

British Columbia



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Winter 2006-2007 will be remembered as one of the stormiest on record in British Columbia, as Pacific systems battered the Region until mid-January, after which the storm frequency decreased. During the lulls of Pacific energy, Arctic air made sure it wasn't forgotten and blanketed the Region a few times. Mountain snowpacks were near or above historical levels over many areas by the end of the period, and valley snowpacks in the northern three-fourths of the interior were also substantial.

GEESE THROUGH GULLS

Very rare in winter along the outer coast, Greater White-fronted Geese lingered near Tofino: 3 on 4 Dec, 2 on 12 & 17 Dec (all AD). Rare but regular along the coast in winter and early spring, 2 Eurasian Teal were in Duncan 26 Dec (DM). A very late Ring-necked Duck was on the Fraser R., Prince George 15 Dec (DMG et al.) for a first local winter record. Casual in the province, a male Tufted Duck garnered much attention after it was located on King's Pond, Saanich 1 Feb+ (GA et al., ph. MY). An ad. Clark's Grebe off Gordon's Beach, Sooke 26 Dec (RTo, LH) was out of place. Following a rash of late-fall

sightings, a juv. Brown Pelican was seen flying past Clover Pt., Victoria 20 Dec (JG) and was relocated on the 27th, when another flew in to join it (RS); one remained until 29 Dec (JF), and 3 were off Gordon's Beach 23 Dec (RTo, LH). Rarely found in the interior during winter, an imm. Double-crested Cormorant was along the South Thompson R. at the mouth of Chase Cr. 26 Dec (JBr) for a first local Dec record.

Black-crowned Night-Herons are few in number but known to be residents at Reifel; one on the Duncan C.B.C. 1 Jan (RoT, BN), however, was a surprise. Turkey Vultures have cleared out of the s. interior by Oct, but one late individual was seen in flight over Penticton 18 Dec (BH). Least Sandpipers are scarce in winter and found along tidal flats of the lower Mainland, but for the first time ever, 4 were found on the w. coast of the island in Tofino Harbour 16 Jan (DL). The Lesser Black-backed Gull first located in Vernon this past fall wandered southward to Penticton 1-10 Dec (LN et al.), back in Vernon 11 Dec (DGC), then at the Kelowna Landfill 16 Dec (MF), and then again in the Penticton area through 4 Jan (RC). It was joined by a second-cycle imm. in Penticton 6-10 Dec (ph. LN, DB). All previous 14 records in the province have been of single birds, and of those eight are from the interior. On the heels of a strong Pacific storm, a Black-legged Kittiwake, rarely encountered in winter, was seen off Pt. Roberts 6 Jan (GP). Casual in winter, a Tufted Puffin was off Gordon's Beach, Sooke 31 Dec (RTo, LH).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

Two Eurasian Collared-Doves were in Delta 1-10 Dec (GP et al.), reportedly present since

Aug. This species appears to be gaining a foothold in the s. Okanagan, with regular reports of them in Osoyoos and now Oliver, where a dozen birds appeared in early Jan (*fide* BMK). A Barn Owl found dead at Tofino 2 Dec (GB) provided the first w. coast record.

The first arriving Rufous Hummingbird appeared in Sooke 13 Feb (*fide* RTo). Although Say's Phoebes are early migrants, they are very rare in Jan; one was located along the Osoyoos lakeshore during the Oliver-Osoyoos C.B.C. (L&CB, T&MS). A late Barn Swallow was seen flying over the ice at Reifel 9 Dec (CG), and 2 were seen in Victoria 11 Jan (CSa et al.). A rare resident of the cen. interior, 2 White-breasted Nuthatches wintered at Cottonwood Island Park, Prince George, while another was found nearby 25 Jan (CCo). Very rare on the coast, a rather cooperative Rock Wren was at



A casual species in British Columbia, this Dickcissel frequented a feeder 31 December 2006 through 4 January 2007 (here) in Port Alberni, furnishing a second winter record for the province. It returned 10 January following a snowstorm. Photograph by Guy L. Monty.

Island View Beach, Saanich 1-28 Jan (ph. TZ). The interior's first record of Bewick's Wren was established during the Kelowna C.B.C. 16 Dec and remained through 4 Jan (†DGC et al.) at the Summerhill Winery. A Northern Mockingbird spent the winter in Summerland; it was first located 1-5 Dec (EH), then reappeared 29 Dec, having survived temperatures as low as -20° C, reappeared 11 Jan (CONC), and was finally relocated 27 Feb+.

Rarely encountered in winter in the cen. interior, a White-throated Sparrow was at a Prince George feeder 17 Dec (NK et al.) along with a White-crowned Sparrow (PS, BS). Casual in the province and accidental in winter, a Dickcissel was in Port Alberni 31 Dec-4 Jan, associating with House Sparrows at a feeder (KC, ph. GLM) and returned to the feeder following a snowstorm 10 Jan (KC). Of 16 Regional records, this constitutes the 2nd documented in winter. A Bullock's Oriole furnished a first winter record for the Parksville-Qualicum checklist area 26

SA Spotted Owls in British Columbia—the only ones of their species left in Canada—number fewer than 25 birds, it is thought, and a report by the Spotted Owl Population Enhancement Team advises the provincial government to capture the remaining birds to begin a zoo-based breeding program. In 2006, the government announced a proposal to capture some birds, move others, provide winter feed and protect habitat in nine key areas. The final science team report, however, calls for an urgent capture program that could see all the birds placed in existing or specially created breeding facilities. One option suggests that about half the population (the unmated birds) could be captured, while pairs are left in the wild. The report by makes no recommendations for protecting the rapidly disappearing old-growth forest habitat on which the birds depend. Currently, Canada's Spotted Owls are believed to exist in nine patches of land in the province; 34,000 hectares in this vicinity are protected from logging.



Very rare in winter in British Columbia, this Bullock's Oriole visited a feeder in the Parksville–Qualicum area regularly until 10 (here 1) December 2006. Photographs by Guy L. Monty.

Nov–10 Dec; it reappeared 10 Jan after a coastal snowstorm (C&DB, ph. GLM). There

are few winter records for the Region. Redpolls were not found in large numbers this winter; thus it was surprising that a **Hoary Redpoll** was discovered on the w. coast in Sooke 27 Dec (RTo et al.), along with 15 Common Redpolls (RTo et al.). A single American Goldfinch was a rare winter visitor to the outer coast in Tofino 17 Dec (AD), and Prince George birders had their first confirmed winter record, with 3 present 17 Dec (PS, BS).

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From early December 2006 into mid-January 2007, the Region was buffeted by a series of storms featuring high winds as much as precipitation, but storm-related avian events seemed minimal. Overall, temperatures were average, except February, which was about 2° C above normal. Precipitation was also unremarkable, except during January, which witnessed about two-thirds the normal rainfall and snow.

This winter was notable for an influx of Asian/Alaskan waterbirds and an irruption of Pine Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls juxtaposed with the continuing trends of northward range expansion (e.g., Red-shouldered Hawk,

Black Phoebe) and wintering by species considered accidental as recently as 1990 (e.g., Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager).

Abbreviations: Finley (Finley N.W.R., Benton), F.R.R. (Fern Ridge Res., Lane), N.S.C.B. (N. Spit Coos Bay, Coos), P.T. (Puget Trough), W.V. (Willamette Valley), W.W.R.D. (Walla Walla R. delta, Walla Walla). “East-side” and “westside” indicate locations e. and w. of the Cascade crest, respectively.

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAILS

Sightings of hybrid waterfowl continue to increase rapidly, along with increased observer scrutiny. Greater White-fronted Geese paired with “white-checked” geese were accompanied by their progeny, including 2 Greater White-fronted Geese × *minima* Cackling Geese at Shillapoo Bottoms, **Clark** 17 Feb (ph. SM) and 2 Greater White-fronted Geese × Dusky Canada Geese (*B. c. occidentalis*) at Baskett Slough, **Polk** through the season (M. Monroe); interestingly, this latter hybrid has occurred “occasionally” at Baskett Slough and Finley in the past (*vide* R. Jarvis). Emperor Geese showed well again this winter, with 3 in w. Washington and 4 in w. Oregon. Now annual among wintering Snow Geese in *Skagit/Snohomish*, an imm. Blue Goose brightened **Fir I.**, *Skagit* through 24 Jan (CCx, SM), and an ad. was there 24 Feb+ (M. Axelson). A Ross's Goose × Snow Goose hybrid hid among hordes of Snows on **Fir I.** 20 Jan (ph. SM).

Only 3 stray Ross's Geese were noted: 2 in w. Washington and one in w. Oregon. Two dark Canada Geese near **Sylvana**, *Snohomish* 3 Dec (CCx) were probably remnants of the flock of *B. c. fulva* that has wintered annually nearby for more than three decades, once numbering over 100 (R. Caniff). Five Black Brant on the westside away from salt water represented an above-average winter; per usual, 4 were among wintering flocks of Cackling Geese, but one was at **Hyatt L.** 16 Feb, furnishing **Jackson's** 5th record (R. Ketchum). A **Bewick's Swan** near **Brady**, *Grays Harbor* 26–31 Dec was about Washington's 8th (ph. P&RS). Most previous Bewick's records were from *Skagit*, and thus it is not shocking that 3 ad. and one imm. Tundra Swan near **Conway** 20 Jan appeared intermediate between *Whistling* and *Bewick's Swans* (SM, B. Carlson). Somewhat overdue, Washington's first **Whooper Swan** visited *Snohomish* 25 Dec–1 Jan (SM) before moving to **Conway** 4 Jan–17 Feb (IA) and then **Ferndale**, *Whatcom* 24 Feb–2 Mar (M. Jordan).

A gathering of 500 Wood Ducks at **Boardman**, *Gilliam* 24 Feb was likely an eastside record (B. Taylor). The **Eugene Falcated Duck** remained throughout the winter. An unremarkable 10 Eurasian Wigeons were noted on the eastside; single Eurasian Wigeon × American Wigeon hybrids, first reported from the eastside in spring 2006, were identified at **Vantage** 3 Dec (M&MD) and **Richland** 11 Feb (BW). Not annual during winter, a Blue-