

FIRST COASTAL OCCURRENCE OF THE FLAMMULATED OWL FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

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On 28 November 2005 Lindy Phizacklea was hanging Christmas lights on a tree outside her Chilliwack home in the central Fraser River valley when she noticed a small bird on the ground beside her below a window. The “fluffball” looked very cold so she caught the bird and brought it inside for warmth and kept it in a dog crate overnight. She tried to feed the owl some raw meat but it would not take it. The following day, on 29 November, I was contacted, as a Director of the Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society (OWL), and visited Mrs. Phizacklea to discover she had rescued an adult Flammulated Owl (*Otus flammeolus*).

The owl (Figure 1) was taken to Mount Lehman for temporary care and over the next many hours was encouraged to feed on crickets and mealworms. It would not feed and I noticed that it held its neck in an unnatural manner suggesting an injury. The next morning, on 30 November, it died. It appears that the owl hit a window and was unable to recover from its injury. The event was well-publicized in local newspapers (Feinberg 2005, McDonald 2005, Van Putten 2005).

The Flammulated Owl has recently expanded its range in south-central British Columbia. It now occurs from the British Columbia-Washington border north through the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys, and the Nicola and Thompson valleys, to Alexis Creek in the west and McLeese Lake in the north (Campbell et al. 1990, Van Woudenberg 1999, Wright 1999). It has recently been found nesting on Bechers Prairie, near Riske Creek, in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region (Wiebe 2005). It has also been found in the East Kootenay (Larry Halversen, pers. comm.).

The Flammulated Owl is migratory and has been recorded in British Columbia from 4 May to 22 October with most birds arriving during the first two weeks of May and departing in late August and September (Cannings et al. 1987). The Chilliwack



Figure 1. Flammulated Owl found injured in Chilliwack, British Columbia, on 28 November 2005 and taken to Mount Lehman for rehabilitation. Mount Lehman, BC. 30 November 2005 (Randy Giesbrecht). BC Photo 3448.

bird is the first record on the coast and is a late date for its occurrence in the province.

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About the Author

Gerry is President of the Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society (OWL) and has been caring for injured wildlife for over 40 years. He is actively involved in several conservation and education organizations and regularly features his cases of British Columbia owls, which he picked up as road kills and prepared as mounts, at a variety of wildlife events throughout the Lower Mainland.