

NEWSPACKET

February 2024

Journal of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club





North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC)

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Annual Membership Dues:
 Couple/Family \$50
 Single \$35
 see none.ca

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Sightings of Rare and Uncommon Birds in the North Okanagan — October and November 2023

by *Chris Siddle*

TEMPERATURES continued several degrees higher than average temperatures for years past and as a result almost all water bodies stayed completely or at least partially ice-free throughout Nov. However, open water did not attract high numbers of water birds. Forest birds seemed fewer than usual without almost no “northern” finches evident.

These sight records were gathered from Cornell’s online database, eBird.

Observers include Margaret Mackenzie (MM); Laurel McDonald (LMc); Chris Siddle (CS); Scott Thomson (ST); Jack VanDyk (JVD).

Snow Goose: very uncommon migrant, but increasing in the Okanagan Valley in the past three decades. Two records – an ad. at Kalamalka beach 1 Nov. (CS) and 9 ads. and 4 juvs. along Otter L. Rd. 4 Nov. (CS).

Cackling Goose: very uncommon migrant. Singles were scattered through the period at Swan and Rawlings Lakes among Canada Geese flocks. A flock of five at Kalamalka Beach was discovered 25 Oct. (ST, CS) and lingered in area until 1 Nov. (CS). Other sightings: 3 at Rawlings L. 3 Nov. (ST, CS); 1

at Rawlings L. 16 Nov. (ST), and 5 at Kalamalka beach 23 Nov. (LMc).

Green-winged Teal: Although a common species, it’s of interest to note peak numbers. The highest count this month was of 151 at the marsh at the north end of Otter Lake (CS). By 28 Nov. the count had dwindled to 20 (CS).

Long-tailed Duck: rare migrant. Female at Otter L. 18 Nov. (KN) and 19 Nov. (CS, ST).



above: Cackling Goose at Kalamalka Beach near Rotary Pier. The bird's small size, tiny bill, and steep forehead help identify it. 25 Oct. 2023. Chris Siddle

Common Merganser: locally abundant fall migrant. Large concentrations of 1000 or more are an almost annual late fall event on Swan L. This Nov. no survey of the whole of Swan L. was carried out but 294 were counted on Rose’s Pond 12 Nov. (CS) and 700 were estimated on Goose L. 9 Nov. (CS).

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Rare & Uncommon Birds continued

Ruddy Duck: common summer resident. Migrant flock of 28 off Kalavista boat launch 25 Oct. (CS). Late record: nine females and/or juvs. at Rawlings L. (CS, ST).

California Quail: common resident. An unusually late brood of at least 6 half-grown chicks plus adults at Rawlings L. 3 Nov. (ST, CS).

(Okanagan Landing) off Kin Beach (CS, m. obs.) Mostly absent elsewhere.

American Golden-Plover: Rare migrant. A juv. appeared at Otter L. marsh 1 Oct. (CS, ST).

Long-billed Dowitcher: with the autumn's mild temperatures and mostly ice-free ponds and lakes, Long-bills (2) lingered at Rawlings L. until 14 Nov. (ST).



above: A new addition to the Okanagan checklist was this first-year Great Black-backed Gull, only the third to ever be recorded for B.C. (normally found along the north Atlantic coasts). This individual delighted birders by appeared first at Penticton on 6 Dec. 2023 where discovered by Chris Charlesworth and Ryan Tomlinson, and later that month re-locating to Vernon and Kelowna.

Red-necked Grebe: common migrant, very local and uncommon in late fall and winter. Concentration of 15-55 found throughout the month on Vernon Bay

Bonaparte's Gull: Local migrant. Usually appear in flocks on Swan Lake during October. This fall only singles or twosomes were detected, suggesting the bulk of migrants bypassed the North Okanagan. Sightings: Two at Coyote Crossing Pond 1 Oct. (CS); one at Otter L. marsh on 16 Oct. (CS), and one at the mouth of Vernon Ck., Okanagan Landing 11 Nov. (MM).

Black-legged Kittiwake: a salt-water gull breeding in large colonies along the outer coasts of North America and spending its non-breeding time over pelagic waters. A first for the North Okanagan checklist (and a

second for the Okanagan Valley) was an immature on Swan L. 10 Nov. (CS). An immature had been photographed in the Shuswap about a week earlier and was probably the same bird.

Say's Phoebe: common summer resident. One lingering on Middleton Mt. 8 Nov. (JVD).

Violet-green Swallow: Common summer resident. As usual this was the last swallow species to depart.

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Rare & Uncommon Birds continued

Latest record for this season was of five along Kidston Rd. 2 Oct. (CS).

Hermit Thrush: common boreal summer resident. Rare migrant through the lowlands. One at 467 Potter Rd. 24 Nov. (JVD).

Swainson's Thrush: common summer resident. The latest sighting this season was one at Polson Park 2 Oct. (CS).

Bohemian Waxwing: Common winter resident. Bohemians arrived very early in the Valley with a flock of 50 over 6131 Silver Star Rd. 10 Oct. (CS). Thereafter flocks tended to be smaller than usual (50 or fewer) and uncommon throughout the period.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: rare irruptive fall and winter visitor from alpine zones. Only one rec. this season. One with Snow Buntings on Middleton Mt. 28 Oct. (MM).

Cassin's Finch: fairly common summer resident but given to unpredictable population irruptions and dispersals from year to year. This autumn the species was decidedly rare. One was in JVD's yard 4 Nov. and another was seen at Pemberton Rd., Lumby 26 Nov. (ST).

Chipping Sparrow: common summer resident. Formerly thought to depart the N.Okanagan in Sept. However, surveys of roadside bushes along Whitevale Road near Headgates Rd. (Whitevale silage pit) revealed about 5-20 Chipping Sparrows each day from the first week of Oct. to 19 Oct. (ST).

Snow Bunting: very uncommon spring and fall migrant. Fairly well-defined migration window: late Oct. through early Nov. One at Swan L. N. Park 28

Oct. (CS); 14 the same date on Middleton Mtn. (MM); 5 at Rawlings L. 3 Nov. (ST, CS).

Fox Sparrow: uncommon to common summer resident in the upper edge of the boreal forest on surrounding mountains. Very rare migrant spring and summer in lowlands. Summer race is the Slate-coloured Fox Sparrow. BC/Alaska coastal races termed Sooty Fox Sparrow. Two records this fall: a possible Sooty at Swan L.N. Park 1 Nov. (MM), one along Whitevale Rd. 15 Oct. (ST).

Golden-crowned Sparrow: rare migrant. Immature at Polson Park boardwalk 2 Oct. (CS).



above: The pale eye and the fresh, unworn plumage indicate that this Red-tailed Hawk is an immature, probably a juvenile hatched last summer. This is the bird that has taken to perching in the tall willows behind the sand bars at the mouth of Vernon Creek, Okanagan Landing. Already more tame than most Red-tails, it appears to have grown used to people and was a favourite among photographers. Photo taken 23 Dec. 2023. C. Siddle

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Rare & Uncommon Birds continued:

Harris's Sparrow: very rare migrant and rare winter visitor. Seldom encountered in migration. One immature at Coldstream Cemetery 15 Oct. (ST, CS).

Swamp Sparrow: not detected in the Okanagan Valley until late winter of 1987. Now a regular but rare fall migrant and very scarce winter resident. ST encountered up to 5 a day among the cattail beds of Rawlings Lake in Oct. Late record is one at Swan L. N. Park 16 Nov. (LMc).

White-throated Sparrow: increasing migrant and winter resident. Oct.-Nov. 2023 was a poor time for this species. The largest concentration was of 6 at Polson Park boardwalk 2 Oct. (CS).

Spotted Towhee: common summer resident. Fairly uncommon and local winter resident in small numbers. This fall towhees began to become hard to find in Sept.-Oct. and in Nov. only 2-3 were found for the month. This is a highly unusual and unexplained development.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: common though local summer resident. Rare in winter. One among the Brewer's Blackbirds at Coldstream Ranch feed lots at 20 Oct. (CS). Later two were found by ST.

Brown-headed Cowbird: common summer resident. Rare in winter. Two were among the blackbirds at Coldstream Ranch feedlots throughout Nov. (ST).

Rusty Blackbird: Rare migrant and winter visitor. JVD and ST located one at the Coldstream Ranch

feed lot 16 Oct. and it was seen several times thereafter throughout the period.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: common summer resident. Very common spring and fall migrant through the valley. Only two Nov. records: one along Salmon Trail, Lumby, 5 Nov. (LMc); 1 at 467 Pottery Rd. 27 Nov. (JVD).

Wilson's Warbler: uncommon boreal forest summer resident. Very rare late autumn straggler. Three sightings: One at Coldstream Cemetery 19 Oct. (MM); one at Polson Park 16 Nov. (MM) and 18 Nov. (CS). 🌿

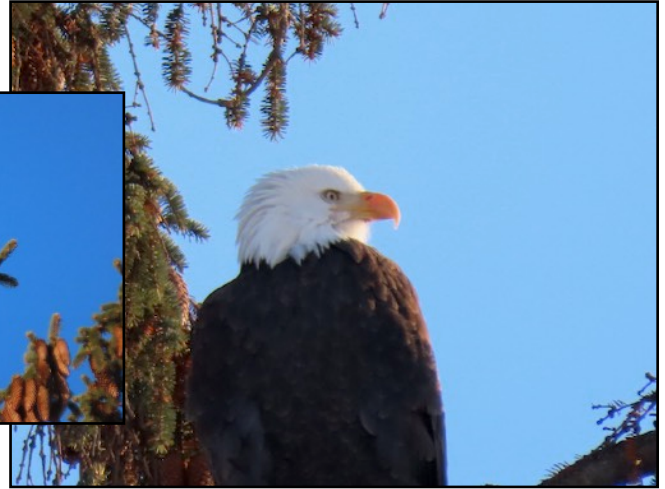


above: An immature Brown-headed Cowbird (on right) with a male Brewer's Blackbird at the Coldstream Ranch. Some autumns a very few cowbirds, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and Rusty Blackbirds mix with the 100+ Brewer's around the feedlots. 22 Oct. Chris Siddle

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Swan & Eagle Count 2024

THE 2024 Swan & Eagle Count was held on Sunday, January 14th. Rod Drennan and Norbert Maertens were the coordinators and several teams surveyed area fields, forests, creeks and lakes. This table shows the results of this annual count over the past 14 years. Photos by Harold Sellers.



Year	Bald Eagle			Golden Eagle	Trumpeter Swan			Tundra Swan
	Adult	Immature	Total	all	Adult	Immature	Total	Adult
2024	118	35	153	1	64	14	78	0
2023	157	49	206	0	52	7	59	0
2022	109	19	128	3	99	14	113	0
2021	91	29	120	4	45	12	57	0
2020	101	47	148	0	137	11	148	0
2019	145	63	208	2	102	15	117	0
2018	100	25	125	2	109	9	118	0
2017	139	45	184	8	143	16	159	1
2016	134	35	169	1	123	37	160	0
2015	88	51	139	2	89	27	116	0
2014	102	44	146	0	78	7	85	0
2013	104	42	146	0	43	13	56	0
2012	100	52	152	0	103	36	139	0
2011	96	26	122	0	120	24	144	0

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FEBRUARY CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETING

NONC monthly meetings are held in the Emerald Room at The Schubert Centre for Seniors, 30th Ave., in downtown Vernon. No entry fee. Members and non-members welcome. Coffee and cookies served!

WEDNESDAY, February 7th, 7:00 pm.

Our guest speaker will be Megan Buers, UBC student and researcher, on Screech Owls.

SATURDAY NATURE WALKS

Join us Saturdays at 9:00 am (8:00 in August). Visitors welcome. Dress for the weather. We do a lot of birdwatching, so bring binoculars if you have them. See list below.









DR 1 & 2 are generally suitable for almost anyone, of any age. However, if you have issues of mobility and/or stamina, you should speak to the leader before attempting.

DR 1 Easy — Suitable for most people. Mostly paved or good-surface path, fairly level with some gentle climbs.

DR 2 Moderate — Suitable for most walkers and hikers with no mobility or endurance issues. May have longer distance with steeper hills and switchbacks, some uneven and rough path.

February 10th - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a nature walk on the Grey Canal Trail from BX Creek to Rugg Rd and back. Meet at the BX Creek and Falls Trail parking on Star Road, off of Silver Star Rd. Ice grippers on your boots might be

February 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	
4	5	6		8	9	
11	12	13	14	15		
		20	21	22	23	
25	26	27	28	29		

required. Contact Harold at <hikerharold@gmail.com>

February 17th - 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for the Kalamalka Park loop and Kidston Pathway nature walk. Short and steep uphill followed by gravel trail that meets up with paved pathway. Meet at the corner of Cunliffe Road and Palfry Drive West. Ice grippers on your boots might be required. Contact Rod and Ruth at <rdrennan@shaw.ca>

February 24th - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk in Kalamalka Park on the trail from the Twin Bays parking lot to Turtles Head Lookout (also known as Rattlesnake Point) and back. Meet in the first parking lot by the interpretive signs kiosk, Ice grippers on your boots might be required. Contact Susan at <supepghat@hotmail.com>

February 16-19 The Great Backyard Bird Count

see <<https://www.birdcount.org/>>

