

## Birds and Mammals Seen and Heard at Big Bar Camp

by Bill Kinkaid

When planning trips for this camp, I had optimistically hoped for a hundred bird species for the week, but the final tally came up at 138. Several factors account for the total: this year's camp, unlike most camps, brought us into a wide variety of habitats ranging from valley bottom cottonwood groves, through bunchgrass steppes and wetlands, sub-boreal and montane forest up to alpine tundra. We also held the camp a bit earlier in the summer than is usual—for several reasons unrelated to birding, but fortuitously catching the birds at a busier time of year. And we had the pleasure of having several excellent birders along to find the birds.

The most commonly seen bird in the campsite area itself seemed to be Chipping Sparrow, with Mountain Bluebird appearing regularly. MacGillivray's Warbler was seen flying over the camp one day; Common Nighthawk, American Pipit and Red Crossbill all made appearances in camp, and a family of Three-toed Woodpeckers passed through one evening when we were having a campfire. The ponds on the edge of the ranch and the wetlands at the lake just up the road from the camp housed Virginia Rail, Sora, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Willow Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

The grasslands and Douglas-fir parklands around the camp gave Least, Dusky and Olive-sided Flycatchers; the Poison Lake–Big Bar Mountain area had Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows along with Horned Lark. Subalpine birds on hikes into the Marble Range included Blue Grouse, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Townsend's Solitaire and Fox Sparrow.

The road down to the Big Bar Ferry on the Fraser River gave many highlights,

including Golden Eagle, Veery, abundant Lazuli Bunting, nesting Lewis's Woodpecker, Gray Catbird and Say's Phoebe in the sage brush, and Chukar, seen at the base of cliffs.

On trips to the Gang Ranch, Long-billed Curlew and Wilson's Phalarope were seen in the ponds uphill from the ranch, an American Kestrel was near the parking lot, and Western Kingbirds were nesting in between a hydro pole and a transformer. On the return from the ranch, a family of Sandhill Cranes was seen on Meadow Lake Road east of the Canoe Creek village. Waterfowl were seen in reasonable numbers and variety, highlights being Ruddy Duck and White-winged Scoter in the Gang Ranch ponds, Redhead at Poison Lake and Red-necked Grebe at the Riley Lake Dam.

All four grouse species were seen, and most of the expected woodpeckers with the exception of Downy. Raptors were relatively uncommon, and no owls were seen or heard all week.

### Mammals

Mammals were uncommon, apart from the widespread *Equus caballus* and *Bos taurus*<sup>1</sup>, the latter of which mooed late into the night from across the ravine next to the camp. The road to Big Bar Ferry had a herd of some thirty Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), observed as close as 500 m from the roadside. Up to five yellow-bellied marmots (*Marmota flaviventris*) were seen regularly by the Riley Lake Dam, as well as outside Coyote cabin at Big Bar Ranch. The only notable mammal sightings were two moose and three mule deer; and from the tents, coyotes were heard howling in the dark of the last night.

<sup>1</sup> Horse and bull or cow.

## BIRD LIST (Latin names omitted to save space)

Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture.

Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck.

Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel.

Chukar, Ruffed Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Spruce Grouse, Blue Grouse.

Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope.

Herring Gull.

Mourning Dove, Common Nighthawk, Black Swift, Calliope Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker.

Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Cassin's Vireo, Warbling Vireo.

Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven

Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow.

Black-capped Chickadee, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Varied Thrush, Gray Catbird, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing.

Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, MacGillivray's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting.

Spotted Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco.

Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Bullock's Oriole.

Purple Finch, Cassin's Finch, House Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, House Sparrow.

### Plant List for the Big Bar Ranch Camp

The plant list for the Big Bar Ranch Camp is so extensive that its publication is held over to the Spring issue of *Discovery* in 2006. It may be found, however, on our website at [www.naturalhistory.bc.ca/VNHS](http://www.naturalhistory.bc.ca/VNHS).