### August 16 – August 22

This turned out to be a good birding week with 76 species recorded. August 20<sup>th</sup> Wilson’s Phalarope, Mourning Dove, American Kestrel, Merlin, Bank Swallow and MacGillivray’s Warbler all made the highlights list. On August 22<sup>nd</sup> the first early fall Ring-necked Duck was sighted. On the same day 1 of the Great Horned Owls and 1 Western Tanager were found along the East Dyke. Underneath the Gift Shop and Warming Hut decks we still have a couple of late nesting Barn Swallows. More than likely they would be on their second brood at this time of year.

#### August 23 – August 29

Another good birding week with 81 species observed. This week had a greater selection of shorebirds. The main highlight was a Marbled Godwit found in the West Field on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The last report of a Marbled Godwit at the Sanctuary was July 2010. Also on the 29<sup>th</sup> a Northern Waterthrush was found in the muddy ditch edge of the Inner Grassy Trail. Typically this time of year we are able to find the Black-crowned Night Herons but no sightings as of yet. American Coot numbers are growing as they return from their nesting grounds in the interior. Coots are often referred to as “kleptoparasitic” which means they don’t always feel like getting their own food and will steal a meal from another bird.

*September 2020 had a grand total of 113 bird species. September is one of my favorite months, with cooler temperatures and some of the northern species returning to intermingle with the remaining summer birds makes for a good crossover of bird life.*

#### August 30 – September 5

August 30<sup>th</sup> a juvenile Red-necked Grebe was seen in the Display Ponds and a Black-throated Gray Warbler was spotted along the Inner Grassy Trail on the same day. September 1<sup>st</sup> visitors reported a Red-eyed Vireo. September 2<sup>nd</sup> a count was done over the Southwest Marsh of roughly 200 Barn Swallows of which approximately 50 were young birds. Also on the 2<sup>nd</sup> a Semipalmated Plover was observed as it feed in the mud of the West Field. Killdeer and Semipalmated Plovers look very similar except that the plovers are smaller and only have 1 dark band on the upper chest while Killdeer have 2 dark bands on their chests. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> one pair of Western Tanagers and 4 Pied-billed Grebes were seen. On the 5<sup>th</sup> a single Hudsonian Godwit was located in the West Field.

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

*(Continued from page 9)*

#### September 6 - September 12

I believe this week was the peak for southern migrating shorebirds as 15 different species were reported. The big highlight was a Curlew Sandpiper on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Our last Curlew Sandpiper sighting was in this month in 2017. Another sign of fall approaching is when we start to see Sandhill Cranes congregating before they head south for the winter. On the 9<sup>th</sup> 16 Sandhill Cranes were located in the farm field off the East Dyke. Along with the high count of shorebirds we also saw a lot of new sparrows, warblers, flycatchers and diving ducks making an appearance which further bumped up the list to 92 species.



*Curlew Sandpiper*

*Photo: John Gordon*

#### September 13 – September 19

What a difference a week makes in the bird world. From the 92 species of last week we are down to 79 species this week. Last reports of Orange-crowned Warblers, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Ring-billed Gulls but at the same time we saw new arrivals of Hutton's Vireo, Fox Sparrow, Townsend's Solitaire and White-throated Sparrow. We had good views from the back deck of the Gift Shop this week of a pair of Belted Kingfishers. The Belted Kingfisher gets its name for the belt of blue-gray feathering across its white chest. The males just have the single belt and the females have a second belt of rust colored feathers.

#### September 20 – September 26

Greater-white Fronted Geese, Cackling Geese, Ruddy Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper were new additions for the weekly list. There are now 25 Sandhill Cranes around the Sanctuary. Varied Thrush, Hermit Thrush and Northern Waterthrush were all present in this week.

#### September 27 – October 3

Large flocks of Canada Geese now band together in preparation for their migration as far south as Mexico. Not all will head south as there certainly is a population that winters around our area. When in flight they are most often in a V formation and there are a few good reasons for this. Usually the lead bird at the head of the V is an older more experienced bird who has done the migration before. When they become fatigued the lead bird will drop back in the line and be able to take advantage of reduced wind resistance provided by the birds ahead. Another good reason for the V formation is so birds can still keep an eye on their fellow fliers ahead to see if they make any course changes. By the end of September swallows and most shorebirds will have left our area. The coming months will bring in a larger variety and number of waterfowl including the Lesser Snow Geese.

#### **Whimsical Names**

Back in 2004 I had visited a website produced by Terry Ross which included some whimsical names for groups of birds. It made me laugh back then and it still makes me laugh so I thought I would share it with you again.

A drift of Snow Buntings  
A whirligig of Phalaropes  
An outfield of Flycatchers  
An asylum of Loons  
A hangover of Red-eyed Vireos  
A deck of Cardinals  
A gulp of Swallows  
A blizzard of Snow Geese  
A slyness of Fox Sparrows  
An incontinence of Yellowlegs  
A coronation of Kingbirds  
A marathon of Roadrunners

Not to leave the birdwatchers out. Here are a few whimsical names for them as well.

A chat of Birders  
A straggle of Birders  
A rush of Birders (during migration)  
A spotting of Birders  
A posse of Twitchers

I'm sure you can come up with even more examples of quirky names for both groups.

Text: Varri Raffan  
Gift Shop Manager

#### **Bird Seed Policy in Effect**

Just a reminder that visitors are no longer allowed to bring their own bird seed. This policy took effect January 2020. Bird seed is still available at the Gift Shop for \$1 a bag.

# The Volunteer Corner

## *Special Thanks to the Following Volunteers:*

Many thanks to Brian Self, Kelly Mitchell, Janna Peterson, Laura Jones, Kathleen Cathcart, Emma Turgeon, Jim Martin and Mary Taitt for helping with visitors for these past three months.

Our usual newsletter mailout volunteers were willing to help with the Summer Marshnotes, but we deprived them of the task. (Staff were bored when it was pouring rain the day before the work party, so we did all the labels.) Many thanks anyway!

A few people have helped by filling bird feeders and bagging bird seed. Many thanks to Eric Rossicci, Eileen Axford, Owen and Jamie Shutter, Hannah Jang and Justin Makonin for their hard work.

Our regular bird survey volunteers over the past few months have included Brian Self, Kristina Breit, Janice White, Ben Lambert, Gabby Thompson, Claire Melanson, Gillian Seitz, Jessica Meier, Morgan Dunne, Jason Eames, Amber Burnett, Ivy Whitehorne, and Dan Dixon.

## *Volunteers Wanted in the Next Few Months:*

- ◆ Sanctuary trail hosts on weekends from fall into Christmas time.
- ◆ Helping with bird surveys every two weeks.
- ◆ Specific maintenance work parties.

For more information, ask at the Gift Shop or visit our website. [www.reifelbirds sanctuary.com](http://www.reifelbirds sanctuary.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@reifelbirds sanctuary.com](mailto:kathleen@reifelbirds sanctuary.com).)

## Bird Count Reminder

There are several upcoming Christmas Bird Counts in December and early January. If you are interested in assisting, please contact Yousif Attia at 778-689-2473.

## Why be a Member?

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

FREE admission to the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary all 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) ☐

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

Telephone: 604 946 6980 Fax: 604 946 6982  
Website: [www.reifelbirds sanctuary.com](http://www.reifelbirds sanctuary.com)



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