

British Columbia Important

Bird Areas Program

IBA in the Spotlight: Chilcotin Junction

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The wide grasslands and breathtaking canyon scenery of the Chilcotin Junction IBA make it an exciting area for birders and naturalists to explore. The IBA includes an extended area along both the Chilcotin and Fraser Rivers, upriver of the junction. It encompasses a mosaic of grasslands, big sagebrush flats, sand dunes, Interior Douglas-fir forest, small lakes and marshes, riparian zones, steep slopes with hoodoos, and rock outcrops above roaring rivers below.



Photo: Dick Cannings

Flammulated Owl.

Chilcotin Junction IBA provides habitat to one of the highest breeding concentrations of Flammulated Owls in Canada. Other species at their northern breeding limit include Lewis's Woodpecker, Prairie Falcon, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Long-billed Curlew, and Dusky Horned Lark. Sprague's Pipit and Upland Sandpiper have been reported historically.

The eastern boundary of the IBA is intercepted 14 km west of Williams Lake on Highway 20 near the Fraser River. Fields near the river support breeding Long-billed Curlew, while open slopes and ravines above the river provide nesting habitat for many

bird species including Long-eared Owl, Lazuli Bunting, Bullock's Oriole, and Eastern & Western Kingbirds. In May and June, Flammulated Owls and Common Poorwills can be heard calling after dusk near Doc English Bluff Ecological Reserve.

Among the best locations for viewing wildlife within the IBA are Farwell Canyon Road and the Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park. In late fall, bighorn sheep can be observed rutting in the Park and sightings of Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, Rough-legged Hawk, or Northern Hawk Owl are possible.

BC Nature's Anne Murray and IBA Coordinator Krista Englund will be giving a presentation about the Chilcotin Junction IBA in Williams Lake on May 11 and touring the site on May 12. For more information, please contact kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca or visit www.ibacanada.ca.

Kris Andrews, Chilcotin Junction Caretaker

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Websites of Interest

www.ibacanada.ca
www.bcnature.ca
www.birdscanada.org
www.naturecanada.ca
www.birdlife.org



Photo: Kris Andrews

Chilcotin Junction IBA.

Who's Who in the British Columbia Important Bird Area Program

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is an international conservation initiative coordinated by BirdLife International. The Canadian co-partners for the IBA Program are Bird Studies Canada (BSC) and Nature Canada, represented in this province by BC Nature. BSC leads on the technical side of the program while BC Nature works with local naturalists and organizations to support on-the-ground stewardship and conservation efforts. With support from BSC and Nature Canada, BC Nature coordinates a network of more than 50 volunteer Caretakers, who are the foundation of the IBA program in BC, acting as eyes, ears and hands on the ground for BC's 84 IBAs. A list of all Caretakers in BC is available on the BC nature website: www.bcnature.ca/pages/stewardship_projects/IBA_areas-caretakers.html.



Krista Englund (left) and Anne Murray (right) of BC Nature on a BC Ferry through Active Pass IBA en route to an outreach session in Victoria in July 2009.

Anne works closely with Pete Davidson, BSC's Programs Manager for BC, to oversee the BC IBA program. Pete is an avid birder with a background in ecology and ornithology and more than 20 years experience in bird and marine mammal conservation. Pete has been providing guidance to the IBA program since joining BSC in 2005 and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the program - including expertise gained from previous work with BirdLife International and IBA programs in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos.

Krista Englund joined the team in 2008 from Coquitlam as a contractor for BC Nature to help coordinate existing

Caretakers and find Caretakers for the remaining IBAs. With over a decade of experience in biology, environmental education, planning, and stewardship work - and a one-year old at her side - working up to one day per week on the IBA Program from home was a perfect fit for Krista. The program expanded in response to enthusiastic funder support of outreach work and Krista's effort increased to 2-3 days per week in 2009, until her second son was born in August. For the next 6-9 months, Krista continued with the sole responsibility of maintaining existing connections with Caretakers and her workload has steadily increased since then.

“With support from BSC and Nature Canada, BC Nature coordinates a network of more than 50 volunteer Caretakers, who are the foundation of the IBA program in BC, acting as eyes, ears and hands on the ground for BC's 84 IBAs.”

Karen Barry, a Project Officer with BSC in BC, joined the program in August 2009 to assist with outreach and technical work while Krista focussed on her fledglings. Karen, an avid birder with a background in science and a particular interest in natural history and conservation who lives in Nanaimo, added one day per week of IBA work to her job coordinating other BSC programs (e.g. Coastal Waterbird and Beach Bird Surveys) four days per week.

Karen and Krista now jointly coordinate the IBA program in BC, where strong momentum demanded increased effort from both coordinators in 2010-2011. Krista continues to maintain primary responsibility for communicating with, and supporting, Caretakers, as well as developing



Caretakers birding in Boundary Bay.

The Caretaker Network was hatched in 2007 after a model used in many countries around the world. Driving the network's establishment was Anne Murray, a naturalist, writer, and former president/director of BC Nature. Anne has been involved with the IBA program since it came to Canada in the mid-1990s and oversees the program on behalf of BC Nature, providing important strategic direction, helping to build awareness, and establishing connections with naturalists, governments and non-government organizations, and other important partners.



Karen Barry and Peter Davidson of BSC.

Who's Who continued...

communication materials. Karen focuses more on the technical aspects of the program (e.g. updating site summary information) and outreach, which fits well with her central location within a high density of IBAs on Vancouver Island, and her involvement with other BSC programs that are expanding across the province.

Anne, Pete, Krista, and Karen comprise the BC IBA Committee, a highly motivated team of individuals who are dedicated to ensuring the long term sustainability of the IBA Program in BC. This Committee will soon be supported by a Regional Review Committee, which is being established to assist with the significant task of updating all of the site summary information on the IBA Canada website (www.ibcanada.ca) (see also pg 6).

IBA work in BC is also supported nationally by the IBA Canada Committee, which reformed in 2009 as a result of a significant investment of external funding to develop a National IBA Caretaker Network. As one of the first provinces to establish a Caretaker Network and reinvigorate the IBA program, experiences in BC are informing the reinvigoration of the IBA program across the country.

The National IBA Canada Committee helps provincial IBA programs by

providing national infrastructure (e.g. IBA Canada website), standardized protocols and communication materials (e.g. signs), fundraising coordination, federal-level advocacy, and capacity building support. Regional partners lead at the province or territory level by championing the IBA Program within their jurisdiction, mobilizing volunteers, providing data, and leading local conservation, stewardship, advocacy, and outreach activities.

The Important Bird Areas Program has been supported by numerous other partners since taking root in Canada in 1996. The Government of Canada was a critical partner in the early years, providing generous financial support through its Millennium Fund program. Environment Canada provided strong in-kind support in a science advisory role and through the provision of migratory bird data. The Government of Canada continues to provide important in-kind support. In addition, Nature Canada and BSC seek funding on an ongoing basis to support IBA work across the country. The BC Program has recently received invaluable support from the Government of BC, Mountain Equipment Coop, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, and Shell Environmental Fund.

Krista Englund, IBA Coordinator

Complementary Designations to IBA Sought

Additional designations are being sought for two Important Bird Areas in BC: Tofino Mudflats and Boundary Bay-Roberts Banks-Sturgeon Banks.

The Caretaker for Tofino Mudflats IBA, the Raincoast Education Society, submitted an application to officially designate the Tofino Mudflats as part

of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). The BC IBA Committee is supporting an application to designate Boundary Bay IBA as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. Both designations complement the IBA designation and will strengthen local and international awareness and efforts to conserve these sites.



Photo: Ted Cheskey

Karen Barry (4th from top left) attended the IBA Canada Committee Meetings April 18-20, 2011 in Port Rowan, Ontario, on behalf of the BC IBA Program. Karen was joined by representatives from Nature Canada, Bird Studies Canada, and nine provinces. More info: <http://naturecanadablog.blogspot.com/>

“Anne, Pete, Krista and Karen comprise the BC IBA Committee, a highly motivated team of individuals who are dedicated to ensuring the long term sustainability of the IBA Program in BC.”



Photo: Karen Barry

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) designation is being sought for Tofino Mudflats IBA.



Photo: Bob and Chris McCay

Spruce Grouse.

Caretakers Welcome: Manning Bird Blitz June 17-19, 2011

Caretakers are invited to join Anne Murray for a presentation about the Important Bird Areas Program during the Manning Park Bird Blitz on June 18, 2011. The presence of Caretakers at presentations like this helps to highlight the role of Caretakers and stimulate interesting dialogue. The Bird Blitz also provides an excellent opportunity to participate in some fun birding within one of BC's 84 IBAs. For more info, contact Anne at sanderling@uniserve.com.



Photo: Kim Taylor

Mountain Bluebird.

IBA Signs & Standard Wording Available Soon!

In response to demand from Caretakers and program partners, the BC IBA Committee is working to develop two important communication items:

(1) a standard IBA sign that can be installed in any IBA across Canada to identify the site as one of a network of sites across Canada (and the world), and

(2) an IBA recognition standard - a document that provides standard wording and logos associated with the IBA program, which can be used

by Caretakers and program partners who wish to include information about IBAs in their own communication materials (e.g. signs, brochures, websites, etc).

These draft recommendations are being reviewed by the IBA Canada Communications Sub-committee and will hopefully be available this summer. To request a sign for your IBA, or a copy of the recognition standard, please contact Krista Englund at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca.

Tools to Assist Caretakers: E-Bird & the Portal

EBird has grown exponentially over the past year and has the potential to greatly improve our ability to track changes in birds within IBAs and other key locations over time. In addition, eBird is a very practical and fun way to enter and manage your bird observations, and those of others for your local IBA, in one easily accessible location. Use this tool to find maximum counts, chart IBA visitation by birders or changes in bird abundance through seasons and across years, and more. Caretakers are

strongly encouraged to enter all their bird observations into eBird.ca. For more information, contact Krista at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca.

A key advantage of becoming a Caretaker for a nation-wide conservation program is the potential to gain

support from (and provide assistance to) the large number of other individuals involved in the program across Canada. A web-based communications tool called the IBA Caretaker's Network Portal ('the portal') is available to facilitate sharing of resources, knowledge, and experience between Caretakers. The three key features of the portal include (a) an interactive map for locating IBAs and Caretakers, (b) a resource room that provides useful materials to assist Caretakers in fulfilling their roles, and (c) a discussion forum that enables

Caretakers to share experiences and learn from one another. To join, sign up at www.canadiannaturenetwork.ca and then email Krista at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca and you will be given access to this useful tool.

Krista Englund

Reaching Out to First Nations & Local Gov't

Ensuring awareness of the IBA network in BC among decision makers is a key part of conserving the sites as bird habitat. In 2009, with funding from Mountain Equipment Coop, we initiated an outreach program to senior governments and non-government agencies - key organizations that have a shared interest in long term conservation of IBAs.

The resounding success of this first outreach project encouraged us to consider a second phase, focusing on First Nations, particularly in remote locations, as well as local governments and organizations. With a second grant from Mountain Equipment Coop, we began phase II outreach in summer 2010.

A major focus was to initiate a conversation with the Nuuchahnulth First Nations, whose traditional territories encompass many areas identified as Important Bird Areas on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. To get things started off, Karen Barry gave a presentation to the West Coast Vancouver Island Aquatic Management Board and distributed information packages to 10 First Nations located in Port Alberni, Ucluelet & Tofino area. Karen also met with individuals of several First Nations on West Coast Vancouver Island and in Prince Rupert, with favourable responses. We are very pleased to welcome Dave and Dianne Ignace of Hesquiaht Nation to the IBA Program as Caretakers for Hesquiaht Lake IBA, one of the most inaccessible of the coastal IBAs. The Caretaker Network continues to engage First Nations in other locations, such as the Stellat'en First Nation, who are the Caretaker for Fraser Lake IBA. In the Fraser River Estuary IBA, we were pleased to advise the Tsawwassen First Nation on a barn owl nest box

when an old barn was demolished. At Active Pass IBA, Caretakers consulted with the Tsartlip First Nations on wording for a site brochure. We will continue to communicate with and engage First Nations across BC, on an ongoing basis, in recognition that they are the original 'Caretakers' of our Important Bird Areas and we share a common interest in ensuring the long term sustainability of our birds and their habitats.

We have also worked to increase awareness of the IBA program amongst local governments, acknowledging that incorporation of IBAs into regional and municipal government plans and policies will give these internationally important areas greater recognition at the local level. To prioritize, we overlaid maps of IBAs with Regional Districts and targeted municipal and regional districts with the highest number of IBAs within their boundaries, particularly where the IBAs were partly or wholly within the jurisdiction of local governments.

Members of local governments were as interested in the IBA program as senior governments. By March 31, 2011, we had given 10 presentations and attended several workshops and meetings, reaching over 185 people representing 35 organizations. This work led to numerous immediate outcomes, including incorporation of IBA information into management plans and inclusion of IBA information on interpretive signs.

Most importantly, these outreach sessions offer an opportunity for local governments and First Nations to become involved in the Caretaker Network and IBA conservation in the future.

Anne Murray & Krista Englund



Photo: Chris Dale

Northern Pygmy Owl.

May 14-15: World Migratory Bird Day

Mayor Gregor Robertson of the City of Vancouver has signed an official proclamation recognizing World Migratory Bird Day and referencing the Important Bird Areas Program. World Migratory Bird Day is a program of the United Nations that highlights the need to protect migratory birds and their habitats where people around the world take action and organize public awareness events.

www.worldmigratorybirdday.org

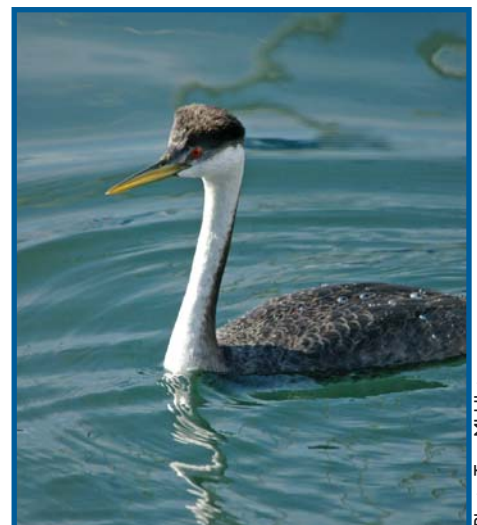


Photo: Tom Middleton

Western Grebe.

Technical Work Taking Off: Push to Update Site Summaries in 2011-12

An unanticipated, but logical, result of conducting outreach at a more local level is an increased demand for accurate online technical information (boundaries and bird data in particular). Outreach is a critical component of gaining support needed to conserve IBAs; however, the credibility of the program ultimately hinges on the availability of accurate and up-to-date technical resources. With help from BirdLife International and Audubon, the IBA Canada Committee has nearly completed reviewing thresholds and developing the tools and protocols needed for a comprehensive, network-wide review of the IBA site summaries.

The new tools and protocols are in the final stages of being tested for four IBAs in BC: Boundary Bay-Roberts Banks-Sturgeon Banks, Comox Valley, Baynes Sound, and Lambert Channel-Hornby Island.

These updates are more involved than the revisions to textual components of the Site Summaries that were completed with the help of Caretakers between 2007-2009. Since 2009, the IBA Canada Committee has

been developing protocols for revising Site Summaries based on BirdLife International standards.

These new protocols include:

- (a) updating the bird presence tables to include recent (post 2005), maximum counts of individuals and/or pairs of regularly occurring, target species,
- (b) updating the land use and habitat sections based on list of standard BirdLife land use and habitat categories,
- (c) updating the conservation threats section based on a standard list of threats (pressures),
- (d) revising site boundaries to correct mistakes (e.g. significant exclusions of important habitat or inclusions of

non-habitat) that were made during the original designation process, and

- (e) revising textual components to account for differences described above and any other site changes.

A Regional Review Committee is being established in BC to help source data, provide guidance, and review changes to site summaries. IBA Coordinators will be helping to coordinate the process and compile information. Caretakers and program partners will have an important role to play by providing local information and perspectives. Much of this local information is already compiled in detailed annual reports previously submitted by Caretakers, which will help expedite the process (thank you!). Stay tuned for further updates as this process unfolds in BC.

Support the IBA Program

If you are not already a member of BC Nature and Bird Studies Canada, please consider taking out a group or individual membership. Supporting these two organizations helps to keep the IBA program progressing towards its goal of conserving birds and their habitat. As a bonus, you will receive regular communications about the programs and bird conservation (e.g. BirdWatch, BC Nature magazine and the Focus on IBAs articles,) and hear about opportunities to go birding at BC Nature camps and field trips.

Please contact: manager@bcnature.ca and/or generalinfo@birdscanada.org

IBAs in British Columbia are a partnership program of:



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BCnature
FEDERATION OF BC NATURALISTS



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