

Exercise WESTERN TANAGER in Western Canada (14-28 May 2005)
(Major Tim Cowley, G1 PS Branch, HQ UKSC(G), BFPO 140)

Introduction

WESTERN TANAGER was the brainchild of Tim Cowley (TC) and Richard Seargent in 2003. Both had previously exercised at the British Army Training Unit Suffield in south-east Alberta and when, in 2003, TC was fortunate enough to be posted there for 30 months, it provided the convenient means to organise an AOS lead expedition. Unfortunately due to work commitments Richard was unable to take part in the exercise.

Apart from being an opportunity for the AOS to explore a region of the world that few of its members appeared to have explored before, WESTERN TANAGER was important for TC for another reason, it was the first valuable chance that had presented itself for him to organise an expedition since being kidnapped in 1995, whilst carrying out a recce for an abandoned 1996 AOS expedition to Colombia, South America.

The expedition was always going to be difficult and require both dedication and a sense of humour. This was due to the time required at each site and the distances between locations that were of most interest to birds. This forced the team to purchase food on the move and to use commercial accommodation or TC's quarter. Camping and self-catering were not practical options for a two week expedition of this kind.

Aim

The aim of the expedition was to break new ground for the AOS by visiting an area of North America that few had visited previously, with the challenge of visiting as many of the available habitats as possible in a two week period.

Expedition Team

Lt Col Roger Dickey (RD)	
Maj Andy Bray (AB)	
Maj Hilary Nash (HN)	
Capt Tim Cowley (TC)	Exped Leader
Dave Pentelow (DP)	
WO1 Pete Amphlett (PA)	
WO1 Norman Trigg (NT)	
WO2 Mark Easterbrook (ME)	

DAY 1 – 14 May 2005 (Calgary to Salmon Arm, via Banff and Lake Louise)

TC met the remainder of the team at Calgary Airport on the afternoon of the 14th May 2005 and then immediately embarked on the start of a 7,375 km journey. The aim of the first day was to head west along Route 1 to Salmon Arm in the Rockies, with a few detours on the way to look for mountain species. It is almost inevitable in foreign countries that the first day will produce a reasonable list of new or interesting species but this day produced some real surprises!

We had not travelled far from the city of Calgary before TC started to point out some of the features. As we approached the Jumping Pound junction, TC mentioned that just beyond the junction there was a small pond which was a good site for Trumpeter Swans in spring. Passing under the road, we were able to then look back at the pond, where to our surprise there were 4 swans! Pulling over on to the hard shoulder, we were able to confirm that the birds were 4, very late, immature Trumpeters on their flight north. Scanning the small pond we were able to find amongst some of the familiar wildfowl many of the North American ducks: American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teals, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked ducks, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye and Buffleheads. Amongst the ducks there were also several Eared and Horned Grebes, as well as 8 Wilson's Phalaropes gently picking insects from the pond's surface.

A few miles further along Route 1 we took our first detour, along Sibbald Creek. Sibbald Creek is a quiet road about 40 kms long, partly metalled and partly graded track. At the junction we found yet more wildfowl on another small pond and our first Redheads and Red-winged Blackbirds. Heading south, then west, we scanned the fences and tree tops as we drove, quickly finding Mountain Bluebirds, American Kestrels, Tree Swallows and a Grey Jay. A Red-naped Sapsucker darting into a bush brought about a short stop, which also produced a male Myrtle subspecies of the Yellow-rumped Warbler. Before reaching the end of the track we had also added Great Blue Heron, Osprey and Common Merganser to our list. We had also found our first mammal species: Hoary Marmot and Common Muskrat.

We joined Route 1 for one junction and then turned onto the Route 1A. At Seebe the Bow River is dammed and just above the dam we found an unexpected Western Grebe. A few miles further on we came to the small community of Exshaw, well known amongst local birdwatchers as a winter site for Grey-crowned Rosy-Finches. Not that we expected to see these high altitude finches in May but the garden bird-tables are always worth checking and we were rewarded with our first hummingbird for the expedition, a female Rufous Hummingbird. Exshaw is dominated by a large industrial plant, which spoils the view as you enter the Rockies but the wildlife appears to have accepted the human presence and on a nearby pool we found a Belted Kingfisher and Red-necked Grebes. Within a kilometre of the site we also found a group of more than 30 Bighorn Sheep grazing by the roadside.

With the afternoon passing quickly we pressed on to Harvey Heights, close to Canmore and the entrance to the Banff National Park. Harvey Heights is a great place for looking for tolerant mountain species, which can be found in the gardens of this tiny community set in woodland, especially in winter. The heights did not let us down and we had good views of Pine Siskins, Dark-eyed Juncos, a brilliant male Rufous Hummingbird, American Robins, American Crows, a Hairy Woodpecker, Brown-headed Cowbirds and a male Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler. We were also scolded by a very angry Red Squirrel.

We entered the Banff National Park and headed towards Lake Louise, via Route Routes 1 and 1A, with another detour to Minniwanka Lake, where we saw our first summer plumaged Common Loon or Great Northern Diver! En route we saw several White-tailed Deer and 2 Northern Flickers but the real stars were 7 Harlequin Ducks on the Bow River between Highway 93 and Lake Louise.

At Lake Louise we looked for the Clark's Nutcrackers that are normally picked up easily in the car park but not this day. The team moved to the front of the hotel, in the hope that they may be on the lawns without success. We took the track that follows the lake shore and we could hear a distant Northern Pygmy-Owl and the eerie calls of Varied Thrushes but no nutcrackers. To our surprise we found 2 Common Porcupines on the hotel lawns and, the greatest surprise of all, a Northern Hawk Owl perched at the top of a tall conifer next to the hotel. As we watched the owl we heard news of a female Grizzly Bear and her two cubs not too far away. Within a few minutes we had joined about a dozen people, treated to the sight of the mother bear and her 2 three-year old cubs searching for food in a mountain meadow.

As the light faded we grabbed a snack and continued our journey into the early hours of the morning. While the co-driver, ME, snored his way to Salmon Arm, RD kept TC amused from the back seats.

DAY 2 – 15 May 2005 (Salmon Arm to Vancouver Island)

The real aim of Day 2 was to get to Victoria on Vancouver Island. But not before checking out Shuswap Lake at Salmon Arm. In August 2003, TC had seen a Clark's Grebe at Salmon Arm and wanted to see if another bird could be found. Clark's Grebe is a scarce bird in Western Canada.

In spite of the late night, everyone was up early and keen to get on with the birding. At the lake we could see that there were more than 150 large grebes, but in the nearest 3 birds we could see that there was a Clark's Grebe with 2 Western Grebes. The birds were so close to each other that we could compare the two species side-by-side. This large lake, with a flotilla of house boats, is a good spot to stopover and we were able to enjoy many species in the early morning sun, including 8 Bald Eagles, 4 Ospreys, a Red-tailed Hawk, 2 Pied-billed Grebes, 4 Wood Ducks, a Cinnamon Teal, American Coots,

Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gulls, Violet-green Swallows and various blackbirds (Red-winged, Yellow-headed and Brewer's).

Continuing on Route 1 we headed through the Rockies to Hope and then across the coastal plain to the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal, pausing only briefly for the odd bird, petrol or food. We did manage to get good views of a group Turkey Vultures moving along a ridge and several smaller birds, including Western Kingbird, Yellow Warbler and Song Sparrow.

At the ferry terminal we had about 30 minutes to check out the shoreline and bays created by the causeway to the terminal. Glaucous-winged Gulls were scavenging around the terminal and perched on the street lights. Along the shoreline we could see more than 500 Great Blue Herons and amongst the flocks of birds on the water we could pick out 200 plus Surf Scoters, several White-winged Scoters, a single Black Scoter, a Greater Scaup, several Buffleheads, a Pacific Loon, 2 Common Loons and several grebes, while a White-crowned Sparrow hopped between the boulders where we sat. Once we had boarded the ferry a Black Oystercatcher was also found.

The ferry departed the terminal and headed out across the Straits of Georgia. As it did so the wind and rain turned against us. In spite of the weather we saw some great birds with over 360 Pacific Loons (which resemble pale headed Black-throated Divers), several Pelagic Cormorants, 3 Greater Scaup and 2 large California Sea Lions before we entered the narrow passage between the coastal islands, known as Active Pass. The turbulence of the tides in this narrow pass makes it a good place for auks and marine mammals. Dotted on the rocks or swimming in the sea we found more than 30 Harbour Seals. In the water were about 15 Pigeon Guillemots, 2 Common Murre, more than 20 Rhinoceros Auklets and 6 Mew Gulls. We also encountered our first definite North-Western Crows, which live along this part of the Pacific Coast, and 3 more majestic Bald Eagles.

Once off the ferry we headed south towards Victoria, choosing not to pursue a local rarity en route, the Eurasian Skylark. Instead, we used the remaining light to look for Anna's Hummingbirds at Swan Lake. Swan Lake is a pretty, little park that would be a good place for a short visit. We found a mixture of water and woodland birds, including Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebe, American Wigeon, Cedar Waxwings, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ravens, Swallows (Barn, Tree and Violet-green), 2 superb male Common Yellowthroats, Spotted Towhees, a pair of shy Black-headed Grosbeaks, a Western Wood-peewee, four Marsh Wrens, a Bewick's Wren and 3 Anna's Hummingbirds, including a stunning male that posed and glistened in the setting sun.

DAY 3 – 16 May 2005 (Victoria and Duncan environs)

The day started badly with drizzle as we walked the harbour wall at Ogden Point at 0650 hrs. A few birds had not been put off by the conditions and we had good views of Black Oystercatcher, Pelagic and Double-crested Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets and Glaucous-winged Gulls. Unfortunately no Wandering Tattler, which this location does turn up with some regularity.

We moved on to the nearby Clover Point, but the rain only got worse. Clover Point had most of the species that we had seen at Ogden Point, but in greater numbers, plus a Marbled Murrelet, several ducks (including at least 4 Harlequin Ducks, 30 Surf Scoters, a White-winged Scoter and 2 Mallards), 8 North-Western Crows and 4 wet little Savannah Sparrows. Soaking wet, we moved on.

On the way around the coast we stopped briefly and found a *streptopelia* dove species perched on a telephone wire. It looked and acted like a Eurasian Collared Dove, which is exactly what we thought the bird was and we moved on. It was not until we spoke to local birder Derrick Marvin in Duncan that we discovered that this species is a major rarity for the Island. Unfortunately no one had taken any detailed notes of the bird that could definitely rule out a Barbary Dove, which is also a major rarity for the Island.

After a café stop to dry out and warm up, we arrived at one of Victoria's highest points and a natural migrant spot, Mount Tolmie. Within minutes of our arrival, we found a flock of more than 21 Western Tanagers passing through the trees at the top of the hill and we were able to get great views of the handsome males with their smart black, yellow and red plumage. A male Cooper's Hawk also performed an aerial courtship display over the neighbouring gardens. We explored the narrow tracks

that circle the top of the hill, passing through lightly wooded and open areas. This proved to be an excellent spot for small birds with 2 more Anna's Hummingbird, a Brown Creeper, several Warblers (Orange-crowned, Townsend's, Wilson's, Yellow), 4 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, 2 Bushtits, several Sparrows (Chipping, Golden-crowned) and several other species already seen at Swan Lake.

The weather improved as it approached midday at Mount Tolmie and we moved to the coast again to look for Hooded Merganser. Esquimalt is an attractive spot, the road running between a long beach and large lagoon. This is a good spot for the introduced Mute Swans, with more than 10 present. Amongst more than 100 roosting Glaucous-winged Gulls were 9 Caspian Terns. On the sea 8 Red-breasted Mergansers bobbed up and down but unfortunately the Hooded Mergansers had eluded the team again.

We turned our backs on Victoria and headed north towards Duncan and our rendezvous with local birder and expatriate Derrick Marven. En route we stopped over at the Goldstream Provincial Park to look for American Dipper and Stellar's Jay. The former was found on the stream next to the car park however the latter required a walk to the Visitor's Centre, which caused a delay but the opportunity to see other birds including 2 Red-breasted Sapsuckers, several Winter Wrens, a Swainson's Thrush, a California Quail, a Purple Finch and, for some lucky observers, a Pileated Woodpecker.

In Duncan, we met up with Derrick at Tim Horton's, a coffee and doughnut café chain that became a firm favourite with the team! Derrick had agreed to take the team to two of his local spots: Hillcrest Road and Curry Creek Road. These are wooded areas dissected by tracks and power-lines, which provide access and borders. We spent a couple of hours at Hillcrest Road using Derrick's invaluable knowledge of local bird calls and the area to track down Band-tailed Pigeon, Hammond's Flycatcher and MacGillivray's Warblers. At Curry Creek Road we were able to get good views of Olive-sided Flycatcher, along with American Goldfinch, Northern Flicker and another Red-breasted Sapsucker.

DAY 4 – 17 May 2005 (Duncan to Tofino and the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve)

We returned to Curry Creek Road, without Derrick, at 0610hrs on a cold morning to look for Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Black-throated Grey Warbler. We heard at least one of the former but were unable to find the bird hiding deep in the wood. We were also able to hear Ruffed Grouse displaying but these too proved difficult for most of the group to see, never mind identify. As the sun slowly started to break through, we found an adult Great Horned Owl and large owl roosting close to the edge of a woodland block, which gave everyone great views of these large and impressive owls.

At 0900hrs we moved back to Hillcrest Road but the flycatcher and warbler still proved impossible, although we did find 9 Band-tailed Pigeons, 2 Rufous Hummingbirds, a Red-tailed Hawk, a Black-headed Grosbeak and 2 chipmunks.

After an hour we departed and headed for Tofino mid way up the west coast of the Island. The route took us through forests and over mountains before passing over the ridge and down towards the Pacific Coast. A Sharp-shinned Hawk put in a brief appearance; we also saw 2 Bald Eagles, several Turkey Vultures and DP caught a glimpse of Northern Pygmy-Owl, which moved on when we braked.

We arrived at the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve at about 1630hrs - in the rain - and headed for Wickaninnish, where a Yellow-billed Loon had been reported and where we hoped to see some migrating seabirds. We were able to definitely identify 30 plus Pacific Loons and 4 Common Loons. A large loon with a bold chequer-board back was found but its bill could not be seen at all against the sea in the poor light, perhaps indicating that it was the rare visitor as we could see the dark bills of the 4 Common Loons. Regardless, we concentrated on those birds that we could see well and watched a trickle of more than 60 Sooty Shearwaters, mostly heading north, along with a Sabine's Gull, 25 plus Common Murre, 3 Pigeon Guillemots, 8 Marbled Murrelets and 2 Rhinoceros Auklets. Closer inshore we watched a Red-necked Grebe, several Pelagic Cormorants, at least 25 White-winged Scoters, 2 Black Scoters, a Surf Scoter, a Harlequin Duck and a Sea Lion. While on the beach were 4 North-Western Crows, 2 Black Oystercatchers, our first Western Gull amongst the numerous Glaucous-winged Gulls and a flock of 80 plus Sanderling containing 9 Dunlin.

A brief stop at Grice Bay proved disappointing with a single Spotted Sandpiper. We then visited Radar Hill, on the advice of Derrick Marven, to look for Blue Grouse. When we arrived at the small hill, only 126 metres above sea level, close to the sea it looked like an unlikely spot to see this bird but it proved to be successful and we located a female on the hillside above the first car park. The bird was quite tame and slowly walked within a few meters of the group.

Our final stop was at Chesterman Beach, just south of Tofino. This sandy beach backed by woodland and gardens can be good for migrating shorebirds. On this occasion the beach was quiet, with a small flock of Sanderlings and 2 Semi-palmated Plovers, however overhead an immature Bald Eagle chased an Osprey and two Caspian Terns patrolled the edge of an offshore island. In the woodland and gardens nearby we find a Stellar's Jay and a Fox Sparrow that did not mind the rain.

DAY 5 – 18 May 2005 (Tofino pelagic and Pacific Rim National Park Reserve)

The one chance for the team to have a lie in, as we did not have to be at the jetty to meet our pelagic boat until 0800hrs. To our disappointment it was still raining and when we reached the public jetty and met local birders George Bradd and Adrian Dorst it looked doubtful that we would ever get onboard our boat. After about an hour's delay the Captain of the boat eventually decided to take the trip, as the sea swell appeared to have stabilised at about 2 metres. The delay had not been a total disaster as we had good views of a Bonaparte's Gull and 2 Western Gulls roosting with the 40 plus Glaucous-wings. We also spotted a Lapland Longspur (Bunting), which was a lifer for international birder George Bradd.

We boarded the boat with Adrian, one of the top seabird watchers in the area, and headed out of the harbour, picking up 4 Greater Scaup as we did so. As we left the sanctuary of the inner harbour the conditions worsened but we plodded on, fortified by seasickness medication. Soon 70 plus Sooty Shearwaters were careering past the boat. A steady stream of Pacific and Common Loons also flew past, while dozens of auks preferred to flutter a short distance or to dive under the waves to get out of our path. Some, like AB, were braving the cold, driving rain and strong winds out on deck, while most remained under cover in the warmth of the boat, with its large windows. After an hour or so the Captain announced that the sea swell was at 3.8 metres and that he was making the decision to return to more sheltered coastline, as we were obviously not going to ask him to turn back no matter how severe the weather conditions. This was a massive disappointment, as there was the potential to see whales and some exciting seabirds in this area, including albatrosses, but the weather was so severe that the birds would have to pass by very close, if we were going to see them. We turned towards the coast and navigated our way around several of the smaller islands and along the inlet. This proved to be a good alternative and we were rewarded with a Stellar's Sea Lion at the first island that we visited and 2 fantastic Wandering Tattlers at the second island, which was also home to a rare Sea Otter. We also saw 2 Harbour Seals and a Harbour Porpoise. On another large rocky island we found a small colony of Brandt's Cormorants and along the shoreline of the inlet a lonely Brandt Goose and 7 Whimbrel.

Back at the jetty we met up with George Bradd again and he took us to his home, so that we could get access to the Tofino mudflats, which are well known as a shorebird migration spot. We were late in the season but still fortunate enough to find 11 Western Sandpipers and a Long-billed Dowitcher, along with the more familiar Black-bellied (Grey) Plovers and Whimbrel, plus 4 Bald Eagles and Raccoon searching out crabs.

George had also agreed to show the group a spot where he had seen Wandering Tattlers recently and where we might get to see the birds from a steady base. We returned to Wickaninnish, only this time after a quick look at the offshore rocks and inshore waters we headed south through the tall, moss draped forest of conifers. We were lucky and saw two pairs of these great waders at different locations. We also found 3 Band-tailed Pigeon, a Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, a Fox Sparrow and Banana Slugs *Ariolimax columbianus*, although for such great coniferous woodland the number of species was disappointing.

With the weather still drizzling, we headed for the Long Beach Sewage Lagoon, which consists of two small pools surrounded by forest. As we approached the lagoons, George warned the team that about fifty per cent of the time he encounters a Black Bear at this site and told us to be cautious. Sure enough the large old, jet black bear of the Vancouver Island subspecies (*U. a. vancouveri*) was in the corner of

the first pool. The bear watched the group and we waited to see what he would do from a distance of about 40-50 metres. The bear sat for about ten minutes, then walked slowly into the forest, where we hoped he would remain until after we had gone. At the pool we were able to get good views of an Osprey at its nest, a Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal and another Stellar's Jay.

Time was getting on and we had to head back to Tofino, to see if we could locate a Pacific-slope Flycatcher. A brief stop at Tofino Airport produced a Killdeer and a Bald Eagle. George took the team to a narrow, inconspicuous track close to his home. The track lead through dense forest, with thick undergrowth and this time we were lucky to get the flycatcher calling and feeding high, silhouetted against the sky. Varied Thrushes were also calling all around us and we walked the track slowly but only those at the front of the group were lucky to grab a glimpse of this bird. An American Robin was also at this site.

DAY 6 – 19 May 2005 (Tofino to the Okanagan Valley)

An early morning start saw the team heading back across the Island to Nanaimo and back to the mainland. The rain did not abate for most of the journey, so we pressed on to Parksville, on the east coast of the island before we made our first stop. At Parksville we explored the Allsbrook Road/Little Mountain area and the Parksville Bay Community Park. At the former we found 3 Vaux's Swifts, a Rufous Hummingbird, 2 Chestnut-backed Chickadees and a Townsend's Warbler. At the park there were more than 20 Canada Geese, but no Cackling Goose that had wintered at the site, plus 8 Bonaparte's Gulls and more than 50 Glaucous-winged Gulls.

A short drive and we were at Duke Point Ferry Terminal, near Nanaimo, where we boarded the ferry back to Tsawwassen. The crossing from this terminal is less productive, as it does not travel through Active Pass, however the team found 3 Common Tern, along with several gulls, auks, cormorants and loons.

Once back on the mainland we headed for Boundary Bay, another site for shorebirds. There were relatively few shorebirds and those that were present were too far away to identify. A Marsh Wren showed well and there were several swallow species (Barn, Tree and Northern Rough-winged), 5 Northern (Hen) Harriers and a terrapin species.

In the late afternoon we headed for the Rockies. At Hope, the western gateway to the mountains, we pulled over in to the Hunter Creek Rest Area, our last chance to find a Black-throated Grey Warbler, sadly we had to settle for a group of 20 plus Vaux's Swift and a Swainson's Thrush.

From Hope we took Route 3 to Osoyoos, concentrating on the road or resting, few birds were observed along this leg. A brown phase of the Black Bear and the Black-tailed race of the Mule Deer were seen close to the road. Just south of Keremos, and about 30 minutes from Osoyoos, we took the Nighthawk Road south towards the Canada/USA Border Point. In total darkness, with the windows down we drove the road, listening for a Nighthawk, as the name suggests. To our surprise the bird we actually heard was a Common Poorwill. The team debussed and we found the bird perched on a fence post by torchlight. Amazingly the bird remained on its perch and everyone was able to get a good view.

DAY 7 – 20 May 2005 (Okanagan Valley)

An early start saw the team grabbing an early morning breakfast at Tim Horton's, where clearly the staff were more tired than the team but it was not long before we were birding Road 22, north of Osoyoos in the Okanagan Valley, an important wine producing area in Canada.

A scan of the grassy fields produced 7 superb displaying male Bobolinks, 4 Wilson's Snipe and many Savannah Sparrows. A walk south along the canal bank at this site, past fields, beaver ponds and marsh, produced some excellent birds, including: 6 Ospreys, an American Kestrel, 6 Wood Duck, 2 Ring-necked Duck, 5 California Quail, 13 Mourning Doves, 3 Cliff Swallows, a House Wren, 4 Marsh Wrens, 2 Western Kingbirds, an Eastern Kingbird, a Say's Phoebe, a Lark Sparrow and an American Beaver.

We then visited two other locations that are close by: the Ecological Reserve and Harold King's garden, which are home to several local species. At the former we were lucky to see at least one Canyon Wren, 2 Rock Wrens, 3 White-throated Swifts, 3 Western Bluebirds, 2 Lazuli Buntings, a Western Meadowlark and a stunning male Bullock's Oriole. At Harold's garden we saw a female Calliope Hummingbird, the smallest North American bird, and several Yellow-bellied Marmots.

The remainder of the morning we spent along Camp McKinney Road, which heads up into the forested hills on the eastern side of the valley. This road too is well known for localised species. Noteworthy birds at this site include a Long-billed Curlew, 2 fleeting Lewis' Woodpeckers, a Red-naped Sapsucker, 4 Grey Flycatchers, 2 Mountain Chickadees, 3 more Western Bluebirds, 2 Cassin's Finches and 2 Yellow-pine Chipmunks.

We continued north to Oliver, where we stopped at the northern end of River Road to watch a cracking male Black-chinned Hummingbird and a pair of Calliope Hummingbirds. Between Oliver and Okanagan Falls, along the shore of Vaseau Lake we found an immature Golden Eagle and another superb Bullock's Oriole. At Okanagan Falls we turned east again and drove up into the conifer covered hills along Shuttleworth Creek and up to an area known as Browning Creek. The area was fairly quiet for birds, with only a few woodland birds, including our first Ruby-crowned kinglet. It was however more productive for mammals and we saw a very obliging Coyote in the middle of the track, a Red Squirrel, a Colombian Ground-Squirrel and a White-tailed deer. On our way back down Shuttleworth Creek we stopped at an area of burnt forest and found 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, a Spotted Towhee and another Black Bear.

The team continued north of Okanagan Falls and then took the White Lake Road to 3 Gates Farm, which had been territory to a pair of Western Screech-Owls. Unfortunately the owls were not showing and we later discovered that the owls did not breed in 2005. This is also a great spot for hummingbirds and while we were there we were able to see four species within just a few metres: Anna's, Black-chinned, Calliope and Rufous. We also had good views of Red Crossbill, Cassin's Finch, Black-headed Grosbeak, House Finch, Western Tanager and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

In the late afternoon we headed south back to Osoyoos, stopping briefly at Vaseau Lake to hear Sora and to see a Golden Eagle and Yellow Warbler. We then tried another site for Western Screech-Owl until it was too dark to go anywhere other than bed.

DAY 8 – 21 May 2005 (Okanagan Valley to Waterton Lakes National Park)

At 0530hrs we were already at Vaseau Lake, looking for rails. It was not to be, but we did see a pair of Bullock's Orioles, several Marsh Wrens, 3 Red-necked Grebes and a Common Loon. We quickly moved on and returned to Shuttleworth Creek, hoping that an early morning visit would be more productive and we were right. Within the first 2 kms we found 4 Clark's Nutcrackers and a Warbling Vireo. In the following 3 kms we found another Lark Sparrow and 2 Say's Phoebe at a ranch. At 12.5 kms from the main road there is a fork in the road and this proved to be a great place in the morning, with a male Williamson's Sapsucker, 3 Grey Jays, a Stellar's Jay, a Hammond's Flycatcher, 2 Black-capped Chickadees, an 'Oregon' Dark-eyed Junco and several warbler species (MacGillivray's, Orange-crowned and Audubon's Yellow-rumped). A little further up the hill we discovered another male Williamson's Sapsucker, a Pileated Woodpecker (heard), a Northern Flicker, 2 Downy Woodpeckers, a Dusky Flycatcher, a beautiful Cassin's Vireo, a Hermit Thrush, 2 Pine Siskins, and several warblers (including Townsend's).

Our last stop in the Okanagan before heading towards Waterton in Alberta was to explore the first 5 kms of the Camp McKinney Road again, in an attempt to relocate the Lewis' Woodpeckers. The woodpeckers could not be found this time but we did find a colony of more than 20 Bank Swallows and a family of 6 Great Horned Owls roosting in close proximity.

We wound our way east out of the Okanagan Valley along Route 3. Our first stop was at Mt Anarchist, where TC had recently seen a Pygmy Nuthatch prospecting a nesting cavity amongst the pines but the bird had moved on. A number of birds were still at the site, despite the development that was going on, including a Red-naped Sapsucker, 2 Cassin's Finches and Vesper Sparrow. The latter is normally a grassland bird and this bird may have been lost.

58 kms east of Osoyoos the team found 2 Lewis' Woodpeckers, which have the unusual habitat for a woodpecker of fly catching, and this time everyone was able to see the birds well. 2 Clark's Nutcrackers were also at this spot.

10 kms east of Salmo a bird on a small roadside pond caught the driver's eye and at last we had found a male Hooded Merganser. The little pond also hosted 5 Barrow's Goldeneye, 3 Lesser Scaup and a Belted Kingfisher.

The team stopped briefly at Stagleap Provincial Park, at the top of the pass, for a team photograph, before descending towards Creston. TC was determined to try and find a Varied Thrush along this section of the road and eventually one was found, a male calling from the top of a tree. Telescopes were quickly unloaded and everyone was able to see the beautiful thrush out in the open. Only a few kilometres along the road we encountered another brown Black Bear. Probably 3 years old, it allowed us to drive within just a few metres of it, as it grazed on dandelions.

It was getting late in the day by the time we reached Cranbrook and probably the last chance that we would get to make a reasonable stop for a little birding and a meal. We stopped for a few minutes at Elizabeth Lake on the western side of the town and watched more than 30 Black Terns hawking over the marsh. On the open water were 2 Pied-billed Grebes, a Cinnamon Teal and 5 Ring-necked Ducks.

The journey from Cranbrook to Waterton took the team through the Crowsnest Pass, in ever fading light. The setting sun making the mountains look impenetrable and cold. Once past the Crowsnest Pass, we headed down into the foothills, until we reached Pincher Creek and turned south towards the Waterton Lakes National Park. A Short-eared Owl crossed the road in our headlights. A long legged, short tailed, short eared mammal also crossed the road and was quite likely a Bobcat. It was well into the early hours of the morning by the time that we reached Waterton, where we came across a Red Fox cruising the empty footpaths, and it was straight to bed to grab a few hours sleep.

DAY 9 – 22 May 2005 (Waterton Lakes National Park to Ralston (BATUS))

Dawn at the Marquis Hole in Waterton Lakes National Park, east of the Rockies, was cold and windy. As a result the only birds that we could hear were Red-eyed Vireo, Chipping Sparrow and Ruffed Grouse, although none showed themselves. We quickly moved on to the Hay Barn but the conditions were no better and we moved on to the Maskinonge viewpoint. At the lake there were ducks keeping tight to the shore, Black Terns being tossed around in the air, while on the far side of the lake 2 Sandhill Cranes and a shy Moose provided the real excitement.

With the weather so poor in the exposed areas, the team headed up into the mountains to Cameron Lake, getting good views of a Merlin as we drove past the Bear's Hump and up the Akamina Parkway. At Cameron Lake it was raining and cold. Half of the group stayed around the lake car park, the other half followed TC up a kilometre or two of the Summit Lake Trail. Few birds were active but the views of 4 Varied Thrushes, a Grey Jay, several Winter Wrens and at least one Chestnut-backed Chickadee (a local Alberta species) were worth the extra effort.

We returned to Waterton for a late breakfast, packed and headed, in better weather, to the Red Rock Canyon. This is a good sight for Townsend's Solitaire but not this time. We did see several good Alberta species including Cassin's Finch, Townsend's Warbler, Stellar's Jay, a few observers saw a Boreal Chickadee and we also saw a Golden-mantled Ground-Squirrel.

The last stop was to return to the Waterton townsite and Cameron Falls area. Close to the falls we found a further 8 Cassin's Finches, 3 Pine Siskins and a Red-naped Sapsucker. As we departed Waterton and passed the impressive Prince of Wales Hotel, 2 Vaux's Swift flew over Linnet Lake. Waterton is the only known breeding site for this species in Alberta.

The team headed north-east on Route 5 towards Mountain View and then on to Stirling. We had only just crossed the boundary of the Waterton Lakes National Park, when a Red-tailed Hawk chased a smaller Broad-winged Hawk across the road.

Soon after we pulled off the highway and explored the tracks around Mountain View for Bobolinks, which can be quite close to the road at this site but none were found. The small ponds, however, held a Barrow's Goldeneye, Cinnamon Teals, and Red-necked Grebes. Between Mountain View and Cardston we encountered our first Swainson's Hawk of the expedition.

At Stirling we visited the lake. It was so windy at this prairie lake that the team had to shelter by the side of the viewing platform but the birding was worth it, with 3 species of gull, 8 species of waders and 11 species of waterfowl, including: Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Willet, Marbled Godwit, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Ruddy Duck and Northern Pintail.

From Stirling we continued our way north-east to Taber, where there is a large lake visible from the highway. A short track leads to a point which overlooks a small island used by American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, gulls (California, Franklin's and Ring-billed) for breeding. The lake was alive with birds, Common and Black Terns quartered over the heads of Western, Red-necked and Eared Grebes, and wide variety of ducks, including a female Hooded Merganser.

From Taber we took the Route 3 almost to Bow Island before turning north on to Route 879. This quiet back road produced a small group of Pronghorn, an antelope and the second fastest land mammal in the world, and close to the river a male Baltimore Oriole flashed across the road. At Route 524, we turned east and every one was able to get a good view of a Vesper Sparrow and a sought after Burrowing Owl, before finally turning north again and following a dirt track to Suffield, then on to TC's quarter in Ralston for the night.

DAY 10 – 23 May 2005 (Brooks environs and Dinosaur Provincial Park)

Another early start and a few minutes birding around TC's quarter, which has a garden list of 115 species, produced a Least Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Mourning Dove, Pine Siskins and an unexpected Red-naped Sapsucker. The latter a garden first for TC.

One of the area's top local birders, Ben Velner, joined the team and we departed west along Route 1 towards Tillebrook, a wooded campsite and a bird magnet in the middle of the open prairie. On the way we saw a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes that were nesting close to Ralston, 2 Chestnut-collared Longspurs, a Coyote and a rather unexpected bird, a late Rough-legged Hawk perched on a telegraph pole.

At Tillebrook the team met more of Alberta's birdwatchers, who had held their Big Bird Day in the area the day before. Small birds were flitting through almost every tree from tiny Ruby-crowned Kinglets and warblers (Tennessee, Yellow and Yellow-rumped), to Baltimore Orioles, secretive Grey Catbirds and Brown Thrashers. On the ground Common Grackles, Mourning Doves, Swainson's Thrushes, Chipping and Clay-coloured Sparrows searched for food. Close to the entrance to the site Ben found another unexpected bird, a Townsend's Solitaire, which we had missed at Waterton.

From Tillebrook we moved on to Inter Lake, by the side of the west bound carriageway at Brooks. This small pond held some great birds with 4 species of tern (Black, Caspian, Common and Forster's), 7 species of duck (including 2 male Hooded Mergansers and 7 Bufflehead) and 3 species of grebe (Eared, Red-necked and Western).

Driving the short distance south from Brooks to Kinbrook Island Provincial Park we passed the nest of a Ferruginous Hawk, with two adults present. At Kinbrook we searched the campsite trees, headed out part way along the causeway and covered the marsh area, finding 47 species including 2 gulls, 2 terns, 3 grebes (inc Horned), 7 waterfowl, American Coots, 3 flycatchers, 5 warblers (inc Blackpoll and Wilson's), 6 sparrows (inc Lincoln's), Grey Catbird, Baltimore Oriole and Western Tanager.

We then headed towards the south end of Newell Lake, with Black-necked Stilt and Wilson's Phalaropes en route. At Lake Newell we found a local speciality migrant, 12 Red knot accompanied by more than 100 Black-bellied Plovers.

The next stop was the lake at Kitzum and the neighbouring lakes west of Highway 36. At Kitzum there was a single flock of over 1,500 Black-bellied Plovers, which contained another 61 Red Knot and

a Ruddy Turnstone. Also at the site a Ferruginous Hawk, Northern Harrier, Wilson's Phalaropes, Spotted Sandpipers, Willets, a Killdeer and two very visible American Bitterns, either courting or fighting. As we arrived at the western ponds the weather and light started to deteriorate. In spite of this we still managed to find some interesting birds, including 2 Black-crowned Night-Heron, 6 waterfowl, 9 waders (inc Baird's Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and a Dowitcher sp), 3 Bonaparte's Gulls and a White-tailed Jack-Rabbit.

In the late afternoon the team headed north past Duchess to the Dinosaur Provincial Park (DPP), finding 2 Long-billed Curlews at the Duchess Dam. DPP is an important site for dinosaur remains, for which it has been declared a World Heritage Site, and a great example of the North American Badlands. On this occasion we concentrated our efforts on the campsite area Cottonwood trees, which can be good for migrants. The poor weather had affected the passage and there were few birds apart from the sparrows (Chipping, Clay-coloured, House, Lark and Vesper) and one of the local specialities that we could hear, a Rock Wren. It was not until we had departed the park and were heading back towards Patricia that we saw one of the more spectacular local birds, 2 Prairie Falcons hunting over the fields.

Continuing to Highway 884 and then south towards Suffield Base and Ralston, the team pulled over on to a deserted track on TC's patch and found a male McCown's Longspur amongst the Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Vesper Sparrows and Horned Larks. Just north of the Base another Prairie Falcon flew across the road and circled briefly before disappearing.

DAY 11 – 24 May 2005 (Manyberries, Pokowki and Suffield)

In the early morning the team met up with Ben Velner again and went south of Medicine Hat to the Manyberries area, where some of the best patches of Alberta prairie remain. As soon as we arrived at the area we found Pronghorns and an American Badger. Our goal was to find a Sage Grouse, which was always going to be difficult as there are few and the leks were over. We found several of the other local birds as we drove closer to a traditional lek site, including displaying Sharp-tailed Grouse, Ferruginous Hawks, Marbled Godwits, Willet, Sprague's Pipit and Mountain Bluebirds. At the site we were surprised by the good number of Brewer's Sparrows in the area, another local species, and, as if to order, four large male Sage Grouse flew into the lek site. The birds remained for a few minutes, then flew towards the vehicles, before doubling back and flying away from us. Once again our luck had held out and we had been treated to a fantastic sight of these magnificent birds. With so much success it was time to move on to another important local site, Pokowki Lake.

En route to Pokowki we found a Loggerhead Shrike close to the road, as well as 3 Great Horned Owls and 3 more Ferruginous Hawks. At Pokowki the weather was windy and cold. The low water levels had concentrated the waterfowl and some of the waders quite close to Highway 885. Soras could be heard on both sides of the highway but only one showed itself. A White-faced Ibis flew in from the west but dropped out of sight before everyone could get on to it and despite our efforts it could not be relocated. A more obliging Forster's Tern crossed the highway several times and gave good views of its wing plumage. The team moved to the reservoir and marsh to the west and found better numbers of waders, including Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, a Short-billed Dowitcher amongst a group of Dowitchers sps, a Dunlin which is a local rarity, Semi-palmated Plovers and American Avocets. The team also found several gulls, Black Terns, blackbirds, an American Bittern and a Black-crowned Night-Heron.

In the late afternoon the team returned to Medicine Hat and then on to the sewage lagoon at Suffield village. This little site is often good for close views of common species and a regular site for migrating American (Buff-bellied) Pipit. Unfortunately only DP was able to get on to the expedition's only American Pipit. The remainder had to make do with several duck species, blackbirds, Killdeer, Marsh Wren, Sora and Savannah Sparrows.

DAY 12 – 25 May 2005 (Medicine Hat environs and Cypress Hills)

Another early morning meeting with Ben Velner and a dawn chorus at Police Point Park in the city of Medicine Hat. This is probably the most watched area in the region and visited almost daily by Ben. The group spent quite a long time trying to glimpse a Yellow-breasted Chat and although two were

heard, neither bird was prepared to come out of the dense bushes. Later in the morning an early Common Nighthawk flew over the park. Of the 52 species that we found at the site in a couple hours, the highlights included: American White Pelicans, 4 tern species (Black, Caspian, Common and Forster's), a Broad-winged Hawk mobbing a Great Horned Owl, 28 Cedar Waxwing, 3 Baltimore Orioles, House Wrens, Least flycatchers and 2 White-tailed Deer.

Ben bid farewell to the team and we moved on to the West Ridge in Medicine Hat. Recent tree clearance at the site had removed the trees formerly used by a Provincial rarity, the Indigo Bunting. Sadly the birds could not be located. The few birds that were found included a Lazuli Bunting, 2 House Finches, a Brown Thrasher, Yellow Warbler and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

The latter part of the morning and early afternoon were spent in the Alberta part of the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, an unglaciated plateau of boreal foothills surrounded by grassland, less than one hour from Medicine Hat. By now many in the team were starting to feel the accumulative effect of sleep deprivation and the pace started to slow after ME started enquiring about ebay details to auction his telescope and tripod. As a result we concentrated on the main sites in the park. The two lakes, Elkwater Lake and Reesor Reservoir, produced most of the commoner duck and gull species, as well as Common Loon, Ospreys, Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans. 5 Mountain Bluebirds were found close to the nest boxes along the road between the two lakes. The campsite beyond Reesor Reservoir held several passerine species, including a pair of American Redstarts, at least 2 'Pink-sided' Dark-eyed Juncos, 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 3 Black-capped Chickadees and 3 Pine Siskins.

It was late afternoon by the time the team arrived at Medicine Hat's Sparrow Trail, as it is known locally and on the internet, on the outskirts of the city. This dirt track through farmland and various grass types has produced more than 10 species of sparrows in a single day for some lucky observers. Early morning would have been ideal but there are only so many mornings in a two week expedition. On this trip we found 5 species of sparrow including the local Grasshopper Sparrow, plus Brewer's, Clay-coloured, Savannah and Vesper. 2 Grey Partridges were also at the site.

The team headed back to Ralston via the Spring Box Road, which forms the southern boundary of the Suffield Training Area. Many sparrows, larks and longspurs could be seen along the fence wires and tracks. A pair of Ferruginous Hawks nesting close to the road gave good views and 3 Common Nighthawks gave poor views from the rear as they flew north-west.

The final stop of the day was a return visit to the Burrowing Owl nest site on Highway 524, south of Suffield. One bird was out in the open, allowing everyone the time to have a good look at this great little owl.

DAY 13 – 26 May 2005 (Ralston to Cold Lake)

An early departure from Ralston saw the team, less PA who returned to Germany, heading virtually 300 miles due north to Cold Lake. The drive produced a good variety of species from the roadside, with many ducks, waders, hawks, Northern Harriers, Raven, American Crows, Black-billed Magpies, swallows, larks, sparrows, blackbirds, cowbirds, meadowlarks, Pronghorns and Mule Deer. Highlights included several Sharp-tailed Grouse, a Loggerhead Shrike and 4 Upland Sandpipers.

Three stops en route, at Gooseberry Lake, the junction of Highways 41/600 and Czar, produced some excellent waders. More than 4,000 waders were at Gooseberry Lake, a large alkaline lake between Consort and Czar. This included 2,000 plus Semi-palmated Sandpipers, 1,000 plus Baird's Sandpiper, 100 plus phalaropes of which most were Wilson's but at least 5 were Red-necked, 50 plus American Avocets, at least 5 Pectoral Sandpipers. At the junction of Highways 41 and 600 the alkaline lake was covered in more than 1,000 Red-necked Phalaropes, with several sandpipers along the shoreline (2 Baird's, 1 Least, 8 Pectoral and 2 Semi-palmated).

The team arrived at Cold Lake mid afternoon and met local birder, Ted Hindmarch, who took the team straight to the town's small beach, to check the gull flock. Amongst the Ring-billed Gulls, an Immature American Herring Gull and, in the nearby gardens, 7 Purple Martins at a purpose built nest box.

We then moved west, stopping at the Twp Road 634 marsh and finding a Sora and Cooper's Hawk. Continuing west along Highway 55 we passed through Rat Lake Flats, picking up 14 Sandhill Cranes and 6 Greater White-fronted Geese. Around La Corey and Crane Lake area we visited several gardens. The first gave the team close views of a nesting Pileated Woodpecker and our first White-throated Sparrow. The second produced even more new birds with 3 totally unexpected Harris Sparrows, a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak. From the garden we could view a flock of waders, containing 8 American Golden Plover, 2 Semi-palmated Plover, a Killdeer, 2 Least Sandpipers and more than 20 Semi-palmated Sandpipers. The third garden had been a good site for Evening Grosbeaks but not this time, however, the team did get good views of a White-breasted Nuthatch, another White-throated Sparrow and more than 20 Chipping Sparrows.

The late afternoon was spent around Ethel Lake and the Primrose Highway. The fen at Ethel Lake is a well known local site for Yellow Rail, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow and Sedge Wren. Nelson's and Le Conte's Sparrows were seen well, as was a Sandhill Crane. A Sedge Wren was heard calling but could not be located. The Yellow Rails could be heard from at least 3 positions, two of which were within a few metres of the road. These birds call from an open area of the marsh, covered by an aquatic grass that lies close to the surface of the shallow water. A habitat that you would imagine should be relatively easy to see any bird as it moves around. Of course this is not the case, the Yellow Rail is an easy bird to hear and narrow down to one or two square meters of grass but the birds are well concealed and apparently able to move without disturbing the grass at all. TC watched the group with amusement, he had pursued a bird for 90 minutes in a tiny area of the marsh in 2004 and it was only when he headed for the road that a bird flew for 7 metres from his feet and disappeared again. That bird had been Ted's first Yellow Rail in 10 years of local birding! Although the birds had only just arrived at the site and therefore not thought to be breeding, no one wanted to distress the birds, instead the group contorted their bodies and telescopes to get a different angle of their patch of grass but these very vocal birds did not show. Travelling along the northern shore of Ethel Lake the team came across a Bald Eagle and an American Beaver. We then turned north and followed the Primrose Highway all the way to the boundary of the Canadian Forces Range. This flat area of various woodlands and ponds is full of birds and a great place to be at dawn. In the setting sun we were lucky to see a Moose do a u-turn back into the forest, 2 Solitary Sandpipers, 2 Spotted Sandpipers and hear a Hermit Thrush. Driving south, on our way to Cold Lake, we started to pass many White-tailed Deer and at 2245hrs TC collided with a large adult when it bolted from the darkness. The animal was fortunately dead from the impact but had caused a great deal of damage to the minibus' radiator and headlights. With the help of two local passers-by and a taxi, most of the team returned to the hotel while TC waited until 0130hrs to be recovered. Unfortunately the recovery truck also hit a large owl (Great Horned or Barred) before dropping TC at the hotel.

DAY 14 – 27 May 2005 (Cold Lake to Edmonton, via Elk Island National Park and Beaverhill Lake)

The last full day's birding was full of potential, with help from Richard Klauke and Ted Hindmarch, the area's top birdwatchers. TC met the team, Richard and Ted for breakfast at 0530hrs and briefed everyone on the transport problem. Richard and Ted generously offered to take the team out for the morning. NT volunteered to help TC with the minibus in the meantime.

By noon the team had added a long list of birds, or second sightings, to the expedition account, including: Ruddy Turnstone, Boreal Chickadee, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, vireos (Blue-headed, Philadelphia and Red-eyed) and warblers (Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Cape-May, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia and Palm). TC and NT had managed to acquire a replacement minibus and, having thanked Richard and Ted for their invaluable help, the team headed west towards Edmonton.

Our first short stop was to return to one of the gardens that we had visit the day before, in the hope of seeing the Evening Grosbeaks. The Grosbeaks remained elusive, however, we were able to hear Ovenbirds calling and see another White-breasted Nuthatch and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, plus a 'Slate-coloured' Dark-eyed Junco.

Our next stop was the Elk Island National Park, where we had good views of both American Bison subspecies (Plains Bison and Wood Buffalo), American Beaver, Common Goldeneye, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers. We then explored two flat farmland areas west and south of nearby Beaverhill Lake. At the former, around Twp Road 520, we located a high flying flock of over 300 plovers, probably American Golden but could not make out any Buff-breasted Sandpipers amongst them. At the latter site, around Amisk Creek, we tolerated the blizzard of mosquitoes to identify a Stilt Sandpiper thanks to keen eyed ME and a Short-billed Dowitcher amongst the ducks, waders and blackbirds.

DAY 15 – 28 May 2005 (Edmonton to Calgary)

With all of the hard work done, the last morning was to be a morning to experience just a small number of birds that can be very difficult to see if you do not have the local knowledge and this morning we would be going out with Edmonton's 'OWLER 1' himself, Ray Cromie and his banding friend Trevor. Ray is a dedicated owl bander and conservationist. On a warm, sunny morning with Ray and Trevor, the team were given the opportunity to handle Great Grey and Northern Saw-whet Owl owlets and to hand feed a wild female Hawk Owl. A real privilege for everyone! Add to that a female Northern Goshawk, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, more Eastern Phoebes, hummingbirds and 35 American Golden Plovers, and we had finished our expedition on a high note and could relax on our way to Calgary Airport and the business class flight to London.

Conclusion

The 15 days of birding had taken the team through the most diverse habitats in Western Canada and produced a list of bird sightings that had exceeded all predictions. Not everything had gone strictly to plan, the weather had been frequently against the group, especially on the pelagic trip and there had been a few omissions from the list which might surprise some (Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs and Golden-crowned Kinglet), while we had remarkable good fortune at other times (Grizzly Bear, Trumpeter Swans, Hawk Owls, Sage Grouse, Wandering Tattler, etc). All in all the team saw 267 bird species, heard a further 5 species, and saw 31 mammal species in two weeks. Ideally this expedition would have taken place over 3 weeks, if participants were able to secure the time away from work, and TC put the team under great pressure and at times a relentless pace to achieve so much in only two weeks. The expedition did prove that this region of North America, which is often ignored by British birdwatchers, can be exciting and rewarding.

EX WESTERN TANAGER BIRD AND MAMMAL LISTS

Notes:

The following points should be noted:

H = Heard (with the number of birds following when recorded).

+ = More than or at least

c = Circa

NC = Not Counted

P = Possible (with the number of birds following)

EX WESTERN TANAGER BIRD LIST

SER	NAME	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	Pacific Loon <i>Gavia pacifica</i>		361+	1	30+	27+	20+									
2	Yellow-billed Loon <i>Gavia adamsii</i>				P1											
3	Common Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	1	2		4+	13+			1	2			1			
4	Pied-billed Grebe <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	1	3						2						1	
5	Horned Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	5	2								1	2				
6	Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	2	2		1	1			3	5	6		2		4	
7	Eared Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	3								4	5	20+				
8	Western Grebe <i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	1	150+							2	4					
9	Clark's Grebe <i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>		1or2													
10	Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>				60+	72+										
11	American White Pelican <i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>									3			11			
12	Double-crested Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>			2						44+	3		7			
13	Brandt's Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>					20+										
14	Pelagic Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>		2	7	c10	11+	2									
15	American Bittern <i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>										2	1				
16	Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	2	504+	4			2	1					5		1	
17	Black-crowned Night-Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>										2	2				
18	White-faced Ibis <i>Plegadis chihi</i>											1				
19	Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>		2	3	3											
20	Greater White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons</i>													6		
21	Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	15+	21+	12+			c20	46+	10+	30+	c21	20+	12	71+	32+	

SER	NAME	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
22	Brant <i>Branta bernicla</i>				P15	1										
23	Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>			10+												
24	Trumpeter Swan <i>Cygnus buccinator</i>	4														
25	Wood Duck <i>Aix sponsa</i>		4			1		6					1			
26	Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	5	20							10+	115+	NC	2	20	2	
27	American Wigeon <i>Anas americana</i>	3	1								9		4	12	NC	
28	Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	3	20+	22+		12	8	11	2	14+	14	NC	6	9		
29	Blue-winged Teal <i>Anas discors</i>	6	1							7+	11	NC		16	10+	
30	Cinnamon Teal <i>Anas cyanoptera</i>		1						1	6+	6	10+				
31	Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	1	1			1				20+		NC		22	NC	
32	Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>									20+	1	NC		13		
33	Green-winged Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>		1			1			2			NC	2		2	
34	Canvasback <i>Aythya valisineria</i>	3								4				8	2	
35	Redhead <i>Aythya americana</i>	3							2	3	13		2	8	1	
36	Ring-necked Duck <i>Aythya collaris</i>	19	1					2	5	11+		5+	c16		6	
37	Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>		4			4										
38	Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i>	10	4						4	10+		c10	4	25		
39	Harlequin Duck <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	7		4to9	1											
40	Surf Scoter <i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>		200+	c30	1+	c16										
41	White-winged Scoter <i>Melanitta fusca</i>		c20	1	25+											
42	Black Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>		1		2+											
43	Bufflehead <i>Bucephala albeola</i>	28	20+								7		4	7	3	
44	Common Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	3												1	1	
45	Barrow's Goldeneye <i>Bucephala islandica</i>	3							5	1						
46	Hooded Merganser <i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>								1	1	2					
47	Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>			8												
48	Common Merganser <i>Mergus merganser</i>	2	6				2	2							1	
49	Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	1								1	5	13+	2	3		
50	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	5	4	1	1	1		8		2			2	3		
51	Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>		13	2	4	7								1	1	
52	Northern Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>						5	1			1	1		4		
53	Sharp-shinned Hawk <i>Accipiter striatus</i>				1											
54	Cooper's Hawk <i>Accipiter cooperii</i>			1										1		
55	Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>															1
56	Broad-winged Hawk <i>Buteo platypterus</i>									1			1			

SER	NAME	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
57	Swainson's Hawk <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>									1	3			5		
58	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	1	2	1			1	1	1	1	2		2	9		
59	Ferruginous Hawk <i>Buteo regalis</i>										3	6	3	1		
60	Rough-legged Hawk <i>Buteo lagopus</i>										1					
61	Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>							2	1							
62	American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	4+	1				2	1	6		1		3		1	
63	Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>									1				1		
64	Prairie Falcon <i>Falco mexicanus</i>										3					
65	Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>									2			2	1	2	
66	Ring-necked Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		5				1			2	4		1			
67	Ruffed Grouse <i>Bonasa umbellus</i>				1					1H						
68	Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>											4				
69	Blue Grouse <i>Dendragapus obscurus</i>				1											
70	Sharp-tailed Grouse <i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>											c15		3		
71	California Quail <i>Callipepla californica</i>			1				5								
72	Yellow Rail <i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i>													3H		
73	Sora <i>Porzana carolina</i>							2H		1	1H	5		2		
74	American Coot <i>Fulica americana</i>	2	20+						2	7+	c25	15+		5		
75	Sandhill Crane <i>Grus canadensis</i>									2				15		
76	Black-bellied Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>					2				3	1600+	8				
77	American Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i>													8	300+	35
78	Semi-palmated Plover <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>				2							2		2		
79	Killdeer <i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	1	1			1	3	1	2	2	5	6	2	2	1	1
80	Black Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus bachmani</i>		1	9	2	1										
81	Black-necked Stilt <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>									2	8					
82	American Avocet <i>Recurvirostra americana</i>									20+	11	10+		52+	1	
83	Solitary Sandpiper <i>Tringa solitaria</i>													2	1	
84	Willet <i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>									2	7	4	2	1		
85	Wandering Tattler <i>Heteroscelus incanus</i>					6										
86	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i>		1	1	1	1		2	4	5	5	2	4	2	2	
87	Upland Sandpiper <i>Bartramia longicauda</i>													4		
88	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>					42				7						
89	Long-billed Curlew <i>Numenius americanus</i>							1			2		1	2		
90	Marbled Godwit <i>Limosa fedoa</i>									4+	1	11				
91	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>										1				3	

SER	NAME	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
92	Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>										73					
93	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>				110+									P		
94	Semi-palmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>											25+		2000+		
95	Western Sandpiper <i>Calidris mauri</i>					11										
96	Least Sandpiper <i>Calidris minutilla</i>										1			3		
97	Baird's Sandpiper <i>Calidris bairdii</i>										8			1000+		
98	Pectoral Sandpiper <i>Calidris melanotos</i>													13+	1	
99	Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>				9							1				
100	Stilt Sandpiper <i>Micropalama himantopus</i>														1	
101	Short-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus griseus</i>											1			1	
102	Long-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>					1										
102a	Dowitcher sp <i>Limnodromus sp</i>									2	1	7				
103	Wilson's Snipe <i>Gallinago delicata</i>							4		2	3				1	
104	Wilson's Phalarope <i>Steganopus tricolor</i>	8									16	12+		105+	1	
105	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>											P2		1000+		
106	Sabine's Gull <i>Xema sabini</i>				1											
107	Franklin's Gull <i>Larus pipixcan</i>									7+	3	10+	3			
108	Bonaparte's Gull <i>Larus philadelphia</i>					1	8				3				2	
109	Mew Gull <i>Larus canus</i>		6	1												
110	Ring-billed Gull <i>Larus delawarensis</i>		50+							20+	16	5+	30+	10+		
111	California Gull <i>Larus californicus</i>		1							140+			1			
112	American Herring Gull <i>Larus smithsonianus</i>													1		
113	Western Gull <i>Larus occidentalis</i>				1	7										
114	Glaucous-winged Gull <i>Larus glaucescens</i>		21+	160+	30+	83+	70+									
115	Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i>			9	2						1		1			
116	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>						7			4	4		2			
117	Forster's Tern <i>Sterna forsteri</i>										1	1or2	1		1	
118	Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>								30+	37+	4	10+	3	12	c10	
119	Common Murre <i>Uria aalge</i>		2	1	25+	17	4									
120	Pigeon Guillemot <i>Cephus columba</i>		c15	2	3+	20+										
121	Marbled Murrelet <i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>			1	8+	17										
122	Rhinoceros Auklet <i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>		20+	71+	2+	3	1									
123	Band-tailed Pigeon <i>Columba fasciata</i>			1	9	3										
124	Eurasian Collared/Barbary Dove <i>Streptopelia sp</i>			1?												
125	Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>							13	4		8		9			

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126	Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>				2				6		2	4	1			
127	Northern Hawk Owl <i>Surnia ulula</i>	1														3
128	Northern Pygmy-Owl <i>Glaucidium gnoma</i>	1H			1											
129	Burrowing Owl <i>Athene cinicularia</i>									1			1			
130	Great Grey Owl <i>Strix nebulosa</i>															3
131	Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>								1							
132	Northern Saw-whet Owl <i>Aegolius acadicus</i>															3
133	Common Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles minor</i>												3			
134	Common Poorwill <i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>						1									
135	Vaux's Swift <i>Chaetura vauxi</i>						c24			2						
136	White-throated Swift <i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>							3+								
137	Ruby-throated Hummingbird <i>Archilochus colubris</i>													1	1	2
138	Black-chinned Hummingbird <i>Archilochus alexandri</i>							2								
139	Anna's Hummingbird <i>Calypte anna</i>		3	2			1	1								
140	Calliope Hummingbird <i>Stellula calliope</i>							10+								
141	Rufous Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	2		1	2	1		1								
142	Belted Kingfisher <i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	1	1	2				1	1				1			
143	Lewis' Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes lewis</i>							2	3							
144	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>														2	
145	Red-naped Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>	1						1	1	1	1					
146	Red-breasted Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus ruber</i>			3	1											
147	Williamson's Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i>								2							
148	Downy Woodpecker <i>Picoides pubescens</i>		1or2						2		1		3		1	1
149	Hairy Woodpecker <i>Picoides villosus</i>	1						2							4	1
150	Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	2		1	1		2	6	4		5		2			
151	Pileated Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>			1					1H					1		
152	Olive-sided Flycatcher <i>Contopus cooperi</i>			1or2	1to2											
153	Western Wood-pewee <i>Contopus sordidulus</i>		1						2					1	1	2
154	Least Flycatcher <i>Empidonax minimus</i>										4		4	5		
155	Hammond's Flycatcher <i>Empidonax hammondii</i>			1					1							
156	Dusky Flycatcher <i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>								1							
157	Grey Flycatcher <i>Empidonax wrightii</i>							4								
158	Pacific-slope Flycatcher <i>Empidonax difficilis</i>				2	1										
159	Eastern Phoebe <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>														2	2
160	Say's Phoebe <i>Sayornis saya</i>							1	2							

[illegible]

SER	NAME	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
195	House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>							1			1		9			
196	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			4+	2					4+						
197	Sedge Wren <i>Cistothorus platensis</i>													1H		
198	Marsh Wren <i>Cistothorus palustris</i>		4				1	4	4	2	6	8+				
199	American Dipper <i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>			1												
200	Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Regulus calendula</i>							1	1	1	1		5			1
201	Western Bluebird <i>Sialia mexicana</i>							6	1							
202	Mountain Bluebird <i>Sialia currucoides</i>	2										1	8	5		
203	Townsend's Solitaire <i>Myadestes townsendi</i>										1					
204	Swainson's Thrush <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>			3	2		1				10+	1		2		
205	Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>								1					1H		
206	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	5	4	9	15+	2	6	3	7		44+		14+	4	2	2
207	Varied Thrush <i>Ixoreus naevius</i>	2				1			1	4						
208	Grey Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>										2					
209	Brown Thrasher <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>										2	2	3			
210	European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		20+				3	2			4		17	4	1	
211	American Pipit <i>Anthus rubescens</i>											1				
212	Sprague's Pipit <i>Anthus spragueii</i>											4		1		
213	Cedar Waxwing <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>		9					1					10			
214	Tennessee Warbler <i>Vermivora peregrina</i>										1				1	
215	Orange-crowned Warbler <i>Vermivora celata</i>			3	1			1	2					1		
216	Yellow Warbler <i>Dendroica petechia</i>		1	1		1		4			4	1	7	3	2	
217	Chestnut-sided Warbler <i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i>														1	
218	Magnolia Warbler <i>Dendroica magnolia</i>														3	
219	Cape May Warbler <i>Dendroica tigrina</i>														2	
220	Yellow-rumped Warbler <i>Dendroica coronata</i>							1	1	1	2		2	11	5	
220a	Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler <i>D. c. coronata</i>	1														
220b	Yellow-rumped (Audubon) Warbler <i>D. c. auduboni</i>	1							1							
221	Townsend's Warbler <i>Dendroica townsendi</i>			3		H	1	1	1	1						
222	Black-throated Green Warbler <i>Dendroica virens</i>														1	
223	Blackburnian Warbler <i>Dendroica fusca</i>														3	
224	Palm Warbler <i>Dendroica palmarum</i>														1	
225	Blackpoll Warbler <i>Dendroica striata</i>										1				5	
226	Black-and-white Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>														4	
227	American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>												2		3	

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228	Ovenbird <i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>														2H	1H
229	Northern Waterthrush <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>													P1		
230	MacGillivray's Warbler <i>Oporornis tolmiei</i>			4+	2				1							
231	Common Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>		2							1	4					
232	Wilson's Warbler <i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>			1							1					
233	Yellow-breasted Chat <i>Icteria virens</i>												2H			
234	Western Tanager <i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>			22				3			2				1	
235	Spotted Towhee <i>Pipilo maculatus</i>		2	5	3+			1	2				2			
236	Chipping Sparrow <i>Spizella passerina</i>			1				1	2	3	49+		4	25+	9	2
237	Clay-coloured Sparrow <i>Spizella pallida</i>										15		6	1		1
238	Brewer's Sparrow <i>Spizella breweri</i>											12+	1or2			
239	Vesper Sparrow <i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>								1	1	3	2	8	7		
240	Lark Sparrow <i>Chondestes grammacus</i>							2	1		10		1			
241	Savannah Sparrow <i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>			4		2	1	12+			1	4	4	1		
242	Grasshopper Sparrow <i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>												1			
243	Le Conte's Sparrow <i>Ammodramus leconteii</i>													2		
244	Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow <i>Ammodramus nelsoni</i>													1		
245	Fox Sparrow <i>Passerella iliaca</i>				1	1										
246	Song Sparrow <i>Melospiza melodia</i>		1	2				3		1	2			1		
247	Lincoln's Sparrow <i>Melospiza lincolni</i>										1					
248	White-throated Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>													3	1	
249	Harris's Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia querula</i>													3		
250	White-crowned Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>		1	2	1								1			
251	Golden-crowned Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia atricapilla</i>			4												
252	Dark-eyed Junco <i>Junco hyemalis</i>	1														
252a	Dark-eyed (Slate-coloured) Junco <i>J. h. hyemalis</i>														1	
252b	Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco <i>J. h. oreganus</i>								4							
252c	Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco <i>J. h. mearnsi</i>												2to3			
253	McCown's Longspur <i>Calcarius mccownii</i>										1					
254	Lapland Longspur <i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>					1										
255	Chestnut-collared Longspur <i>Calcarius ornatus</i>										7	2		3		
256	Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>													1		1
257	Black-headed Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>		2	1	1			2								
258	Lazuli Bunting <i>Passerina amoena</i>							2					1			
259	Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>							7								

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15	Common Porcupine <i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	2														
16	Coyote <i>Canis latrans</i>							1			1					
17	Red Fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>								1							
18	Black Bear <i>Ursus americanus</i>					1	1	1	1							
19	Grizzly Bear <i>Ursus arctos</i>	3														
20	Common Raccoon <i>Procyon lotor</i>					1										
21	Northern (Steller's) Sea Lion <i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>					1										
22	California Sea Lion <i>Zalophus californianus</i>		2													
23	Sea Lion sp <i>Otariidae sp</i>				1											
24	Pacific Harbour Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>		30+			2										
25	American Badger <i>Taxidea taxus</i>											1				
26	Sea Otter <i>Enhydra lutris</i>					2										
27	Bobcat <i>Lynx rufus</i>								P1							
28	Mule Deer <i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>													5		
28a	Mule (Black-tailed) Deer <i>O. h. columbianus</i>				1		1									
29	White-tailed Deer <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	8						1					2	30+		
30	Moose <i>Alces alces</i>									1				1		
31	Pronghorn <i>Antilocapra americana</i>									C10	3	3		13		
32a	American Bison (Plains Bison) <i>Bos bison bison</i>														15+	
32b	American Bison (Wood Buffalo) <i>B b athabasca</i>														40+	
33	Bighorn Sheep <i>Ovis canadensis</i>	30+														
34	Harbour Porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>					1										

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