

FIRST OCCURRENCE AND CONFIRMED BREEDING OF BEWICK'S WREN IN THE CRESTON VALLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Linda M. Van Damme

619 20th Avenue South, Creston, BC V0B 1G5

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) has a limited range in British Columbia, occurring year-round along southeastern and southern Vancouver Island, on the southwest mainland including the Sunshine Coast, and in the Fraser River valley east to Hope and Manning Park (Campbell et al. 1997). Since the mid-2000s there have been several extra limital records scattered throughout the year from the southern central interior including Kelowna, Inkaneep Provincial Park (C. Charlesworth pers. comm., Figure 1), Hedley, Keremeos, and Okanagan River (R. W. Campbell pers. comm.).



Figure 1. Adult Bewick's Wren at Inkaneep Provincial Park, BC. 26 April 2009 (Chris Charlesworth). BC Photo 3706.

There also appears to be an autumn breeding record for the Vaseux Lake area. Doug Brown (pers. comm.), banded a fledgling Bewick's Wren on 21 September 2008. He describes the bird as "only a day or two out of the nest. It still had the juvenile downy underparts with the tail still growing in and much of the body feathers still in pin." The origin of the bird is unknown.

On 22 June 2009, I observed an adult Bewick's Wren (Figure 2) feeding one fledged young on a fallen tree trunk within a riparian black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*) forest on private property in the Creston valley. The fledged young was loudly begging while flicking its wings. The young still had downy feathers on its head and back and the yellow gape was visible. The weather was overcast with frequent rainstorms accompanied by thunder and lightning so viewing was limited. I returned the following day and was able to re-locate the wren family where I observed at close range one fledged young and two adults. On 1 and 9 July, G. Breault observed two adults and four fledged young along the shrubby edge of the cottonwood forest in the same general area (Figure 3).

I visited this site on several occasions to monitor the progress of the family. Although fledged young were able to forage on their own and were



Figure 2. Adult Bewick's Wren in a black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*) tree. Creston, BC. 22 June 2009 (Linda M. Van Damme). BC Photo 3697.



Figure 3. The prominent yellow gape is visible on this fledgling Bewick's Wren still being fed by adults at the edge of a black cottonwood forest. Creston, BC. 9 July 2009 (Gary Breault). BC Photo 3698.

observed doing so, the adults continued to feed them occasionally as was observed on 31 July. The wrens remained in the same general area where they were more often heard than seen. On 31 August, a wren was loudly singing and it took a lot of scanning to finally locate it foraging 13.7 m (45 ft) up in a cottonwood tree. A single Bewick's Wren was last seen at this location on 16 November 2009.

A second occurrence of Bewick's Wren was noted on 24 June 2009, while I was walking on one of the south trails in the Corn Creek Marsh Unit within the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area. A single bird was singing while perched on a dead willow (*Salix* sp.) at the outer edge of a black cottonwood forest. The wren was observed for approximately

20 minutes and during this time would sing from the dead willow or fly to a cottonwood tree within the forest and sing from there. It also dropped to the ground where it was observed foraging. The Bewick's Wren was not found at this site on subsequent visits in 2009.

This note confirms a significant eastward extension of breeding range across southern British Columbia to the Creston valley in the West Kootenay region. Given the bird's propensity to inhabit riparian black cottonwood forests with a dense understory, Bewick's Wren should find suitable habitat to expand its range throughout the Creston valley.

Literature Cited

Campbell, R.W., N.K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J.M. Cooper, G.W., Kaiser, M.C.E. McNall, and G.E.J. Smith. 1997. The birds of British Columbia. Volume 3 – passerines (flycatchers through vireos). University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, BC. 693 pp.

About the Author

In October 2009, Linda published a birding booklet "Creston Valley Birds – when and where to find them". The discovery of the Bewick's Wren added species number 301 to the revised checklist.