



- making British Columbia a safer place for birds -

SPRING/SUMMER 2016

"Return of the Osprey" Festival

Saturday July 23rd & Sunday July 24th 2016

~ please see page 8 for Festival Program ~

WBT Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia

Dedicated to the protection of wild birds and their habitats, on the principle that all wildlife must benefit

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Produced at Minerva House Telephone: 604 922 1550
DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION: September 1st 2016

WBT Fundraiser: Patricia M. Banning-Lover
Special Events/"Return of the Osprey"
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THE CONSERVATION AREA AT MAPLEWOOD FLATS

2645 Dollarton Highway, North Vancouver, BC V7H 1B1
(2 km. east of Second Narrows Bridge)

WBT Maplewood Office Telephone: 604 903 4471

Our trails are suitable for all ages and wheelchair accessible
(wheelchair accessible washrooms for physically challenged visitors
are available upon request)

Leashed dogs are allowed on the east side only

Please no dogs (leashed or unleashed) to special or regular events

REGULAR EVENTS 2016

(please see page six for details)

(meet at The Conservation Area Office - rain or shine)

WBT Bird Surveys

First Saturday of the month 8 am.—12.30 pm.

Last Saturday of the month 8 am.—12.30 pm.

AI's Saturday Nature Walks 2016

(please see page six for details)

Second Saturday of the month

meet at The Conservation Area Office at 10 am for a 2 hr. walk

Rob Lyske's Members' Only Walks 2016

(please see page six for details)

David Cook's Sunday Afternoon Walks 2016

(please see page six for details)

Volunteer Day

Third Saturday of the month 10 am.

WBT WEBSITE—late Spring new release

www.wildbirdtrust.org

WBT Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia
is incorporated as a non-profit society under
the Provincial Societies' Act, Society # S - 31197
and is a charitable organization under the federal
"Income Tax Act" Charity # 14026 5570 RR0001

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© John Lowman
Patricia M. Banning-Lover
Rob Lyske

Patricia M. Banning-Lover

Al Grass
© John Lowman

Patricia M. Banning-Lover
Patricia M. Banning-Lover
June M. Ryder

Derek Killby and Al Grass
Kate Weiss

Al Grass
© John Lowman

Essence! - the President's Message!



Patricia M. Banning-Lover

Mission Accomplished! Ward Meadow Completion is celebrated by (left to right) WBT's MCA Manager Ernie Kennedy, WBT Director Chris Pharo, WBT Volunteer Jennifer Townley, WBT Volunteer Sharon Carey, WBT Director Derek Killby.

The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats, Thursday, March 17th 2016

Happy smiles in the image above celebrate the completion of the Ward Meadow installation which was delayed by very warm spring weather in 2015. We began early this year and the planned planting of native vegetation (coastal wildflowers and coastal wild grasses) is a joy to behold! We look forward to seeing it flourish.

In addition to the volunteers in the above image we would like to thank Sue Flecker, Paul Goddard, Bernice Goddard and Gill Hersee. What would we do without our devoted Volunteers?

Successful installation of 95 Purple Martin nest boxes depends on a perfect tide—but also on calm seas—and we were lucky enough to have both at 7 am. on Good Friday, March 25th when Ernie Kennedy and Mike Mont set off aboard HMSC PUMA. By early Easter Sunday morning, March 27th, PUMA Program Co-ordinator June Ryder had e-mailed to say a Purple Martin “scout” had been reported near Seattle.

Many thanks again to Volunteers Sharon, Jennifer, and Derek who helped ready the nest boxes during the preceding week and came in early on lift-off day to assist with loading even though it was a Holiday Weekend—and to Ernie and Mike (pictured just upstream of Westcoast Bridge) who, as June commented, look as if they are shooting rapids!

On the east side of the property, Great Blue Heron and Bald Eagle have been busy with nesting tasks for some time. The new Bird Feeding Station is alive with bird-song and activity—including visits by two Pileated Woodpeckers, American Goldfinch, Common Redpoll—to say nothing of the Red-winged Blackbirds, chickadees, towhees and sparrows. This very popular stop on Osprey Point Trail offers an opportunity for old and young to enjoy birds and it has become a magnet for photographers.

Our “Return of the Osprey” Festival will be held July 23rd/24th—please see the program on page eight this issue. We are delighted to announce that The Kingfisher Club will make its debut at the Festival with two events for children—a Saturday morning event in the Great Room of Corrigan Nature House followed by a noon walk to Osprey Point with Naturalist Al Grass.

As we go to press on April 4th there are no reports yet of returning Osprey or Purple Martin. We did have a sighting, by an excited Conservation Area visitor, of a whale “blowing” off Osprey Point early afternoon on Saturday April 2nd. That’s a first!

All the very best,

Patricia M. Banning-Lover, President



June M. Ryder

A perfect tide and calm weather support WBT's MCA Site Manager Ernie Kennedy and WBT Volunteer Mike Mont as they set off to install Purple Martin Nest Boxes, Good Friday, March 25th 2016.

The Colours of Winter by Rob Lyske



© Robert Alexander

American Goldfinch at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats

November's steady rains seemed to wash away warmth as they stripped off leaves that held any last traces of colour. Birdsong was absent and a walk through the skeletal forest and past the strawy meadow area seemed bleak yet there were birds in the colours of winter.

It will be remembered as a very good year for the not-so-common Common Redpoll which were seen all over the Lower Mainland.

What was at first a single bird at the Conservation Area's new Bird Feeding Station soon joined a flock of 50 other Common Redpolls in the alders throughout the sanctuary. Their rosy breast, yellow bill and namesake red cap were a welcome sight through the quiet winter months.

As far as remarkable sightings go, there were few. A Northern Goshawk on January 15th was a nice find for Quentin Brown. The wintering Spotted Sandpiper along the eastern side of the shoreline continued to be one of the few reported in the Vancouver area. Neither of those species offered much in the way of colour but the dazzling plumage of the male Wood Duck gracing the West Pond more than made up for it.

Perhaps it's the common names of the regularly-wintering birds that can warm things up as we long for springtime. Green-winged Teal, Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Purple Fiches. The burst of song from a Purple Finch is usually one of the first indications that winter is fading away. Another song from high in the trees is that of the American Goldfinch which is now coming into breeding plumage. It is incredibly difficult to find once the cottonwoods leaf out.

The majestic blue of the Tree Swallow and the vibrantly-hued Violet-green Swallow were back just before Spring was officially declared. Rufous Hummingbirds have returned to the bright pink

Salmonberry flowers and the full pallet of warblers is right around the corner. Would we be so amazed by their brightness if not for the duller shades that are left while they are away for the winter?

Join WBT Contract Naturalist Rob Lyske for Member's Only Walks 2016

Saturday April 16th and Saturday August 13th
10 am-noon ~ rain or shine ~

LETTERS in November 2015 we received a LIFE Membership from WBT Member Joyce Wihnan.

Receiving a LIFE Membership always makes a day memorable in the Membership Office—but imagine our delight when Elsie and I looked closer and we realized that it was not one LIFE membership but two—one for Joyce and one as a gift for her friend Laura! A little correspondence followed over the months and resulted in this uplifting and very encouraging letter from Joyce which she permits me to share with you.

Patricia, it was such a blessing to be able to support what you are doing.

I was looking after my mother in her final years and we had many good walks around the trails at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats. Dorothy had spent her 92 plus years on the North Shore and was an avid hiker and walking the trails and watching the birds made her happy.

On a personal note I copied parts of what you have done at The Conservation Area in a park restoration project in Abbotsford. Since October I have been volunteering with the City of Abbotsford restoring the SE corner of Berry Park from an ivy desert to a native wildlife habitat. It contains a good stand of large trees but was completely overrun with ivy with some mahonia hanging on it and also contained other invasive species of holly and laurel which we removed as well.

We completely removed all the ivy and planted native plants, salal, huckleberry, salmonberry, dogwoods, vine maples. The birds have showed their appreciation. It is an urban park but there is water and we have seen Varied Thrush, Steller's Jay, Brown Creeper, chickadees, juncos, Spotted Towhee, of course Northwestern Crows—and we have hawks and eagles overhead.

The changes have greatly increased local visitors to the park. I used what I had seen at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats to assist in the process. I want to thank you for your inspiration and all the others involved in Wild Bird Trust.

All the best, Joyce Wihnan

Corrigan Nature House hosts its first Children's Nature Day Camp

by Patricia M. Banning-Lover

Corrigan Nature House on St. Patrick's Day—March 17th 2016—hosted its first Children's Nature Day Camp! We were delighted to welcome Highlands Out-of-School Care Society with Executive Director Elsie Webb, her staff and a group of 25 children ranging in age from 5-12 years old to the Great Room where Elsie had covered the tables with festive green tablecloths!



Elsie M. Webb

*St. Patrick's Day 2016—Corrigan Nature House Children's Nature Day Camp
at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats*

Arriving mid-morning by public transport, everyone quickly settled in to enjoy their packed lunches before watching a power-point presentation on The Conservation Area which featured images of several species of birds, spring flowers like Salmonberry, Coastal Black-tailed Deer, Tree Frog, Garter Snake and other wildlife.

The large group was then split into five each accompanied by an adult leader.

Before leaving the Great Room Elsie gave the children a few simple guideline such as staying on the trails and added a gentle reminder that quiet respectful behaviour would definitely be rewarded with more sightings.

These smaller groups arrived at the Meet and Greet where WBT Volunteer Receptionist Maureen Topley and I showed them the gallery of John Lowman images and the new colourful photo display board put together by WBT Director Derek Killby. The older children enjoyed the three image sequence of the “Owl and the Squirrel” encounter and a discussion on food chains followed.

The children were abuzz with questions “What is the most unusual bird seen here?” one asked, which gave me the opportunity to tell the story of the sighting by John Lowman of American White Pelicans in the Park Street Marsh Area. The Ken Lum replicas of Squatters’ Shacks in the Barge Channel stimulated more questions as we reflected together on another time when people hadn’t had a television or a cell phone—or a bathroom!!

I shared with the children that Maple Bear, dressed in her blue T-shirt and sitting in her welcoming position on the porch of the Meet and Greet, is still the only bear I have ever seen in over two decades at The Conservation Area. This news resulted in much laughter and a few nice big bear hugs for the large “stuffie”.

Against a backdrop of brilliant Spring sunshine each little group armed with a map and a clipboard set off with its adult leader to enjoy a sensory experience. Their mission was to listen, look and smell. Then it was back to the Great Room for the review where each group shared what they had seen. We were very interested to read their findings—a snake, a burrowed hole, a scientist’s footprint and perhaps the most amazing of all—Beaver’s Eggs!! A moment for me to treasure forever occurred when a 10 yr. old boy said at the end of the experience “This was the best hike of my life!”

Since Corrigan Nature House represents an extension of The Conservation Area and the “living classroom” this inaugural event certainly fulfilled its mandate. At the end of the day as I reflected on the happiness we had given and received I felt that Doris Corrigan, an educator herself, would have been extremely pleased.



FREE WILD BIRD TRUST NATURE WALKS 2016

Guided by Legendary Lower Mainland Naturalist

Al Grass

Although *WE* believe you when you tell us that your dog wouldn't dream of chasing wildlife it's very hard to get that message across to nesting and ground resting birds!

PLEASE—no dogs, leashed or unleashed!

JANUARY 9th—NOT JUST MUD!! Why are tidal flats critical habitats for wildlife?

FEBRUARY 13th—DUCK TALES Dabblers and Divers at their best

MARCH 12th—WHAT IS FOR DINNER? Maplewood's Raptors

APRIL 9th—A LONG JOURNEY The miracle of migration—celebrate the arrival of spring birds

MAY 14th—THE MUSIC OF BIRDS Enjoy The Conservation Area's birds and their music

JUNE 11th—OSPREYS AND MARTINS They are back! - and many other birds too

JULY 9th—SALT MARSH SECRETS REVEALED The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats boasts the premier example of salt marsh in Burrard Inlet. A rare supervised opportunity to appreciate this important inter-tidal ecosystem.

AUGUST 13th—ALL ABOUT HABITAT Understanding habitat

SEPTEMBER 10th—AUTUMN Fall migration and Maplewood's birds

OCTOBER 8th—FRESH AND FROSTY Birds begin to prepare for the challenges of winter

NOVEMBER 12th—WOODLAND WONDERS Maplewood's forests live with the help of beetles, woodpeckers, and fungi

DECEMBER 10th—HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS A winter's day at Maplewood is always full of wonderful surprises

SPECIAL EVENTS FOR 2016

Saturday, MAY 21st meet at 6 am for the "Dawn Chorus" with Al and Jude Grass Early morning at Maplewood is full of bird songs and calls - an experience that should not be missed. Meet at the double gates just before the main entrance (travelling east) to The Conservation Area at 2645 Dollarton Highway, North Vancouver.

Saturday & Sunday, JULY 23rd and 24th "Return of the Osprey" Festival Weekend (see page eight this issue for Festival Program and look for future promotional signage at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016

SATURDAY, November 5th 2016 WBT's Annual General Meeting & 23rd Birthday—look for program in Fall 2016 issue.

ADDITIONAL 2016 WALKS

Sunday Afternoon Walks with David Cook

SUNDAY, April 10th "Native Plants as Natural Healers" and SUNDAY, July 17th "Native Fruit Basket" 1.30-3.30 pm.

Summer Evening Walks 2016 with Al and Jude Grass

WEDNESDAY, July 6th and WEDNESDAY, July 20th 7 pm–9 pm.

Two delightful evening opportunities to hear birds singing, observe wildflowers, perhaps see bats and swifts and possibly a mother deer and her fawns.

"Members' Only" Walks 2016 with Rob Lyske

SATURDAY, April 16th and SATURDAY, August 13th 10 am–Noon.

All walks, unless otherwise specified, meet at WBT's Conservation Area Office, at 10 am 2645 Dollarton Highway, North Vancouver (604 903 4471) — events take place Rain or Shine!

Wheelchair accessible trails,

Wheelchair accessible washrooms for physically challenged visitors are available by request.

View from Osprey Point with Al Grass

Spring arrived at Osprey Point with all its wonderful sights, sounds and smells. I think of Osprey Point as the marriage of land and sea – a place of wonder where nature speaks timeless truths.

In spring the air is filled with the spicy aroma of swelling cottonwood buds, which are sticky with what is sometimes called the “Balm-of-Gilead”. Indian Plum is one of the first shrubs to bloom issuing forth with dangling clusters of white flowers. Pink Salmonberry and Red-flowering Currant flowers welcome returning Rufous Hummingbirds from wintering grounds in Mexico. Tiny white flowers of Whitlow-grass hug the ground on short stems. Whitlow grass is not a grass but a member of the mustard family.

Watching the gulls from Osprey Point is always entertaining. Judging by the broken shells, mud clams, cockles, little neck and varnish clams are gull favourites. It struck me one day that something wonderful is going on here. For one thing, the clam can’t be too big (like a horse clam) because it takes too much energy to fly up with it. On the other hand, it can’t be too small because its food value would be also be too small. And the right size clam has to dropped from just the right height. The clam must be dropped onto rocks . . . not on mud or sand! Once cracked open, the “owner” better be quick to grab it – hungry crows and other gulls are only too ready to “steal” the goodies!

Keep watch offshore for cormorants, diving ducks, terns and eagles. Perhaps you will be rewarded by a first sighting of an Osprey – a cause for celebration. Take time to share some special moments at Osprey Point, check out Danny’s Butterfly Garden. Look for early butterflies like the Mourning Cloak and Satyr Comma. Let nature come to you.



© Struan Robertson

*Legendary Lower Mainland Naturalist
Al Grass*



© Al Grass

Indian Plum Flowers

About Our Covers by John Lowman

Front Cover: *Purple Martin Nest Boxes* © John Lowman

One of my favourite photographic subjects at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats is the Purple Martin, North America's largest swallow, and one of the few birds that nests only in the boxes that humankind builds for them. The image shows nesting boxes on one of the dolphins remaining from the days when the Eastern mudflat served as a log sort. I photographed the martins as they carried dragonflies and other insects to their chicks waiting eagerly at the entrance to their home. Boxes 43, 44 and 45 are examples of the new style of nesting domicile, the other three unnumbered boxes represent the old style that has gradually been replaced. Of course, the dolphins will not stand forever, at which point they also will have to be replaced.

Back Cover: *Landing Osprey* © John Lowman

Two of the dolphins visible from The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats also have been used by Osprey for nesting, although one of these has fallen into disuse. A third nest is situated out of sight to the South-west of the property. The image shows an Osprey landing on the remaining visible nest, to which Osprey have returned every year since I first visited Maplewood in 1996. When I accompany WBT Surveyors cataloguing the nesting Purple Martins and their young, I also get an opportunity to photograph the Osprey. In 2006 there were three Osprey nests on the mudflats surrounding Maplewood, which produced three, two and one chick respectively. In September once all the chicks had fledged, there was an astounding twelve Ospreys at Maplewood, a testimony to the abundance of Flounder, these Ospreys' main food, in the Burrard Inlet.

“Return of the Osprey” Festival 2016 Program

Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th July 2016

The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats, 2645 Dollarton Highway, North Vancouver, BC.

~ events take place rain or shine ~

Saturday: 8 am.-4 pm.

8 am-10 am “BIG SIT” - gather early at our Meet and Greet Office where we will break into teams—please bring a chair, your own binoculars and personal recording material—then join us under the Covered Work Area for the Tally at 10.30 am—refreshments will be provided. WBT official recording material will be provided to teams.

11 am.-12.30 pm. The Kingfisher Club in the Great Room of Corrigan Nature House—**Nature Kids BC “Bird Migration Parade”** with Elise Roberts followed by a short walk to see Osprey and Purple Martin at Osprey Point with Naturalist Al Grass.

11.30 am.-4 pm. Osprey and Purple Martin Watch—look for WBT’s green tents at Osprey Point to learn more about and to view our “Summer Signature Species”.

1.30 pm. “Family Walk” - gather at our Meet and Greet Office—all ages welcome, join Naturalists Al Grass and Jude Grass.

2 pm. “Personal Disaster Preparedness” - a presentation in the Great Room of Corrigan Nature House by North Shore Emergency Management—perhaps a chance to chat with people in other cities through a mobile radio kit.

Sunday: 10.30 am.-4pm.

10.30 am.-4 pm. Osprey and Purple Martin Watch—look for WBT’s green tents at Osprey Point to learn more about and to view our “Summer Signature Species”.

10.30 am-noon A Morning with Wild Birds Unlimited in the Great Room of Corrigan Nature House—presentations and displays.

2 pm. “Bring Back The Butterflies” with WBT Founder **Dr. Richard Beard**—a visual presentation in the Great Room of Corrigan Nature House followed by a short walk with Richard around The Conservation Area to look at WBT’s Anise Swallowtail Restoration Project—a release of Anise Swallowtail caterpillars will depend on weather conditions.

PLEASE NO DOGS—LEASHED OR UNLEASHED!

Free Parking—all events are wheelchair accessible—wheelchair accessible washrooms available

Elsie Webb at WBT's Membership Office



*WBT Membership Secretary Elsie Webb
answers calls in Corrigan Nature House Membership Office*

With the installation of our Membership Office in Corrigan Nature House we hope we have made membership servicing more efficient. You may join or renew your membership over the telephone with WBT's Membership Secretary Elsie Webb by speaking to her directly or leaving her a message at the Membership Office 604 929 2379.

If you prefer to join or renew by e-mail please send Elsie an e-mail at wbtmembershipoffice@telus.net

Mailing in your membership form or leaving it at The Conservation Area's Meet and Greet Office with one of our Receptionists are other ways of keeping your membership current.

We are sometimes asked "*How do I know my membership is up for renewal?*" - membership renewal letters are either mailed or e-mailed to you by Elsie around the anniversary of the date you joined or renewed.

If you have a query please feel you can contact Elsie by telephone or e-mail for clarification on your membership status.

Give Wildlife a Chance!

join WBT Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia
(a tax receipt will be issued for membership fees and donations)

Single Membership: ☐ \$30 per year ☐ \$60 for 2 years
Family Membership: ☐ \$35 per year ☐ \$70 for 2 years number in family ____
LIFE Membership: ☐ \$500
Donation: ☐ \$

TOTAL: \$ _____

Visa # _____ Expiry Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Are you interested in volunteering—no experience necessary—we train! Office: ☐ Outside Work: ☐

Please make your cheque payable to: **WBT WILD BIRD TRUST OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**
124-1489 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, British Columbia V7T 1B8
WBT Membership Office Telephone: 604 929 2379 e-mail: wbtmembershipoffice@telus.net

Invasive Plants

at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats

by Patricia M. Banning-Lover

WBT LIFE Member Joyce Whinan's delightful letter on page eight of this issue presents me with a very good opportunity to comment on invasive plants at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats and how Wild Bird Trust deals with them. I would also like to address the completely unfounded recent rumour that WBT uses pesticide and herbicide on the property—not only would that practice violate the terms of our occupation but it would be technically impossible since Wild Bird Trust has never held, nor will be applying for a Pesticide/Herbicide Applicator's Permit.

Remembering that we are the Licensed Operator of the site and do not, and never will actually own the land, it falls to official Site Manager Environment Canada, and Landowners PortMetroVancouver, and District of North Vancouver to make the decisions on how and when to address invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Spartina (*S.patens*) which may require mechanical removal and/or specialized treatment. It is their task, not Wild Bird Trust's, to evaluate best management practices, treatment timing and cost sharing.

WBT's Site Manager Ernie Kennedy assisted by a regular team of trained WBT volunteers conducts careful hand removal and disposal of holly, lamium, periwinkle, ivy, daphne, laurel, cotoneaster etc., during the winter months. Although we consider every year as slightly different given weather patterns, this annual maintenance fits within a recognised framework of "safe periods" as we adhere to a formula of dates (mid-September to end of February) to prevent interfering with nesting. This protocol was evolved many years ago by WBT Habitat Advisor Dr. Patrick Mooney. Patrick, a former Vice-President of WBT, is the architect of all the major restoration projects at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats.

Himalayan Blackberry, which left to its own devices would cover most areas not heavily shaded by trees, is managed to provide useful, but reasonable, thicket cover and fruit—both fresh to satisfy the occasional feasts by an August-visiting Black Bear and mummified for the winter sustenance of birds such as Spotted Towhee.

We do carefully remove Purple Loosestrife before and during its August blooming period. If left unaddressed, this pretty pinkish purple flowering plant would take over the Park Street Marsh Area and eventually spread throughout the Pocket Marsh, the installed wetlands and ditches on the property.

As Google tells us "*Purple Loosestrife, a wetland plant native to Europe and Asia, was brought to North America during the early 19th century. This highly invasive plant was likely introduced when its seeds were included in soil used as ballast in European sailing ships and discarded in North America.*" Because of its fine upstanding habit it also became highly prized by many home gardeners as a handsome back-of-the-border plant.

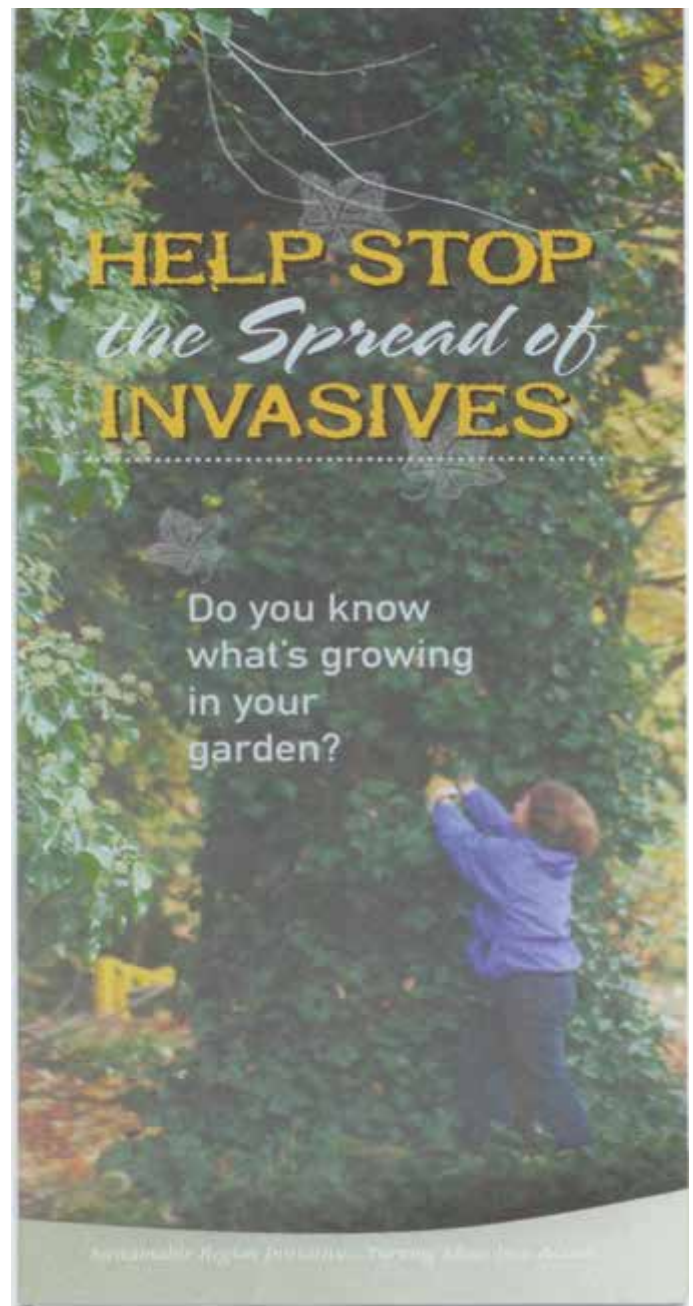
We encourage you to pick up a very informative leaflet called "**Help Stop the Spread of Invasives—do you know what's growing in your garden?**" Not only will the leaflet help you identify the top invasive plants but it will suggest some alternatives. So for instance, don't choose Purple Loosestrife but plant instead Hardhack, Fireweed etc., - don't choose English Holly but plant instead Tall Oregon Grape, Pacific Crabapple etc.

For more information
on this helpful and easy to understand leaflet contact:

GVRD Parks Department Telephone: 604 432 6200

or email: icentre@gvr.bc.ca

or go to their website: www.gvr.bc.ca/parks



Wild Bird Trust

receives generous funding from

North Shore Community Foundation

by Patricia M. Banning-Lover

After submitting a successful funding application in late September 2015 I was honoured to accept a cheque from North Shore Community Foundation at a ceremony held in North Vancouver District Council Chambers on Monday, November 30th 2015. Here is what I said on our behalf.

“Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia was founded in 1993 by Dr. Richard Beard and myself. Our task was to transform a degraded industrial site into the North Shore’s first wildlife sanctuary – The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats on Dollarton Highway. We are a membership based non-profit organization with charitable status.

Our mission statement promises “dedicated to wild birds and their habitats on the principle all wildlife must benefit”.

We direct this very generous funding from WARD ANIMAL FUND through North Shore Community Foundation to the conversion and preparation of an area and installation of an all-year major bird feeding station and native plant nursery.

Feeding birds is critical throughout the colder months and can often make the difference to survival. This funding allows us to expand the existing Winter feeding program to an all-year commitment introducing summer hummingbird feeders to attract Rufous Hummingbirds who arrive here as the vibrant pink flowers of Salmonberry herald the Spring.

The Bird Feeding Station will also provide the opportunity for education for all ages. Information on how to keep your feeders clean, how to build and install bird boxes – what to feed – and perhaps more importantly what not to feed!!

In conjunction with bird feeders we plan to construct several areas where we will grow coastal native vegetation. This will assist us as we seek to share the importance of native plants and their place in the home garden as a natural way to feed birds. Plants like Mahonia Aquifolium which produce lovely yellow flowers as a nectar source in the Winter for Anna’s Hummingbirds followed by beautiful dusty blue berries throughout late Summer and Fall which provide a feast for birds such as American Robins. Mahonia offers a useful and very attractive native alternative to the popular English Holly and Cotoneaster with their now well-recognised disastrously invasive characteristics.

The Bird Feeding Station is highly visible from the main wheelchair accessible pedestrian thoroughfare Osprey Point Trail and will bring delight to our many visitors both young and old.

WARD ANIMAL FUND and North Shore Community Foundation will be acknowledged on signage displayed adjacent to the project.

Thank you very much indeed.”



Sue Ridout

*North Shore Community Foundation President Mike Boehm and
WBT President Patricia M. Banning-Lover.
Monday, November 30th 2015*

WBT's Purple Martin Nest Box Monitoring Program at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats “Maplewood's Purple Martins 2015”

by June M. Ryder, Program Coordinator

Our Purple Martin Summer 2015 started with the early morning high tide on April 9th when the nest boxes were removed from storage and loaded on to the small boat. Fortunately the sea was calm, so the difficult job of lifting the boxes high overhead and hooking them onto the dolphins (done by Ernie Kennedy) and manoeuvring and stabilizing the gently rocking boat (done by Mike Mont) was achieved quickly and efficiently.

On April 15th the first returning Purple Martin was seen by John Lowman. The bird that he saw would have been a “scout”, leading the migrations, with other martins following behind at intervals of days or weeks. New arrivals begin to search for their summer homes and establish ownership of their properties. The older birds, who arrive first, have first choice of nest boxes, and may well return to the box they used last summer if they successfully raised a brood there. The younger birds, arriving later, have to find the best accommodation that is still vacant.

So, at first, there is a lot of activity around the colony with birds exploring potential nest sites and squabbles over contested boxes. This preliminary ‘establishing a home’ period lasts for several weeks. We did the first nest box survey, walking out on the mudflats, on June 14th. Our observers reported seeing 68 birds going in and out of nest boxes, 10 females stealing nesting material (dried grass, leaves) from one nest box and carrying it into another, and two cases of a bird dragging nesting material out of a box only to drop it on the ground.

On June 28th, similar activity was observed, but by the July 5th survey, there seemed to be a distinct decline in activity – probably because the birds were now more settled in their accommodations, and likely a fair number were already incubating eggs or brooding hatchlings.

We did, however, see some interesting (and inexplicable) bird behaviour. A male martin holding a leaf and standing on the ‘porch’ of his (?) nest box (the “porch” is the small platform in front of the entrance hole) was disturbed by the close approach of a female. So he flew but dropped the leaf, whereupon she dived down, caught it in mid-air, flew across to the next row of dolphins, and took it into her (?) nest box. There was no protest or chase by the male. At another nest box, a female was seen removing a few bits of nest material and dropping them, and then another female retrieved those bits and took them back into the same box!

Chicks were first seen on the July 13th survey. These young birds would have already been 12-15 days old. At this age, they are able to move from the actual nest (which is always in the back corner of the box) to the box entrance, where we can see them, while they wait for a parent to arrive with food.

As the surveys continued, chicks were seen at more and more nest boxes, peaking at 38 boxes on August 9th. Of course, there are more chicks in the boxes than those that are visible, but to see them or even hear them is always a bonus.

Purple Martins lay their eggs asynchronously, i.e., the egg-laying period for a colony is spread over a few weeks. As might be expected, the first arrivals (the older birds) produce eggs before the later (younger) arrivals. So chicks in the various nests are of different ages, and some broods fledge much earlier than others. If all the chicks were of the same age, they would all be vulnerable to any potential disaster. For example, if a spell of cold, wet weather temporarily reduces the food supply, chicks only a few days old might not survive the shortage, while older juveniles are more resilient. So this asynchronous egg-laying and chick development is a safeguard against loss of large numbers of young.

This summer we also observed a quite different cause of mortality. On July 18th the survey team noticed that an egg was lying on the porch of one nest box. As they watched, a male martin landed there and the egg fell to the ground. A closer look discovered three freshly broken eggs, each with a tiny embryo. Bruce Cousens (Senior Biologist, BC Purple Martin Stewardship and Recovery Program Coordinator), our advisor for Purple Martin affairs, suggests that this was an example of infanticide: it is likely that an unpaired young male was trying to take over the box and the existing nest in order to attract a female nesting partner. Possibly this behaviour was triggered by a shortage of unoccupied nesting sites.

We conducted the last survey of the season on August 15th. Although activity at the colony was continuing, the daylight tides were now too high for access to the mudflats until after most of the remaining chicks have fledged. (This happens regularly every year in late August.) Most of the Purple Martins disappeared—presumably heading south—overnight on August 18th-19th (slightly earlier than usual), although some later-fledging birds remained for a few more days. Martins were last seen on August 28th.

On September 30th, the nest boxes were brought in, once again by boat at high tide. Then we opened the boxes and carefully examined the contents to determine which ones had been occupied by a nesting pair of martins. Finally, the boxes were cleaned and stored in their new shed for the winter.

RESULTS

The number of nesting pairs of Purple Martins was estimated by combining field observations with information about box contents. We found clear evidence that the martins had nested in 69 boxes, plus 16 possible nests. This leads to a best estimate of 77 nesting pairs (assuming that half of the “possible” nests were active nests).



© Mark Habdas

Purple Martin at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats

Sadly, we found an unusually high number of dead martins in the boxes – one adult male, and 42 chicks ranging in age from one or two days to feathered juveniles almost ready to fly. We have discussed possible causes of chick mortality, but reached no firm conclusion.

Other Purple Martin colonies around the Strait of Georgia did well this summer – despite drought and hot weather. In previous years chick mortality has been attributable to spells of cool and/or rainy weather that limit the food supply (primarily dragonflies) for the nestlings. But in 2015 we had very little adverse weather during the breeding season.

We do not know if or how the occasional influx of smoke from forest fires could have affected the martin chicks.

Tree Swallows nested in two of the older boxes that remain permanently fixed to the dolphins (so we could not examine the nests). These swallows nest earlier than the martins. Our observers noted much activity toward the end of June, including adults carrying food to the nests, but we do not know if any young fledged successfully.

As I write this, we plan to set out the nest boxes on Friday, March 25th. The martins usually arrive in mid-April, but may arrive earlier. We need to make sure that their nest sites are ready.

NOTE

You can watch the northward migration of Purple Martins across the North American continent by searching the web for “purple martin scout arrival study” or going to <https://www.purplemartin.org/research/8/scout-arrival-study/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the following volunteers who carried out the surveys and assisted with putting out and bringing in the nest boxes: Colin Clasen, Derek Killby, Angela Bond, Ben Clifford, Chad Sole, Dawn Lessoway, Janice Wilson, Jennifer Townley, Marc Sole, Nancy Masterman, Paul Goddard, Tanya Patzke, Wendy Metcalf Roy, Sharon Carey. Also, a big thank you to Ernie Kennedy (WBT’s Site Manager) and volunteer Mike Mont for looking after the safe installation and retrieval of the nest boxes.



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*Left to Right: June Ryder, Wendy Metcalf Roy, Derek Killby and Jennifer Townley
Extreme Right beyond Box 47: Paul Goddard*

Annual General Meeting 2015

A very lively and well attended Annual General Meeting was held in the Great Room of Corrigan Nature House on Saturday, November 28th 2015.



WBTs "Volunteer of the Year" 2015 presented to Jennifer Townley

WBT President Patricia M. Banning-Lover presented WBT Volunteer Jennifer Townley (above) with WBTs "Volunteer of the Year" Award 2015 and Edna-Mae Lawson (right) with WBTs "Close Encounter" Award 2015.

WBT's Board of Directors became eleven embracing new Directors Dennis Gornall and Irwin Oostindie and two returning Directors—our Founder Dr. Richard Beard (a past President) and Eric Greenwood (a past Treasurer).

Because of time constraints at the AGM three of the annual awards were presented at a later date.

WBT's "Well Spotted" Award 2015 went to Luis Mogyoros for his Pine Marten sighting.

We all remember the story of Flipper, the young female Osprey which ran into trouble off Osprey Point at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats on Sunday, August 23rd 2015. WBT's "Making British Columbia a Safer Place for Birds" Award 2015 went to Harvey Dueck and Michelle Baudais. Michelle and Harvey took decisive action which certainly contributed to Flipper's rescue, rehabilitation and safe release.

Images: Robert Alexander



WBTs "Close Encounter" 2015 Award presented to Edna-Mae Lawson

IRRUPTION

by Derek Killby and Al Grass

In the cyclical life of birds (and birdwatchers) populations of birds can vary greatly. Month to month, season to season and year to year. There are different words to describe these variations which can lead to confusion. A frequently asked question is, "I have more finches (or chickadees or flickers, etc.) in my yard than I have seen before. Is this an irruption?"

The quick answer is no! These changes in numbers are simply natural fluctuations in bird populations that occur for no specific reason. This is a natural cycle.

So then what is an irruption? Yes, that is the correct word in this case. An **irruption** is a plant or animal population that 'enters a region suddenly and in very large numbers outside of their normal range' (dictionary.com).

This can occur in many species, but is most well known in a few families of birds. The winter finches, owls (particularly Snowy Owls) and raptors such as falcons and hawks.

Winter finches such as Red Crossbills, White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins, Common and Hoary Redpolls, and Pine Grosbeaks are seed and cone specialists. Their normal range is broadly the boreal forest from Alaska to Newfoundland and Labrador.

When seed and cone crops are in good supply they have no need to travel from their usual range, but if those crops fail or are not sufficient to sustain them through the winter they go in search of better crops to the eastern, western and southern parts of North America. These birds (particularly Pine Siskins) can arrive in large numbers and actually 'bully' local birds at your feeder.

The most dramatic irruption is that of the Snowy Owl. An irruption of these striking white owls is an eagerly awaited occurrence among birders. Here on the West Coast these events happen on a 4-7 year cycle. For the last 2 winters they have irrupted to the East Coast. If this coming winter is a La Nina winter as expected and, it is cold enough around the Lower Mainland (the range of these birds is typically the Arctic tundra as far north as Baffin and Ellesmere Islands and Greenland), then perhaps this will be our turn. We are starting into that 4-7 year cycle.

A long held view of why these owls irrupt is that there is a failure of prey populations, such as Lemmings, and this causes them to go in search of better hunting grounds. A newer theory has an opposite view: that is, that an abundance of prey in the Arctic allows for a more productive breeding season and more young survive and it is these young birds that must move out of their normal range looking for food.

When birds of prey such as, Snowy Owls, Great Grey Owls and Rough-legged Hawks, are out of their normal range they are typically under stress and should not be approached or disturbed. Always view from a distance and allow the birds to follow their natural cycles and habits. Whatever the reason, birdwatchers and nature lovers are happy for the opportunity to observe these spectacular owls.

There is another term that birders use to describe a sudden increase in a bird population: a **fallout**. But this has to do with migration and weather patterns, not seasonal occurrences that create irruptions.

When birds, such as warblers and songbirds migrate, they often encounter severe weather. Sometimes they try to go east or west to avoid the storm, but more frequently they will land and wait out a storm. As the storm passes you may notice birders heading out early, and eagerly, the next morning hoping for a fallout. This fallout is a spectacular happening with sometimes hundreds of birds busily feeding and restoring their energy after the storm and before continuing on their migration. A phrase often used to describe these events is that, "... the birds were dripping from the trees." A very apt description.

So, an irruption is a seasonal shift in population and a fallout is a one-time event lasting anywhere from minutes to a few hours. What then is a super flight?

A **superflight** is a once a decade or so event that sends 6, 7 or 8 species of northern birds south out of their normal range. This is usually due to a combination of weather patterns and changes in the food supply of northern species such as Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Common and Hoary Redpoll. Usually the fruiting cycle of seed/fruit bearing trees varies so that one or two species may irrupt one year but perhaps not for the next 2-3 years. Then approximately on an 8-10 year cycle the production of all trees is simultaneously affected which creates the phenomenon of a superflight. The reason behind this event appears to be an evolutionary response to alleviate long term stress on the trees and plants of the boreal forests.

Whether it's an irruption, a fallout or a superflight these cyclical events are exciting and thrilling for all bird-watchers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Go to **Bird Source-Birding with a Purpose**
then under **BirdSource Projects**
click on **Irruptive Bird Survey**
to view distribution maps
of bird species being tracked.

NORTH SHORE ELDERCOLLEGE SOCIETY

by Kate Weiss

ElderCollege has been a long-time supporter of Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia. For the last eight years, our members have paid an appreciative donation to enjoy educational walks with great Trust Naturalists, such as Kevin Bell, who are so knowledgeable in speaking about our feathered friends that populate The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats.

Many years ago, the idea of a learning institution for older adults was developed. Often called third age learning, life-long learning, continuous learning, or elder learning, the concept was developed from the understanding that people wish to remain intellectually active throughout their lives. Many adults entering their retirement years wish to continue being mentally active and challenged, and find that their new-found leisure time presents the possibility to explore new learning opportunities. Indeed, the concept of lifelong learning is incredibly popular worldwide, with both dedicated and post-secondary institutions offering classes to mature adults. While many institutions have paid staff to develop the courses, some, like ElderCollege, are volunteer-driven.

North Shore ElderCollege Society was formed in September 2015 by group of dedicated volunteers who had been actively involved with ElderU at Capilano University, where it had been running classes for nearly 25 years. Ready to take on a greater presence in the community, ElderCollege became an independent Society and now offers a variety of courses in locations across North and West Vancouver to better meet the needs of its participants.



Allan Orr, long-time ElderCollege Volunteer and Facilitator for the Spring Bird Walks Course, enjoys bird watching at Osprey Point at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats.

Courses are developed by volunteers who have an interest or expertise in a particular topic, or where an idea has been suggested by a participant. Every course is developed to provide an enjoyable, positive, social experience with a strong educational component. In fact, many course participants have developed friendships from meeting in our classes! Our motto “come learn with us” reflects exactly how we work. It’s an invitation to anyone who wishes to learn - COME, learn with us. It reflects the educational nature of our Society – come LEARN with us. It reflects the fact that we are volunteers, speakers, students and friends – come learn, WITH US.

It is this philosophy of engagement, community and learning that continues to attract both new and returning members year after year, and what helped to make Spring 2016 - ElderCollege’s inaugural term – such a successful start for our new Society.

From discussion groups on a variety of topics to technology training, speaker series, to ukulele, to snowshoeing and bird watching, Spring offered a diverse range of courses to appeal to a wide variety of lifelong learners. Some of our members even travel from Richmond and New Westminster to attend our classes! We added new courses including Greek Archaeology, A Day in the Life speaker series, and Utopias and Dystopias. Perennial favourites such as Incredible Journeys, themed History series, Gourmet, Fact and Fiction, Books Unlimited and Bird Walks at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats continue to be popular courses with our members and regularly sell out.

Our very popular What’s News discussion group is now offered in four locations. Books Unlimited is now in its 18th year, and in partnership with Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia, Bird Walks at Maplewood have been offered since 2008.

Planning for our Fall term is well underway, with more ideas for courses than ever before. Our website is regularly updated with news and events, and our popular eNewsletter is available to anyone who wishes to subscribe for all the news delivered by email. Registering for courses is easily done either through our online self-registration system, by phone or at an Open House. There are no exams, no pressure, only engaging content in a social learning environment, so come learn with us.



North Shore Elder College Society

For more information and to register,
visit our website: www.nseldercollege.org
or give us a call on 778 246 6737
Kate Weiss, Executive Director

We are delighted to celebrate our continuing partnership with news of an expanded program!

By the time you read this the popular ElderCollege Spring Walks six week course with WBT Naturalist Kevin Bell will be well underway. Participants will be accompanied by long time ElderCollege Volunteer and Course Facilitator Allan Orr and WBT Director Dennis Gornall. The course begins on Friday, April 1st and ends Friday, May 6th.

Fall 2016 will bring an opportunity to register for a brand new ElderCollege course beginning October 12th and ending November 19th.

Called “Stepping Into Fall”, it will be led by renowned WBT Naturalists Al Grass and Jude Grass with an introduction by WBT President Patricia M. Banning-Lover. This will be a five week course consisting of three walks at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats and two visual presentations at Parkgate, North Vancouver.



*Elder College Member Pat Lefroy
and her journal of images created on walks
at The Conservation Area at Maplewood Flats*



Volunteer Opportunities!

No experience necessary—we train!

Gardening, Field Work and Trails
(contact MCA Manager Ernie Kennedy
Telephone: 778 881 5300)

Reception at WBT's Maplewood Meet and Greet Office at The Conservation Area
(contact Patricia Telephone: 604 922 1550)

***All WBT Volunteers are required to fill in an application form
and sign a waiver of liability before commencement of work.***

INJURED WILDLIFE?

Wild Bird Trust cannot help you
with injured wildlife.
as we do not have the facilities
or the mandate to effect rehabilitation.
Please call the experts for assistance:

WRA in Burnaby
Telephone: 604 946 3171
(Wildlife Rescue Association)

OWL in Delta
Telephone: 604 526 7275
(Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society)

Are you enjoying the new Bird Feeding Station at The Conservation Area?

You can help by donating seed and feed
to Wild Bird Trust by contacting

Wild Birds Unlimited,
1190 Marine Drive,
North Vancouver, BC.

Telephone:
604 988 2121



Launch of “Birder’s Guide to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland”

Saturday, May 14th 2016—6.30-8.30 pm.
Alice McKay Room, Vancouver Public Library,
350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver.

An invitation to the official book launch of Nature Vancouver’s updated
“Birder’s Guide to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland”
on International Migratory Bird Day,
at the finale event of the May 7-14 Vancouver Bird Week.

www.vancouverbirdweek.ca



Bark Peekers

Q Why does a tree remind you of a coyote?

A They both have a bark!

One way of looking at birds is by looking at the feeding habits of their “guilds” or groups.

For example, some songbirds fly from a perch to catch insects while some (swallows) catch insects in flight. Others, like the Brown Creeper are “probers” while chickadees and bushtits may be probers some of the time and “gleaners” at others.

The Brown Creeper and Downy Woodpecker have long bills for poking into cracks in tree bark for insects and spiders (eggs, larvae, adults). Chickadees may not dig down as deeply, but they can still find tasty morsels.

The feet of the creeper and woodpecker are designed to grab into the tree when the bird is in a vertical position.

The creeper’s tail is stiff which helps balance it in its search for food.

Also, the creeper’s brown colour is excellent camouflage, helpful in concealing it from its enemies.

Did you know?

- The creeper “creeps” up the tree, the nuthatch goes down the tree.
- The creeper sees the world up-side down!

The voice of the Brown Creeper is a good test of one’s hearing.

Why do birds probe or “poke” into tree bark? It is because the cracks make excellent hiding places for insects, spiders and their eggs larvae and cocoons – all a feast for birds.

Some birds like the Red-breasted Nuthatch and Black-capped Chickadee use cracks in tree bark to hide (cache) food like nuts and seeds. And they remember where they have put it. Now that is amazing!

Birds that probe tree bark have bills of different lengths which helps to minimize competition for the same foods. It is nature’s plan.

Bushtits and other birds may be seen picking off insects from tree bark (gleaning). Small bugs called scale insects are a favourite.

What types of trees are good to watch for creepers and other bark probers?

Three good ones are:

- Big-leaf maple
- Black cottonwood
- Douglas-fir

Older trees are best because they have rougher bark. Most trees with rough bark are good to keep an eye on as well.

Watch in the morning as the rising sun warms up the tree on its sunny side – this will “wake up” the insects and spiders and make good feeding places for birds.

Question – Where does a creeper build its nest?

The answer will amaze you!



© Robert Alexander

Brown Creeper

Text by Al Grass
the KINGFISHER club logo
was designed by Richard Smith

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