

Marshnotes®



**BRITISH COLUMBIA WATERFOWL SOCIETY
SUMMER 2021**

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

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF MARSHNOTES

October 15th, 2021



Planning a visit? Remember to visit our website to book your visit, but also check out our Twitter account @ReifelSanctuary to see if anything notable has been seen.

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Maintenance: Dave McClue
Field Team: Kristina Breit
Evan Gogal
Marissa Sasaki
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Hours of Operation:	9:00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. every day except Mondays. (Closed Mondays) Reservations are required for visits. The Sanctuary is wheelchair accessible.
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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Booking Visits And Checking In At The Front Gate

During this past year, many members have commented on how peaceful the Sanctuary is with its reduced numbers. Everyone still wants to visit though, so the reservation system will be kept in place until further notice, as it will help establish a workable daily visitor capacity. Above all, though, it is needed to reduce unnecessary vehicle traffic on Westham Island and vehicle congestion at turnaround points such as our front gate area. Regular visitors in recent years may have noticed that there has been a 50% chance every weekend that they may have been turned away at the front gate due to a full parking lot.

If you have not booked a visit, please do not add to Westham Island traffic by driving out hoping to drop in, as you will be turned away. People can book as late as 3 pm the day before as long as the time slot is still available. Starting three days earlier for Saturdays and Sundays is recommended (ie as soon as the time slots open for those days). If you plan to bicycle here for your visit, call our office the day before.

Before closing time each day, all the information about bookings is assembled for staff at the gate the next morning. First thing each day, they set up a traffic stop to line up early arrivals out of the way of local traffic while waiting to check in. Many thanks to our staff Evan Gogal, Marissa Sasaki, Janna Peterson and Kristina Breit who are regularly on gate duty patiently answering questions about all of this.

We are currently fine-tuning the website information for upcoming school bookings, birding tours and special programs, which will all need to be booked in person or by phone outside of the on-line booking system. In the meantime, if you are planning to bring an oversized vehicle, call us to let us know.

About Our Covers

Front Cover: *Wood Duck Family*

© *Jim Martin*

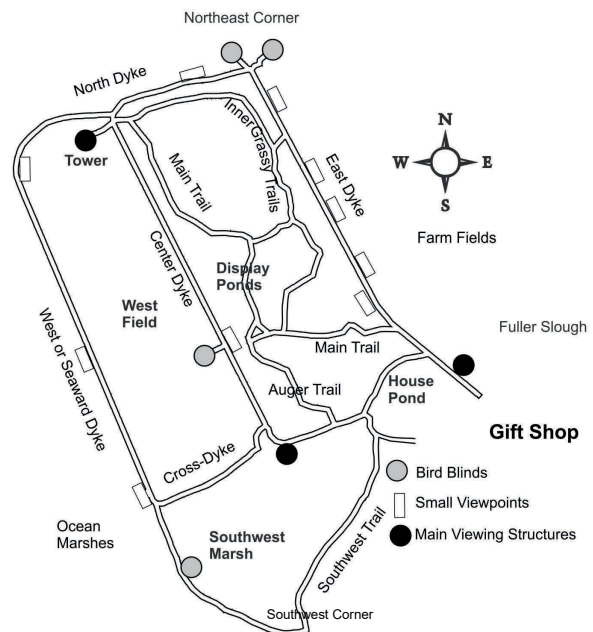
Back Cover: *Young Sandhill Crane*

© *Janice White*

Editor's Note:

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

Sanctuary Locations Map



Contents

Page	3	Booking Visits And Checking In At The Front Gate	Varri Raffan
	4	Bird Highlights	Varri Raffan
	7	The Symbolism of Birds	Kathleen Fry
	8	Manager's Report	Kristina Breit
	10	Who Used That Box?	Kathleen Fry
	11	Volunteer's Corner	
	11	Why Be a Member	

Bird Highlights

April 2021 ended with a diverse selection of 108 bird species. April is the best month to observe many species as they migrate through the Fraser Delta on their way northward to breed. The winter population of ducks has also moved northward leaving behind the resident waterfowl to nest.

March 28 – April 3

This week, as in previous years, we note the last spring sighting of a Black-crowned Night-Heron. Trumpeter Swans are also leaving, heading to northern BC, Alaska and the Yukon to nest. The 28th had the last local report of a Barred Owl. New birds arriving this week were Greater White-fronted Goose, Barn Swallow and Sanderling. We have noticed a couple of Canada Geese already sitting on nests. With incubation period of 25 to 30 days, we should see goslings by the end of April, then more goslings and ducklings from the middle of May to the end of June. Back on February 19th we noted the Great Horned Owls sitting in an old Red-tailed Hawk nest along the driveway. In late March one of the adults was sitting up on the edge of the nest, and we suspected that the nest had hatched. (See the Manager's Report for full details.)

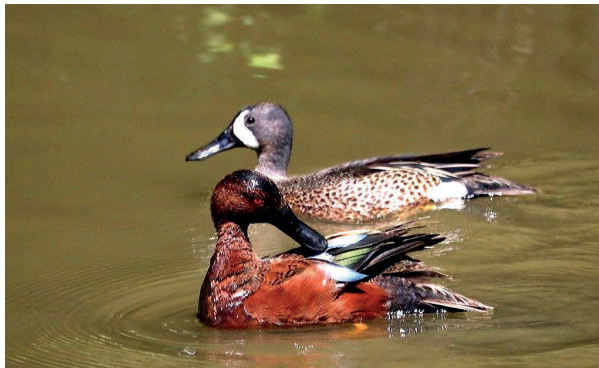
April 4 – April 10

In this week's list of 73 species Cinnamon Teal, Western Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Cliff Swallow and Brown-headed Cowbird were new arrivals. On April 10th, after a 3 week absence, the Northern Mockingbird has re-appeared at the south end of the Seaward Dyke. Offshore, Double-crested Cormorants, Red-breasted Mergansers, Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlin, Mew Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls and Eurasian Wigeon were all visible.

April 11 – April 17

On the 11th the first 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were found at the west end of Robertson Slough. On the same day 4 Downy Woodpeckers and 1 Hairy Woodpecker were seen in the trees along the driveway. On the 15th a Turkey Vulture flew westward over the parking lot. Turkey Vultures nest in caves, cliffs and remote rocky outcrops of southern BC and Gulf Islands. They are not strong fliers so they rely on upward winds and currents of rising warm air to help them along. You don't often see them on the ground unless they are eating their main food source which is carrion. (Arriving at the airport a Turkey Vulture was asked if he wanted to check in his dead squirrel and opossum, for which he replied "No thank you, they're carry-on.") Sorry, couldn't resist this old joke. North of the Observation Tower or North Dyke, you will see 3 posts of Purple Martin nest boxes. The first sightings of Purple Martins were on the 16th as they flew calling over the Sanctuary and perched on these

western-most set of boxes. Although these nest boxes are very old, the birds do successfully raise young in them each year. The Purple Martins are also using the new box complex north of the outlet to the east of the tower. On the 17th a Steller's Jay was seen along the Center Dyke.



Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal Photo: Sadia Ramirez

April 18 – April 24

Each week in April brings new migrants. New birds on our species list include Blue-winged Teal, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler and Black-throated Gray Warbler. The best time to see the biggest variety of warblers is mid-April to mid-May as they pass through on their way north to nest. When looking for warblers the best trails to check are the Center Dyke, East Dyke and the Inner Grassy Trails. On the 20th we had a second sighting of Cinnamon Teal. On the 23rd the first brood of 6 goslings showed up. Wood Ducks are now being observed moving in and out of their nest boxes. Once the hen has laid the clutch size she wants, which is usually around 6 to 10 eggs, it takes approximately 28 to 30 days to hatch. If everything goes well we can expect to see young Wood Ducks by the middle of May.

April 25 – May 1

Shorebird sightings are still strong with Western Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers Greater Yellowlegs being the highlights. The last Greater White-fronted Geese and Rough-legged Hawk



Rough-legged Hawk

Photo: John Whitmore

were recorded this week. Warbler viewing was still good this week particularly on May 1st when we experienced a fall out of warbler species. Warbling Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Townsend's Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler all made the list. Other birds of note for this week's list were Merlin, Lincoln's Sparrow and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

May is a good month to look for ducklings, goslings and other young families such as Black-capped Chickadees, American Robins, Marsh Wrens, Bushtits and Great Horned Owls. The total species count for this month was 106.

May 2 – May 8

This week was a great start to the month with 80 species reported. New species included Short-billed Dowitcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, Red Crossbill and American White Pelican. On the 6th the first brood of 14 Mallard ducklings was seen in House Pond. Mallards have an average of 6 to 10 young. Even starting off with 14 ducklings this hen was only able to raise 1 in the end, more than likely due to predation. As long as she can replace herself the species will go on. This was the last week that we were able to spot Lesser Snow Geese. The majority of them left the Fraser Delta in the 3rd week of April heading to nest on Wrangel Island, in the Arctic Ocean in Russia. Ruby-crowned Kinglets have also gone north but only as far as Alaska and eastward along the northern top of Canada. Dark-eyed Juncos have also left our area to nest in other parts of the lower mainland. Even though they nest locally we haven't had any confirmed nests here at the Sanctuary.

May 9 – May 15

On the 9th 2 Osprey were reported from the Sunday morning 10:00 am public guided tour. Duck species present through the summer are Mallard, Gadwall, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal and for a short time Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal. Only the first 3 species listed above nest here. As for the other duck species, they leave for the summer, returning around the start of October. The first brood of 13 Wood Ducks showed up in Fuller Slough on the 13th. A second smaller brood of Wood Ducks showed up the next day. Be it the old dilapidated nest boxes or the newer stand of boxes to the east, we see Purple Martins busy staking claim to and setting up their future nest sites.

May 16 – May 22

No Ring-necked Ducks or Hooded Mergansers were reported this week. Barn Swallows have been seen rolling up shoreline mud with their beaks and carrying it a mouthful at a time in order to construct their cup



Wood Duck brood

Photo: Kathleen Fry

shaped nest. Nests are found attached under eaves, shelves or ledges, over outdoor light fixtures and of course on rafters in barns. At the Sanctuary, check around the Warming Hut and the man-made structure inside the dyke of the Southwest Marsh. A very high count of 14 Wilson's Phalaropes were observed in the West Field on the 22nd. Four Turkey Vultures were circling the Sanctuary on the 16th and both Western Wood-Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher showed up on the same day. At the front gate on the 16th, we had had our second Warbling Vireo sighting. On the 21st the first spring Western Tanager was found at the north end of the East Dyke and on the 22nd the first Willow Flycatcher was located.



Greater Yellowlegs and Wilson's Phalarope

Photo: Kathleen Fry

May 23 – May 29

An unheard of count of 23 Wilson's Phalaropes was seen at the West Field on the 23rd. By the end of the week we could still find 13 of them. After a 6 week absence the Northern Mockingbird announced its return on the 19th by singing loudly from the tree tops at the northwest corner of West Field. We assume this is more than likely the same bird as before. The first summer appearance for Black Swift happened this week. Both Black and Vaux's Swifts are best seen May to July and the best viewing opportunities are on cloudy days. These low pressure cloudy days are best

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

(Continued from page 5)

because the airborne insects they feed on exclusively are pushed downward to lower elevations. Swainson's Thrush, Bank Swallow, Virginia Rail, Townsend's Warbler and Bullock's Oriole were some of the other mentionable highlights.

June ended up as a record breaking month with temperatures surpassing previous records. Another small record breaking event in this month was when the Sandhill Cranes successfully hatched 2 colts. It's been 3 years since they produced Louie. June 2021 had a total of 93 species reported. This is one of our best June tallies since June 2015 which had 91 species.

May 30 – June 5

This week alone had 76 of the month's total count. June 1st there were 3 Steller's Jay's spotted along the outer Seaward Dyke. Most people are used to seeing Steller's Jays around their yards or neighborhood especially in the winter, but here at the Sanctuary it is a highlight for us to see them once or twice a year if we are lucky. From June 9th in to the first few days of July visitors were seeing and hearing a House Wren in the trees around the picnic area. Some folks thought they could hear 2 House Wrens singing in the same area. Its loud calling, probably trying to attract a mate, went on throughout most of the days it was here. Come the beginning of July the singing stopped and the bird had moved on. Males with no mate are thought to make rudimentary nests in preparation for finding a mate, so at the end of July, both boxes were inspected and each had a very rough cup-shaped pile of twigs, along with hundreds of spider cocoons. One theory is that having an abundance of spider cocoons helps make the nest more attractive to a female. The resulting hatch of spiders could also help control mites that can be a problem for young nestlings. To have had a House Wren stick around this long was unusual as we only see 1 or 2 birds each year, and typically only for 2 or 3 days. This species is widespread across North America, but is at the northern range of its usual breeding distribution along the coast. In British Columbia, it is more typically found in dry interior areas such as the Okanagan River Valley.

June 6 – June 12

The Sunday morning walk didn't start off with a bird sighting but that of a coyote as it cut across the driveway making its way from one farm field to another. At this time we are seeing high numbers of Gadwall throughout the ponds. Gadwalls do nest at the Sanctuary but broods will appear later in the summer. On the 11th a new batch of 7 Mallard ducklings was located. A juvenile Spotted Sandpiper was also seen on the 11th in the ditch that separates East Dyke and the farm fields. Spotted Sandpipers tend to be loners and are distinguishable by the persistent bobbing and wagging action of its tail when walking or standing still. We had all 6 species of



House Wren

Photo: Wade Bailey

swallows and all 3 species of Teal this week. Two Turkey Vultures were seen on the 12th.

June 13 – June 19

At this point of the summer it is hard to find many Warblers as the majority of them have moved through this area. This month, which only had 65 species reported, starts a quiet viewing time as many other migratory species have already headed north. After a 7 week absence a single Pied-billed Grebe was found. Double-crested Cormorants are also reappearing after a 5 week absence. An Eastern Kingbird happened at the beginning of this week. Waterfowl are now going through their annual molt. Visitors often ask "where have all the male mallards gone?" They are still here but when in molt, also referred to as "eclipse plumage", they lose their chestnut colored chests and iridescent green heads and are often mistaken for females. The easiest way to tell them apart when they are in this drab eclipse plumage is by the beak color. Males will have a drab olive colored beak while the females have a two toned orange and black beak.

June 20 – July 3

As mentioned this is a much quieter time for watching birds. The abundant butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies are an alternative to watch until about the

beginning of August. For this period, highlights were 3 female Hooded Mergansers, 2 Turkey Vultures, 1 Sora and some unusual looking ducks that are not found in your field guides. These hybrid concoctions are Mallards which are the ancestors of all breeds of domestic or farmyard ducks, except the Muscovy duck. When wild or feral ducks interbreed it gives an array of plumages from the typical Mallard coloration to ducks that are mostly white. West Field is now starting to see some high tide shorebird use, as these species have already begun their fall migration south from their breeding grounds. When nearby tidal flats are covered at high tide, West Field shallows provide them with continued feeding opportunities. On the high tide of July 3rd, for example, nearly a thousand shorebirds were reported there. They were a mix of Baird's Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Baird's Sandpipers are usually solitary and only in small flocks when they are seen here, and they pass through here from late July into September, so this was an unusual mix.

What? A new species for the Sanctuary checklist? Hold the presses! Just when I was going to send off an updated Sanctuary checklist for reprinting we had a last minute addition of a Costa's Hummingbird which is a first for the Sanctuary. Although it was spotted at one of the feeders on June 12th, it didn't hit our airways until this week. This addition will bring the Sanctuary checklist up to 299 species.



The Symbolism of Birds

I thought that the following, which you may already know, might be of interest. They are references to birds and their meanings found in literature, folklore, mythology and in different cultures from around the world. Most birds have good connotations but some have bad omens as well.

Bluebirds	<i>Joy, hope</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Fearlessness, bravery</i>
Cardinal	<i>Faithfulness, loyalty</i>
Cranes	<i>Rebirth, healing, peace, good luck</i>
Doves	<i>Peace, hope</i>
Eagles	<i>Courage, power</i>
Falcons	<i>Longevity, vision, protection</i>
Hummingbirds	<i>Love, joy, good luck</i>
Magpies	<i>Love, marital happiness</i>
Owls	<i>Wisdom, Insight, death</i>
Stork	<i>Long life</i>
Swans	<i>Light, purity</i>
Ravens	<i>Guidance, communication, sickness, death</i>

Text: Varri Raffan
Gift Shop Manager

Costa's Hummingbird

Photo: Mark Rubensohn

Note that this hummingbird species is generally found much further south during the nesting season. This species winters in Mexico, and nests in the dry desert areas of coastal California, and the Sonoran and Mojave Deserts of Arizona, Nevada, Utah and California. Although we have not until now had a Costa's Hummingbird recorded at the Sanctuary, this is the 32nd B.C. record for this species, according to Melissa Hafting, B.C. Rare Bird Alert, Vancouver and Area, including Fraser Valley and Sea-to-Sky.

Manager's Report

After last year's lengthy closure, we were happy to be open these past months. Sanctuary visitor numbers in 2021 throughout April, May and June totalled 12,293. In years prior to the pandemic, numbers for those months were more than double that but we have kept daily numbers low until some of the Covid-19 related issues have decreased. We have slowly increased these daily limits as of July 1st and will continue to assess whether daily limits can be increased further.

The weather has been somewhat unusual this year for this period, particularly the extreme hot spell in late June, when Ladner temperatures hovered between 34.6 and 36.2 C from the 26th to the 28th and July has been very hot as well. These extreme temperatures are hard on the Sanctuary's plants, birds and visitors. Remember that many of the birds are going through their summer moult and are flightless right now, so move slowly to reduce their stress. Remember your water bottle and insect repellent, too.

Maintenance in the past few months has been focused on keeping trails passable by trimming trail edges and mowing, controlling invasive plants and completing a reconstruction project involving one of the blinds in the northeast corner. Over the winter, we determined that the blind needed to be moved to firmer ground.



Young Great Horned Owl June 23rd Photo: Kathleen Fry

The area has been closed off to the public during the process of dismantling the blind and putting it back together in its new location, but it should be available for visitor use by the fall. Many thanks to Dave McClue for his skilled work on this project.

Every spring and summer, we document duck and goose broods, map nesting species such as Barn Swallows and track specific young such as owlets and young cranes. This year for example, from early March through to mid-May, we located 9 of the carefully crafted hanging nests of Bushtits in the Sanctuary. The first one to catch our attention was built in the Cork Oak tree just west of the Warming Hut but others were attached to dangling branches of Douglas Fir, Pacific Crabapple, or just Himalayan Blackberry vines. In late June and early July, there was a renewed Bushtit interest in these nest sites, so perhaps there will be more young Bushtits soon.

In the late winter, when we were still closed, the Great Horned Owl pair surprised us by nesting just south of the driveway. The eggs probably hatched March 26th, as the incubating bird sat differently in the nest. By April 3rd, noticeable white downy shapes were seen, and by April 5th, a photo showed one of the young clear enough to verify it was about 10 days old. By the time the two owlets fledged and left the nest on May 17th, they were almost adult sized but downy. We have not seen both young at the same time on any day since, so one may have expired during an intense thunderstorm shortly after fledging. We had views of a juvenile bird in late May and into June in trees near the nest, driveway and Robertson Slough, then we started seeing it over behind our tractor shed, or even perched on a tractor. Nearly always, there was a parent bird present and perhaps uneaten prey left nearby. We blame the young owl for the gruesome half eaten rat left on the fence by the Gift Shop. In July now, the fully-feathered young looks much like an adult except for downy feathers around the head.



Great Horned Owl young April 5th Photo: Janna Peterson

Our Sandhill Crane pair has had a complicated nesting season, but they are now raising one colt that hatched June 23rd, and the family is doing well so far. How they got to this stage is a long story. March weather was frigid. They spent April constantly chasing off their 2018 offspring (“Louie”) and engaging in psychological warfare with all of the Canada Geese in the central ponds, as best we could tell. They were unsuccessful in claiming their usual nest island as a Canada Goose was already sitting on eggs there. Is there perhaps an unwritten bird rule that it is okay to argue over a nest site unless another bird is already on eggs? They spent mid-April re-arranging then lying down on all of the nearby Canada Goose nest sites one after another. They may have laid at least two eggs in these “temporary” sites. The pair visited their usual island several times for sustained staring contests with the nesting goose there but she would not budge. At the end of April, they made a nest on one of the driftwood islands right by the Gift Shop in House Pond and laid two eggs on the 27th and 30th, only to have a Raccoon destroy the nest in the middle of the night on May 10th. Louie finally found a summer friend and left, and the pair also disappeared for a day or so. It turns out they were building another nest, this time hidden deep in the cattail marsh not far from their usual nest island. They hatched two eggs on June 23rd and 25th respectively. The second chick appeared tired one day and disappeared overnight by July 4th. The crane pair is being very attentive to the remaining chick though and the family explores the trails and marshes of the Sanctuary every day.

Only 10 broods of Canada Geese hatched this year, all within a three week period from April 23rd to May 8th. Of the 53 goslings produced, at least 35 remain. Many other goose nests we noted in April were destroyed or predated in late April and again a week or so into May. Causes for this may include predation by Raccoons or other wildlife (as with the crane nest May 10th), the Sandhill Cranes themselves disrupting nests in Display Ponds, or disruption from people nearby when nests were too close to trails. Southwest Marsh did not have very many goose nests this year, but the islands have been eroded by wave action, and the log boom protecting them needs to be re-constructed, so this may have also been a factor.

2021 has been a better year for Mallards and Wood Ducks than in recent years. So far, there have been 18 Mallard broods seen this summer for a total of 135 ducklings. Most Mallard broods hatched from May 22nd to late July, although one early brood appeared in House Pond in the first week of May, with all of the ducklings except one disappearing within a week. Wood Ducks have produced at least 11 broods to date (83 ducklings). These have appeared on the ponds between May 11th and July 27th. Some boxes such as Box 43 in House Pond may have produced two Wood Duck broods. Gadwall are late nesters, and we have



Purple Martins on the older boxes Photo: Kathleen Fry

just started to see broods. The first Gadwall brood of 3 ducklings was seen on July 10th, another of 4 ducklings a week later and yet two more broods of 4 and 6 in the next two weeks. There was a lot of courtship behaviour of this species seen in May and June in House pond so we expected a few broods.

Barn Swallows are still nesting, so a report on their season will be in the next edition of Marshnotes. We have been regularly checking known nest sites over the summer. As in past years, there is evidence of multiple nest initiation dates. Even now on July 24th, there are new swallow nests with eggs, presumably second or even third clutches.

Purple Martins nested in both the older and newer boxes offshore this year, using at least three of the boxes in each complex. They arrived at the Sanctuary in mid-April and by May 8th, our regular Sanctuary survey team noted them exploring the older boxes. By the 4th or 5th of June, some were on the newer boxes. A total of at 6 boxes were observed to have birds bringing in either nest material or food, and there was also some activity in the boxes offshore of Alaksen NWA on pilings along the river. At least two nests in our newer boxes were still active in late July.

This spring, when we numbered all of the Sanctuary’s nest boxes, it made an opportunity to recruit observers for a summer nest box monitoring project. Many thanks to Kristina Breit for taking hundreds of observations from staff, volunteers and visitors for this project, and for preparing the preliminary report presented on page 10. Just to stymy us, the Wood Duck box 43 mentioned in her article has yet another mystery activity underway, as it now sports a meter long tuft of grass stems hanging out of the entrance hole. It is tough for a landlord to track all of this!

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

Who Used That Box?

Since late March, staff and volunteers have been busy observing and documenting activity around our nest boxes. A total of 412 activity records were compiled, mostly related to 115 of our 249 songbird boxes. Even a single observation on a box was useful. A keen young birder observed Black-capped Chickadees feeding young in box 527. Even with no other records for that box we have confirmed the nesting species, a successful hatch and young present. Two songbird boxes stood out for the highest number of records. Box #1 at the front gate was watched almost daily by staff while on gate duty. The box with the second highest number of observations was box #123 in House Pond just across from the Warming Hut Deck.

Songbird activity records confirmed nesting in 51 boxes, with strong indications of nesting in 10 additional boxes. Of these 61 boxes, 37 were used by Tree Swallows, 18 by House Sparrows and 6 by Black-capped Chickadees. Three more boxes were used by wasps and hornets. Activities seen at another 49 boxes did not paint a clear enough picture to judge if nesting had occurred but included observations of adult birds sitting on top of the box, birds checking out the box, or single observations of a bird entering a box. These additional records tell us that Tree Swallows were at 21 additional boxes. House Sparrows at 14 more, and that Black-capped Chickadees, Bewick's Wrens, a Brown Creeper, a House Wren and rodents had been present at the rest.

Although spotty sometimes, this project helps show species distribution in the Sanctuary. House Sparrows dominate most of the driveway boxes and some boxes in House Pond, with just a few others used in Display (4 boxes) Southwest Marsh (1 box) and West Field (1 box). Tree Swallow nesting activity was mainly noted in West Field (13 boxes), in Southwest Marsh and the centre of the Display Ponds (13 boxes with confirmed nesting and re-nesting). There were just a few pairs nesting along the driveway and in House Pond. The boxes near the tower were the first to be occupied and are still active with young being fed at the end of July. The most common species interactions were between these two species. A very persistent pair of Tree Swallows attempted to take over box #1 at the front gate from a pair of House Sparrows. For almost 2 weeks they disturbed the nesting of the sparrows, engaging in hefty fights with the box owners. In the end the sparrows won, but the pair of swallows is still seen near the box, probably still hoping for a coup.

Some records noted wildlife just perching on boxes or exploring them. On April 18th a female Wood Duck was seen eying the hole of one of the song-bird boxes, clearly not a good fit for her. On May 26th, a mink was trying to enter the very small hole of a box housing a

chickadee family. Shortly after the mink left, a Bald Eagle chased by Red-winged Blackbirds came down and landed right on the same box. Before anyone could grab a camera, the Eagle took off and left the box swinging back and forth on its slim pole. The poor chickadee babies must have felt seasick after that.

House Wren activity seen around the boxes #59 and #60 in the picnic area was a real treat. House Wrens are not usually seen at the Sanctuary or a nesting species here. On June 12th, our volunteer Brian Self observed the wren moving nest material from one box into the other. It almost looked like the bird was moving into a better apartment. However, even after several weeks of loud song, we were not able to confirm any actual nesting.

Observations on the activity around Wood Duck boxes mainly alerted us to species use, but we will have to wait for nest box checks after nesting season to make a final call on the overall usage. Relatively high numbers of Wood Duck broods were seen this year, though, much better than in 2020.

Wood Duck boxes 43 and box 59 in House Pond had many records from staff and visitors, as both boxes could be seen clearly from the Gift Shop and kept everyone entertained. A Northern Flicker made regular visits to box 59 which had just been replaced. In previous years, this box had been "punctured" by a flicker who had created at least one additional entrance hole. We were thankful that this flicker eventually lost interest and left the box unharmed this year. Box 43 had constant activity. In early June, for more than a week, every day a hen Wood Duck was seen leaving or entering the box usually by 11am in the morning. On June 11th, down feathers were floating in the pond below the box and a fresh brood of Wood Ducks was exploring House Pond. On July 1st again a hen was seen entering the box. Shortly afterwards a Cooper's Hawk landed on the box, which caused TWO! Wood Duck hens to pop out of the box and land in the pond. When the hawk flew off, one of the hens re-entered the box. A few minutes later she came out again and flew off, and the second hen went into the box. A third female was observed hanging around the box in the pond. We are curious to see what this box will show when we open it, because on July 21st another fresh brood of 10 Wood Duck babies appeared in House Pond and again down feathers were floating below box #43.

Thank you to all staff and volunteers who faithfully recorded observations. We definitely gained some insights about nest box species this summer.

Text: Kristina Breit
Sanctuary Staff

The Volunteer Corner

Special Thanks to the Following People:

- Jim Martin, Brian Self, Kelly Mitchell, Mary Taitt, Christine Barker, John Chandler and Emma Turgeon for working a regular schedule here each week, helping with trail trimming and visitor questions, but most recently keeping eyes on the Sandhill Crane family every day even if the birds do not want to be found.
- John Chandler, Kim Tung and Michael Baker, our muddy work party in mid-July that helped remove vegetation encroaching into a small channel at the tower.
- All visitors and volunteers that recorded nest box activity this year for our nest monitoring project.
- Eric Rossicci and Eileen Axford for bagging bird seed, rain or shine every week.
- Our bird survey team members Morgan Dunne, Jason Eames, Peter Candido, Will Diaz, Brian Self, Ben Lambert, Amber Burnett, Dan Dixon, Gabby Thompson, and Ivy Whitehorne.
- Melissa Hafting for letting us know whenever a visitor has reported something rare in the way of a bird sighting here that we missed.

Volunteers Wanted:

- ♦ Sanctuary trail hosts for the rest of the summer and 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.)

Why be a Member?

As a Member, you receive the following benefits:

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

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