

B.C. Field Ornithologists Bird Records Committee Report for 2021

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Abstract: In 2021, the British Columbia Bird Records Committee reached decisions on 22 records. Of these records, 18 were accepted to the Main List, and 4 were not accepted. Five new species, Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*), Gray-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*), Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*), Common Pochard (*Aythyaferina*) and Bell's Vireo (*Vireobelli*) were added to the Main List. The records reviewed involved birds seen between 1991 and 2021. The provincial checklist now stands at 534 species on the Main List, with an additional 10 species on the Provisional List.

Keywords: rare bird reports, British Columbia, checklist, Bird Records Committee

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This is the ninth annual report of the B.C. Bird Records Committee (BRC or committee) since its re-instatement in 2013. Details on the committee's mandate, history, operating guidelines, and past decisions can be found in previous annual reports (*e.g.* Craig 2021; Hentze 2015, 2020) and on the BCFO website. Two committee members, Guy Monty and Catherine Craig, reached their term limits and rotated off the committee in early 2021. Prior to their departure, a request for applications for committee membership was posted to the BCFO website and regional listservs. After ratification by the BCFO Board of Directors, Jeremy Gatten and Joachim Bertrands became members of the committee. Committee members continuing from the previous year included Cathy Antoniazzi, David Bradley, Dianne Cooper, Ian Cruickshank and Marc Phinney. Catherine Craig remained Chair in an advisory role throughout 2021, despite having officially left the committee, until a new Chair had been elected.

In total, the committee reached decisions on 22 records in 2021. These included 18 accepted to the Main List, and four not accepted due to identification not being established. Accepted records included five new species added to the Main List: Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*), Gray-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*), Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*), Common Pochard (*Aythyaferina*) and Bell's Vireo (*Vireobelli*). Details on all these records are provided below. Submitted records involved observations from 1991 to 2021.

The committee periodically updates its database of all reviewed records, which is posted online at the BCFO website. The committee would greatly appreciate receiving

submissions for any records, past or present, not in this database. Up-to-date details on committee membership, the Review List, checklist, rare bird report form, committee decisions, photos of many of these records, and other information can be accessed from the BRC section of the BCFO website (<http://www.bcfo.ca>).

The following is an account of all records reviewed and adjudicated since the previous report. Bird species are listed taxonomically and with naming following the seventh edition and supplements of the American Ornithological Society (AOS) Checklist of North American and Middle American Birds (Chesser *et al.* 2021). Provincial firsts and new additions to the Main List are written out in uppercase. The number in brackets following the species name refers to the unique Bird Records Committee Number assigned to the record. Primary finders/observers are listed for accepted records only and are designated by (†). If more than one observer is listed, an asterisk (*) indicates those who submitted details. In some cases, an observer other than the original finder submitted a report or supplemental evidence (*e.g.* photographs). Although the committee appreciates receiving reports from the original finder(s), details from subsequent observers are also encouraged and welcomed. If photos (ph), video (v), or sound recordings (so) were provided, that is also noted after the observer's initials. Descriptions of records are based on comments and discussion provided from individual committee members during official committee business. For many records, an attempt is made to provide brief context or background information on provincial occurrence and vagrancy patterns.

Bird Records Committee Decisions

Accepted Records

Main List

Accepted records are ones for which the committee has received documentation that conclusively supports the identification. In addition, accepted records are believed to pertain to wild birds that arrived in British Columbia without the active intervention of humans. Records that are provincial firsts are accepted to the Main List if they are accompanied by physical evidence (*i.e.* photograph, video recording, sound recording, or specimen). Records of non-firsts may be accepted without physical evidence if the submitted notes are detailed enough to eliminate other species.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) 2021–11

*Koksilah River, Cowichan Bay — 12 July 2021—
Ken Thorne†(ph), Len Van Driel†*

This record constitutes the first record for British Columbia. The bird was well photographed, verifying identification and location. The bird was only observed in the morning and was never relocated despite multiple observers looking that evening and subsequent days.

Tricolored Heron reaches relatively far north on the east coast of North America, with breeding records north to southern Maine, yet this pattern does not mirror itself in the west. It is a regular vagrant in southern California, but the species occurs primarily south of the Mexican border (Frederick 2020). There are few records north of San Francisco, yet there is a surprising record from southern Alaska in 1985 (Gibson *et al.* 2013).

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) (2021-02) and (2021-14)

*Duck Lake, Creston — 11 May 2020 — Paul Foth†(ph), Marc-Andre Beaucher (ph)
K'ootz/Khutze Conservancy, Central Coast — 02–04
May 2021 — Carol and Doug Stewart†(ph)*

The first report consisted of a description and photos of a sighting of 16 *Plegadis* ibises. The initial photos submitted were not sufficient to identify the birds to species level. Later, more photos were submitted by other observers on eBird that showed the birds to be White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) (eBird 2022).

The second record is one of a single bird photographed extensively and described in detail, with no doubt about identification. This record was from far west in the province, which seems to have become an increasingly common occurrence in recent years.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) is yet unrecorded in the province, though there are records from Washington (WBRC 2021), Montana (MBRC 2012), and Alberta (eBird 2022). It is expected to eventually occur in the province and should be considered for any ibis sighting here, though hybrids with White-faced Ibis are known so cautious identifications are warranted.

COMMON POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*) 2021-19

*Summit Park, Victoria — 08–27 November 2020 —
Jody Wells†, Les Peterson†, Michael Force (ph)*

This record represents the first accepted record for Canada. There is no doubt about the identification of this bird, with head shape, bill pattern and colouration of upperparts (light grey) being diagnostic for a male Common Pochard. Provenance is more of a concern with waterfowl in general, but nothing indicated this bird had ever lived part of its life in captivity (*i.e.*, no bands, no damage to wing tips and wild behaviour, occurring in the company of other *Aythya* ducks). November is a typical month for Eurasian vagrants to show up in B.C., and this bird left well before the winter ended. All seems to line up for a credible vagrant. The few North American records outside Alaska are mostly from California, indicating at least some pattern of vagrancy on the west coast, albeit based on few records (Howell *et al.* 2014; eBird 2022). One record from Quebec was not accepted due to questions around provenance yet is treated as valid in Howell *et al.* (2014). In addition, a female Common Pochard reported during the winter of 2020-2021 in Parksville has not yet been submitted to or evaluated by the BRC.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) (2021-03) and (2021-16)

*Creston — 7–17 September 2020 — Paul Foth†(ph) (2)
Kelowna — 25 July 2020 — Nick Swan†, Michael
Force (ph)*

Both records conform to most Ferruginous Hawk sightings in the province, being from summer/fall and from the southern interior. The first one is of two immature birds, seen well in flight and perched. The Creston Valley is arguably becoming the prime location to encounter this species within B.C. The second one is of a well documented immature seen in appropriate habitat in Kelowna. Satellite tracking of juvenile and adult Ferruginous Hawks from Washington has shown that the Rocky Mountains are not a strong barrier to dispersal for this species, and individuals of all ages crossed between Washington and Alberta via various routes through southeastern British Columbia (Watson 2003). This indicates that Ferruginous Hawk occurrence in the province may be due to multiple factors, including spring overshoots or potentially occa-

sionally nesting birds in the spring/summer (notably in the Okanagan or Nicola regions), and dispersal to fall and winter ranges in the autumn through the Kootenays.

GRAY-TAILED TATTLER (*Tringa brevipes*) 2021-18

Minette Bay, Kitimat – 23-26 June 2020 - Joachim Bertrands† (ph, so), Christian Kelly†

This was a well documented first record for Canada found in early summer in Kitimat. Many photographs showed all differentiating features between Gray-tailed and the very similar Wandering Tattler, the latter being the regular tattler in the province's coastal regions. Sound recordings provided final proof of this bird being *T. brevipes* (Bertrands and Kelly 2021; this volume). Records outside Alaska remain very rare, with only eight records in the lower 48 states, additional to the Kitimat bird.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) 2021-22

Panama Flats, Saanich — 05–09 July 2021 — Geoffrey Newell†(ph)

This record came during the middle of summer, a time when unexpected shorebirds occasionally show up. Good photos were obtained showing all necessary characteristics including the greenish legs, olive upperparts with sparse white spotting, distinct white supercilium and short bill. The typical flight call was heard occasionally, as the bird travelled between different ponds in the area it was staying.

Wood Sandpiper remains an extremely rare vagrant in all of North America, with records scattered along both coasts, likely due to its Eurasian-wide distribution. Mid-summer is a time when few observers are active but extremely rare shorebirds have shown up in the past, potentially due to failed breeding elsewhere.

Red-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa brevirostris*) 2021-05

Deep Bay, Vancouver Island — 27 September 2020 — Mark Wynja†(ph)

A spectacular and well documented record of a bird that was observed for less than an hour prior to taking off and disappearing inland, in a western direction. This Beringian endemic rarely strays outside of its usual range, the Bering Sea, with borders defined by the Aleutian Chain and neighbouring Chukchi Sea. Besides its rarity, the location (Deep Bay – Georgia Strait) is highly unusual for any kittiwake (*Rissa* sp.), as even Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) is rarely sighted. There are only a handful of records for the province, and few documented ones.

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) 2021-12

Bralorne — 10–16 June 2021 — Daryl Thompson†(ph)

This was a well documented record of a female that visited a feeder for multiple days in a row. The location was quite remarkable, being rather far from the U.S. border. This species has extended its range northwards over the past century (Koenig *et al.* 2020), and it occurs regularly to southern Washington. This species is known to wander, sometimes in response to food shortages on breeding grounds, and may be found far from its typical breeding habitat (Koenig *et al.* 2020). This record involved a female bird, as with most previous records in the province.

Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) 2021-04

Kelowna — 15 October 2020 — Michael Force†(ph)

This record again confirms this species as one of the most regular of the eastern vagrant warblers, both in spring and fall. The 2020 record was of an immature bird photographed in the observer's yard in Kelowna. The species has once been confirmed as breeding; a 1998 record is significant as it details an adult female feeding two fledglings and represents the only confirmed nesting in the province (Campbell *et al.* 2001). Its nearest regular breeding localities are in eastern Alberta.

Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*) 2021–10

Vernon — 30 October–26 November 2020 — Glen Goerzen†, Michael Force (ph)

Rare warblers in the fall have a tendency of remaining in a location longer than rare warblers found in the spring; a trait shared by this bird. The bird frequented the Polson Park Trail and boardwalk in Vernon for a prolonged time until at least late November. The bird was well documented and observed by many.

There are only a handful of records of this eastern warbler for the province. Its southeastern distribution in North America may account for the few and far between records in the Pacific Northwest, a tendency shared by some other warbler species of that same region.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) 2021-15

Elk Lake, Saanich — 10 February–20 March 2021 — Jody Wells†(ph)

A well documented bird that stuck around for quite some time, although at times very elusive and with many gaps during which it wasn't detected. Many conclusive photographs were taken, illustrating the prominent white

supercilium, distinct whitish malar stripe wrapping around brownish auriculars, pale-yellowish lower mandible, dark streaks on the chest and flanks, white belly, and reddish patch near the bend of wing and marginally on flanks. As is typical for the age of Eurasian vagrants occurring in B.C. (and indeed most vagrant birds anywhere), the bird appears to be a first-year bird based on the whitish tips to the greater coverts. This record fits nicely into a growing trend of records from the west coast of North America, with other records from Washington State (21 December 2004 to 14 March 2005) and Alaska (15-26 November 2011) (Howell *et al.* 2014). B.C.'s one and only other record was a returning bird that frequented a neighbourhood in Victoria during the winters of 2014-2016 (Hentze 2017). Birds on the west coast seem to be of the nominate, mainland Eurasia subspecies, contrary to the east where both the nominate and the darker race *coburni*, native to Iceland, may occur.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE (*Lanius collurio*) 2021-08

Powell River — 22–30 October 2020 — Iwan Van Veen†, Michael Force (ph)

This record constitutes the first for Canada and only the second ever in the ABA area, after a record on Gambell, Alaska in 2017. Found on the 22nd of October, it was initially dismissed as a Northern Shrike (*Lanius borealis*). The next day, the observer obtained better photographs, which lead him to believe this was another species. Due to the difficulty of identifying ‘Old World shrikes’, its identity was carefully assessed against similar species such as Brown Shrike (*L. cristatus*), Isabelline (*L. isabellinus*) and Red-tailed Shrike (*L. phoenicuroides*). Eventually, the combined plumage characteristics undoubtedly pointed towards Red-backed Shrike.

Red-backed Shrike breeds in Europe and western Asia, not regularly reaching farther east than Kazakhstan. The nonbreeding season is spent in southern Africa, making this one of the farthest travelling members of the *Lanius* genus.

BELL'S VIREO (*Vireo belli*) 2021-20

Island View Regional Park, Saanich — 06–21 September 2020 — Aziza Cooper†, Michael Force (ph)

This represents the first record for B.C. This individual was readily identified from other vireos by a combination of its typical song and plumage, including faint spectacles and wing bars. Although this bird arrived in the fall, it behaved as if it was spring and continuously sang for most of its stay. The yellow underparts and rather contrasting plumage in general make this more likely an eastern Bell's

Vireo (*Vireo belli belli*). However, drawing a solid conclusion on field observations alone make that solely a hypothesis, and we leave this bird unidentified to subspecies level.

Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) 2021-21

Kelowna — 19–23 December 2020 — Jesse Hannebauer†, Nathan Early†, Michael Force (ph)

The provided documentation clearly shows a male Lesser Goldfinch, supported by the black cap, large white bases to the primaries and described vocalisations. The species has been documented breeding in the southern Okanagan Valley, but records in the province remain rare, though increasing. Although described as a permanent resident on the Pacific coast north to southern Washington, this species has been expanding its breeding range northwards prior to making it into the province (Watt and Willoughby 2020).

Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) (2021–01) and (2021-09)

Darfield, Cariboo — 21–23 July 2020 — Jacob McBailey†(ph)

Revelstoke — 30 July–08 August 2020 — Darlene Cancelliere†(ph)

The first record consisted of an adult male Indigo Bunting which was seen well by multiple observers and observed singing in a grassy area off Hwy 5 in Darfield. It was found on 21 July and relocated on the 23rd. It wasn't found on any other dates.

The second record is one of a male observed in a grassy field just south of Revelstoke, associating with Lazuli Buntings (*Passerina amoena*). It remained on site for a week and was observed by multiple observers.

Campbell *et al.* (2001) report that most observations (to that publishing date) are of singing males present for only 1 or 2 days in June and July. Campbell *et al.* (2001) list one breeding record in the Province from Creston, and since that time additional breeding has been confirmed in the Southern Rocky Mountain Trench (Howie 2015). Nevertheless, it remains a rare bird in the province.

Non-accepted Records

Identification Not Established

The following reports are ones for which the documentation was inadequate to conclusively determine the species involved. It must be stated that by not accepting these records, the committee is not indicating that these sightings were necessarily misidentified. Although that may sometimes be the case; it is more frequent that the documentation submitted does not fully eliminate other species, even if they happen to be rarer than the one sub-

mitted. This may be due to incomplete submissions, or simply that important features of plumage or behaviour were not observed in the field. Names of observers are withheld from non-accepted reports.

Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*) 2021–07

Otter Point, Sooke — 21 November 2020

The combination of no photographic documentation, brevity of the observation, distance and optics involved, and insufficient description of the lighting conditions (east-bound towards the morning sun) warranted a conservative stance. Although this bird was described well in the notes, the observation time (less than 10 seconds) was deemed insufficient to carefully judge all characteristics on an actively migrating small Larid, and inconsistent with the elaborate description that was provided. Little Gull used to be of almost annual occurrence in B.C. (eBird 2022), but this trend has not persisted in more recent years.

Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) 2021–17

Deka Lake, Cariboo — 12 June 2021

This report lacks the critical identification details necessary to support the sighting as a Whooping Crane, including any mention of the long neck and legs. American White Pelican is a far more likely option that matches this description, as it sports long and broad wings in a similar combination of black and white colours. The location of the sighting also favours this species over the endangered Whooping Crane.

Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) 2021-13

Sechelt — 26 March 2021

The description lacked several significant identification points including the long barbs originating from the throat patch, the white upper breast and size references. Besides that, the species is known to hybridize with Anna's Hummingbird especially this far north in their range, with multiple examples having been observed/captured in the past, including recently at Colony Farm, Metro Vancouver (Vancouver Avian Research Center 2019).

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) 2021–06

Moss Rock Park, Victoria — 15 December 1991

Although the observer does mention a set of characters that fit a *Myiarchus* sp., species including Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) and Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) were not accounted for

in the description. Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) is a regular vagrant to the province, with many records in especially June and October, but none in December. The few extralimital records of Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) in the Pacific Northwest are from later in the fall and winter, indicating that this species should be considered as a realistic possibility for the Moss Rock Park *Myiarchus*, and therefore can't be identified to species level due to lack of conclusive features noted.

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