

The BC IBA Caretaker Network: Making Strides

The BC Caretaker Network is gaining momentum as more and more sites are matched with eager and capable nature enthusiasts across the province. To date, caretakers have been found for 64 of BC's 84 IBAs. The remaining IBAs are quite remote and finding caretakers for these sites is taking some extra work and time (see page 4 for the IBAs that still need caretakers).

Volunteers who have become Caretakers for their sites have agreed to four main duties to start:

- Review their designated Site Summary on the website www.ibacanada.com (or, in a few cases, help write a summary) and submit revisions/new summaries to the coordinator.
- Commit to at least one annual, seasonally appropriate visit to their site, with a brief report back to the coordinator.
- Take opportunities to raise awareness of their IBA in the community.
- Advise BC Nature of any conservation threats to the site requiring actions, such as letter writing or meeting with environment agencies, etc.

Significant progress has been made on these activities already. In total, 20 site summaries have been updated and many others are in the process of being reviewed. Caretakers have also been great about submitting annual reports for their sites. These reports have ranged from lengthy and detailed documents describing the results of monitoring surveys to brief emails noting the presence/absence of key bird species or changes in land use activities. Since a report template does not currently exist, any format for annual reports is acceptable, as long as a report is received at least once a year. In the future, program coordinators may develop a report template with the hopes of making it simpler for Caretakers and easier to monitor changes over time and space.

A number of Caretakers have also been quite active in conducting outreach and other activities related to their IBAs. Hans Laue, the Caretaker for the Little Qualicum River Estuary to Nanoose Bay IBA and member of the Nanoose



Yellow warbler

Photo: Ian Routley

Naturalists, has developed an exciting new website that is worth checking out: <http://members.shaw.ca/halae/>.

This site, which is a work in progress, contains a web-based checklist for the birds of Nanoose Bay. Hans' site features amazing bird photographs by Ralph Hocken and Tony Markle, bird calls from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and information about the seasonality and distribution of each species in Nanoose Bay. This site highlights the advantages of developing web-based bird lists - it is easy and affordable to distribute high quality images and vocalizations of birds with species lists. The Little Qualicum River Estuary to Nanoose Bay IBA on Vancouver Island is particularly noteworthy for the waterbirds it supports - including Black Brant, Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, and Thayers' Gull.

June Ryder, Caretaker for Pacific Spirit Regional Park IBA in Vancouver also recognizes the benefits of using the internet to distribute information about IBAs. June is in the process of adding an IBA page to the Pacific Spirit Park Society website (www.pacificspiritparksociety.org).

June has also taken advantage of the Power-Point presentation that was distributed to all Caretakers by delivering a talk to a group of nature enthusiasts during a local festival this past spring. Pacific Spirit Regional Park is an

Story continued on Page 2

Inside this issue:

BC Caretaker Network: Making Strides 1-2

BC IBA Program Update 2

Frequently Asked Questions 3

IBA Activities from Coast to Coast 3-4

Piloting a New Monitoring Form 4

Start your Cameras IBA Photo Contest 5

Birder's Scrapbook 5

Draft Monitoring Form 6-8

Websites of Interest

www.bcnature.ca

www.ibacanada.ca

www.birdscanada.org

www.naturecanada.ca

www.birdlife.org

The BC IBA Caretaker Network continued

Continued from page 1



Active Pass.
Photo: Pete Davidson

“Wedged between Mayne Island and Galiano Island, Active Pass IBA is a narrow zigzag of ocean bordered by wooded cliffs that draws migrating Bonaparte’s Gulls in spring and murre, auklets and Harlequin Ducks in winter.”



Krista Englund, IBA Coordinator, with her son Rowan at 15 months.

important stopover for migrating songbirds and supports a large population of resident birds, including woodpeckers and raptors. It was formerly home to a Great Blue Heron colony, but the birds departed a few years ago, probably joining the heronry at Stanley Park. As herons move their nesting sites from time to time, it is quite possible that they will return to PSP IBA.

An exciting partnership is developing around Active Pass IBA. Wedged between Mayne Island and Galiano Island, Active Pass IBA is a narrow zigzag of ocean bordered by wooded cliffs that draws migrating Bonaparte’s Gulls in spring and murre, auklets and Harlequin Ducks in winter. Pigeon Guillemots and Bald Eagles nest there and are often seen from the deck of the BC Ferry, en route between Tsawwassen and Vancouver Island. The Conservancy Associations of the two bordering islands are

the IBA Caretakers. Together with park representatives and other groups, and ably led by Michael Dunn and Mike Hoebel, they are working towards better recognition of the importance of the Pass by installing signage at national, provincial and regional parks that have a view of the sea, and providing information on-board BC Ferries.

In the Okanagan, Doreen Olson, Eva Durance and Doug Brown have been monitoring proposed residential and resort developments adjacent to four IBAs: White Lake, Kilpoola, Vaseux Lake and Osoyoos Oxbows. With their input, BC Nature has been able to write letters to the Regional District regarding the significance of the sites, and the need to take birds and wildlife into consideration. Caretakers at Strathcona IBA on Vancouver Island and Squamish Estuary IBA in Howe Sound were also active this summer in addressing conservation concerns in their sites.

BC IBA Program Update

IBA Coordinator

An IBA Coordinator, Krista Englund, was hired in June on a 6-month contract to assist with the BC IBA Program. Krista has over a decade of experience in biology, environmental education, and stewardship work, and is enjoying the opportunity to apply her skills to this position while developing new ones. With a 1-year old budding naturalist at her side, the flexible position of IBA Coordinator works well for Krista.

IBA Page on the BC Nature Website

One of Krista’s first tasks was to update the IBA webpage on BC Nature’s website. Now, instead of a single long page, the IBA website consists of a series of 10 pages. Highlights of the new website include:

- A page dedicated to the Caretaker Network, where you can find instructions and FAQs,
- A ‘What’s New’ page that outlines news & highlights different IBAs every 1-2 months,
- A ‘Publications’ page, where you can download all publications produced, including newsletters & brochures,
- A ‘Milestone’s’ page, which shows the history of the IBA program in BC,

- An ‘IBA Map’ page, which currently has an overview map of BC’s IBAs, but will hopefully someday have a larger map that shows the IBAs in more detail, and
- A page on conservation planning, which summarizes past conservation plans completed.

Be sure to bookmark this site and check the ‘What’s New’ page from time to time:

www.bcnature.ca/pages/stewardship_projects/IBA.html

Funding

In order to ensure that the BC IBA program can continue to make significant progress with assistance from our Caretakers, Krista has been preparing funding applications for several organizations, including the BC Gaming Commission and Mountain Equipment Coop. If these applications are successful, BC Nature will have some resources next year to assist with travel costs to some of the IBAs, developing more posters and other program materials, meeting with conservation agencies and organizations regarding the IBA program, and continuing to support Caretakers through the provision of an IBA Coordinator.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What types of information should I be collecting when I visit my designated site?

BC Nature: We are primarily interested in knowing three things: Are the birds for which the site was designated still utilizing the site and how has that use changed over time? Has the habitat or land use within or adjacent to the IBA changed? Are there any current conservation threats to the site or birds? These questions can usually be answered by one or more appropriately timed site visits.

Q. What other types of information would BC Nature like to know?

BC Nature: In addition to knowing how the IBA site and its birds are doing, we are interested in knowing a bit about your activities and your future hopes for your IBA. Please record the amount of time you spend volunteering as a Caretaker (include traveling to and from sites & time spent conducting monitoring, stewardship, outreach and reporting activities) and include this information with your annual report as it can help us leverage funding to assist with the program. We are also interested in hearing about your wish list—what do you envisage for the future of your IBA? What activities would you like to be able to conduct? What do you need to achieve these goals?

Q. What materials are available to help Caretaker's conduct outreach activities?

BC Nature: We currently have a general program brochure that can be distributed to interested audiences and a PowerPoint slide show for delivering presentations to groups. A poster that includes site specific information—ideal for events, conferences or kiosks—can also be developed

upon request.

Q. Can the IBA program protect all species of birds?

IBA Canada: No, the IBA program is site-based and may not be appropriate for all species. A proportion of Canada's bird species, because of their dispersed distribution, cannot be protected fully at any time in their life-cycle by inclusion within the IBA network. It is important to note that the IBA program forms just part of an integrated approach to bird conservation and is part of a larger national bird conservation strategy.

(source: <http://www.ibacanada.com/faq.html>)

Q. What are the benefits of the IBA program?

IBA Canada: The identification of important bird habitat is a necessary first step in establishing habitat-based priorities in bird conservation. The designation of a network of sites can help decision-makers focus their efforts and protect the most critical bird habitat. The program is inclusive and identifies important sites for all groups of birds. It integrates aquatic and terrestrial habitat conservation by protecting seabird, shorebird, landbird, and waterfowl habitat. Most importantly, the program is community-driven and cooperative. It relies on grassroots involvement to develop and implement effective conservation plans, providing an important conservation voice for sites outside the formal protected area network. The program will also help generate widespread public awareness about birds and will help build partnerships at all levels: international, national, provincial, and local. (source: <http://www.ibacanada.com/faq.html>)



Cedar waxwing
Photo: Larry Adamache

“In addition to knowing how the IBA site and its birds are doing, we are interested in knowing a bit about your activities and your future hopes for your IBA.”

IBA Activities in Canada from Coast to Coast

There are nearly six hundred designated IBAs across Canada, encompassing wetlands, forests and migration hot spots from coast to coast. Provincial naturalist groups are taking an active role in their protection and stewardship, with the help and coordination of Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada, the joint BirdLife International partners for the program. A cross-Canada IBA Caretaker Program is now underway, building on the work of British Columbia IBA Caretakers and monitoring programs in Alberta and Quebec. The Federation of Alberta Naturalists is piloting a field form for monitoring sites, in line with BirdLife International protocol, and we are adapting the form for use in British Columbia. By using standardized report-

ing techniques, it is easier to collect and compare data, not just across Canada but worldwide. In Quebec, IBAs are known as ZICOs (Les zones importantes pour la conservation des oiseaux) and Nature Quebec is playing a proactive role in stewarding provincial sites. One initiative has been to produce an excellent CD about the sites and their importance.

Provincial naturalist groups are in regular phone contact regarding IBAs, thanks to the coordinating role of Nature Canada, and here in BC we hope to incorporate many of the ideas developed by other groups into our IBA Caretaker program. *Story continued on page 4*



American kestrel
Photo: Larry Adamache

Wanted: Caretakers

IBA Sites still needing Caretakers include:

Amphritite and Swiftsure Banks
 Big Bay south to Delusion Bay
 Carmanah Walbran Forest
 Cecil Lake
 Checleset Bay
 Cleland Island and Southeast Clayoquot Sound
 Fraser Lake
 Greater Vancouver Watershed
 Hesquiat Lake area
 Holden Lake
 Kitkatla Channel, Goschen Island north to
 Porcher Island
 Klaskish River and East Creek Watersheds
 Kotcho Lake
 Megin, Moyeha, Watta & Pretty Girl Water-
 sheds
 Mussel and Kynoch Inlet and Sheep Passage
 Nootka Island banks
 Snake Island
 Stuart, Tachie and Middle Rivers
 Tachick and Nulki Lakes

BC Important Bird Areas Program
 BC Nature
 c/o Heritage Centre
 1620 Mt Seymour Rd
 North Vancouver, BC V7G 2R9

BC Nature Office Phone: 604-985-3057
 E-mail: iba@bcnature.ca
 Website: www.bcnature.ca

*“To know nature and to
 keep nature worth knowing”*



Ministry of
 Environment

Activities of Canadian IBA Partners cont'd...

Continued from page 3

Bird Studies Canada supports the IBA program nationally through hosting and managing the web database (www.ibacanada.ca), and coordinating the national IBA review committee (which is being reformed now following a dormant period). Andrew Couturier, based in Ottawa, directs the scientific and technical aspects of the Canadian IBA program. Pete Davidson, based in Delta, BC supports Krista Englund and Anne Murray in implementing the BC IBA Caretakers network. With Anne's input, and review from Rob Butler and Art Martell, Andrew and Pete are putting your site summary edits and revisions into a common format and uploading them to the online IBA database, which is being redesigned and will soon have a fresh new look.

One of Bird Studies Canada's primary roles in the IBA program is to integrate the bird monitoring information from a

variety of regional, national and international surveys (e.g., Christmas Bird Counts, eBird, Coastal Waterbird Surveys and the BC Breeding Bird Atlas) into the IBA framework, so the efforts of each of these programs is complementary and collectively stronger. We are doing this with the assistance of a grant from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Fund (what a mouthful!), which provides the resources to develop and test web-based data management, analysis, mapping, reporting, and communications tools for you to use. This will serve as the template for a national IBA Caretaker Network – so you are at the cutting edge of IBA development, not only in Canada, but right across North America (perhaps even the entire Americas!). Bringing all this bird monitoring information under the IBA 'umbrella' will help serve our broader interest in producing report cards on the state of the nation's birds and their habitats, while keeping the focus local.

Piloting a New Monitoring Form for BC's IBAs

BC Nature has developed a draft monitoring form (see page 6) to try out in IBAs across the province. This monitoring form is based on the form being used by the Federation of Alberta Naturalists and is consistent with BirdLife International protocol.

Using this form is not mandatory—rather—we are encouraging interested Caretakers to try it out and let us know how easy it was to use and make suggestions for improvement. Over the long term, we hope to implement the use of a standardized monitoring protocol for all sites across BC that is both easy to use and consistent with protocols in other provinces and countries.

The key advantage to using a standardized monitoring and recording techniques is that it is easier to collect and compare data over time and space—and not just across BC or Canada but

worldwide. A complete and continuous record of standardized monitoring data will also support better conservation of the sites. For example, it is much easier to make a strong case for conservation action with the backing of a continuous and standardized record of data that highlights the conservation concern and the need for action.

Using a standard monitoring form could also make it easier for Caretakers by:

- Highlighting the type of information that would be of greatest value to collect, and
- Making reporting quicker (simply send us your completed form(s)).

For more information about how to use the monitoring form, or to give us feedback, please contact Anne Murray at sanderling@uniserve.com.



Start your Cameras: IBA Photo Contest Coming Soon!

As a way to build up a bank of IBA photos to use in our IBA program materials, and to thank our dedicated volunteer Caretakers for their commitment, BC Nature will be initiating an IBA photo contest this fall. The rules of the contest are simple:

- Take your camera with you when you visit your IBA this fall & winter.
- Snap shots in and around your IBA—birds, landscapes, people, activities—whatever catches your eye.
- If you prefer that we DO NOT use any of your photos our program materials (e.g., website, posters, brochures, newsletters, and presentations), please let us know. We will, of course, request your permission to use any of your photos and will give photo credit.
- Send digital photos by email to iba@bcnature.ca or hard copies by regular mail to BC Nature c/o Heritage Centre, 1620 Mt Seymour Rd, North Vancouver, BC, V7G 2R9 by **March 30th, 2009.**

We are particularly interested in photos that highlight the IBAs themselves—a single picture can often capture the essence of a site that would otherwise take several paragraphs to describe.

Prizes of interest to nature enthusiasts are currently being secured and if you have any suggestions for potential donations, please let us know.

Birder's Scrapbook

Ann McNeill pictured doing a Coastal Waterbird Survey, an ongoing monitoring project that is used widely by coastal IBA Caretakers to look at numbers of birds using sites.

Photo: Pete Davidson



A flock of Surf and White-winged Scoters, Glaucous-winged Gulls and a large container ship in Burrard Inlet IBA. Oil spills are a potential threat to many of BC's marine IBAs, especially with the projected increases in shipping traffic to Vancouver ports and Prince Rupert/ Kitimat.

Photo: Pete Davidson

"Building Better Birding Skills" - working on identification and counting skills, as part of a program engaging the local community in stewardship and monitoring at Tofino Mudflats IBA. Check out <http://www.tofinomudflats.com> for more on the many and various activities going on at this Pacific Rim IBA!

Photo: Pete Davidson



Caretakers of coastal IBAs with mudflats, be on the lookout for this aggressive invasive aquatic grass, *Spartina* species. These grasses (common name Cordgrass) invade mudflats and beaches, outcompeting native plants (e.g., *Salicornia*, *Zostera*), creating massive monocultures. Introduced to the Pacific Coast, spartina is a multimillion dollar problem in Washington state, where "spartina meadows" now dominate some intertidal areas, resulting in significant declines in waterfowl and shorebirds. *Spartina anglica* was first found in the Fraser Delta in 2003, and a detection and removal program has been in progress for the last few years. To date, spartina has been detected only within the Georgia Basin (Fraser Delta, Comox estuary, Burrard Inlet). If you think you have found spartina or are interested in finding out more, contact River Works at 604-659-3503 or riverworks@vanaqua.org.



Field Form for Monitoring BC's Important Bird Areas

This field form is intended for use in monitoring **Important Bird Areas**. It is based on Birdlife International's Global Framework, a protocol designed for monitoring IBAs across the globe. Data are rolled-up by Birdlife International every four years to create global, continental and regional pictures, including the status of sites and bird population trends. Your contribution to this global initiative is greatly appreciated!

At its most basic level, **STATE**, this survey is a bird checklist: simply record the bird species and their numbers. However, because we need also to assess each site's **PRESSURE** and **RESPONSE** indicators, please fill in those parts of the form where possible. And please be sure to complete the **Site Visit Information**. *Note: because the identification of IBAs is an ongoing process, this form (or parts of it) may be used to collect data at any BC sites of avian interest.*

Please submit your forms to:
 BC Important Bird Areas Program
 BC Nature
 c/o Heritage Centre
 1620 Mt Seymour Rd.,
 North Vancouver, BC V7G 2R9
iba@bcnature.ca

SITE VISIT INFORMATION

Name of IBA: _____

Your Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

Assistant names: _____

Date of Survey: _____

Time: Start: _____ Finish: _____

How much (%) of the IBA was monitored today: _____

Which area of the IBA was monitored (NE, SE, etc.)? _____

Where was the IBA accessed? Provide road numbers or GPS coordinates if available: _____

Temperature: _____

Beaufort Wind Speed: _____

Wind Direction: _____

Cloud Cover (%): _____

Notes: _____

STATE: Habitat

For each IBA species that qualifies the site, please rate the bird's habitat, both in terms of its **Area** and its **Quality** using the following codes:

- Good (>90% of optimum)
- Moderate (70 to 90%)
- Poor (40 to 69%)
- Very Poor (<40%)

Species	Habitat	Area	Quality
<i>e.g. Dunlin</i>	<i>mudflats</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Moderate</i>

Details: please note any major changes to habitat area or quality since the last assessment:

STATE: Birds

We are primarily interested in the site's target (IBA qualifying) species as outlined in the IBA site summaries.

Species	Number

Species	Number

PRESSURE

Please write-in any threats you see at the site and score them by filling in the number that corresponds to the timing, scope and severity of threat.

Timing

- 3—Happening now
- 2—Likely within 4 years
- 1—Likely beyond 4 years
- 0—Past or unlikely

Scope

- 3—Whole area/populations
- 2—most of area/pop.
- 1—some of area/pop.
- 0—small area/few individuals

Severity

- 3—Rapid deterioration
- 2—Moderate deterioration
- 1—Slow deterioration
- 0—Little or no deterioration

Pressure Type	Timing	Scope	Severity	Comments
Agriculture: Crops				
Agriculture: Livestock				
Residential/commercial development				
Energy production and mining				
Transportation developments				
Over-exploitation (hunting/trapping)				
Recreational activities				
Fire and fire suppression				
Invasive species				
Forestry				
Dams/water management				
Pollution: Livestock waste				
Pollution: Urban waste				
Pollution: Industrial waste				
Pollution: Noise and light pollution				
Climate change: Habitat shifting				
Climate change: Drought				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				

RESPONSE: Formal

General comments on conservation work at this site, including any recent changes or developments:

Please check the appropriate box in each of the following three areas below:

A. Conservation Designation

- Whole area of IBA (>90%)
- Most of IBA (50 to 90%)
- Some of IBA (10 to 49%)
- Little/none of IBA (<10%)

Details: _____

B. Management Planning

- Management plan exists for target species or site
- Plan out-of-date or incomplete
- No plan exists but planning underway
- No planning has taken place

Details: _____

C. Conservation Action

- Needed conservation is being properly implemented
- Substantive measures are being implemented but are limited
- Some limited initiatives are in place or are taking place
- Very little conservation taking place

Details: _____

RESPONSE: Grassroots

Are there active community-based organizations (CBOs) or stewardship groups (SGs) operating at this site? Please list groups you are aware of:

Please detail any conservation activities that you are aware of that have been undertaken by the site's CBOs or SGs:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please list anything else that you think might be important for this site:

This program is supported by the following partners:

