



## **Birds of the Nakusp, New Denver, and Burton Region of Southeastern British Columbia, 1975 to 2012 – Part 2: Passerines (Flycatchers through Old World Sparrows)**

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### **Abstract**

Between August 1975 and December 2012, 266 species of birds, including nonpasserines and passerines, were recorded in the Nakusp, New Denver, and Burton regions of southeastern British Columbia. Accounts for 146 species of nonpasserines (55% of the total number of species) were published (Davidson 2011). The following and final component treats the 120 species of passerines.

Accounts for regularly occurring species usually include six parts: status, ornithological history, descriptions of non-breeding and breeding habitats, occurrence and migration chronologies (*i.e.*, early arrival, peak movement, and late departure), specific breeding information, and comments. The latter provides clarification for taxonomic decisions, noteworthy regional and provincial distributional information, relevant literature, and a summary of Nakusp Christmas bird counts from 30 consecutive years.

The passerine species accounts have been prepared primarily from my personal database of over 40,000 individual records.

### **Introduction**

The format for each species account follows Davidson (2011; Figure 104). The *Literature Cited* section pertains only to passerines. This part, however, includes the *Acknowledgements* for both nonpasserine and passerine components. Figure numbers continue

from the nonpasserine species accounts.



**Figure 104.** The first half of *Birds of the Nakusp, New Denver, and Burton region of Southeastern British Columbia...* was published in *Wildlife Afield* 8(1) in 2011 as a 101-page article. It contained details for 146 species of nonpasserine birds.

Species accounts are organized within families following the latest taxonomic order and scientific names proposed by the American Ornithologists' Union (see American Ornithologists' Union 1957, 1973, 1983, 1989, 1997, and 1998).

## FLYCATCHERS

### Olive-sided Flycatcher

*Contopus cooperi*

**Status:** *Rare in spring and uncommon in summer; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) reports that "...this large flycatcher appears to be very rare in the district." His only record is of two or three at Snowshoe Lake, near Edgewood, seen at 1,600 m elevation on 6 July 1930.

**Habitat: Non-breeding and Migration:** In May and early June, this species has been reported from a variety of locations and elevations, including mixed woodlands adjacent to agricultural land, marshes as low as 500 m, and within more typical breeding habitat. **Breeding:** Most records are from higher elevations away from valley bottoms, between 1,000 m and 1,950 m. Many sightings have been from the edges of forestry clear-cuts.

**Occurrence: Spring:** In most years, this flycatcher does not arrive until early June, but there have been a few late May reports. The earliest arrival date is 23 May 1992. **Summer:** It is fairly well established within the breeding range by mid-June and occurs regularly until at least late July. The data show a decline in August, which may simply reflect the termination of singing. There is only one record after the middle of August – three birds were seen near Nakusp on 28 August 1976.

**Breeding:** There are no confirmed breeding records, but the species almost certainly breeds within the study area. Singing birds are heard regularly during the breeding season.

**Comments:** The lack of breeding reflects the lack of observer effort at higher elevations during the breeding season. There are breeding records from these habitats adjacent to the study area. Logging roads leading up from the valley would be good places to look for this species.

Olive-sided Flycatcher is listed as "Threatened"

by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada in 2007 (Pearce and Kirk 2008), based mainly on trend analysis of results of the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) between 1966 and 2004 (Sauer et al. 2005). BBS trend estimates for the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton study area are not useful because Olive-sided Flycatcher may not be adequately represented on the BBS routes as this is a patchily distributed species, a habitat specialist, and the number of birds detected per route is low (see Campbell et al. 2007, Kotliar 2007).

### Western Wood-Pewee

*Contopus sordidulus*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring and summer; presumably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) describes Western Wood-Pewee (Figure 105) as a "common summer migrant" that "breeds freely" in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 105.** Western Wood-Pewee is widely distributed in the interior of British Columbia but it is not particularly common in the study area and probably only breeds locally and in small numbers. Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 3 June 2008.

**Habitat: Migration:** Records are from a wide variety of habitats including residential gardens, agricultural areas, wetlands, and parks. The closed coniferous forests of the study area are not favoured by this species. **Breeding:** Many of the records are from riparian habitats adjacent to lakes and along the deciduous edges of agricultural lands in Brouse.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically arrives in mid-May but occasionally much earlier, the earliest date is 29 April 1997. Numbers of migrants peak during late May and early June. **Summer:** It occurs regularly through June and July with a decline in records in August. The latest departure date was 26 August.

**Breeding:** There are no nest records. However, the presence of singing birds annually through the breeding season suggests that wood-pewees breed in the area. A pair was observed repeatedly taking food to an unseen location in a tree near Summit Lake on 24 July 2012. A juvenile Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) was observed being fed by an adult Western Wood-Pewee on 4 August 1980.

**Comments:** The apparent difference in status between the study area and Kelso's experience in Edgewood is likely due to the subtle differences in habitats, and their changes, between the two regions.

#### Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring and rare in summer; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** During Kelso's time in Edgewood, this species, along with Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), were considered to be a single species known as Trail's Flycatcher. Kelso (1931) does not mention this species. See *Comments*.

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** Most records are from Brouse and Summit Lake. The Brouse site is a very damp, sometimes flooded, low-lying field with adjacent deciduous second-growth woodlands. The Summit Lake site is a marshy, riparian shrubland.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are two records: 27 May 1986 and 31 May 2003. **Summer:** Almost 80% of all records are from June or the first week of July. There are only a handful of records in late July and early August, the latest being 7 August 1989.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records, but the presence of singing males over several weeks suggests breeding.

**Comments:** Lack of sightings later in the summer is quite likely due to the difficulty of separating this species from other *Empidonax* flycatchers (particularly Willow Flycatcher) when the birds are no longer vocalizing. The study area is also beyond the southern limit of the breeding range for Alder Flycatcher in British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1997).

Willow Flycatcher and Alder Flycatcher, originally considered subspecies of Trail's Flycatcher, were distinguished as separate species by distinct song-types ("fitz-bew" and "feebeo," respectively, by Stein 1958, 1963) and later accepted by the American Ornithologist's Union (1998).

#### Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*

**Status:** *Common in late spring and summer; breeds.*



**Figure 106.** The familiar "fitz-bew" song of the Willow Flycatcher is its main distinguishing feature and is heard regularly in summer in the riparian wetlands at the south end of Summit Lake. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 6 June 2012.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) does not assign a status to Willow Flycatcher (Figure 106) but does mention one nest with four large young found on 1 August 1931.

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** Most records are from wetland edges, including marshes and riparian zones along creeks and lakeshores.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Typically arrives in late May or early June. The earliest arrival date is 25 May 2002. **Summer:** It is seen and heard regularly through June and July, with numbers dropping off in August. The latest reported observation is 29 August 2009.

**Breeding:** No nests have been reported but the species typically builds its nest in a low shrub (Figure 107). Adults have been noted carrying nest material on 16 June 2009, food on 24 June 2009, and feeding fledged juveniles on 15 July 2002. There are two records of adults feeding a fledged Brown-headed Cowbird, on 11 July 1998 and 11 August 2007.



**Figure 107.** Willow Flycatcher is a common species across southern British Columbia but nests are a challenge to locate because they are built in the crotch of a low shrub, usually near water. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 26 June 2012.*

**Comments:** The best place to see this species is at Summit Lake or along Nakusp Creek where it passes through Brouse. The emphatic “fitz-bew” song of the Willow Flycatcher is a common sound during summer. See *Comments* for Alder Flycatcher.

### **Least Flycatcher** *Empidonax minimus*

**Status:** *Uncommon in late spring and early summer and very rare later in the summer; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** This is a species that favours mixed deciduous woodlands. Within the study area it is found primarily in low-lying areas adjacent to wetlands and in the woodlands adjacent to the agricultural fields in Brouse.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically arrives during the last week of May. One seen on 14 May 1988 was exceptional. **Summer:** It occurs regularly in very small numbers through most of June. There are very few records for July and only one for August (14 August 1994). As with others in the genus *Empidonax*, identification is difficult once the birds are no longer singing. This may, in part, contribute to the paucity of late season records.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records but singing birds have been noted annually through June and sometimes into July. A few pairs possibly breed occasionally.

**Comments:** The species has become more common in the last 10 or 12 years following continued range expansion in the province reported by Campbell et al. (1997). Prior to 2000, little evidence suggested that birds remained in the area for any length of time. Since then, however, males have been observed establishing territories and singing for three or four weeks. In 2005, one individual that was first noted on 4 June at Summit Lake was still singing in the same location on 6 July. Most records have been from Brouse or Summit Lake. In 2012, three singing males could be heard simultaneously at Box Lake.

### Hammond's Flycatcher

*Empidonax hammondi*

**Status:** *Common in late spring and summer and very rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) lists a single record for Hammond's Flycatcher (Figure 108), a specimen collected near Edgewood 17 June 1926.



**Figure 108.** Hammond's Flycatcher, a woodland species, is the most common flycatcher encountered in the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton study area. *Photo Hector Chu-Joy, Sr.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** The species occurs in coniferous and mixed coniferous-deciduous woodlands both at woodland edges and deep within the forests, from valley bottom to at least 1,000 m.

**Occurrence: Spring:** This flycatcher typically arrives in early May, but arrival dates are quite variable. The earliest date is 14 April 2008. It is well established by the second week of May when at least 10 may be found within a few kilometres of each other in suitable habitat. On 22 May 2000, while walking the six-kilometre stretch of an abandoned railway line near Summit Lake, 21 singing males were detected. **Summer:** Numbers remain strong through June and well into July, but detectability declines in August. **Autumn:** Virtually all have left by the end of August; there are four September records, the latest record is

on 4 September 2005.

**Breeding:** There are few nest records for Hammond's Flycatcher, but it is definitely a regular breeder in the area. Nest-building has been observed twice, 28 May 2005 and 14 June 2008, both at Box Lake. The 2005 nest contained eggs by 12 June. It is not known exactly when the young fledged but the nest was empty by 25 June. Elsewhere, adults have been observed carrying food in late June and an adult with three recently fledged young was observed on 5 July 2005.

**Comments:** This is by far the most common flycatcher in the study area. It can be found almost anywhere there is some coniferous forest. It is worth noting that Kelso found this species to be very rare, whereas he found Dusky Flycatcher to be quite common. In the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton area, the situation is reversed. The slightly drier and more open habitat in the valley bottoms near Edgewood may explain the higher status for Dusky Flycatcher, but it does not explain the near absence of Hammond's Flycatcher in the surrounding coniferous forests.

### Dusky Flycatcher

*Empidonax oberholseri*

**Status:** *Generally rare in summer, locally uncommon; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) mentions this flycatcher as "not uncommon summer migrant; breeds in the district." He further describes four nests located in the Edgewood area found between 1920 and 1928.

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** There is virtually no typical Dusky Flycatcher habitat, such as open forested environments, in the study area. The bird has, however, adapted to some mid-elevation clear-cuts where it occurs quite regularly in small numbers. It shows a preference for habitats in which a mix of coniferous and deciduous saplings is established. There have been scattered records from a variety of other habitats, including suburban back yards, marsh edges, and some recently cleared woodlands.

**Occurrence: Summer:** All records fall between 3 June and 15 July.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records, but the presence of multiple singing males in July suggests breeding.

**Comments:** It is not clear how long Dusky Flycatchers have been occupying forestry clear-cuts in the study area. There were no records in such situations prior to 2008. But it is uncertain whether they were simply overlooked or they have recently begun using such sites. See *Comments* for Hammond's Flycatcher.

### **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**

*Empidonax difficilis*

**Status:** *Rare in summer and casual in autumn.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention Pacific-slope Flycatcher (Figure 109).

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** All but one of the summer records are from mixed woodlands near water. These have included riparian areas, woodlands adjacent to agricultural fields, and lakeshore woodlands. The few autumn records are from varied habitats, including suburban gardens and

heavily forested areas.

**Occurrence: Summer:** There are scattered records throughout the summer months, but fewer as the season progresses. The only time a bird appeared to remain in one area for any length of time was in 2010 when a male was singing in a suburban garden in Nakusp from 23 June to at least 10 July. **Autumn:** There are three September records. Two were seen at different locations on 2 September 1990 and one at a third location on 3 September 1989.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** By 1980, the Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) complex was recognized to consist of two separate species based on size and plumage variations, voice, breeding ecology, and genetics (Johnson 1980, Johnson and Marten 1988). These included Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*E. difficilis*) and Cordilleran Flycatcher (*E. occidentalis*). The designation was officially announced in 1989 by the American Ornithologists' Union. The status of the latter species in British Columbia is unknown but it is thought to range east of the Rocky Mountains (Lowther 2000). However, there is an area of suspected sympatry in south-eastern portions of the province.



**Figure 109.** In interior British Columbia, Pacific-slope Flycatcher populations decrease from south to north with latitude. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Say's Phoebe**  
*Sayornis saya*

**Status:** *Rare in spring, casual in summer and autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention Say's Phoebe (Figure 110).



**Figure 110.** Although Say's Phoebe is a very irregular summer visitor, it has nested at least once in Brouse. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** The lone breeding record is from the agricultural fields in Brouse. **Non-breeding and Migration:** Most spring records are from the agricultural fields in Brouse. Autumn records are from varied open habitats such as sports fields and the cleared industrial areas near the mouth of Kuskanax Creek in Nakusp.

**Occurrence: Spring:** This is the earliest migrant amongst the flycatchers. It occurs from 22 March to the end of April. There are few May records. **Summer:** The only records for June and July are the breeding pair in 1999. Two August records may represent autumn migrants. **Autumn:** There are two records. Two birds were seen in New Denver on 1 September 1975, and a single bird was seen twice on the Nakusp Secondary School playing fields on 17 and 18 September 1986.

**Breeding:** There is one breeding record. A nest with four young was found in a farm shed in Brouse on 24 June 1999. The young had fledged by 1 July.

**Comments:** With the exception of the one nesting pair, no other birds were seen after the initial sighting. It would seem that birds generally do not remain in the area for more than a day or two.

**Western Kingbird**  
*Tyrannus verticalis*

**Status:** *Rare in spring and summer and casual in autumn.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso, (1926, 1931) describes Western Kingbird (Figure 111) as "Not rare in the Arrow Lakes district" but not as common as Eastern Kingbird.



**Figure 111.** Cultivated farmland is the most frequently used habitat of Western Kingbird in British Columbia and every year or two it occurs in the agricultural fields in Brouse. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** All but two or three of the records are from the agricultural fields in Brouse, Glenbank or Crescent Bay.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Western Kingbird is not recorded every year; when present it occurs from 30 April to the end of May. All records are of one or two birds. **Summer:** The May pattern is continued through June; the latest record is 1 July 1999. **Autumn:** There are three records: 2 September 2012, 4 September 2000, and 10 September 1978.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The drier, more open habitat normally favoured by this species is not available in the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton area.

**Eastern Kingbird**  
*Tyrannus tyrannus*

**Status:** *Rare in spring, uncommon in summer, and rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Eastern Kingbird (Figure 112) as a “summer migrant, breeds” in the Edgewood area. He goes on to say that this “small bird’s audacity is almost beyond belief: I have seen it when nesting drive off Robins and large Hawks, and on one occasion I noticed it in pursuit of an Osprey.”



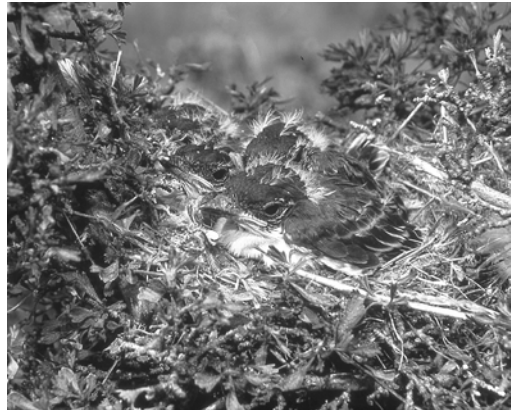
**Figure 112.** The highest numbers of Eastern Kingbird in British Columbia occur in the south-central and southeastern regions of the province. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** All records are from along, or near, Nakusp Creek as it passes through the agricultural fields in Brouse or from Summit Lake. **Migration**

**and Non-breeding:** It has been reported from a wide variety of locations and open habitats, but all were fairly close to water.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Eastern Kingbird generally arrives quite late in the season; there are only two records before the middle of May, one on 29 April 1989 the other 1 May 1997 (Marilyn Pasiaka, pers. comm.). **Summer:** A slight peak in numbers occurs during the first week of June, suggesting there is some migration through the district. By late June only one or two resident pairs remain. By late August small flocks of up to 15 may occur. **Autumn:** Departure is early and abrupt; there are no records after 6 September.

**Breeding:** A nest with well-feathered young (Figure 113) was observed 28 July 1991. Young may leave the nest between 14 and 21 days after hatching (Siderius 1994), suggesting that egg-laying in the study area commences in mid- to late June. Adults with dependent young have been observed between 5 and 19 August. Mixed flocks of adults and young are seen in late August.



**Figure 113.** Eastern Kingbird nest with well-feathered nestlings. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** Most of the suitable nesting habitat in Brouse is on private land and therefore difficult to access. It is quite likely that the species breeds more regularly than the records indicate. The presence of late summer flocks, numbering up to 15, apparently confirms this.



## SHRIKES

### Loggerhead Shrike

*Lanius ludovicianus*

**Status:** *Accidental.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) collected an adult female at Edgewood on 16 May 1917. This was his only record and at the time the second spring record for interior British Columbia (Brooks and Swarth 1925).

**Occurrence:** There is only one record. An adult was seen in Brouse on 10 June 1989.

**Comments:** Campbell et al. (1997) list Loggerhead Shrike as “*casual*” in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia, a status that also applies to the Creston valley where it has been recorded in all four seasons (Van Damme 2009).

### Northern Shrike

*Lanius excubitor*

**Status:** *Rare in spring and uncommon in late autumn and winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Northern Shrike (Figure 114) as “Uncommon. Recorded a few times in April and October” in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 114.** Northern Shrike is an autumn migrant that sometimes remains through the winter. *Photo by Gail Spittler.*

**Habitat: Migration:** The species was observed in a variety of open habitats including open fields, sewage ponds, transportation corridors, and in town sites. **Winter:** Virtually all records are from the open agricultural fields of Brouse.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Wintering birds may remain through March and into early April; the latest record is 14 April 1995. Records in March far exceed those of January and February, suggesting that many of these birds are in passage. Peak migration occurs during the last week of March; 55% of all spring sightings occurred between 23 and 31 March. **Autumn:** There is no evidence of a significant number of passage migrants as occurs in spring. At no time were two or more birds seen on the same day. Northern Shrikes may arrive as early as mid-October, but mid-November is more typical. **Winter:** Records are concentrated in December and early January. One bird, and very occasionally two, has been seen in Brouse throughout the winter.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Northern Shrike has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 19 times (63%) in 30 years.

## VIREOS

### Cassin's Vireo

*Vireo cassinii*

**Status:** *Uncommon (occasionally common) in spring, uncommon in summer and early autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes this species as “Summer migrant, not common” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Migration and Breeding:** All records are from coniferous forests or mixed coniferous/deciduous woodlands. The species occurs from valley bottom to about 1,500 m.

**Occurrence: Spring:** It typically arrives in late April; the earliest date is 19 April 1993. Peak migration

occurs in mid- to late May. **Summer:** The species occurs regularly throughout June and July. The data show a decline in numbers in early August, followed by an increase in late August, suggesting the arrival of migrants. **Autumn:** Migration is brief and departure is fairly abrupt; there are no records after 13 September.

**Breeding:** Although no nests have been found, there is other evidence that breeding does occur. Adults carrying food, and adults feeding fledged young, have been observed in late June and early July (e.g. an adult was observed feeding a juvenile with down on its head in Brouse on 10 July 2009).

**Comments:** In the early 1990s, Cassin's, Blue-headed, and Plumbeous vireos were considered the same species under the name "Solitary Vireo." Molecular studies by Murray et al. (1994) showed that the three conspecifics were actually all different species, which was accepted by the American Ornithologists' Union (1997). Two of the species occur in British Columbia: Blue-headed Vireo (*V. solitarius*) in the northeast and Cassin's Vireo throughout the rest of the province.

### Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

**Status:** Common in spring and summer and uncommon in early autumn; breeds.



**Figure 115.** Warbling Vireo is the most common and widely distributed vireo in the study area. Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 11 August 2007.

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) did not mention Warbling Vireo (Figure 115).

**Habitat: Migration and Breeding:** All records are from young deciduous woodlands or mixed coniferous/deciduous woodlands including roadside shrubs, suburban gardens, wooded edges along agricultural fields, and riparian zones. Birds have been reported from valley bottoms to at least 1,600 m.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Individuals sometimes start appearing in early May, the earliest is 3 May 1981, but the main influx begins during the second week of May, with numbers increasing throughout the month. The song of the Warbling Vireo is one of the most common sounds during late May and June. It would not be difficult to locate 15 or 20 during a morning's outing. **Summer:** The numbers observed in May continue through June and July, with some decline in August. **Autumn:** Autumn departure begins in late August and all are gone by early September. There are only two records after 4 September, the latest is 11 September 1999.

**Breeding:** Only one nest (Figure 116) has been reported. A nest with four well-feathered young was located in a willow (*Salix* sp.) near Little Wilson Lake on 1 July 1994. Adults with dependent young have been seen several times between 22 July and 5 August.



**Figure 116.** Searching for the hanging, compact nest of Warbling Vireo when leaves are off trees in autumn and winter may help with locating breeding sites the following summer. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Creston, BC, February 1994.

**Comments:** Despite the scarcity of breeding records, this species almost certainly breeds regularly in the study area.

**Red-eyed Vireo**  
*Vireo olivaceus*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring, common in summer, and uncommon in early autumn; probably breeds*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Red-eyed Vireo (Figure 117) as an “Abundant summer migrant, nesting freely” in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 117.** The incessant and robin-like song of the Red-eyed Vireo led to one of its colloquial names, “preacher-bird.” *Photo by Paul Whalen.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** All sightings are from deciduous woodlands or mixed coniferous/deciduous woodlands. Most sightings are from lower elevations near the valley bottoms. There are no sightings above 800 m.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Most years, Red-eyed Vireos do not arrive until early June; the earliest arrival date is 23 May 1992. **Summer:** It occurs regularly throughout June and July, with reports declining significantly in August. **Autumn:** Virtually all have left before the end of August; there are just five September records, the latest is 6 September 2009.

**Breeding:** No nests have been discovered but this species almost certainly breeds regularly in the study area. Territorial males are quite common throughout June and July. Adults carrying food have been observed on two occasions, 21 July 2010 and 26 July 2012.

**Comments:** The species is one of the latest Neotropical migrants to arrive in the study area. Red-eyed Vireos suddenly appear, giving the impression that the entire summer population arrives at once!

**JAYS, MAGPIES AND CROWS**

**Gray Jay**  
*Perisoreus canadensis*

**Status:** *Common resident at higher elevations. At lower elevations, very rare in spring, casual in summer, and uncommon in autumn and winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) describes Gray Jay (Figure 118) as “Resident: common, especially at higher elevations.”



**Figure 118.** Gray Jay is much more common at higher elevations throughout the year, but in some years it moves down into the valleys during winter. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: *Breeding and Non-breeding:*** Most sightings are from coniferous woodlands above the valley floor. The species has been recorded to at least 2,200 m in the sub-alpine. ***Winter:*** Most sightings are at lower elevations and the habitat is more varied; it includes backyard feeding stations, agricultural lands, mixed woodlands, and coniferous forests.

**Occurrence:** Due to limited access into high elevations, there are very few upland records for Gray Jay outside the summer season. It is presumed, however, that it occurs year round in those areas. ***Spring (low elevation):*** Several early March records would appear to be birds that overwintered in the valley; there are very few other records below about 1,000 m. ***Summer (low elevation):*** There are a few scattered records for June, July and August. ***Summer (upper elevations):*** Occurs regularly. ***Autumn (low elevation):*** Occurs sporadically through September and early October. In late October and November of some years, a small number occupy the valley bottoms. ***Winter (low elevation):*** Most years one or two appear at feeders, particularly those adjacent to the forested hillsides away from the lake.

**Breeding:** The species is known to start nesting in British Columbia in mid-March (Paul 1959). The upper elevations, where most breeding occurs, are largely inaccessible during the breeding season. As a result there are very few breeding records. One pair was observed building a nest near Nakusp at about 600 m. Nest-building was observed on 28 March 2005 and the nest appeared to be complete by 1 April, but no further activity was noted. The nest site was in a young cedar tree immediately adjacent to a private driveway. The home owners were away during the building stages but returned on 1 April. Perhaps the increased traffic along the driveway was a factor in nest abandonment. Elsewhere, mixed groups of adults and immature birds have been noted several times in June.

**Comments:** Many winter sightings have been at one particular feeder in Crescent Bay on Upper Arrow Lake. Since the owner of that feeder passed away in the early 1990s, there have been fewer low-elevation sightings.

Four subspecies of Gray Jay occur in British Columbia (Strickland and Ouellet 1993). The race resident in the study area is *P. c. bicolor* (Campbell et al. 1997). Recognizing various subspecies in the field is difficult as there is much variation in plumage characteristics among individuals within a subspecies.

Gray Jay has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 22 times (73%) in 30 years.

### **Steller's Jay** *Cyanocitta stelleri*

**Status:** *Common year round resident; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Steller's Jay (Figure 119) as "Very numerous, especially in winter, but does not appear to breed." In his 1931 paper, however, he describes a nest located on 31 May 1926. He writes, "...at Langbells Ranch a pair attempted twice to build & nest but as the old birds were a nuisance coming into the kitchen & stealing food the nests were destroyed."

**Habitat: *Breeding and Non-Breeding:*** Coniferous or mixed woodlands are favoured during most of the year. Steller's Jays have been recorded from valley bottom to at least 2,100 m. ***Winter:*** Many move into towns where they occur regularly at feeders.

**Occurrence: *Year round:*** Steller's Jay occurs regularly. In late autumn it tends to form flocks, typically five to 15 birds, which remain together through the winter.

**Breeding:** Based on the resident status of this species, it seems almost certain that Steller's Jays do breed in the study area but no nests have been found. Fledged juveniles have been reported at least twice in July.

**Comments:** Of the 16 subspecies of Steller's Jay recognized in North America, three occur in British Columbia (Greene et al. 1998, Campbell et al. 1997). Two forms are restricted to the coast while *C. s. annectens* ranges throughout the interior of the province. Identifying features and intergrades of subspecies are discussed by Stevenson (1934) and



**Figure 119.** Steller's Jay is resident and in winter can often be found in small flocks. The species often frequents bird feeders. *Photo by Paul Whalen.*

Wiebe (1995). Steller's Jay became the official bird of British Columbia in 1987.

Steller's Jay has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count in each of the 30 years of the counts.

### **Blue Jay**

*Cyanocitta cristata*

**Status:** *Rare in autumn, very rare in winter, casual in early spring.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention Blue Jay (Figure 120).

**Habitat:** All records have been from residential areas, usually in association with bird feeders.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are two records. One individual, last seen on 6 April 1989, had spent the entire winter of 1988/89 at a feeder in Glenbank, in Nakusp. Two years later, three birds last seen on 27 April 1991, had been in the area since the previous October (Campbell et. al. 1997). *Autumn:* It has been reported from 25 September to the end of November.



**Figure 120.** In October, 1990, three Blue Jays arrived in Nakusp, over-wintered, and remained until 27 April 1991. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, February 1991. BC Photo 4012 (see Campbell and Stirling 1971).*

However, almost 70% of the records for all months of the year are from October. Blue Jay has been reported in 11 different years between 1975 and 2012. **Winter:** Most of the reported autumn birds had left before the beginning of December. On at least three occasions, from one to three birds remained all winter. There have also been two years, 2003 and 2005, in which

birds have apparently arrived in the area in January or February.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** This species is expanding its range in southeastern British Columbia where breeding has been documented in the East Kootenays near Cranbrook and Kimberley since the 1990s and more recently in Creston and Castlegar (Campbell et al. 1997, Van Damme 2012).

Blue Jay has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count twice (7%) in 30 years.

**Clark's Nutcracker**  
*Nucifraga columbiana*

**Status:** *Uncommon resident at higher elevations; occurs irregularly at low elevations; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) says of Clark's Nutcracker (Figure 121), "They cannot be called common in the [Edgewood] district & seem to be great wanderers."

**Habitat: Summer:** Most records are from higher elevations in the Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir (ESSF) zone; nutcrackers occur to at least 2,200 m. Lower elevation sightings have been from a variety of locations but are generally associated with coniferous trees. **Non-breeding and Winter:** It has occurred in towns, agricultural areas, and lowland coniferous forests.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The sub-alpine zone where nutcrackers spend most of their time is virtually inaccessible in spring, making status impossible to assess. There are scattered records for March, April, and May at lower elevations. **Summer:** Low elevation records continue to be sporadic and unpredictable. An exceptional flock of 11 was seen in Brouse on 25 August 2007. The species occurs quite regularly at higher elevations through the season. **Autumn:** Some years some birds move down slope, beginning in late August and sometimes continuing well into November. Although this usually involves just one or two birds, groups of up to 20 have been reported. **Winter:** On a few occasions, up to five birds have been reported in towns, sometimes at feeders, during winter. A group of 13 seen on 13 January 1991 was unusual.



**Figure 121.** Although resident at higher elevations, small numbers of Clark's Nutcrackers are seen infrequently below 500 m elevation. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

**Breeding:** Breeding has not been documented, but the species likely does breed at higher elevations.

**Comments:** There is limited access to upper elevation habitats in the study area. More field work in these areas would probably result in a different status assigned for this species. The lack of a significant number of lowland winter records suggests that most remain in forests at upper elevations throughout the year.

While not a regular latitudinal migrant, Clark's Nutcracker exhibits seasonal altitudinal movements related to food sources as well as periodic irruptions from its normal year-round range (Tomback 1998).

Clark's Nutcracker has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count eight times (27%) in 30 years.

### **Black-billed Magpie**

*Pica hudsonia*

**Status:** *Accidental in summer, casual in autumn and accidental in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) reports that Black-billed Magpie is "...scarce though resident in the neighbourhood with the exception of the breeding season, at this time they are not seen." Earlier, Kelso (1926) reported a large influx in 1925 when flocks of up to 40 were seen in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat:** The species has been recorded in agricultural fields, on a golf course, at the creek mouth at Burton, and from within town sites.

**Occurrence:** **Summer:** A single bird was reported 4 and 5 June, 1993. **Autumn:** There are six records scattered between 16 September and 16 November. **Winter:** There is one record, a single bird observed near Nakusp on 29 December 1991.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Although Kelso reports that this species was not numerous in Edgewood, he does suggest that they occurred regularly. This is certainly not the case today, neither in the study area nor in Edgewood.

Black-billed Magpie has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count once (3%) in 30 years.

### **American Crow**

*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

**Status:** *Very common resident; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) says of American Crow (Figure 122), "It is certainly not a resident on the Arrow Lakes; it is a summer visitor absent in winter, it breeds in sparse numbers but cannot even in summer be called very numerous."



**Figure 122.** Once considered migratory in many interior locations, American Crow has become a resident species even in northern locations. It has adapted well to human settlements. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** All nests have been in human-influenced habitats. The trees in community parks in Nakusp and New Denver, and the golf courses in those towns are common nesting sites. It also uses the agricultural areas in Brouse. **Non-breeding and Winter:** It continues to use habitats near human habitation, and is rarely seen far from towns. Habitats include lake shore, towns, agricultural areas, and golf courses. Winter birds are generally restricted to town sites and landfills.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The species occurs regularly in flocks of up to 25 in March and early April. Flocks disperse later in April and it generally occurs in pairs or small feeding groups for the remainder of the season. *Summer:* This pattern continues into the summer until young birds begin to appear; family groups remain together until late August when the larger flocks begin to form. *Autumn:* It occurs regularly in flocks throughout the season. *Winter:* Flocks continue to occur within towns, but most have left the rural areas. Some migrate out of the study area.

**Breeding:** Breeds regularly. Most nests have been in conifers. Nest building begins at least as early as 16 April. Nests with young have been reported between 10 May and 13 July. Fledged young have been observed prior to the end of May but dependent young were still being seen in August. American Crows are generally single-brooded; it is unclear whether these late nests are re-nesting attempts resulting from earlier failures or simply late starters.

**Comments:** Until the early 1980s, many American Crows left the study area in winter. Since then, however, numbers in winter have increased steadily and now there is much less difference between the size of summer and winter populations.

American Crow has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count every year in numbers ranging from 14 to 142 birds.

### Common Raven *Corvus corax*



**Figure 123.** Common Raven is the most conspicuous and widely distributed passerine year-round. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Status:** *Very common resident; breeds*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) describes Common Raven (Figure 123) as a “common resident that breeds.”

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** The species occurs in all habitats from valley bottom to alpine. *Winter:* Numbers in towns, agricultural areas, and landfill sites increase significantly in late autumn and winter.

**Occurrence:** Occurs in all seasons.

**Breeding:** Common Raven breeds commonly although few actual nests have been recorded. Nests with young were seen between 21 April and 15 June. Family groups occurred regularly throughout the summer. Known nests have been in large conifers (Figure 124) or on cliff ledges.



**Figure 124.** This Common Raven nest, located near the top of a tall conifer tree, has been used more than once in at least several years. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 24 July 2012.*



**Comments:** The species is regularly seen patrolling highways for road-killed animals throughout the year.

Common Raven has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count every year in numbers ranging from 49 to 308.

## LARKS

### Horned Lark

*Eremophila alpestris*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring and rare in autumn; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) discusses two subspecies. He describes “Pallid” Horned Lark (*E. a. articola*) as “a rather common fall migrant”, and “Dusky” Horned Lark (*E. a. merrilli*) as, “Winter migrant; commoner than the Pallid Horned.” However, I find his comparison to be somewhat suspect. His detailed text (Kelso 1931) describes only two encounters with “Dusky” Horned Lark in the Edgewood area, but several with Pallid Horned Lark.

**Habitat: Migration:** All records are from open areas including golf courses, agricultural fields, and grassy or weedy areas near the major lakes. **Summer:** In alpine habitat immediately adjacent to the study area, the species has been recorded throughout the summer and includes sightings of adults with young. It is possible that Horned Larks breed, but access to suitable alpine habitat is quite restricted

**Occurrence: Spring:** It occurs irregularly between 4 March and 28 April. All reports are of one or two birds except for a flock of 24 seen on 21 April 1984. **Autumn:** The species occurs between 31 August and 11 November. Most records are of groups of fewer than 10 birds. One notable exception is a flock of more than 50 seen on 29 September 1986.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Most sightings have been somewhat fortuitous. Small groups feeding quietly in agricultural fields will occasionally rise up and move to another

part of the field. Once they settle again, they become almost invisible. If not there to see this movement, the entire flock would remain undetected as these fields are on private property and generally quite large. I suspect many go undetected and that their status, particularly in autumn, is higher than that stated here. Recent personal data, however, suggest that Horned Larks may not be passing through the area quite as often as they once did. There are 40 records between 1975 and 2012 but since 2002 the species has been recorded only three times.

The American Ornithologists’ Union (1957) lists 21 subspecies of Horned Lark for North America of which 15 occur in the west. The latter races are smaller and paler than the eastern and northern populations. Four geographic subspecies occur in British Columbia (Beason 1995, Campbell et al. 1997). The “Streaked” Horned Lark (*E. a. strigata*) occurs only on the southwest mainland coast (see Camfield et al. 2011 for recent status). On the mainland interior, the three subspecies are “Pallid” Horned Lark (*E. a. articola*), “Dusky” Horned Lark (*E. a. merrilli*), and “Arctic” Horned Lark (*E. a. hoyti*). The subspecies most commonly encountered in the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton study area is the “Pallid” subspecies.

## SWALLOWS

### Tree Swallow

*Tachycineta bicolor*

**Status:** *Very common in spring, common in summer, and very rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Tree Swallow (Figure 125) as an “abundant summer migrant; breeds freely” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** Feeding flocks are typically seen over lakes or agricultural fields. **Breeding:** Nests near marshes, around lakes, and in agricultural fields.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically arrives in late March, although it can be quite late in some years. The earliest date is 23 March 1997. Peak movement is in mid-April when flocks of two or three hundred

are recorded, often mixed with other swallow species. **Summer:** It occurs regularly in June and most of July but there is a marked decline in numbers beginning in late July. There are few August records. **Autumn:** Most are gone by the end of August. The latest recorded date is 6 September 1985.



**Figure 125.** Tree Swallow is a common summer visitor, usually seen foraging over wetlands and agricultural fields. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Breeding:** Tree Swallows breed commonly in nest boxes (Figure 126) and natural tree cavities. The birds start inspecting nest cavities in early April, but nesting often does not begin for a few weeks. Nest contents are often difficult to determine, but known nests with eggs have been recorded between 24 May and 5 June; nests with young between 27 May and 3 July. On 29 May 1973, Rev. John Stainer reported observing a Brown-headed Cowbird entering a nest cavity occupied by Tree Swallows, but the outcome of the nest attempt is unknown. Studies conducted in Ontario (Mills 1988) suggest that cowbirds are rarely fledged from Tree Swallow nests.

**Comments:** Tree Swallows can be quite aggressive in their search for nest sites. In 1992, I observed a pair of Tree Swallows harassing a female Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) at a nest box. The bluebird eventually left the nest and the swallow immediately flew in. It was later discovered that the

bluebird had been incubating eggs. The swallows built a new nest on top of the bluebird eggs and raised their own young.



**Figure 126.** Each year, Tree Swallows use nest boxes set up in agricultural areas such as Brouse and Crescent Bay. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Brouse, 20 May 2009.*

Erskine (1979) estimated that artificial boxes provide nest sites for about 20,000 pairs of Tree Swallows in Canada or about two percent of the estimated national population of one million pairs (see Robertson et al. 1992).

### **Violet-green Swallow** *Tachycineta thalassina*

**Status:** *Very common in spring, common in summer, and abundant in very early autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Violet-green Swallow (Figure 127) as an “abundant summer migrant, our commonest swallow” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** Early spring arrivals have been seen flying over agricultural fields. At this time, small lakes are still ice-covered, but as soon as they thaw, flocks are often seen foraging low over the water. Autumn flocks occur adjacent to fields or lakes wherever utility lines provide suitable staging areas. **Breeding:** All recorded breeding has occurred in human influenced habitats – town sites or farmlands.



**Figure 127.** Violet-green Swallow, a common summer visitor, nests in boxes as well as holes and cavities in old buildings such as this one on a storage shed near the Nakusp Hot Springs. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 7 May 2010.*

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* Arrival seems to occur in two stages. Each year a few birds arrive early, well ahead of the main influx. The earliest date is 5 March 2005, but mid-March is more usual. Following this brief appearance of one or two birds, no more are seen until the last few days of the month, or in early April in some years. Peak migration occurs between mid-April and early May when flocks of 100 or more are seen. By mid-May, the migrants have passed through and only the breeding birds remain. *Summer:* The species occurs in breeding pairs or in small groups through June and into July. By mid-July birds begin to gather into flocks and by early August these sometimes number several hundred. *Autumn:* Most years the large flocks have left by the end of August. A very large flock estimated to contain 500 birds seen at Burton 1 September 2007, and another of 200 at New Denver on 6 September 1982, are exceptions. The latest recorded date is 9 September 1989.

**Breeding:** Nests commonly in nest boxes, natural cavities in trees, and sometimes in cliff cavities. Nest contents are not always easily determined, but nests

with eggs have been observed between 25 April and 16 May (Figure 128) and nests with young between 19 June and 10 July.

**Comments:** The species is most often encountered around towns or farms.



**Figure 128.** The nest of Violet-green Swallow is a loose collection of grasses with an assortment of usually white feathers. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

## Northern Rough-winged Swallow

*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and uncommon in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) reports Northern Rough-winged Swallow (Figure 129) as a “Common summer migrant. Nests in the [Edgewood] district.”

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** It occurs over a wide range of habitats including lakes, creeks, fields, marshes, and forest openings. **Breeding:** Nests sites are generally in steep banks that occur beside lakes and along road-cuts.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically arrives during the third week of April; the earliest date is 9 April 1978. The migrating flocks are generally not as large as other swallow species and rarely exceed 20 birds. They may join the large mixed-species flocks on occasion. There is no discernible peak in migration numbers. **Summer:** Numbers remain fairly constant through June and July with some decreases noted during August. **Autumn:** Many have left the

area by late August, with only scattered sightings in September; all are gone by 9 September. In 1976, two individuals were recorded in Nakusp on 7 November (Campbell et. al. 1997).

**Breeding:** Nests regularly in the area. Birds are seen entering suitable nest sites as early as 25 April. No data are available on nests with eggs or young. Dependent young still being fed by parents are observed as late as 22 July. Most reports of nests have been of adults entering crevices in rock faces along roads and highways. Other nest sites have included the interior of an abandoned hot water tank and the open end of an exposed pipe. Elsewhere in the province, Northern Rough-winged Swallow is known to nest in American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) lodges (Campbell 2007).

**Comments:** The species is most often encountered when observers are driving along the highways adjacent to rocky cliffs. Birds may flash across the road as they come and go from their nests in the rock crevices. They seem to have adapted to avoid collisions with passing vehicles as no dead birds have ever been found.



**Figure 129.** Northern Rough-winged Swallow generally nests as pairs, or in small numbers, in rock cuts with crevices beside roads and visits agricultural fields to forage. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Bank Swallow**  
*Riparia riparia*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, summer, and autumn.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes this species as “widely distributed” but “not very numerous” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat:** The bird has been seen in a variety of open locations, indicating no particular habitat preference.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are three records: 17 and 18 May 2002, 21 May 1996 and 25 May 2003. *Summer:* There are two records. Several were noted at Burton 14 July 1995, and four or five were seen at Nakusp 23 July 1995. *Autumn:* There are two records of a single bird: 3 September 1992 in Nakusp and 9 September 1989 in Brouse.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records. A small group was observed investigating a sand bank in a gravel pit near Nakusp, but no nesting occurred.

**Comments:** The scarcity of records for this species is likely due to the lack of suitable nest sites in the area. The closest known colony is to the south in the Slocan River valley.

**Cliff Swallow**  
*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and uncommon in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) reported no records of Cliff Swallow (Figure 130) for the Edgewood area. He does mention one known breeding locale much to the south of Edgewood in the vicinity of Syringa Creek.

**Habitat:** *Migration and Non-breeding:* Spring flocks occur regularly over fields and lakes. *Breeding:* All nest sites have been on buildings in agricultural areas, in towns, or under bridges.



**Figure 130.** Soon after arrival in late April and early May, Cliff Swallows start building their mud pellet, bowl-shaped nests under the eaves of buildings and overhangs of bridges. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* Small numbers begin arriving in mid-April but the arrival date is much less consistent than for other swallow species. The earliest date is 6 April 1995. The larger numbers don't arrive until late April; flock size is generally fewer than 20 birds. *Summer:* Breeding birds are seen regularly in June and early July with post-breeding flocks beginning to form in mid-July. There are few August records. *Autumn:* Departure is in early September; there are no records after 14 September. However, on four separate occasions, Cliff Swallows have appeared in November. In 1981, 1982, 1996 and 1997 up to eight birds were present between 4 and 15 November. In 1982, the birds were seen repeatedly between 4 and 7 November (Campbell et. al. 1997).

**Breeding:** Most nesting colonies are relatively small, up to 25 nests. Contents of nests are difficult to determine but active nests with eggs and young have occurred between 6 May and 4 July.

**Comments:** Cliff Swallow numbers have declined dramatically in recent years. Prior to 2000, up to 25 pairs nested regularly in Brouse with smaller colonies elsewhere. Since 2007, there have been scattered sightings in Brouse and no reported breeding. One barn in Crescent Bay still has a small colony of three or four pairs.

Between 1966 and 1991, data from Breeding Bird Survey transects suggested no overall changes in total populations across North America but caution is required for interpretation as colonies are locally distributed and site occupancy varies greatly between years (Brown and Brown 1995).

**Barn Swallow**  
*Hirundo rustica*

**Status:** *Common in spring, summer, and autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention Barn Swallow (Figure 131).



**Figure 131.** Unlike most swallows, Barn Swallow frequents coniferous forests wherever a bit of open habitat provides suitable foraging and nesting sites. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat:** The Barn Swallow is less restricted to valley bottoms than other swallow species. It has been recorded at least to 1,900 m. It occurs in towns, around farms, adjacent to lakes, in marshes, at the local ski hill, and in small openings in forested areas.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* This is one of the last swallows to arrive. Although a few are seen in April (earliest date 15 April 1978) most don't arrive until early May. It does not occur in flocks, and numbers rarely exceed 10 birds. *Summer:* Numbers remain constant but still relatively low through June and July. Adults and fledged young begin forming flocks in August. *Autumn:* Flocks of up to 50 have occurred in early September with numbers dwindling as the month progresses; the latest date recorded is 27 September 1985.

**Breeding:** Barn Swallow is a regular breeder. Nests with eggs (Figure 132) have been recorded from 24 May to 18 August and nests with young from 10 June to 2 September. All nests have been on human-made structures including buildings, bridges, and ferries.



**Figure 132.** Unlike the white eggs of our five species of cavity and burrow-nesting swallows, Barn Swallow and Cliff Swallow lay creamy-white eggs spotted with reddish brown. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** There are three ferries that cross Arrow Lake: at Needles, Arrow Park, and Galena Bay. Only the Arrow Park ferry is within the study area. Barn Swallows nest regularly on each of these ferries, despite the fact that the vessels are in almost constant motion. The lake at Galena Bay is several kilometres wide yet the swallows are quite content to follow the ferry back and forth all day long. On two of the ferries, birds have built nests on the underside of the loading ramp. When the ferry is in motion, this ramp is raised to an angle sharply above the water; during loading and unloading, the ramp is horizontal!

## CHICKADEES

### Black-capped Chickadee

*Poecile atricapilla*

**Status:** *Common year round resident; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Black-capped Chickadee (Figure 133) as a “Common resident, breeds freely” in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 133.** A common year-round resident, Black-capped Chickadee is quick to take advantage of bird feeding stations in winter. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 18 November 2006.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** This chickadee is found in gardens, agricultural areas, riparian areas and other shrubby or mixed woodlands; it tends to avoid the mature coniferous forests, except at the edges.

**Occurrence:** It occurs in all months of the year but is reported slightly more often in winter.

**Breeding:** The species breeds regularly in nest boxes and tree cavities. Excavation has been observed between 27 March and 26 April, nests with eggs between 23 April and 24 May, and nests with young between 19 May and 22 July.

**Comments:** Although this is primarily a lowland species, it has been recorded to at least 1,200 m. In winter many birds move into the towns where both natural and feeder foods are readily available. This makes the birds easier to detect and probably accounts

for the apparent increase in winter numbers.

Black-capped Chickadee has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count every year in numbers ranging from 18 to 123.

### Mountain Chickadee

*Poecile gambeli*

**Status:** *Common resident at higher elevations and very rare in autumn, winter, and spring at lower elevations; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) mentions Mountain Chickadee (Figure 134) but gives very little detail other than to say it is “not nearly as plentiful” as the Black-capped Chickadee in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 134.** In some years, a few Mountain Chickadees move down from their usual subalpine habitats into the valleys in winter. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 17 February 2007.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** All records are from the Engelmann Spruce/Sub-alpine Fir forests between about 1,400 m and the tree-line at 2,100 m. **Winter:** Most records are from backyards and gardens where bird feeders are present and agricultural areas.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Data from upper elevations are very sparse for this season. Lower elevation records are from March and early April and represent birds that overwintered in the valleys. **Summer:** All records are from upper elevations, generally above 1,500 m. There are no lowland records. **Autumn:** Some years

a few individuals wander down from their upland breeding habitats and into the valley bottoms; this may occur any time after mid-October. One 17 September 1994 record was exceptional. **Winter:** It is not recorded in the valleys every winter, but when they are present only one or two birds are reported.

**Breeding:** Although no actual nests have been found, there are records of adults feeding fledged juveniles and adults carrying food between late June and late July. In 2009 two nests were discovered a short distance outside the study area. Each contained at least two young, one on 22 July, the other on 27 July.

**Comments:** Mountain Chickadee has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count nine times (30%) in 30 years.

### Chestnut-backed Chickadee

*Poecile rufescens*

**Status:** *Uncommon resident; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) mentions Chestnut-backed Chickadee (Figure 135) but gives very little detail other than to say it is “not nearly as plentiful” as the Black-capped Chickadee in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 135.** Chestnut-backed Chickadee is most common in the wet coastal forests of the province but also occurs locally in the interior wet belt. *Photo by Gail Spittler.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** In or near the valley bottoms; habitats are varied and include suburban gardens, forest edges in agricultural lands, riparian areas, and golf courses. Above the valley floor, it occurs in coniferous forests to about 1,450 m. **Winter:** Some years there is a significant influx into towns where they may occur quite regularly at bird feeders.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species occurs in small numbers irregularly throughout the season. **Summer:** Numbers are irregular with no discernible change between spring and summer. There is a slight upslope movement in late spring and early summer. **Autumn:** Numbers increase in mid-October, likely resulting from some birds moving down slope prior to winter. **Winter:** As is the case with most species that frequent bird feeders, there are a disproportionate number of winter records. Sightings continue to be somewhat irregular, however. Some winters they seem to be quite numerous at feeders in towns and around farms, whereas other years they are virtually absent.

**Breeding:** In 1999 a pair was observed in a suburban garden in Nakusp, raising 2 broods in the same cavity in a cedar hedge. Young first noted on 26 May, left the nest on 11 or 12 June. The nest again contained young on 30 June, which were still in the nest on 13 July. No further observations were made. Elsewhere, excavation has been observed as early as mid-April. Adults with fledged young have been observed on several occasions between 11 June and 15 July.

**Comments:** The previously mentioned variation in winter numbers from year to year may apply to other seasons as well, particularly at lower elevations. While breeding season records are never numerous in the valley bottom, there have been some seasons with no records at all. It is unclear whether these vagaries represent changes in overall population numbers or just altitudinal shifts in distribution.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 29 times (97%) in 30 years, in numbers ranging from three to 53.



**Boreal Chickadee**  
*Poecile hudsonicus*

**Status:** *Uncommon resident at high elevations; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) mentions Boreal Chickadee (Figure 136) but gives very little detail other than to say it is “not nearly as plentiful” as the Black-capped Chickadee in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 136.** Boreal Chickadee is at home year-round in subalpine habitats. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** It occurs exclusively in the Engelmann Spruce/Sub-alpine Fir forests from about 1,500 m to the tree-line.

**Occurrence: Summer and Autumn:** The status assigned to this species is based on observations from adjacent areas. This is an upland species that is rarely observed much below 1,800 m. Access to such elevation is very limited within the study area. All available records are from July, August, and early September. **Winter:** There is no evidence of any down-slope movement in the winter. It should be noted, however, that any possible altitudinal movement outside the summer season would likely go undetected.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records, but based on observations in similar habitat nearby, it seems likely that breeding does occur.

**Comments:** Boreal Chickadee has a very large range in North America but it is restricted almost completely to the boreal forests of Canada and the northern United States, however it is widespread throughout the interior of British Columbia (Campbell et al. 1997). Godfrey (1986) recognized five subspecies in Canada and assigned *P. h. columbianus* as the form found in British Columbia. [See Ficken et al. (1996) for additional information on the geographical variation in this species].

In British Columbia, the highest numbers of Boreal Chickadee in winter occur in the Southern Interior Mountains Ecoprovince along the southeastern border of the province (Campbell et al. 1997).

## NUTHATCHES

**Red-breasted Nuthatch**  
*Sitta canadensis*

**Status:** *Common resident; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) makes one brief statement about Red-breasted Nuthatch (Figure 137) in the Edgewood area: “This beautiful bird is a common resident.”



**Figure 137.** Red-breasted Nuthatch is a common resident and throughout the year frequents a wide variety of habitats from valley bottom mixed forests to subalpine meadows. *Photo by Gail Spitzer.*

**Habitat: Year round:** Red-breasted Nuthatch occurs in a wide range of habitats from back gardens in the lowlands to over 2,100 m. In all cases at least some coniferous trees were present.

**Occurrence:** It occurs regularly in all seasons. As with other common feeder birds, the data show a bias toward winter.

**Breeding:** Despite the common status of this species, only a few nests have been documented. Excavation has been observed as early as 22 April. Two nests with eggs were recorded on 26 April 1972 and 20 June 2009; four nests with young were noted on 19 May 2012, 3 June 2007, 12 June 2003, and 22 July 1995. Adults feeding fledged young have been recorded between 25 June and 6 August. Nests are typically observed in dead trees or broken-off stumps.

**Comments:** Red-breasted Nuthatch has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count every year, in numbers ranging from eight to 65.

**White-breasted Nuthatch**  
*Sitta carolinensis*

**Status:** *Casual in spring and autumn and very rare in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) recorded White-breasted Nuthatch (Figure 138) only once in the Edgewood area, on 17 October 1913.



**Figure 138.** White-breasted Nuthatch is an uncommon visitor in winter where it frequents bird feeders. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat:** Virtually all observations have been made at bird feeders in Nakusp or New Denver.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are two records. A bird that spent the winter in Nakusp remained until at least 2 April 2001. In 1987 an individual that had not been reported during the winter was observed at a feeder on 2 April. *Autumn:* There are two records. In 2000 a single bird first noted on 5 October remained all winter. In 2003 another individual first observed on 4 October, remained until at least January. *Winter:* On six separate occasions, one or two birds have remained for all or part of the winter.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** When present during winter, the species does not visit feeders with the same regularity as the Red-breasted Nuthatch. One or two short visits per day seem to be the norm, whereas the Red-breasted Nuthatch comes and goes all day.

White-breasted Nuthatch has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count five times (17%) in 30 years.

**CREEPERS**

**Brown Creeper**  
*Certhia americana*

**Status:** *Uncommon resident; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) merely notes Brown Creeper (Figure 139) as “A not uncommon resident” in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 139.** In the interior of southern British Columbia, Brown Creeper is widely distributed and resident in coniferous forests. It probably breeds locally. *Photo by Kevin Atkins.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** Most breeding season records are away from the towns and major valleys. Creepers prefer the coniferous slopes above the valley floor. **Non-breeding:** There is a down-slope movement following the breeding season. Birds are frequently seen in town during autumn and winter where they frequent mixed and coniferous woodlots.

**Occurrence: Spring:** This quiet and somewhat secretive species is not seen every day, but probably could be with effort. **Summer:** There are fewer sightings around the towns and lakes as summer progresses. **Autumn:** Numbers increase somewhat in late September and remain at this level through the season. **Winter:** The data would indicate that Brown Creeper is more common in winter than during other seasons. This is at least partially due to a slight influx of Brown Creepers into towns and farmland. They also visit feeders at this time.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records, but the number of sightings and the presence of singing males strongly suggest that breeding does occur.

**Comments:** The species is probably more common than the data would indicate. Its inconspicuous nature undoubtedly results in under-detection. This is compounded during the breeding season when the birds move away from populated habitats and disperse into the surrounding forests. Brown Creepers frequently mix with small flocks of Golden-crowned Kinglets, particularly in winter.

Brown Creeper has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 27 times (90%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to eight birds.

## WRENS

### Rock Wren

*Salpinctes obsoletus*

**Status:** *Accidental in spring and casual in summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat:** All observations were made along the rocky

east shore of Arrow Lake.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There is one record. A single bird was seen once on 1 May 1977 at Nakusp. **Summer:** There are two records. A single bird was seen several times at Nakusp from 6 June to 13 July 1978. Another was seen at Burton on 23 June 1984.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The closest known population of Rock Wren in the West Kootenay is along the rocky cliffs in the valley between Syringa Creek and Deer Park, about 100 km south of Nakusp (Campbell et al. 1987).

### House Wren

*Troglodytes aedon*

**Status:** *Casual in spring and accidental in summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) did not record this species during his first three years in Edgewood. His first sighting was in May 1916, but by 1926 he described the species as "...now common. Breeds freely."

**Habitat:** There are not enough records to accurately describe habitat, but all individuals were observed singing from small trees or shrubs in residential gardens.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are two records. In 1993 a male was singing in Brouse on 16 May. In 1994 a male was singing in Nakusp on 6 and 13 May. **Summer:** There is one record, a male singing in a garden south of Nakusp on 5 June 2010.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** House Wren is a rare species anywhere in the West Kootenay (Campbell et al. 1997, Van Damme 2012).

**Pacific Wren**  
*Troglodytes pacificus*

**Status:** *Common resident; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) reports that Pacific Wren (Figure 140) [formerly Winter Wren] was, “Common until the winter of 1915-16, when an intense spell of frost was followed by a sudden thaw; the creeks melted and the brush became saturated with moisture, while next night the temperatures fell to below zero [Fahrenheit]. Apparently the tiny birds were frozen to their perches and the surrounding brush; anyhow, they were suddenly wiped out over a very large area, extending the length of the lakes and far into the surrounding country. They did not begin to recover their numbers till 1920.”



**Figure 140.** The explosive song of the resident Pacific Wren is a common sound during spring and early summer. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, near Nakusp Hot Springs, 25 May 2010.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** The species prefers damp coniferous sites, frequently in association with abundant deadfall or brush piles. Pacific Wrens have been recorded from valley bottom to at least 1,900 m.

**Occurrence:** There are far more records during May, June and July, but clearly singing birds have biased the data. Pacific Wren occurs regularly throughout the year.

**Breeding:** Despite the year-round status of Pacific Wren, only two active nests have been reported. A wren entering a nest in the upturned root of a fallen tree (date unknown) was observed near Nakusp. A second nest was built inside a pair of snowshoes hanging on a porch wall in Crescent Bay in early June 1990 (Figure 141). Perhaps human traffic on the porch was too much as this nest was later abandoned.



**Figure 141.** A pair of snowshoes hanging on a wall in a residential porch was a highly unusual nest site for a pair of Pacific Wrens. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Crescent Bay, June 1990. BC Photo 4008.*

**Comments:** Recent research has revealed that there are two species of “Winter” Wrens in British Columbia that are genetically and phenotypically distinct (Toews and Irwin 2008, Toews and Irwin 2012). The species inhabiting most of British Columbia has been named Pacific Wren, whereas Winter Wren (*T. hiemalis*) occurs only in the northeast region of the province.

Pacific Wren has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 27 times (90%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to eight.

**Marsh Wren**  
*Cistothorus palustris*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, accidental in summer, casual in autumn, and accidental in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat:** All sightings have been from small patches of wetland where a few sedges have established or from patches of tall rank grasses.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are six records between 21 March and 5 May. *Summer:* There is one record, 30 August 2005. *Autumn:* There are six records between 10 September and 17 November. *Winter:* There is one record, a single bird was observed in the marsh at the north end of Slocan Lake on 3 January 2012.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Two marshes within the study area apparently provide suitable breeding habitat for Marsh Wrens, one at Summit Lake and the other at the north end of Slocan Lake, but there is no evidence of this species occupying these marshes.

**DIPPERS**

**American Dipper**  
*Cinclus mexicanus*

**Status:** *Common resident, becoming locally very common in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes American Dipper (Figure 142) as a “Common resident” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat:** The species lives along fast-moving creeks throughout the year. **Breeding:** Nests have been discovered on rocky cliffs beside the creek and on support structures beneath bridges across the creeks. **Winter:** Many move downstream, congregate near creek mouths, and spread out along the adjacent lake shores.

**Occurrence:** *Year-round:* It occurs regularly along most creeks throughout the year. The downstream movement in the winter makes detection easier and has created a data bias. On occasion, 20 or more have been counted at one time from the bridge at Burton in January and February.



**Figure 142.** American Dipper is present year-round on clear, fast-flowing creeks. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Breeding:** American Dipper nests regularly on natural and human-made sites (Figure 143) associated with most creeks. Nest-building has been observed between 31 March and 5 May, eggs between 5 April and 21 May, and nestlings between 2 May and 10 July.



**Figure 143.** American Dipper frequently builds its mossy nest on the bridges over fast-flowing creeks. Photo by Gary S. Davidson.

**Comments:** American Dipper has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 28 times (93%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to eight birds. The Fauquier Christmas Bird Count (CBC) circle is almost completely outside the study area, except for the very northern part, which just includes Burton. In 2005, the Fauquier CBC recorded 37 American Dippers, most of which would have been seen at Burton.

## KINGLETS

### Golden-crowned Kinglet

*Regulus satrapa*

**Status:** *Common resident, becoming very common at times during winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) merely says, “Not uncommon resident” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Breeding:** The species favours coniferous forests from the valley floor up to at least 2,150 m. **Non-breeding and Winter:** It utilizes a wider range of habitats including mixed woodlands, suburban gardens, and agricultural lands. It is often seen foraging on branches of deciduous trees in winter.

**Occurrence:** The species is seen regularly in all seasons. **Spring:** It generally occurs in pairs or occasionally small groups of up to six. **Summer:** The spring pattern continues through the summer. **Autumn:** Kinglets form small flocks of up to 10 birds in early October and remain in groups until the end of the season. **Winter:** The flocks formed in autumn remain together until at least mid-February.

**Breeding:** No active nests have been reported. Adults carrying food have been observed in early July and adults feeding fledged young have been observed between 12 July and 22 August. Its tendency to build concealed nests fairly high in the trees has hindered the detection of nests.

**Comments:** Data from the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count suggest that winter numbers have shown a steady decline in the last 30 years. The average number recorded during each of the last three decades has been 42.0, 30.3, and 22.1, respectively. It is not clear whether this drop in winter numbers is indicative of an overall decline in population, or merely a change in winter distributional patterns. While there is no similar set of data to measure populations at other times of the year, my personal impression is that their numbers are declining overall.

### Ruby-crowned Kinglet

*Regulus calendula*

**Status:** *Common in spring, uncommon in summer, common in autumn, and casual in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) records this species in the Edgewood area as “Summer migrant. Common. Recorded from 29 March to 27 September.”

**Habitat: Migration:** Habitat is quite varied and includes gardens, agricultural areas, riparian and other habitats with mixed or deciduous woodlands.

**Breeding:** It breeds only at higher elevations within the Englemann Spruce/Sub-alpine Fir zone.

**Occurrence: Spring:** It occurs at lower elevations from late March to late May as a transient only; the earliest date recorded is 28 March 1997. A few linger into early summer. Peak numbers occur between late April and mid-May. A five or six kilometre walk along the abandoned railway trail at Summit Lake on 6 May 2000 produced 15 birds. **Summer:** With the exception of a few late spring transients, all summer records are from upper elevations, from about 1,400 m to at least 2,200 m. Most birds have left their upper elevation breeding areas by the end of August. **Autumn:** It occurs at lower elevations from early September (early date 28 August), to late November and sometimes into December. Numbers are generally lower than in the spring. **Winter:** There are three December records, perhaps representing late migrants. In 2006, a lone bird was reported in Nakusp from 29 January to 7 February.

**Breeding:** No active nests have been reported, but adults feeding fledged young have been observed in late July. Limited access to upper elevations within the study area and poor coverage has resulted in insufficient data.

**Comments:** It is not clear whether the spring movement noted in the valleys represents birds on their way to their upper elevation breeding grounds, or birds headed farther north. In autumn, however, the timing of their disappearance from the uplands

and their arrival in the lowlands suggest that there may be a down-slope movement in late August and early September.

### GNATCATCHERS

#### Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

*Poliptila caerulea*

**Status:** *Accidental.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** A single Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (Figure 144) was present in Nakusp from 14 to 25 November 2006 (Davidson 2007, Cecile 2007).



**Figure 144.** This Blue-gray Gnatcatcher found in Nakusp was the first record for the species in interior British Columbia. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 14 November 2006. BC Photo 3529.*

**Comments:** When first discovered, this bird was in company with Black-capped Chickadees gleaning insects from the bark of deciduous trees. In the following days it was never far from the chickadees. During an early snowfall on 24 November it continued to forage actively, but this weather may have been instrumental in the bird’s disappearance, as it was not seen again. There have been no other records of this species elsewhere in the Kootenay region (R.W. Campbell, pers. comm.).

## BLUEBIRDS, THRUSHES AND ALLIES

### Western Bluebird

*Sialia mexicana*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, summer, and autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) discusses the status of Western (Figure 145) and Mountain bluebirds (*Sialia currucoides*) collectively. He describes them both as “abundant summer migrants, breeding freely.” In 1916, he reports that Western Bluebird was more common than Mountain Bluebird. But subsequently, Western numbers dropped and by the 1920s Mountain Bluebird was the more common species in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 145.** Favouring more open forested habitats, Western Bluebird is rarely seen in the study area. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** The dry open forest habitat preferred by Western Bluebirds is not available in the study area. Birds have occurred in a variety of open habitats including farmland, gardens, and around sewage lagoons.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are four records: 18 and 19 March 1995, 21 March 1997 and 25 March 1994. **Summer:** In 1995 a pair nested in Nakusp and was seen daily from 24 June to at least late July. There are no other summer records. **Autumn:** In 1995 a single bird was observed near the previously mentioned nest site on 14 September. Also in 1995, a group of

six was reported several times between 18 and 21 October about five kilometres south of Nakusp in Crescent Bay.

**Breeding:** There is only one breeding record. A pair nested in a bird-box in a suburban garden in Nakusp in 1995. Birds were first observed inspecting the box 24 June and young were being fed in the nest by 22 July.

**Comments:** It is noteworthy that all occurrences of Western Bluebird in the study area were reported between 1994 and 1997. There are no records of any previous or subsequent sightings.

### Mountain Bluebird

*Sialia currucoides*

**Status:** *Locally common at times during spring, uncommon in summer, and very rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) discusses the status of this species (Figure 146) and Western Bluebird together. He describes them both as “... abundant summer migrants, breeding freely.” In 1916, he reports that Western Bluebird was more common than Mountain Bluebird. But subsequently, Western numbers dropped and by the 1920s Mountain Bluebird was the more common species in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 146.** Although Mountain Bluebird is a regular spring migrant it rarely breeds in the study area. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Brouse, 9 April 2010.*



**Habitat: Migration:** The species occurs primarily in agricultural fields, but may also be seen along highway and transmission corridors, on playing fields, in grassy areas of lakeshore, and in forestry clear-cuts.

**Breeding:** Most breeding has occurred in agricultural lands in the valley bottoms. Nests have also been recorded in upper elevation clear-cuts, to at least 1,750 m. Although access to alpine habitat within the study area is limited, this species has been reported in this habitat in adjacent areas.

**Occurrence: Spring:** It typically arrives mid- to late-March, the earliest date being 7 March 1992, with the females generally arriving a little later than males. Peak numbers occur in mid-April. **Summer:** Most spring birds pass through and do not remain beyond early June. A few are seen sporadically in some years and occasionally nest. A small number also occur at higher elevations. **Autumn:** There is apparently no migration through the valley bottoms. The only lowland records were of adults and young that bred in the area. A group of six was seen at 2,200 m on 14 September 2002, suggesting that perhaps southbound migrants pass through at higher elevations. The latest recorded date for any elevation was at Nakusp on 27 September 1992.

**Breeding:** Breeds irregularly at lower elevations, probably more often in upper elevation clear-cuts and subalpine meadows. Most lowland nests have been in artificial nest-boxes; one was in the back of an abandoned dump truck (Campbell et. al. 1997). Upland nests usually occur in natural cavities. Birds have been observed investigating nest-boxes as early as 11 April. The earliest known date for a nest with eggs was 13 May. However, a nest with young seen 19 May indicates that egg-laying must occur at least as early as 6 May. Nests with young from first broods have been observed between 19 May and 4 June. Eggs from second broods have been observed as early as 25 June. The latest known date for nestlings was 24 July.

**Comments:** Despite numerous attempts to attract Mountain and Western bluebirds with artificial nest-boxes, success has been poor. At one point, more than 30 boxes were being maintained but never more than

two were used in any year. There has been no apparent use of these boxes for at least the last 10 years.

See *Tree Swallow Comments* for information on competition for nest boxes.

### Townsend's Solitaire

*Myadestes townsendi*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring (although may be common in some years), very rare in summer, accidental in autumn, and very rare in winter; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Townsend's Solitaire (Figure 147) as "Not uncommon resident" in the Edgewood area, "Breeds at some height above the lakes."



**Figure 147.** In some years, Townsend's Solitaire may be common during spring migration. *Photo by Gail Spitzer.*

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** Most spring records have been from the valley bottoms in towns and farmlands. Similarly, wintering birds occur primarily in towns where berries are available.

**Breeding:** Most summer records are from coniferous forests at higher elevations. They quite often nest in roadside cut banks with overhanging vegetation (Figure 148).



**Figure 148.** A ledge in a roadside cut bank, with an overhang of vegetation and rootlets, is a favoured nest site for Townsend's Solitaire. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The species occurs between 27 March and 11 May with peak movement in mid-April. Some years, however, none are seen at all. *Summer:* There are seven summer records scattered through June and July, but there are no records for August. *Autumn:* Despite the presence of migrating birds in spring, there is no equivalent autumn movement. The only autumn record was in 2006, a single bird observed 14 November remained well into the winter. *Winter:* There are about a dozen records; all but two were between 1 December and 3 January. On only one occasion has a bird been known to remain in the area throughout the entire winter.

**Breeding:** There are no confirmed breeding records. However, there are breeding season records from higher elevations and it seems likely that a few breed in the study area. The nest illustrated in Figure 148 was located about 10 km north of the study area.

**Comments:** As with many species that favour high elevation coniferous forests, Townsend's Solitaire is likely more common in the area than available data would suggest.

Townsend's Solitaire has been reported on Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 10 times (33%) in 30 years.

### **Veery**

*Catharus fuscescens*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring and locally common in summer; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Veery (Figure 149) as a "Summer migrant, not uncommon; breeds" in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** Veery is dependent upon moist deciduous sites with a dense shrub layer; it is most often encountered in riparian habitat beside lakes and streams.

**Occurrence: Spring:** This is one of the late-arriving species; the earliest record is 21 May 1994. **Summer:** It occurs regularly in suitable habitat through June and July. The only August record was on 28 and 29 August 2009.



**Figure 149.** Unlike the other three spotted thrushes in British Columbia, Veery is the least spotted and therefore the easiest to identify. *Photo by Paul Whalen.*

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records but the frequency of singing birds on territory strongly suggests that breeding does occur. The riparian habitat at the southeast end of Summit Lake supports at least five or six singing males every year.

**Comments:** Veery has only been reported once after July, therefore, departure dates are unclear. Unlike Swainson’s Thrush (*C. ustulatus*), Veery does not sing as persistently during the breeding season nor does it continue to sing later into the summer. This tendency to be less vocal, in combination with its preference for denser, wet habitats, has undoubtedly contributed to both the lack of breeding records and the lack of late summer sightings.

### **Swainson’s Thrush**

*Catharus ustulatus*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, uncommon in autumn, and accidental in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) merely notes Swainson’s Thrush (Figure 150) as a “Common summer migrant; breeds” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** The species has been reported from valley bottom up to about 1,600 m, in both coniferous and mixed woodlands. One adult was seen foraging in riparian habitat and carrying food

up into a large cedar to feed unseen young.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The earliest record is 23 May 1998, but some years this species doesn’t arrive until early June. **Summer:** There is no evidence of a significant number of passage migrants – numbers encountered in early June are matched by territorial singing birds later in the month. Numbers remain fairly constant through June and July but there is a marked decline in August. **Autumn:** A small cluster of sightings between 27 August and 7 September suggests that a few migrants do pass through the study area. The latest record is 28 September 1986. Twice migrants were heard passing overhead during the night in early September. **Winter:** There is one record of a single bird observed foraging in a large open compost bin on 19 January 2012 (Campbell and Van Damme 2012; see Figure 150).



**Figure 150.** This Swainson’s Thrush, photographed in Nakusp on 19 January 2012, is the first winter record for interior British Columbia. The few other winter records from the province are all from coastal areas. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson. BC Photo 3997.*

**Breeding:** No active nests have been reported. Adults carrying food have been observed in late June and fledged young are seen in July and August. On 30 June 2010, an adult Swainson’s Thrush was observed collecting green caterpillars from the forest floor in a lush riparian area beside Summit Lake (Figure 151). The grubs were carried high up into a cedar tree at about three-minute intervals for at least 20 minutes. It is not known whether the young being fed were nestlings or fledglings.



**Figure 151.** This adult Swainson's Thrush, carrying food foraged from the forest floor, is ready to fly to its nest in a nearby tall cedar tree to feed its young. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 30 June 2010.*

**Comments:** It is difficult to understand why more breeding records have not been reported. The species is clearly widespread in the study area and occurs regularly through the breeding season in a variety of habitats.

**Hermit Thrush**  
*Catharus guttatus*

**Status:** *Rare in spring, common in summer, and casual in autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) reports only one record for Hermit Thrush (Figure 152) for the Edgewood area.

**Habitat:** With very few exceptions, all records of Hermit Thrush are from the coniferous slopes above 1,000 m.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* Infrequently, Hermit Thrushes are recorded from valley bottoms in early May. More typically, however, they arrive directly at their upper elevation breeding habitat in the latter part of May. *Summer:* It occurs regularly at higher elevations through June and July, but is reported less frequently in August. *Autumn:* Departure is apparently in late



**Figure 152.** The beautiful song of the Hermit Thrush is commonly heard in subalpine habitats but the species rarely visits valley bottoms during its four-month visit. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, above Summit Lake, 20 June 2009.*

August, since there are very few September sightings; the latest known record is 3 September 1992.

**Breeding:** No nests have been located, but based on nesting records nearby and the frequency of observations in suitable habitat, it seems likely that the species does breed. Fledged juveniles have been observed in early July.

**Comments:** This species' preference for higher elevation habitats has almost certainly reduced the number of documented sightings in the study area, particularly during spring and autumn migration. The few lowland sightings suggest that upon arrival, birds move directly to high-elevation breeding locations. Similarly, autumn departure appears to be directly from the subalpine breeding grounds.

**American Robin**  
*Turdus migratorius*

**Status:** *Very common (at times abundant) in spring, very common in summer and autumn, and rare in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes the American Robin (Figure 153) as an “Abundant summer migrant” in the Edgewood area. In discussing breeding, he says “two and even three broods are raised in a season.”

**Habitat: Breeding:** It seems that robins are at home in almost any habitat. They have been recorded in all forest types, in agricultural lands and residential areas, from valley bottom to alpine meadow. **Migration:** In spring, large flocks occur in the wet agricultural fields shortly after the snow recedes.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Due to the presence of overwintering birds, precise arrival dates are difficult to determine. Migrants are definitely arriving by late February, with a peak movement between 20 March

and 15 April when flocks sometimes number several hundred. **Summer:** Although the large flocks break up, robins continue to be widespread and common until at least mid-August, at which time flocks began to re-form. **Autumn:** Flocks continue to grow through September but never reach the numbers seen in spring. Most are gone by the end of October, but a few always linger well into November. **Winter:** A small number of robins are present some years. In 2001 a flock of about 100 remained in Nakusp all winter, but generally numbers are less than a dozen.

**Breeding:** A common breeder in the study area. Nests with eggs have been reported between 18 April and 27 June and nests with young between 6 June and 20 July. However, the presence of spotted fledglings in early September suggests that the breeding season extends well into August; the species is known to double-brood (Campbell et. al. 1997)

**Comments:** American Robin has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 18 times (60%) in 30 years.



**Figure 153.** The ubiquitous American Robin occurs seasonally in all habitats from valley bottom to alpine meadows. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 7 April 2008.*

## Varied Thrush

*Ixoreus naevius*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, uncommon in autumn, and generally rare in winter but numbers are variable from year to year; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) writes that Varied Thrush (Figure 154) is “Not an uncommon resident, but appears to be getting scarcer in recent years” in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 154.** In winter, berries of the mountain-ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*) are a favourite source of food for Varied Thrush. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 1 December 2010.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** The species frequents coniferous forests from the valley bottom to the subalpine. **Winter:** Most records are from the valley bottoms, usually in the towns where they may frequent feeders. Winter data from the coniferous slopes above the valley floor are scarce so it is unclear what their status may be during the winter months.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The presence of overwintering birds makes precise arrival dates difficult to determine. But numbers clearly increase by early March and peak in early April, when groups may occasionally exceed 20 birds. **Summer:** Birds remain in the area throughout the summer. While never numerous, they are more

common at higher elevations. **Autumn:** There is an increase in the number of low-elevation records beginning in late September. It is unclear whether this influx is the result of downslope movement, or migration from farther north. **Winter:** Most years a few remain through the winter. Wintering birds sometimes began singing in early February.

**Breeding:** There are no reported nests for the study area but the species certainly breeds. Juvenile birds have been observed in July and August.

**Comments:** Varied Thrush has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 18 times (60%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to 58.

## CATBIRDS

### Gray Catbird

*Dumetella carolinensis*

**Status:** *Common in spring, summer, and early autumn and casual in winter; breeds.*



**Figure 155.** Despite being a common species in summer, no nests of Gray Catbird have been discovered. *Photo by Paul Whalen.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Gray Catbird (Figure 155) status in Edgewood as “Common summer migrant; nests freely.”

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** The species frequents dense deciduous thickets, including strips of vegetation separating roads from fields in Brouse,

riparian areas adjacent to marshes and lakes, and other overgrown brushy sites.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* It typically arrives in late May; the earliest date is 22 May 2000. There is no evidence of a significant number of passage migrants; numbers are never large but they remain fairly constant from late May into summer. *Summer:* It occurs regularly throughout the season. *Autumn:* All have normally left by mid-September, but in 2006, one remained in Nakusp until at least 21 October. *Winter:* There are two records. A single bird first observed in Nakusp on 16 December 1981, remained until at least 3 January (Rogers 1982, Campbell et. al 1997). Another, observed at a feeder in New Denver on 17 December 2012, remained for at least two weeks.

**Nesting:** No nests have been recorded, but a pair was observed entering a presumed nest site with nest material 1 June 2010. Very agitated adults and adults carrying food have been observed in July. Young birds in the company of adults have been observed several times between 19 July and 10 August.

**Comments:** The December 1981 bird frequented a feeder adjacent to an overgrown brushy area close to Arrow Lake in Nakusp. It was first noted at a suet feeder. The homeowner added raisins to the diet, which the bird ate readily.

## STARLINGS

### European Starling

*Sturnus vulgaris*

**Status:** *Very common (at times abundant) in spring, very common in summer and autumn, and common in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** European Starling (Figure 156) first occurred in British Columbia in 1945 (Munro 1947, Jobin 1952), therefore, it is not mentioned in Kelso (1926, 1931).

**Habitat: Breeding:** The species frequents human-altered habitats including towns, agricultural areas, and landfill sites. *Winter:* It generally vacates the

agricultural areas and winter habitat is more-or-less restricted to landfills and towns.



**Figure 156.** A decade or so after it was first reported in British Columbia in 1945 in the Okanagan valley, European Starling had spread its range to include much of the southern half of the province and the Peace River region (Myres 1958). *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*

**Occurrence: Spring:** The presence of over-wintering birds makes the determination of arrival dates difficult, but numbers definitely increase by late February. Peak movement occurs in late March and early April when flocks of up to 500 sometimes are observed, usually in the agricultural fields. *Summer:* It continues to occur regularly in populated areas, but not in the numbers noted in spring. Flocks begin to form again in August. *Autumn:* Numbers are greatest from late September to early November with flocks sometimes exceeding 100 during this time. By late November many have left. *Winter:* There is a small and somewhat irregular winter population, population with numbers varying from year to year but rarely exceeding 50.

**Breeding:** Nests commonly in towns and agricultural areas. Birds investigating suitable nest sites are observed as early as February. The earliest recorded date for a nest with eggs is 3 April 1977 and the latest date for nestlings is 2 July 1976.

**Comments:** Winter numbers are quite variable. European Starling has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 27 times (90%) in 30 years, in numbers ranging from one to 153.

## PIPITS

### American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

**Status:** *Very common (at times abundant) in spring, uncommon in summer, and very common in autumn: probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes American Pipit (Figure 157) as a “Passing summer migrant” in the Edgewood area, “Sometimes seen in flocks of 30 or 40.”



**Figure 157.** American Pipit forages in human-altered grassy areas and field habitats in spring and lakeshores during autumn migration. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Migration:** Flocks are seen in a variety of open habitats. Spring migrants seem to prefer grassy areas such as agricultural fields, golf courses, and playing fields. Autumn migrants are more often observed along the lake shores. **Breeding:** The species is known to breed in alpine meadows.

**Occurrence: Spring:** It occurs from 16 April to 30 May, with peak numbers in late April and early May when numbers may reach 200. **Summer:** There are very few summer records due to limited access to alpine and sub-alpine areas where the species presumably breeds. **Autumn:** Migrants begin to appear in late August; numbers peak in mid-September when flock sizes sometimes reach 100. There are only two records after 15 October, a bird at Nakusp on 28 November 1992, was exceptional.

**Breeding:** Breeding has not been recorded within the study area but birds have been observed in suitable breeding habitat in alpine meadows. There are breeding records for alpine areas adjacent to the study area.

**Comments:** The number of sightings and size of flocks varies considerably from year to year. In 2005, for example, there was only one spring sighting but several autumn sightings, with flocks numbering up to 100. In contrast, 2007 was a complete reversal with spring flocks of up to 100 but only two autumn sightings of one to three birds. Breeding season records are very few. Summer status is based partly on the occurrence of American Pipits breeding regularly in areas adjacent to the study area (Campbell et al. 1997).

## WAXWINGS

### Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulous*

**Status:** *Uncommon in late winter and early spring, and very common (at times abundant) in autumn and early winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes the Bohemian Waxwing (Figure 158) as a “Fall and winter migrant” in the Edgewood area. He further mentions that it is “Seen in flocks of thirty or forty to up to about one hundred.”



**Figure 158.** Bohemian Waxwing is a winter visitor and in some years flocks of several hundred birds are seen. However, flocks of 50 to 100 waxwings are more typical. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*



**Habitat: Migration and Winter:** The species occurs in towns where berries (particularly mountain-ash) and in agricultural areas where apple orchards are available.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Variable from year to year. In some years the wintering birds remain well into March - the latest date is 1 April 1995 - but in other years they have left well before the end of winter. **Autumn:** Arrival dates vary considerably. In 1992, 1994, and 1996, the first flocks were seen in October, the earliest being 13 October 1994, but most years arrival is in the latter half of November. **Winter:** Flocks occur regularly in early winter but numbers usually decline as winter proceeds. In about 50% of the years, there are no records after mid-January.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records. Bohemian Waxwing breeds locally, and sparingly, in the East Kootenay region and primarily from the Cariboo-Chilcotin north through the interior of the province (Campbell et al. 1997).

**Comments:** The primary winter food for Bohemian Waxwing is the fruit of the mountain-ash. Numbers vary according to the availability of this food supply.

Bohemian Waxwing has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 25 times (83%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to 995.

**Cedar Waxwing**  
*Bombycilla cedrorum*

**Status:** *Common in spring, summer and early autumn and casual in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** In discussing the status of Cedar Waxwing (Figure 159) in the Edgewood area, Kelso (1926) describes it as a "Common summer migrant, often breeding in straggling colonies in bushes and trees, as well as in isolated nests."

**Habitat: Breeding and Non-breeding:** It is most often observed in open areas created by human activity, including towns, agricultural areas, golf courses and campgrounds. Breeding also occurs in riparian



**Figure 159.** Cedar Waxwing arrives mainly in late May and early June, later than most other breeding passerines. *Photo by Gail Spitzer.*

habitats. It is rarely observed in the coniferous forest that dominates natural areas of the study area.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Cedar Waxwings are usually very late to return, typically arriving in late May. Two seen on 4 May 2002 in Nakusp were exceptional. Small flocks of 15 to 20 are seen on arrival, but these soon break up as pairs form. **Summer:** Waxwings remain in good numbers through the summer. **Autumn:** Summer birds are still present in early September, but numbers diminish as the month progresses, with most having left by the end of September. There are two October records, 2 October 2008 and 14 October 1990. There is one November record. Two immature birds were observed in Nakusp on 25 November 2012. **Winter:** There are four records. Single birds were observed 2 January 1999 and 6 January 2001; a group of 15 was seen several times in January and February 1988; and a group of three adults and two immature birds was seen several times in January 2012.

**Breeding:** The species breeds regularly in the area. Nest-building has been observed in early June, although late June is more typical. Nests with eggs (Figure 160) have been observed between 13 June and 25 July. Adults with recently fledged juveniles are seen regularly in July. Most nests have been in fairly dense vegetation, including cedar hedging, alder-willow-cottonwood rows along field edges, and riparian shrubs.



**Figure 160.** The pale blue eggs of a Cedar Waxwing, spotted with black and grey blotches, are among the most beautiful of any passerine species. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** Cedar Waxwing has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count three times (10%) in 30 years.

## WOOD-WARBLERS

### Tennessee Warbler *Oreothlypis peregrina*

**Status:** *Casual in spring and summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention Tennessee Warbler (Figure 161).



**Figure 161.** Highest numbers of Tennessee Warblers in summer in British Columbia occur in the boreal forests of the northeast. The species still remains of local and irregular occurrence in far southern areas. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat:** The sightings have been from a variety of habitats including town sites, agricultural areas and forested sites adjacent to wetlands.

**Occurrence:** All records were singing males. **Spring:** There are two records; 5 May 2001 and 26 May 1990. **Summer:** There are five records between 4 June and 9 July.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Numbers and densities of Tennessee Warblers in the province vary greatly among years depending on Spruce Budworm (*Choristoneura fumiferana*) outbreaks as this warbler feeds on the caterpillars of this forest pest. Breeding Bird Surveys show no significant increase in populations of this bird in British Columbia between 1966 and 1985, although continental populations have increased significantly (Rimmer and McFarland 1998).

### Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata*

**Status:** *Common in spring and uncommon in summer and autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) mentions only one record of Orange-crowned Warbler (Figure 162) for the Edgewood area.



**Figure 162.** Orange-crowned Warbler is seen and heard in the valley bottoms in spring but soon moves to upslope habitats at higher elevations to breed. *Photo by Gail Spittler.*

**Habitat: Migration:** Upon arrival in spring, the species occurs in a wide variety of woodland habitats, including towns and other valley bottom sites. It vacates the lower elevations during summer but some return to the valley bottoms in autumn. **Breeding:** It primarily occurs in open sites in mixed woodlands, generally above the valley floor.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Orange-crowned Warblers typically arrive in late April with the earliest recorded date of 15 April 2000. There is a peak in numbers during late May, after which there appears to be an upslope movement. **Summer:** It is recorded regularly through June and July above the major valley bottoms. A decline in August numbers may reflect the cessation of singing, but birds again visit lower elevations. **Autumn:** All have left the area by the end of September with two notable exceptions: single birds seen in Nakusp on 13 October 1996 and 14 November 2006.

**Breeding:** There are no confirmed breeding records, but the annual presence of territorial males suggests that breeding does occur. Adults have been observed carrying food in July.

**Comments:** Most lowland records for the species are during migration. Summer records are from sites at slightly higher elevations ranging to at least 1,500 m. Lack of coverage at higher elevations has contributed to the lack of breeding evidence.

Three of the four North American subspecies occur in British Columbia. The race found throughout the mountainous interior of the province is *O. c. orestera* (Sogge et al. 1994, Campbell et al. 1997). It can be identified by plumage colour and size (see Dunn and Garrett 1997).

**Nashville Warbler**  
*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring and summer, (very locally distributed) and rare in autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) simply says “An uncommon summer migrant” in the Edgewood

area.

**Habitat: Breeding:** In many parts of the province, this species favours open forests with abundant shrubs, often on slopes. This habitat is not readily available in the heavily forested terrain of the study area. Small, open pockets on hillsides, such as those created by transmission corridors, are often the only available sites. **Migration:** Later in the summer, it is also seen at high elevations in the subalpine.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically arrives in early May, occasionally earlier. The earliest known date is 24 April 1986. Its distribution is quite localized and rarely is more than one or two seen on any day. **Summer:** It remains through the summer in small numbers. **Autumn:** There are several records scattered through September, the latest date is 27 September 1980.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records but the presence of territorial birds suggests that breeding is likely.

**Comments:** Many of the sightings are from regenerating vegetation in B. C. Hydro’s main transmission corridor running south along the east side of Arrow Lake. Some intensive searching in this area would probably confirm breeding.

**Yellow Warbler**  
*Setophaga petechia*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Yellow Warbler (Figure 163) as an “abundant summer migrant” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Breeding:** All nests and fledged young have been observed in shrub- or sapling-dominated habitats. This includes riparian sites, roadside ‘hedge-rows’, second-growth deciduous stands in transmission corridors and clear-cuts, and suburban gardens. Nests have been found in alder, maple, and pine saplings. **Non-breeding:** There is no perceptible difference



**Figure 163.** Yellow Warbler breeds regularly in shrubby habitats around marshes at the southeast end of Summit Lake. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson*

from the breeding habitat preference.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The species typically arrives in early May, the earliest date being 2 May 1998. It is not unusual to encounter 15 or more birds in a walk through suitable habitat. *Summer:* It remains in good numbers throughout June, July, and early August. Numbers begin dropping later in August, and generally only one or two are seen by month's end. *Autumn:* There are scattered records of one or two birds through September. Prior to 2012 the latest known date was 26 September 1998. But on 16 November 2012, a Yellow Warbler was photographed in New Denver (Figure 164); the bird remained until at least 26 November (Linda Norman, pers. comm.).



**Figure 164.** This late-departing Yellow Warbler stayed in the vicinity of New Denver for 11 days in November 2012. *Photo by Linda Norman, 16 November 2012. BC Photo 4028.*

**Breeding:** Yellow Warblers breed regularly in the study area. Nest-building has been observed between 8 June and 17 June, nests with eggs between 18 June and 2 July, nests with young between 2 July and 12 July, and dependant fledged young with adults between 2 July and 5 August. In 1998 a nest under construction was noted in Brouse on 14 June. The first egg was laid on 18 June and a complete clutch of four eggs was present by 21 June. On 23 June, a Brown-headed Cowbird egg (Figure 164) had been added to the nest but was removed. The four young hatched on 2 July, and fledged on 12 July.

**Comments:** In North America, Yellow Warbler is one of the most frequent hosts of Brown-headed Cowbird (Friedmann and Kiff 1985). In British Columbia, 15% of 393 Yellow Warbler nests recorded with eggs or nestlings were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbird (Campbell et al. 1997).

The extensive riparian habitats in the Creston valley support some of the highest Yellow Warbler breeding densities in the province (Van Damme 2012).

### **Magnolia Warbler** *Setophaga magnolia*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, uncommon, but very locally distributed, in summer, and accidental in autumn; breeds.*



**Figure 165.** The Nakusp-New Denver-Burton area is at the southern limit of the breeding range for Magnolia Warbler in British Columbia. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 12 July 2009. BC Photo 4013.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention Magnolia Warbler (Figure 165).

**Habitat: Breeding:** The only known nest (Davidson 2009) was found near Summit Lake in a thimbleberry shrub in a large cleared area overgrown with thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*) and ferns (Figure 166). The adjacent forest was a fairly open, mature, mixed woodland. Species included cottonwood, birch, pine, western hemlock, western redcedar and Douglas fir. Other territorial males have been reported in the Summit Lake area and along Bonanza Creek south of Summit Lake. Most of these have been along an abandoned railway corridor that provides shrub-dominated areas adjacent to mature mixed woodlands, similar to that found at the nest site. **Non-breeding:** There have been a few observations in other areas in variable habitats but all generally included mixed forest woodlands.



**Figure 166.** An overgrown clearing with thimbleberry and ferns near Summit Lake is the only known breeding location for Magnolia Warbler in the study area. Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 3 July 2009. BC Photo 4013.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are three records: 8 May 1981 near Box Lake, 15 May 1981 in Nakusp, and 16 May 1993 in Brouse. None of these singing males were reported a second time, so it is presumed that they were transient. **Summer:** Arrival at the Summit Lake site is in early June, the earliest date is 3 June 1989. Singing males are heard until about mid-July, with occasional sightings to the end of July. There are no August records. **Autumn:** There is one record on 4 September 1989.

**Breeding:** Because birds on territory have been noted annually since 1999, it is possible that this species has been breeding in small numbers at Summit Lake since then. The only known nest, found near Summit Lake 12 July 2009 (Figure 167), contained three eggs. One egg hatched on 19 or 20 July, a second egg was apparently infertile, the third egg disappeared some time during incubation. The nestling was partially feathered by 25 July, but I was unable to visit the nest again.



**Figure 167.** This Magnolia Warbler nest in a thimbleberry shrub near Summit Lake is the most southerly reported for British Columbia. One young fledged. Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 12 July 2009. BC Photo 4013.

**Comments:** In 2000, a male was heard singing in Brouse from 4 June to 1 July. Other than the Summit Lake birds, this is the only record of a Magnolia Warbler remaining more than a day or two.

### **Cape May Warbler** *Setophaga tigrina*

**Status:** *Accidental in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** A single male Cape May Warbler (Figure 168) was observed in a suburban garden in Nakusp on 2 January 2006. It was photographed the following day but not seen again (Cecile 2006).



**Figure 168.** Cape May Warbler is very rarely seen in the southern interior of British Columbia. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 3 January 2006. BC Photo 4010.*

**Comments:** Cape May Warbler occurs locally each summer in the Peace River region of British Columbia; elsewhere in the province it is considered a seasonal vagrant (Campbell et al. 2001). The species winters primarily on islands in the Caribbean region but has been found with some regularity in winter at bird feeders at scattered locations across the United States (Peterjohn 1989, Baltz and Latta 1998). In British Columbia, there are two previous winter records: a bird present in Revelstoke from 1 to 9 December 2000 and at Williams Lake from 31 October to 10 December 2004 (Ranson 2005).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler**  
*Setophaga caerulescens*

**Status:** *Accidental in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** A single male Black-throated Blue Warbler (Figure 169) was observed in Nakusp at a bird feeder operated by Lucille Wells on 12 December 1993. Subsequently, it visited a second feeder, about 500 m away, operated by Dave Grimshire (Davidson 1994, 2005a, Siddle 1994b, Campbell et al. 2001). It remained in the area until 16 January 1994 (36 days) when it collided with a plate glass window and died. The carcass was donated to the Cowan

Vertebrate Museum (now the Beaty Museum) on the University of British Columbia campus in Vancouver and accessioned as specimen UBC #15172.



**Figure 169.** This young male Black-throated Blue Warbler, first seen at a suet feeder in Nakusp in December 1993, was the fifth record for British Columbia and the first in winter. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 12 December 1993. BC Photo 2012.*

**Comments:** Through 2002, there are 15 records of Black-throated Blue Warbler for British Columbia of which four were from the West Kootenay region (Davidson 2005a). The other localities are Creston 22 September 1984 (Davidson and Van Damme 1987) and 1 and 2 October 1985 (Campbell et al. 2001) and Balfour 20 November 2000 to 21 April 2001 (Davidson 2005a).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler**  
*Setophaga coronata*

**Status:** *Common (at times very common) in spring, common in summer and autumn, and very rare in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** During the 1920s Yellow-rumped Warbler (Figure 170) was considered to be two species, *Audubon's Warbler* and *Myrtle Warbler*. In his discussion of status in the Edgewood area, Kelso (1926) discusses them separately. He describes Audubon's as an "Abundant summer migrant; breeds." Of Myrtle he says "In 1913 to 1916 it was not uncommon on migration, but of late years has become rare in the district owing to some unknown cause."



**Figure 170.** Yellow-rumped Warbler is usually the first warbler to return in spring and the last to leave in autumn. “Audubon’s” race (*S. c. auduboni*) is the common subspecies in the study area. Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 14 April 2008.

**Habitat: Breeding:** At lower elevations Yellow-rumped Warbler occurs in a variety of woodland habitats including human influenced sites. All, however, feature at least some coniferous trees. It is absent in deciduous riparian zones. At higher elevations it is generally found in pure coniferous forests and subalpine parkland. **Non-breeding:** Habitat selection is much more varied during migration, although there is still some avoidance of purely deciduous sites. **Winter:** All winter records have been from suburban gardens.

**Occurrence: Spring:** This is the first warbler to arrive and it is well-established by mid-April; the earliest arrival date is 4 April 1992. Peak numbers pass through in the first half of May when small flocks of 15 to 20 are observed. **Summer:** It occurs regularly throughout June and July, and flocks begin re-forming in August. **Autumn:** Numbers continue to increase in September; migrating flocks numbering in excess of 20 occur between mid-September and mid-October. Most have departed by the end of October. There are four November records: 1 November 1997, 2 November 2010, 18 November 2003, and 27 November 2006. **Winter:** There are several records for late December and January but none for February.

**Breeding:** Despite the *common* status of this species in summer, no nests have been documented. An adult was observed carrying nest material on 19 May 2010 and another carrying food on 20 July 2011. There are numerous reports of adults with dependant young ranging from 24 June to 1 August. There are at least four observations of fledgling Brown-headed Cowbirds being fed by Yellow-rumped Warblers.

**Comments:** Prior to 1973, Yellow-rumped Warbler was considered two separate species, Audubon’s Warbler (*Dendroica auduboni*) and Myrtle Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) (Hunt and Flaspohler 1998). The zone of hybridization for each subspecies in British Columbia lies just to the west of the North Peace River region (Campbell et al. 2001).

The “Audubon’s” race is by far the most frequently encountered in the study area although a small number of “Myrtle” Yellow-rumped Warblers are reported each year. The proportion of “Myrtle” reports is higher in the non-breeding seasons.

Yellow-rumped Warbler has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count five times (17%) in 30 years.

**Townsend's Warbler**  
*Setophaga townsendi*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and uncommon in autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) apparently did not see this species during his time in the Edgewood area. He reports, however, that one was identified “by a friend.”

**Habitat: Breeding:** All summer records are from the coniferous forests above 800 m. **Non-breeding:** Spring migrants occur in coniferous and mixed forests and may also occur in the valley bottoms.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There is a great deal of inconsistency in arrival dates from year to year. The average is mid-May, but it has been recorded as early as 28 April 1992. **Summer:** It remains through the summer but generally only at higher elevations. There are lowland records for the latter half of August. **Autumn:** Departure is quite early with most having left before the end of August. The latest recorded date is 5 September 2008.

**Breeding:** Despite the *common* status of this species in summer, no nests have been documented. This warbler is frequently heard singing in appropriate habitat during the breeding season.

**Comments:** The apparent variation in arrival dates may be related to the species' preference for upper elevation forests. The variation evident in the data is a reflection of their occurrence in the valley bottoms, which is always somewhat sporadic. I suspect that a concerted effort at higher elevations during early May would reveal a more consistent pattern in arrival dates.

Townsend's Warblers generally nest high in the trees and very few nests have been found anywhere in British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

**Black-and-white Warbler**  
*Mniotilta varia*

**Status:** *Accidental in summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** The only record is of a singing male on 15 June 1992 (Siddle 1992, Campbell et al. 2001). The bird was observed at fairly close range for 10 or 15 minutes. It flew from tree to tree, apparently foraging on the bark of a Douglas-fir, in a back garden in Nakusp. Despite some effort, the bird was not found again.

**Comments:** In British Columbia, Black-and-white Warbler is considered a vagrant anywhere outside its breeding range in the northeastern portion of the province (Campbell et al. 2001, Siddle 2010).

**American Redstart**  
*Setophaga ruticilla*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, and uncommon in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) reports American Redstart (Figure 171) as a “Summer migrant, not uncommon; breeds in the district.”



**Figure 171.** American Redstart is widely distributed throughout the interior of British Columbia in wet deciduous woodlands and shrublands, including the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton area. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 13 June 2009.*



**Habitat: *Breeding:*** The species occurs almost exclusively in damp, second-growth deciduous situations, often riparian. ***Non-breeding:*** Spring birds move directly to their breeding habitats and are rarely seen elsewhere. Autumn migrants, however, occur in a much wider range of woodland types, including gardens, agricultural lands, and mixed woodlands.

**Occurrence: *Spring:*** It typically arrives in late May; the earliest recorded date is 21 May 2000. ***Summer:*** It occurs regularly in pockets of appropriate habitat until late August. Density is quite high in some places; a walk through the riparian/wetland edge at the southeast end of Summit Lake could easily yield 10-15 birds in a couple of hours. ***Autumn:*** Departure begins in August and is fairly abrupt; a single bird reported 13 September 1992 is the only record later than 4 September.

**Breeding:** Nestlings found at Summit Lake on 26 June 2003 represent the area's only nest with contents. A recently fledged juvenile was seen at Summit Lake 30 June 2010 (Figure 172). Adults with recently fledged young have been observed several times between 30 June and 23 July.



**Figure 172.** A recently fledged American Redstart perched beneath the huge leaves of a devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus*). Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 30 June 2010.

**Comments:** Most of the study area is covered with coniferous forests that are unsuitable for breeding redstarts. In those relatively small pockets of suitable riparian habitats, such as at Summit Lake, the species is surprisingly numerous.

## Ovenbird

*Seiurus aurocapilla*

**Status:** *Accidental in summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** The only record is of a singing male in a mixed woodland stand adjacent to agricultural fields in New Denver on 14 to 16 June 1980.

**Comments:** On 20 June 1982, another male Ovenbird was heard singing just outside the study area near Edgewood. Ovenbird is considered a vagrant in southern regions of interior British Columbia (Campbell et al. 2001).

## Northern Waterthrush

*Parkesia noveboracensis*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and casual in autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes the status of the Northern Waterthrush in the Edgewood area as a "rare summer migrant."

**Habitat: *Breeding:*** Territorial males typically occur in damp riparian woodlands adjacent to wetlands or creeks. Feeding occurs on or near the ground but males sometimes sing from high exposed perches in both deciduous and coniferous trees. ***Migration:*** When not breeding, a wider variety of habitats is used, including drier woodlands.

**Occurrence: *Spring:*** The species typically arrives in the latter part of May, the earliest date being 14 May 1988. Ideal habitat is not abundant, but where found, the species may be quite numerous. ***Summer:*** It occurs regularly in suitable habitat through June and July, but becomes harder to find in August. ***Autumn:*** There are two records: 3 September 1992 and 4 September 2005.

**Breeding:** There are no confirmed breeding records; however, adults carrying food have been observed

in late June and singing males are regularly heard through June and July.

**Comments:** Summit Lake and along Bonanza Creek as it flows from Summit Lake to Slocan Lake are preferred locations for Northern Waterthrush in the study area. The swampy marshes here make searching for nests difficult.

**MacGillivray's Warbler**  
*Geothlypis tolmiei*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and uncommon in early autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes this species' status in the Edgewood area as a "common summer migrant." He also states that it "leaves end of September."

**Habitat: Breeding:** The species shows a strong preference for thick ground cover, particularly thimbleberry and bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*); the only known nest was in a thimbleberry shrub. At lower elevations this habitat occurs along streams or other damp situations such as overgrown roadside ditches. At higher elevations this warbler may also be found in sapling-dominated clear-cuts and small riparian areas adjacent to upland streams. It has been reported from valley bottom up to at least 1,900 m. **Non-breeding:** It continues to favour habitat with thick ground cover and is not often seen in drier sites or in heavily forested areas.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically arrives in the late May; the earliest date is 13 May 1994. **Summer:** The species continues to occur regularly throughout the summer. **Autumn:** Departure is in late August or early September; the latest record is 9 September 2007.

**Breeding:** A nest with three eggs, one of which was a Brown-headed Cowbird egg, was found by Reverend John Stainer on 27 June 1974. Elsewhere, adults carrying food have been recorded between 30 June and 15 July and adults have been seen feeding fledged young between 15 July and 30 July.

**Comments:** Given the preference that MacGillivray's Warbler shows for dense ground cover at lower elevations, it is perhaps surprising that the species also occurs in upland situations where there is no such habitat. Many of the upland sightings have been from overgrown clear-cuts, whereas others have been from creek valleys where just a few shrubs seem to suffice.

**Common Yellowthroat**  
*Geothlypis trichas*

**Status:** *Common in spring, summer, and autumn, and accidental in winter; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) simply refers to Common Yellowthroat (Figure 173) as a "Summer migrant, not common; breeds" in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 173.** The bright black mask characteristic of the male Common Yellowthroat in breeding plumage has faded by the end of summer. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 7 September 2009.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** Singing males occupy marshes, overgrown lake shores, riparian stream edges, the edges of hayfields and other damp heavily vegetated sites. **Non-breeding and Migration:** In spring most arrive directly at the breeding sites. Autumn migrants continue to use breeding type habitats but also regularly frequent areas of tall grasses.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species typically returns to the area in mid-May; the earliest date is 13 May 1994. **Summer:** It occurs regularly throughout the

summer. **Autumn:** There is a significant increase in numbers in September and occasionally the species is abundant. Most have left the area by mid-October, but a few linger; the latest known departure date is 5 November 1994. **Winter:** A single male was observed in a small marsh at the Nakusp sewage lagoons on 25 December 1997.

**Breeding:** There are no reports of active nests but the frequency of records and the presence of multiple territorial males annually, strongly suggests that breeding does occur. Two adults feeding two fledged young were observed at Burton on 15 August 1995. An agitated pair, one carrying food, was observed along Bonanza Creek near Hills on 30 June 2010 and another adult male carrying food was observed 15 July 2011.

**Comments:** In late August and early September numbers of migrant Common Yellowthroats congregate in suitable habitats. In excess of 50 birds have been counted in one area of tall weedy grasses along the lakeshore at Nakusp. Many linger in that location for several weeks, with numbers slowly diminishing through mid-October.

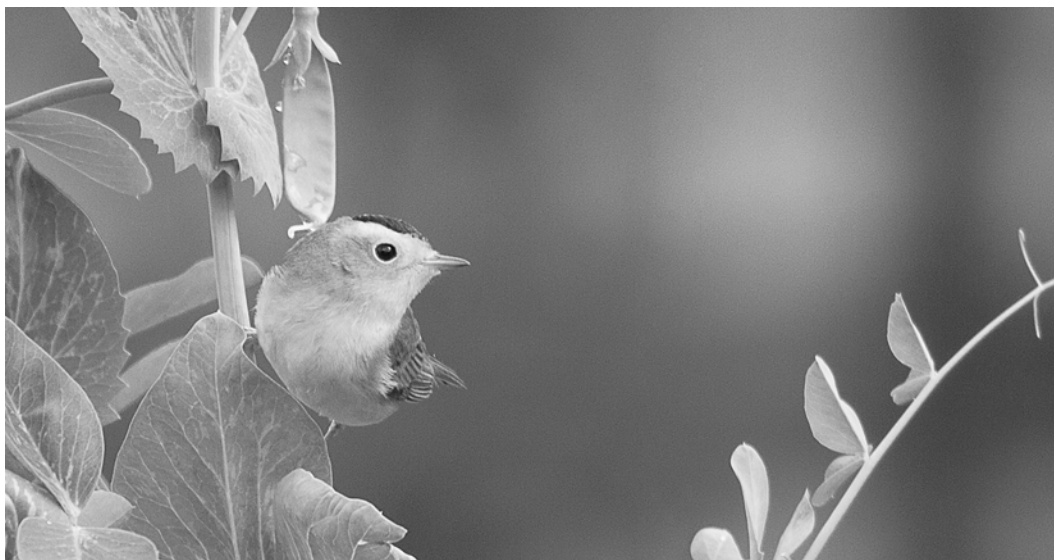
### Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring, summer, and autumn and accidental in winter; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Wilson's Warbler (Figure 174) as a "rather uncommon passing summer migrant" in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Non-breeding and Migration:** Wilson's Warbler is reported from a wide range of habitats including coniferous woodlands, mixed woodlands, riparian areas, wooded marshes, agricultural lands, gardens, sewage lagoons, and golf courses. It occurs from valley bottom to at least 2,150 m. **Breeding:** There are no breeding records but singing males encountered during the breeding season are typically found at higher elevations, often in clear-cuts or subalpine shrubbery.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species arrives in early May; the earliest date is 3 May 2002. It remains in very small numbers throughout the season. **Summer:** Early summer records at lower elevations continue



**Figure 174.** Wilson's Warbler is a Neotropical migrant that leaves during September for wintering grounds that are mainly in Central America. *Photo by Gail Spittler.*

until mid-June. Most records in late June and July are from higher elevations. By late August, birds are again occurring at lower elevations. It is presumed these are early autumn migrants. **Autumn:** Most years the species has departed by late September, but some years a few linger well into the season. There are four October records and two for November. In 2003 a single bird remained until 18 November, and in 2006 one stayed until 23 November. **Winter:** There is one record. On 9 December 2011 a male was observed feeding in a compost bin in Nakusp. The bird remained in the vicinity until 18 January 2012 (Campbell and Van Damme 2012; Figure 175). The following morning, after a cold night, the bird was found dead in the compost bin (Janet Spicer, pers. com.).



**Figure 175.** In some years, a late departing Wilson's Warbler may be found in October and November. The first winter record, a very rare discovery anywhere in the southern interior of British Columbia, was recorded on 1 January 2012 when a bird was found feeding in a compost bin in Nakusp. This is the second winter record for the West Kootenay region. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson. BC Photo 4004.*

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records, but it likely breeds at higher elevations.

**Comments:** In adjacent areas and in other parts of southern interior British Columbia, Wilson's Warblers are known to breed at higher elevations, often in the subalpine zone. As this habitat is mostly inaccessible in the study area very little data are available but it seems likely that breeding occurs in such situations.

## TANAGERS

### Western Tanager

*Piranga ludoviciana*

**Status:** *Common in spring, uncommon in summer and rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Western Tanager (Figure 176) as a "Common summer migrant, though its numbers vary much in different years" in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 176.** Western Tanager is a common spring migrant but only a few remain to breed. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** Summer records are more numerous from higher elevations, often adjacent to clear-cuts, where it has been recorded up to at least 1,100 m. At lower elevations the species occurs in various open situations, often those that are human-influenced. The three suspected breeding records occurred within the town site of Nakusp. **Non-breeding:** Migrants occur in a variety of woodlands but generally avoid the dense coniferous forests that dominate the study area. Most records are from within town sites or agricultural areas where the forests have been opened and the woodland includes deciduous trees.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species usually arrives in early May, the earliest date being 29 April 1992. There is a slight but perceptible peak in late May.

**Summer:** A few migrants still pass through in June, but numbers drop by the end of June and only a small number remain through the summer. Numbers are a little higher at higher elevations. **Autumn:** There are very few records for September; the latest date is 6 September 2008.

**Breeding:** There are no reports of active nests, but adults in company with young birds and adults carrying food have been reported several times. On 2 August 2010 an adult female was seen with one juvenile, on 9 August 1979 an adult female was seen with three fully grown young, and on 16 August 1988 an adult with two young were seen. All three of these sightings were in Nakusp. On 16 July 2011 an adult carrying food was observed at 1,060 m along a forest service road south of Nakusp and on 20 July 2011 another adult carrying food was observed near New Denver.

**Comments:** Based on the above evidence and the annual presence of singing males it is likely that tanagers breed regularly here, but in small numbers.

## TOWHEES, SPARROWS, LONGSPURS AND ALLIES

### Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring and accidental in autumn and winter; possibly breeds very occasionally.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) had a fondness for Spotted Towhee (Figure 177); he writes, “This rather gorgeous, long-tailed bird is a summer migrant, arriving about the middle of March; it occasionally winters.”

**Habitat: Non-breeding:** The species frequents areas of dense shrub, often in association with suburban gardens. It is sometimes reported at feeders.

**Occurrence: Spring:** It occurs primarily between mid-March and late April; there are also three May records. The earliest record is on 10 March 1994, the



**Figure 177.** Spotted Towhee is an irregular spring visitor but it does not stay to breed. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

latest is on 24 May 1999. **Autumn:** There is a single record from 19 November 1996. **Winter:** There is a single record from Brouse on 4 January 1997.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** On a few occasions, pairs have been observed in suitable nesting habitat and males have been heard singing. The Spotted Towhee may occasionally breed here.

Spotted Towhee has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count once (3%) in 30 years.

### American Tree Sparrow *Spizella arborea*

**Status:** *Rare in spring and autumn and very rare in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) reports American Tree Sparrow (Figure 178) as “Summer migrant, not uncommon. Noted in March, May, June, July, August, and October” in the Edgewood area. See *Comments*.

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** Most spring and autumn birds occur in weedy or grassy areas. All winter records have been within Nakusp, often near bird feeders, or in the vicinity of the Nakusp sewage lagoons.



**Figure 178.** American Tree Sparrow is primarily a regular but rare spring and autumn migrant. *Photo by Linda M. Van Damme.*

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The species occurs irregularly between early March and mid-April. The earliest recorded date is 8 March 1998; the latest is 19 April 2010. *Autumn:* It occurs irregularly from late September to the end of November. *Winter:* It has been reported throughout December and early January. There are only two records after 18 January: 28 January 1999 and 2 February 1986.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The species has been seen less frequently during the last decade. There were 23 records for the 1980s, 27 for the 1990s, but only 10 between 2000 and 2010.

Kelso's discussion of the status of American Tree Sparrow during his time in Edgewood is difficult to understand. The species has never been known to occur regularly anywhere in southern British Columbia except as a "summer migrant" (Brooks and Swarth 1925, Munro and Cowan 1947, Campbell et al. 2001). All of Kelso's other accounts are very thorough and quite detailed. In many cases, he identified birds to the subspecies level and, therefore, it is hard to imagine how he could have misidentified this species. However, his status for American Tree Sparrow seems to be in error.

## Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerine*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, and uncommon in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Chipping Sparrow (Figure 179) as "An abundant summer migrant. Nests freely" in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 179.** Chipping Sparrow is the most common sparrow in summer. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** It breeds in a wide variety of partially open habitats with suitable low vegetation for nesting. It occurs in forest openings (particularly transportation and transmission corridors), subalpine meadows, in town sites, and agricultural areas. It has been reported from valley bottom to at least 2,200 m. **Non-breeding and Migration:** There is no perceptible change of habitat from that of breeding; it continues to occupy sites offering open areas. Some evidence suggests that post-breeding flocks move upslope and into subalpine areas.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are a few early May records, but the species more typically arrives in mid-May. The earliest date is 1 May 1994. The numbers peak slightly in late May and early June. **Summer:** The species continues to be fairly widespread and common throughout June, July, and most of August. **Autumn:** Departure is early and fairly abrupt; most have left by the end of August. There are six September records, the latest being 18 September 1994.



**Figure 180.** Chipping Sparrow nests are frequently saddled on supporting branches in small coniferous trees. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

**Breeding:** Breeds regularly. Nests with eggs (Figure 180) have been observed between 13 and 30 June, nests with young between 5 and 22 July, and adults with fledged young between 1 July and 17 August. This chronology suggests that the nesting season is protracted. There is no local evidence of double broods, but the range of dates for nesting activity suggests that this is quite possible. All known nests are within one metre of the ground and have been located in dense shrubs, cedar hedges, or coniferous saplings.

**Comments:** Chipping Sparrows are probably the most common sparrow in summer. Their preference for forest edges frequently leads them to transportation corridors where they are regularly seen when travelling the highways of the study area.

**Clay-colored Sparrow**  
*Spizella pallida*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, summer, and autumn.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** All records are from agricultural fields or areas of open shrub.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are five records between 16 and 25 May. **Summer:** There are four records ranging from 9 June to 9 July. **Autumn:** There are two records: 2 September 1989 and 3 September 1992.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** All records were of passage birds as none were seen after the initial observation. This includes the summer records, which on two occasions were of singing males.

**Vesper Sparrow**  
*Poocetes gramineus*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring, casual in autumn, and accidental in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** Spring records are from the hayfields in Brouse and Crescent Bay. Autumn records are from more diverse locations, including towns, sewage lagoons and open lake shore situations. The one winter record was from a bird-feeding station in a suburban garden in Nakusp.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The species has been recorded 10 times between 17 April and 31 May. *Autumn:* There are five records between 2 and 25 September. *Winter:* In 2007, a single bird appeared at a bird feeder in Nakusp on 29 November and was seen daily until 7 December (Figure 181). No winter records were listed by Campbell et al. (2001) for interior British Columbia.



**Figure 181.** Each autumn, Vesper Sparrow migrates from its breeding grounds in the grasslands in the interior of British Columbia to wintering areas in the southern United States and Mexico. In 2007, a bird visited a feeder in Nakusp from late November to early December, the first winter record for the interior of the province. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 29 November 2007. BC Photo 4015.*

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The individual that occurred in the winter was clearly out of its normal habitat. It spent most of its time in a brush pile at the edge of a Douglas-fir stand. From time to time it ventured out to feed on bird seed scattered on the ground, but rarely remained in the open for long before scurrying back to the brush pile after feeding.

**Black-throated Sparrow**  
*Amphispiza bilineata*

**Status:** *Accidental in summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** An alternate plumage male was observed at Burton on 23 June 1984. It was foraging in a rocky section of the Upper Arrow Lake shore adjacent to shrubby flats. It was not observed again after the initial sighting (Campbell et al 2001).

**Savannah Sparrow**  
*Passerculus sandwichensis*

**Status:** *Common in spring, summer, and autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Savannah Sparrow (Figure 182) as “Summer migrant, not numerous” in the Edgewood area.



**Figure 182.** Savannah Sparrow is a common migrant and probably breeds regularly in agricultural fields and alpine meadows. *Photo by Gail Spitler.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** Most breeding season birds were seen in agricultural fields or subalpine meadows. Savannah Sparrows occur from valley bottom to at least 2,100 m. **Migration and Non-breeding:** It occurs in a wide variety of open, weedy, or grassy habitats including fields, gardens, golf courses, and along the Upper Arrow Lake shore.

**Occurrence: Spring:** In 1993, a Savannah Sparrow was seen in Nakusp on 3 April, but mid-April is a more typical arrival date. Generally, arrival dates are very consistent and 50% of the time they fall between 15 and 20 April. Peak movement is in early May when small flocks of up to 10 are seen. **Summer:** Numbers remain fairly constant through June and July, with a noticeable increase in August when small flocks again occur. These flocks likely result from the addition



of young birds to the population. **Autumn:** Summer populations remain steady until mid-September, at which time there is another increase in numbers, presumably caused by passage migrants. The number of birds drops fairly quickly in late September, followed by a few October stragglers. The latest recorded date is 16 October 1999.

**Breeding:** Despite the *common* status of this species, there are no nest records. Adults with recently fledged young have been observed in late July. It seems highly probable that the species nests regularly in the study area.

**Comments:** The surprising lack of nesting evidence in lowland areas is due in part to the birds' preference for hayfields as breeding sites. Access to such private property is usually restricted. With more observer effort in subalpine areas, nests would likely also be found there. It is interesting to note that during the entire five-year data gathering process associated with British Columbia's Breeding Bird Atlas project, not a single Savannah Sparrow nest was located anywhere in the West Kootenay Region.

Two of the recognized 17 subspecies of Savannah Sparrow in North America occur in the study area. *P. s. anthinus* is a common spring and autumn migrant and *P. s. nevadensis* is the breeding subspecies (Wheelwright and Rising 1993, Campbell et al. 2001).

### **Fox Sparrow** *Passerella iliaca*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring, locally common in summer, very rare in autumn, and casual in winter; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) apparently did not see this species himself in and around Edgewood. He describes it as very rare based on "one or two records obtained by a friend."

**Habitat: Breeding:** All summer records are from forested and subalpine habitats above 1,500 m. **Non-breeding:** There are a few spring and autumn records but too few to be able to categorize their habitat.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are six low-elevation records between 5 April and 3 May. It is unclear when they arrive at higher elevations due to the inaccessibility of these sites in spring. The earliest known record for an upland site is 23 May 1992. **Summer:** There are no low-elevation records. The species occurs in upland areas until at least the beginning of September. **Autumn:** There is one upland record on 3 September 1992 and two lowland records: 13 September 1975 and 27 September 1986. Lack of observer effort in upland areas in autumn makes it impossible to accurately determine status and departure dates. **Winter:** There is one record. A single bird first recorded at a feeder on 31 December 1988 remained for several weeks. There have been several other reports for the winter period, but none that could be substantiated.

**Breeding:** On 12 July 2009 an adult was observed feeding fledged young on a subalpine ridge just east of New Denver (Ed Beynon, pers. comm.). There are no other breeding records but the regular occurrence of singing males in subalpine habitat strongly suggests that the species does breed regularly.

**Comments:** The scarcity of lowland records suggests that Fox Sparrows return directly to their subalpine breeding areas without passing through the lowlands. Access to these areas is limited within the study area. The earliest record, 5 April 2012, was a bird of the 'red' Fox Sparrow race (see Rising 1996).

Fox Sparrow has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count once (3%) in 30 years.

The present taxonomy of Fox Sparrow is evolving as new molecular and behavioural information is examined. Ten of the recognized 18 subspecies occur in British Columbia as migrants or breeders (Godfrey 1986, Campbell et al. 2001). Recently, Zink (1994) and Rising (1996) suggested that the various subspecies of the Fox Sparrow complex can be divided into four groups, which may be different species: Red Fox Sparrow (*P. iliaca*), Sooty Fox Sparrow (*P. unalaschcensis*), Slate-colored Fox Sparrow (*P. schistacea*), and Thick-billed Fox Sparrow (*P. megarhynchos*). Only Thick-billed Fox Sparrow (a California race) may not occur in British Columbia.

**Song Sparrow**  
*Melospiza melodia*

**Status:** *Common in all seasons; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) says of the Song Sparrow (Figure 183) in the Edgewood area, “This sparrow is a very common summer migrant, and breeds freely; a goodly number winter, in fact during that season very few barns or sheds are without a Song Sparrow or two using them as shelter.”



**Figure 183.** Song Sparrow is present year-round and being a hardy bird is able to endure harsh winters. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** Song Sparrows occur in almost any situation that provides some dense cover. This would include gardens with shrubbery, hedges, marshes, roadside ditches, forest edges, and riparian sites. **Non-breeding:** There is little evidence to suggest that the species moves very far from its preferred breeding habitat.

**Occurrence:** Occurs regularly throughout the year.

**Breeding:** There are many records of adults with fledged and dependent young, but only a few nests with young or eggs have been discovered. Nests with eggs have been found between 5 and 9 May and with nestlings between 17 May and 2 June (Figure 184). Despite these narrow ranges, adults with dependent young have been observed between 21 May and 10 August, which suggests the actual range of dates

of incubation is 5 May to late July. It is not known whether any of these later dates represent second broods. There is one record of an adult feeding a fledged Brown-headed Cowbird on 22 July 1990.



**Figure 184.** The calculated dates for Song Sparrow nests with young in the study area range from the third week of May to early August. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** Song Sparrow has been recorded on every Nakusp Christmas Bird Count since 1980 in numbers ranging from two to 46.

See Arcese et al. (2002) for a discussion of the 24 recognized subspecies of which six occur in British Columbia.

**Lincoln's Sparrow**  
*Melospiza lincolnii*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring, summer, and autumn and accidental in winter; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Lincoln's Sparrow (Figure 185) as a “Passing summer migrant, not common” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** It occurs most often in open sites with grasses, weeds, and shrubs. The shrubby edges around the agricultural fields in Brouse, shrubby areas adjacent to lakes, and the shrubby margins of marshes and the Nakusp sewage lagoons are typical. At higher elevations, brushy clear-cuts are also used.



**Figure 185.** Lincoln's Sparrow is mainly a migrant but probably breeds annually in the weedy edges of agricultural fields in Brouse. *Photo by Gail Spitler.*

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species occurs in small numbers from mid-April to the end of May. The earliest date is 13 April 2003. **Summer:** It becomes much harder to find after the middle of June. There are very few records between 30 June and 25 August, but after that date it occurs quite regularly in small numbers. **Autumn:** It continues to occur fairly regularly through September and well into October. The latest record is 25 October 2003. **Winter:** A single bird was recorded at Nakusp on 9 and 10 December 2010.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records but territorial males have been noted infrequently in Brouse.

**Comments:** See Ammon (1995) for additional information on the systematics, ecology, and natural history of this elusive sparrow.

**Swamp Sparrow**  
*Melospiza georgiana*

**Status:** *Casual in autumn and winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat:** All sightings are from brushy areas adjacent to a creek, lake, or sewage lagoon. One was visiting a bird feeder.

**Occurrence: Autumn:** There are three records: 3 October 1993 (Siddle 1994a, Campbell et. al. 2001), 18 October 1992 (Siddle 1993), and 18-19 October 2003. **Winter:** There are two records, in both cases the bird remained in the area for several weeks. An individual visiting a feeder in Brouse was first noted on 13 December 1989. It remained until at least 31 January 1990 (Siddle 1990a, Campbell et. al. 2001). A second bird seen on 7 December 2003 was at the same location as one of the birds observed in October, raising the possibility that the bird was present throughout the intervening period.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Swamp Sparrow has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count once (3%) in 30 years.

**White-throated Sparrow**  
*Zonotrichia albicollis*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring, rare in autumn, and rare in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention White-throated Sparrow (Figure 186).



**Figure 186.** This photograph of a White-throated Sparrow documents its occurrence in the study area during autumn migration. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 5 October 2009. BC Photo 4019.*

**Habitat: Migration:** Birds seen in September and October are generally in passage. They are found in the grassy or weedy sites typically associated with migrating sparrows. **Winter:** From November to February most sightings have been from back yard feeders.

**Occurrence: Spring:** In 2001, an individual that had been present for most of the winter remained until 30 March. Similarly, in 2002, an over-wintering bird remained until 13 April. There are no records of birds arriving in spring. **Autumn:** The species occurs irregularly from 13 September to the end of November. **Winter:** In some years one or two birds remain at bird feeders throughout the season, sometime lingering well into spring.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Prior to 2000, there was only one winter record. Since then, however, White-throated Sparrows have occurred in at least seven different winters. During the past six decades, White-throated Sparrow has expanded its breeding range (Siddle 2010) and increased the number of wintering localities across southern British Columbia (e.g., Campbell et al. 2001, Van Damme 2012).

White-throated Sparrow has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count six times (20%) in 30 years.

### **Harris's Sparrow** *Zonotrichia querula*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring, casual in autumn, and very rare in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat:** The species is generally associated with feeders in suburban or agricultural areas. All records are from Nakusp or Brouse.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Some of the spring sightings represent birds that had been previously reported during the winter. On four occasions, however, birds

were recorded for the first time that year in April or May. The latest date observed is 5 May 1976. **Autumn:** The species was seen in just five different years, ranging in date from 23 September to 29 October. **Winter:** It occurs irregularly throughout the winter period. Some individuals stay for only a day or two, whereas others remain for prolonged periods. In 1998, for example, a bird first recorded on 24 January remained in the area until at least 5 April.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The occurrence of Harris's Sparrow is irregular with sightings being reported about every three years.

Single birds have been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count four times (13%) in 30 years.

### **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

**Status:** *Common in spring (may be abundant for short periods), locally common in summer, common in autumn, and very rare in winter; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes White-crowned Sparrow (Figure 187) as a "Summer migrant, varies much in numbers." He adds "They nest late. I have found no nests before the first half of June." Unfortunately, he makes no mention of where he found nests; the species does not currently nest in the Edgewood area, although it does in adjacent subalpine habitats.

**Habitat: Summer:** All records are from the Engelmann Spruce- Subalpine fir Zone where it has been recorded up to at least 2,200 m. **Migration:** All records are from weedy or grassy areas typically associated with migrating sparrows, or at feeders.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species occurs regularly from mid-April to the end of May. On occasion it arrives earlier; the earliest date is 5 April 2000. Some years they appear only in small groups, in other years, flocks in excess of 100 are seen. Populations peak between 26 April and 5 May. **Summer:** Occurrences



**Figure 187.** White-crowned Sparrow is a common spring and autumn migrant in the valleys and a regular breeder in subalpine meadows. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Nakusp, 23 April 2009.*

in the lowlands during early June represent late migrants. The species occurs regularly at higher elevations throughout the summer. **Autumn:** There are no large flocks passing through the valleys, such as those seen in spring. All records are of less than 10 individuals. It occurs from 30 August to 10 November. **Winter:** There are eight records. In 1988 and 1999, single birds remained for at least six weeks. The other six records were of single birds seen only once, all between 2 and 16 January.

**Breeding:** This species presumably breeds in subalpine habitats. There are no breeding records from within the study area but there is evidence from adjacent areas.

**Comments:** White-crowned Sparrow has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count three times (10%) in 30 years.

See Chilton et al. (1995) for a list of the three subspecies found in British Columbia and how to identify them.

## Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla*

**Status:** *Casual in spring.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat: Migration:** All records are from within Nakusp or from the agricultural fields of Brouse and Crescent Bay. The Nakusp birds were generally associated with feeders, whereas Brouse and Crescent Bay birds were seen along field edges or weedy ditches.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are six records, all between 27 April and 16 May.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** All records are of single birds, and most were found within flocks of White-crowned Sparrows. There is evidence to suggest that Golden-crowned Sparrows do breed in adjacent sub-alpine areas and, therefore, it is possible they breed in the study area.

## Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*

**Status:** *Very common (at times abundant) in spring, very common in summer and autumn, and uncommon in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) discusses two subspecies of juncos in the Edgewood area. Prior to 1973, there were five species of juncos (see *Comments*). Kelso described the “Slate-colored” Junco as “Rare.” He did not see any himself but reports that “a friend obtained a specimen.” “Oregon” Junco (Figure 188) was described as “a very common summer migrant; breeds.”

**Habitat: Breeding:** The species occurs in a wide variety of open and semi-open habitats from valley bottom to alpine. Juncos are frequently seen in human-influenced habitats such as towns, farms, forestry clear-cuts, and transportation corridors. It is seen



**Figure 188.** “Oregon” Dark-eyed Junco is the common subspecies seen throughout the year and it breeds from valley bottom to subalpine meadows. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

less often in closed forests. **Migration:** Habitat is the same as that of breeding. **Winter:** All records are from towns or agricultural areas, usually in association with feeders.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The precise timing of spring migration is confused by the presence of overwintering birds. Numbers definitely have increased by late March and flocks of 50 or more remain in the study area until at least mid-April. By early May, birds are generally seen in pairs or small groups of four to six. **Summer:** It occurs regularly throughout the season. **Autumn:** There is a significant increase in numbers in mid-September when flocks of 20 or more are regularly seen. By mid-October numbers are dropping. Small groups of up to 10 are recorded until the end of November. **Winter:** The population remains fairly constant through the winter, although there is variation from year to year. There is a small flock in Nakusp every winter, which in some years is two or three birds, whereas in other years it may reach 20.

**Breeding:** Breeds regularly in the study area. Nests with eggs (Figure 189) have been found between 22 April and 26 July and nestlings from 3 May to 7 August. Most nests have been situated on the ground, some on dirt banks, and two in hanging flower planters. All have some shelter from above, either provided by leaves of a plant, a log, a sheet of plastic, or the overhang at the top of a dirt bank. It breeds from valley bottom to at least 2,000 m.



**Figure 189.** Most “Oregon” Dark-eyed Junco nests have been found on the ground with egg dates ranging from late April to late July. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** Until 1973, Slate-coloured Junco, Oregon Junco, White-winged Junco, Gray-headed Junco, and Guadalupe Junco were considered separate species. These five species were lumped into one species, Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) in 1973 (American Ornithologists’ Union 1973). British Columbia has breeding populations of four subspecies, three of the “Oregon” group and one “Slate-coloured” race (*Junco hyemalis cismontanus*). In the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton study area, most breeding juncos appear to belong to *montanus* of the “Oregon” Junco (Campbell et al. 2001, Nolan et al. 2002) but wintering birds include significant numbers of the “Slate-colored” subspecies.

Dark-eyed Junco has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 29 times (97%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from two to 44.

**Lapland Longspur**  
*Calcarius lapponicus*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, rare in autumn and accidental in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) says, “So far only noted in the fall in small flocks. Decidedly rare” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat: Migration:** The species uses open areas of short grasses and weeds. Most sightings have been on exposed, grassy flats beside Arrow Lake near major creek mouths.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are two records of single birds: 17 April 1993 and 17 May 2010. **Autumn:** Flocks of up to 75 have occurred, but smaller groups of less than 10 are more typical. It has been recorded from 3 September to 18 October but is not reported every year. **Winter:** There is one record: 3 January 1986 from Nakusp.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The Arrow Lakes valley is not a major migration corridor for Lapland Longspur but it may be more common than the data indicate. The species feeds quietly on the ground in grassy areas and individuals are easy to miss if not flushed.

Lapland Longspur has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count once (3%) in 30 years.

**Chestnut-collared Longspur**  
*Calcarius ornatus*

**Status:** *Accidental in spring and summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There is one record. On 29 March 1984 an alternate plumaged male was seen on the Nakusp waterfront (Rogers 1984, Campbell et. al. 2001). **Summer:** On 7 June 2009 another alternate plumaged male was seen near Burton.

**Snow Bunting**  
*Plectrophenax nivalis*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring, rare in autumn, and casual in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) writes that in the Edgewood area the Snow Bunting (Figure 190) “Occurs in large numbers in winter, but is very erratic in its movements. Recorded 22 October to April 2.”



**Figure 190.** Snow Bunting is an irregular visitor with most birds seen foraging along the waterfront at Nakusp. Photo by Gary S. Davidson.

**Habitat:** Most sightings are from open fields, roadsides, or the Upper Arrow Lake shore.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are fewer than 10 records; all but one between 5 March and 4 April. There was one exceptional sighting on 5 May 1978. Flock sizes ranged from one to 55. **Autumn:** The species has occurred from 22 October to 29 November. The average flock size is 25. **Winter:** There are three records: 2 January 1999, 4 January 1981, and 19 February 1977.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Snow Buntings visit the study area much less frequently than in the past. There are 23 records for the period 1975 to 1990 but only 12 records since then through 2012.

Snow Bunting has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count twice (7%) in 30 years.

## GROSBEAKS, BUNTINGS AND ALLIES

### Rose-breasted Grosbeak

*Pheucticus ludovicianus*

**Status:** *Accidental in spring.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There is one record, a singing male seen in Brouse on 16 May 1981 (Rogers 1981, Campbell et. al. 2001).

### Black-headed Grosbeak

*Pheucticus melanocephalus*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring and summer and casual in autumn; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes the species as “Very rare. Only two records...” in the Edgewood area.

**Habitat:** *Migration:* Spring migrants occur in a variety of deciduous or mixed woodlands. *Breeding:* Singing males occurred primarily in the riparian habitat at Summit Lake and along Bonanza Creek south of Summit Lake. There are also a few records from similar habitat along Nakusp Creek flowing through Brouse and a few from forestry clear-cuts, where it occurs up to at least 1,300 m.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The first migrants typically arrive in the latter part of May; one seen in Nakusp on 5 May 1998 was exceptional. *Summer:* Small numbers continue to be seen through June and July; there are no August records. *Autumn:* There is one record: a single bird was seen near Summit Lake on 4 September 1999.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Based on the annual presence of singing males in one or two specific localities, it seems likely that breeding occurs locally.

### Lazuli Bunting

*Passerina amoena*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer and very rare in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** In describing the status of Lazuli Bunting (Figure 191) in the Edgewood area, Kelso (1926) writes, “This beautiful summer migrant was not recorded till 1920, but with the opening out of the country is now by no means uncommon. Breeds in the district.”



**Figure 191.** Lazuli Bunting has become quite common in recent years (since 1980), favouring the deciduous edges of the fields in Brouse. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat:** *Breeding:* The species shows a preference for edges. It most frequently occurs in shrubbery and young deciduous growth adjacent to agricultural lands, golf courses, suburban gardens, and other open areas. It stays very close to the major valley bottoms; the highest recorded elevation is at Summit Lake (760 m). *Migration:* Habitat choice is less specific during migration but it still stays close to the valley bottoms.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* First arrivals are in mid-May with an early recorded date of 13 May 1993. Numbers are higher by the end of the month. *Summer:* It continues to occur regularly through June and July, but declines in August. *Autumn:* Departure is quite early; there are few September records. The latest record is 14 September 1996. All autumn records



are of single birds, suggesting that the family groups seen regularly during summer either break up or leave earlier.

**Breeding:** There are numerous records of adults carrying food, adults visiting presumed nest sites, and adults with fledged young, but no actual nests have been found (see *Comments* for Indigo Bunting).

**Comments:** There has been a noticeable increase in numbers of Lazuli Buntings since the early 1980s. Today, a walk around Brouse Loop in June may produce at least a dozen singing males. A similar walk 30 years ago would have produced just one or two.

### **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*

**Status:** *Casual in spring and accidental in summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat:** All records are from young deciduous growth adjacent to agricultural lands.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are two records. A single male spent most of the month of June in Crescent Bay in 1987. A male was photographed in New Denver 26 May 2010. *Summer:* A first year male, apparently mated with a female Lazuli Bunting, was observed in Brouse in July 1990 (Siddle 1990b).

**Breeding:** The young male described above was seen in the company of a female Lazuli Bunting and two fledglings. The four birds maintained contact with each other for quite some time during a single observation. The male was not observed feeding the fledglings; the female Lazuli attended them several times.

**Comments:** A male Indigo Bunting (initially identified as a hybrid) was reported paired with a female Lazuli Bunting in Nakusp (Campbell et al. 2001). It was later determined to be a male Indigo Bunting in prebasic moult plumage.

## **BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES AND ALLIES**

### **Bobolink**

*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, accidental in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Bobolink (Figure 192) was not present in the Edgewood area until 1926. Kelso observed one or two males each year from then on. He did not see a female until 1930 (Kelso 1931).



**Figure 192.** The Bobolink only spends two or three months in the study area, just long enough to complete a breeding cycle. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Brouse, 16 May 2007.*

**Habitat:** *Breeding:* All records are from hayfields in Brouse (Figure 193). *Non-breeding:* There are a few scattered records from other agricultural fields in the area.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* It typically arrives in mid-May; the earliest date is 14 May 1989. Up to 15 males are present some years, although eight to 10 is more typical. *Summer:* It continues to occur regularly through June and well into July. There are only three August records. *Autumn:* A record of a single bird on 20 September 1998 was exceptional and is the only record for the season.



**Figure 193.** Several pairs of Bobolinks nest annually in hayfields in Brouse, one of about a dozen known sites in southern British Columbia. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Brouse, 24 July 2012.*

**Breeding:** Breeds regularly in Brouse and perhaps occasionally in Crescent Bay (Davidson 2005b, Van Damme 1999). The number of breeding pairs varies from year to year, but has probably never exceeded 15. Since nesting occurs within hayfields on private property, no actual nests have been located. Males carrying food into suspected nest sites have been recorded as early as 23 June. Agitated males and females suggesting the presence of a nest or very young fledglings have been observed as late as 10 July. Fledglings, flying in mixed flocks with adults, have been observed from 8 July to 24 August. An adult female feeding three begging fledglings on 11 August 2012 seems unusually late based on the other implied breeding evidence. The number of males noted at the Brouse site in the last decade has been lower than the long-term average. Between 1985 and 2000, an average of nine males was observed annually, since that time the average is less than six.

**Comments:** Breeding success for Bobolinks is very weather dependent. If the weather is dry in June, the hayfields are cut before the young fledge. In such years there may be no young at all.

### **Red-winged Blackbird**

*Agelaius phoeniceus*

**Status:** *Common in spring, uncommon in summer, common in autumn, and very rare in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Red-winged Blackbird (Figure 194) apparently arrived in the Edgewood area during Kelso's residence there. From his arrival in 1913 until 1926 he had only two sightings (Kelso 1926). By 1929 the species was breeding and in 1930 he discovered 12 nests (Kelso 1931).

**Habitat: Breeding:** Nesting occurs in three separate marshy areas ranging from a several hectare marsh at the north end of Slocan Lake to a tiny, cattail-fringed pond on the Nakusp golf course. **Non-breeding and Migration:** Red-winged Blackbirds occur in a wide variety of locations, including towns, farmlands, sewage lagoons, and lakeshores. They will also frequent feeders when available. **Winter:** Small groups occasionally over-winter in the agricultural lands near Nakusp or within the town site itself.



**Figure 194.** Red-winged Blackbird is found in small flocks during spring and autumn migration but in summer the species is more locally distributed and is restricted to wetlands with emergent vegetation. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The bird has been recorded every year from early March to the end of May. In some years it arrives before the end of winter; the earliest date is 19 February 1995. Migrating flocks are never large, rarely exceeding 40 birds. There is a peak in numbers in late March. *Summer:* It occurs irregularly in small colonies, rarely exceeding five males. Post-breeding flocks form in mid-August. *Autumn:* Small flocks of up to 20 occur irregularly from mid-August through mid-October. There are fewer sightings in late October and November, typically involving from one to five birds. *Winter:* Most years Red-wings are not present. On a few occasions, a small group has remained for much of the season.

**Breeding:** It breeds in small colonies in three locations: Bonanza marsh at the north end of Slocan Lake, the marsh at the southeast end of Summit Lake, and on a small pond on the Nakusp golf course. Nests with eggs have been recorded from 1 to 15 July, nestlings from 28 June to 20 July, and dependent fledged young from 1 to 18 July (Figure 195). There is considerable difference in breeding chronology between females within a single colony. At the golf course colony, some nests have fledged young, whereas others are still under construction.



**Figure 195.** In early July, the first nestling Red-winged Blackbirds leave their nests and venture out on to adjacent cattails where they are fed usually by the female for up to two weeks. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** Red-winged Blackbird has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count nine times (30%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to 12.

#### **Western Meadowlark** *Sturnella neglecta*

**Status:** *Rare in spring, summer, and autumn and accidental in winter; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** In 1926 Kelso describes the status of Western Meadowlark (Figure 196) in the Edgewood area as a “Summer migrant. Unknown till 1916, now rapidly increasing; breeds freely” (Kelso 1926). In his later paper he reports that it over-wintered in 1921, 1923, and 1924 (Kelso 1931).



**Figure 196.** The loud, musical song of Western Meadowlark is sometimes heard from fields in Brouse during spring. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Breeding:** All breeding season records are from hayfields near Nakusp or from the grassy, Upper Arrow Lake shore near Burton. **Non-breeding:** Migrants occur in a wide variety of open, grassy habitats, including agricultural lands, school fields, golf courses, residential gardens, and open lakeshores.

**Occurrence: Spring:** When present, it occurs in small numbers from 13 March through the end of the season. All records are of one to four individuals. **Summer:** Most years there are very few records. Spring birds may linger into early June but usually do not remain through the season. There are a few July records from Brouse; all August records are from Burton. **Autumn:** The species is not recorded every year; it is most often seen at Burton during September. There are two records later than 30 September, the latest being 9 November 1986. **Winter:** There are two records. A single bird appeared at a feeder on 30 January 1994 and remained until spring. Another individual was recorded in New Denver on 19 December 1981.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records. In 1994, a group of four, which included immature birds, was reported in Burton. There is some indication from local landowners in the Burton area that meadowlarks are perhaps more regular during summer than records would indicate. It is possible that one or two pairs may breed there occasionally.

**Comments:** The agricultural fields in Brouse are small oases for Western Meadowlark in an otherwise coniferous forested landscape. The species may be visiting the study area less often now than it previously did. The average number of spring and summer records per year in the 1990s was about nine but since 2000 the average is down to about four records per year. The autumn data are more consistent and do not reflect the same changes.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird**  
*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

**Status:** *Uncommon in spring and summer and accidental in autumn.*

**Ornithological History:** Between 1913 and 1926 Kelso saw Yellow-headed Blackbird (Figure 197) once in the Edgewood area (Kelso 1926). He had three additional sightings between 1926 and 1930 (Kelso 1931).



**Figure 197.** Most records of Yellow-headed Blackbird are from the spring migration period. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Non-breeding and Migration:** Most records are from agricultural lands in Brouse and adjacent areas. A few birds have been reported in Nakusp, sometimes near feeders, and it has also occurred at sewage ponds.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species occurs irregularly from mid-April to the end of May. Typically, groups contain no more than eight or 10 individuals. **Summer:**

The spring pattern continues until late June; there is one July record. One or two are occasionally seen in August. **Autumn:** There is one record: eight were recorded in Brouse on 25 September 1988.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records. A female, in company with a fledged juvenile, observed at the Nakusp Sewage ponds in August 1997 may have been a migrant.

**Comments:** Yellow-headed Blackbirds have visited the area less often in recent years. Prior to 2002 they were recorded several times a year, particularly in spring. Since 2002, there have been fewer than 15 records.

### **Rusty Blackbird** *Euphagus carolinus*

**Status:** *Accidental in spring and casual in autumn and winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) writes, “Not recorded till 1917. On 8 October, 1919, I obtained a male which was consorting with a mixed assemblage of Bluebirds and Brewer’s Blackbirds. In the spring and summer of 1924 several pairs were observed in Fire Valley and around my house in Edgewood. I have little doubt (though this may be disputed) that they breed in the neighbourhood.” In subsequent years, he was not able to confirm his suspicions of breeding (Kelso 1931).

**Habitat:** It has been recorded at residential feeders in Nakusp, Brouse, and Burton, and at the Nakusp sewage ponds.

**Occurrence:** **Spring:** There is one record: 18 April 1987. **Autumn:** A small group of five birds arrived at a feeder in Brouse in late October 1996. They remained for several weeks although at least two were subsequently taken by a Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*). A single individual was at the Nakusp sewage ponds on 16 October 2011. **Winter:** There are four records. Two of the five that visited the feeder in Brouse in 1996 remained in the area until at least the end of December. One was reported from a

feeder in Brouse on 28 February 1999. In 2001, three visited a feeder in Nakusp from early January until at least 4 February, and two visited a feeder in Burton on 21 December 2006.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Rusty Blackbird has not been recorded in the summer in the study area. The species has been recorded on the Christmas Bird Count twice (7%) in 30 years.

### **Brewer’s Blackbird** *Euphagus cyanocephalus*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, uncommon in autumn, and casual in winter; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) writes of Brewer’s Blackbird (Figure 198), “When I first came to Edgewood in 1913 they were quite rare birds but in later years have become quite common.” In 1930 he found his first nest, and after further searching found five that year.



**Figure 198.** Brewer’s Blackbird is common in spring and summer and in early May displaying males can be seen on fence posts around agricultural areas. *Photo by Paul Whalen.*

**Habitat:** **Breeding:** Most spring and breeding season records are from agricultural lands around Nakusp, New Denver and Burton. **Non-breeding:** Late summer and autumn birds occur in other open habitats including lakeshores and grassy areas. **Winter:** The only records are from bird feeders, one in Nakusp and

one at a lakeshore residence south of Nakusp.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* A few individuals sometimes arrive in late March or early April; the earliest date seen is 31 March 1990. Most, however, arrive closer to the middle of April. The earliest flock noted was one of 40 birds on 12 April 2003. *Summer:* Numbers remain quite steady until the end of June. Mixed flocks of adults and fledged young are seen in late June and early July, after which there are far fewer sightings. There are very few August records. *Autumn:* A few flocks occur in early September. These are larger than those seen in July and August, suggesting they are migrants. The latest recorded observation date is 11 October 2010. *Winter:* There are four records: 2 January 1978, 31 December 1978, 29 December 1991, and a single bird observed several times from late December to 10 February 2007.

**Breeding:** Breeds regularly in the area but only a few nests have been actively monitored. There are no records of nests with eggs. Nests with young have been observed between 5 and 23 June (Figure 199). Adults with dependent fledglings have been observed between 23 and 27 June. Flocks of adults with independent young have been observed from 27 June.



**Figure 199.** Brewer's Blackbird nests regularly in the vicinity of Brouse where in June nests contain developing young. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Comments:** Brewer's Blackbird has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count once (3%) in 30 years.

### **Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscalus*

**Status:** *Accidental in spring and autumn.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat:** Both records are from suburban gardens in Nakusp.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There is one record; a single bird was seen on 20 May 1986. *Autumn:* There is one record; a single bird was seen on 15 September 2001 (Cecile 2002).

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** The Common Grackle breeds only in the Peace River region of the province and it has been assumed that birds enter British Columbia from northwestern Alberta (Campbell et al. 2001). Recently, however, a small breeding population has been established in the Elk valley at Fernie, 215 km south southeast of Nakusp, since the early 1990s (Knight and Campbell 2009). It is possible that some of the far-southern records for the province are of grackles dispersing from that area.

### **Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater*

**Status:** *Common in spring and summer, and accidental in autumn; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso saw very few Brown-headed Cowbirds (Figure 200) in the Edgewood area, and he describes it simply as "An uncommon summer migrant."

**Habitat:** *Breeding:* All records are from open areas including agricultural lands, around lakes, marshes, and suburban gardens, but it also occurs regularly in alpine meadows to at least 2,100 m. *Migration:* Spring birds occur in almost all habitats except closed coniferous forests.



**Figure 200.** This juvenile Brown-headed Cowbird seemed to have little fear of humans as it followed our group as we hiked across an alpine meadow above Arrow Lake. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, 19 August 2010.*

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* The species typically arrives in late April or early May. An early record on 17 April 1995 was a full 10 days earlier than any other record. Flocks in excess of 25 have been seen a few times between 17 and 24 May. All other records are of 15 or fewer birds. *Summer:* The species remains throughout June and July, but numbers start to decline sharply in August; there are no summer records after 18 August. *Autumn:* There are two records. A group of five was in Brouse on 5 September 1983, and a single bird was seen at the Nakusp sewage lagoons on 3 October 1993.

**Breeding:** The species breeds regularly. Nests with a cowbird egg have been seen on 23 and 27 June. Dependent fledglings have been seen with presumed host parents from 24 June to mid-July. Larger young still being fed by other adults have been observed as late as 11 August.

The host species for the two nests containing cowbird eggs were Yellow Warbler and MacGillivray's Warbler. Species observed feeding fledged cowbirds are Willow Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler (Figure 201), Song

Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco.



**Figure 201.** Adult female Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler feeding a fledged Brown-headed Cowbird. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson, Summit Lake, 30 June 2010. BC Photo 4017.*

**Comments:** At least 84 species of birds in British Columbia have been parasitized by the Brown-headed Cowbird and Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" and "Myrtle" Warbler is among the top 10 hosts (Campbell et al. 2001).

**Bullock's Oriole**  
*Icterus bullockii*

**Status:** *Casual in spring and summer.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1931) reports that he did not see this species in the Edgewood area but that it “has been seen in the district.”

**Habitat:** Most records have been from deciduous woodlands adjacent to agricultural farmlands. One was at the Nakusp sewage lagoons and one in a suburban garden.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are four records, all between 20 and 25 May. One was in Crescent Bay on 20 May 1997 and the same year one was reported from Brouse on 25 May. One was at the Nakusp sewage lagoons on 23 May 1986 and one was in Brouse on 23 May 1992. *Summer:* There are four records: 4 June 1993, 22 June 2010, 7 July 2010, and 5 August 2007.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records, but the 5 August record was of an immature bird.

**Comments:** Bullock's Orioles are much more common in the drier, more open areas of the West Kootenay region such as Castlegar and Trail.

Bullock's and Baltimore oriole were originally considered separate species until 1983 when they were “lumped” as Northern Oriole (*Icterus glabula*) after research revealed some hybridization where the two types meet in the Great Plains (American Ornithologists' Union 1983). However, after further studies, the two forms were re-designated as the original species Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) and Baltimore Oriole (*I. glabula*) (Monroe et al. 1995).

## CARDUELINE FINCHES AND ALLIES

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch**  
*Leucosticte tephrocotis*

**Status:** *Very rare in spring, casual in summer, and very rare in autumn and winter.*

**Ornithological History:** During Kelso's time in Edgewood, he discusses both *L. t. tephrocotis* and *L. t. littoralis*, but doesn't provide a statement of status for either. He records that they occurred together in mixed flocks, sometimes numbering up to 100, ranging from 30 October to 21 February.

**Habitat:** *Breeding:* The only record is from a rocky alpine area at 2,200 m. *Migration:* All records are from grassy or weedy areas such as playing fields, lakeshores and agricultural fields.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are seven records scattered between 8 March and 11 May. Five records are of 10 or fewer birds, but on 2 April 1978 a flock of 200 was observed at Summit Lake, and on 5 April 1985 a flock of 100 was seen at Nakusp. *Summer:* There is only one record; a flock of 50 was seen on Dennis Creek ridge, just east of New Denver on 16 July 1988. *Autumn:* There are six records, all of 15 or fewer individuals, between 25 October and 20 November. *Winter:* There are 11 records between 4 December and 14 February. The largest group was a flock in excess of 25 at a feeder in Nakusp on 26 January 1992.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Six subspecies of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in North America have been separated into “gray-cheeked” and “brown-cheeked” forms, each with three races (American Ornithologists' Union 1957, MacDougall-Shackleton et al. 2000). Campbell et al. (2001) note that two subspecies, *L. t. tephrocotis* and *L. t. littoralis* occur in mixed flocks in autumn and winter in the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton area with the former subspecies being more numerous.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count twice (7%) in 30 years.

**Pine Grosbeak**  
*Pinicola enucleator*

**Status:** *Rare in spring and summer and uncommon in autumn and winter; possibly breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Pine



Grosbeak (Figure 202) as a “Common winter visitor from 28 November to the end of February.” In his later paper (Kelso 1931), he mentions a sighting on 18 April 1930 which he describes as “an exception [sic] date.”



**Figure 202.** During summer, Pine Grosbeak is often seen in the mountain passes. In some years it moves down into the valleys during winter. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: *Breeding:*** All summer records are from Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir Zone forests above 1,500 m. ***Non-breeding and Winter:*** Lowland records occur in a wide variety of woodland habitats, including gardens, agricultural areas, and forested regions. It sometimes visits feeders but seems to prefer berries such as mountain-ash. Pine Grosbeaks are frequently seen on roadsides, particularly during winter.

**Occurrence: *Spring:*** It occurs irregularly throughout the season in small numbers. ***Summer:*** All records are from higher elevations, generally above 1,500 m. It occurs regularly in small numbers. ***Autumn:*** A few early September records were from higher elevations and represent summering birds. The first appearance at lower elevations is often in late October, although the species is not recorded every year. ***Winter:*** It occurs throughout the season when present, but it is not recorded every winter.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records. The regular presence of singing males at higher elevations during the breeding season suggests that breeding occurs. Family groups including fledged young have been observed in August.

**Comments:** Access to the high elevation habitats in the study area any season other than summer is difficult. However, casual observations by cross-country skiers suggest that Pine Grosbeak inhabit these areas year-round.

Pine Grosbeak has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 21 times (70%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from two to 152 birds.

**Purple Finch**  
*Carpodacus purpureus*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, accidental in autumn, and casual in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention this species.

**Habitat: *Non-breeding and Winter:*** All spring and winter records have been of birds at feeders in Nakusp or Brouse. The autumn record was from lakeshore-riparian habitat at Summit Lake.

**Occurrence: *Spring:*** There are four records. In 1994 a female was at a feeder in Nakusp on 17 and 21 April and a male visited the same feeder on 30 April. In 1997 a female visited a feeder in Nakusp on 11 May. In 2012 a male and a female visited a feeder in Nakusp on 20 April. ***Autumn:*** There is one record, on 4 September 1999. ***Winter:*** There are two records. A male was at a feeder on 1 December 1996 and a male at a different feeder on 20 February 2005.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** There have been a few additional reports of female Purple Finches but it is not clear whether the observers were able to separate this species from Cassin's Finch. Purple Finch is reported with more regularity in Revelstoke, about 100 km north of Nakusp, and it is likely a few may wander south into the region.

**Cassin's Finch**  
*Carpodacus cassinii*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, (formerly uncommon, see Comments), casual in summer and very rare in autumn and winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Cassin's Finch (Figure 203) as a "Spring and fall migrant." He further states "They are very uncommon in the district" (Kelso 1931).



**Figure 203.** Formerly much more common in spring, Cassin's Finch is currently scarce from March to May. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Migration and Non-breeding:** With very few exceptions, all records have been from within the towns of Nakusp and New Denver. A few others have been from agricultural areas, golf courses, and around sewage lagoons.

**Occurrence: Spring:** There are a few scattered records of single birds between 9 March and 20 May. Before 1996, the species was much more common (see *Comments*). **Summer:** There are five records between 1 June and 15 July. **Autumn:** There are seven records between 2 September and 25 November. **Winter:** There are nine records scattered between 5 December and 13 February.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** There has been a significant change in the spring status of this species since 1995. The status given above and the occurrence description are based on data from 1996 to 2010, during which time there were only four records. Prior to that, the spring status was *uncommon*. It is not clear why there has been such a decline as records from other seasons have changed little.

Cassin's Finch has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count twice (7%) in 30 years.

**House Finch**  
*Carpodacus mexicanus*

**Status:** *Resident, common in all seasons; probably breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention House Finch (Figure 204).



**Figure 204.** During the past decade or so, House Finch has expanded its range into the study area and has become established as a year-round resident. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat:** All but one of the records are from Nakusp where it frequents residential and suburban gardens with adjacent thickets or hedgerows. House Finch also visits bird feeders in winter.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species occurs throughout the season in small flocks. **Summer:** There are fewer records during summer but this undoubtedly reflects

the absence of operating feeders during this time. **Autumn:** The number of records increases as the season progresses with flocks of up to 15 by late October. **Winter:** It occurs regularly throughout the season.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records. Birds are present year-round and singing males are heard around Nakusp in May and June. Mixed flocks of adult and immature birds are recorded in late summer.

**Comments:** The species is a relatively new arrival to the district. Between 1975 and 1990 there are just two records. During the 1990s it was recorded two or three times a year. It has now become a resident in Nakusp and a few can be found almost any time of year. The entire population is estimated to be between 30 and 40 birds.

House Finch has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 12 times (40%) in 30 years.

### **Red Crossbill**

*Loxia curvirostra*

**Status:** *Varies considerably from year to year. At times it may be common, but there can be protracted periods when the species is entirely absent. These absences do not correlate to any particular season; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes Red Crossbill (Figure 205) as “Nomadic, sometimes abundant.”

**Habitat:** All sightings have been in association with coniferous woodlands from valley bottom to at least 2,000 m. It will also visit feeders in residential areas.

**Occurrence:** In all seasons, Red Crossbills show no pattern of occurrence from one year to the next. In 2000, for example, they were reported every month except August. In 2006, the species was common in January and February, but was not seen again for the rest of the year. In 2007, they were not seen until July, but they then remained through the summer and into December.



**Figure 205.** The occurrence of Red Crossbill is unpredictable and at times throughout the year it may be present in fairly high numbers and at other times completely absent. *Photo by Gail Spitler.*

**Breeding:** No nests have been reported. Adults with young have been reported on five occasions between 29 January and 29 June. Adults collecting nest material have been observed in July and August.

**Comments:** The highly irregular movements of the Red Crossbill make it difficult to assign a definite status to this species.

Red Crossbill has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 15 times (50%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from two to 122.

### **White-winged Crossbill**

*Loxia leucoptera*

**Status:** *Casual in spring, very rare in autumn, and casual in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes the species' status in the Edgewood area as “Much scarcer than [Red Crossbill]”. Later he writes, “Aug 19th 1917. A cloud of these birds streamed into some trees accompanied by a few Pine Siskins” (Kelso 1933).

**Habitat:** All records are from coniferous forests.

**Occurrence:** *Spring:* There are five records between 20 March and 20 May; all are one or two individuals. *Autumn:* There are nine records from 1 September to 30 November. On 24 November 1985 a flock of 50 was seen at Hills, but all other records are of five or fewer birds. *Winter:* There are five records; one in December, three in January and one in February. On 24 December 1999, nine were found dead in the middle of Highway 6 southeast of Nakusp. [See Campbell and Preston (2006) for a synopsis of a program in British Columbia established to record vehicle-induced mortality of wildlife.] Of the January records, the most noteworthy was a flock of 150 seen along the Wilson Lake Road on 17 January 1981. On 6 February 1996, a flock of about 80 was seen at 1,400 m on a forest service road above Summit Lake.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** In areas adjacent to the study area, White-winged Crossbill has been recorded during the summer at higher elevations. Access to such regions within the study area is very limited. In recent years, the species has occurred much less frequently; there have been only two records since 2000.

### **Common Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea*

**Status:** *Abundant in spring, autumn, and winter during most years; it is absent, or nearly so, in some years.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) describes the status of Common Redpoll (Figure 206) as “Abundant winter migrant, some years flocks must number three or four hundred birds.”

**Habitat: Non-breeding and Winter:** The species occupies a variety of habitats but favoured sources of natural foods are the seeds of western redcedar and birch. It also occurs regularly at bird feeders.

**Occurrence: Spring:** Birds that were present during winter often remain well into spring. The latest record



**Figure 206.** Common Redpoll visits the study area almost annually during the winter but numbers vary considerably from year to year. It regularly feeds at bird feeders. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

is 2 May 1982. Flock size generally decreases as the season progresses; a flock of over 100 on 22 April 1982 was exceptional. *Autumn:* Most years the first flocks arrive in late November or early December. They were much earlier in 1992, 1999, and 2000, when first arrivals were noted on 1 November, 7 November and 5 November, respectively. The largest flock ever recorded was one estimated to contain 500 birds on 21 November 1999. *Winter:* Numbers usually remain fairly constant throughout the season.

**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** Occurrence of Common Redpolls is highly variable from year to year. Despite its *abundant* status, there have been years when numbers were small, and a few years when none were reported at all.

Common Redpoll has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 18 times (60%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from 12 to 388 birds.

### **Hoary Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni*

**Status:** *Casual in winter.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) mentions one specimen collected on 27 February 1917 in the Edgewood area. He concedes that other pale birds

were noted in redpoll flocks but he was unable to identify them satisfactorily.

**Habitat: Winter:** The species has been recorded only in suburban gardens in Nakusp.

**Occurrence:** There are two records of single birds: 25 January 1986 and 25 February 1990 (Siddle 1990a).

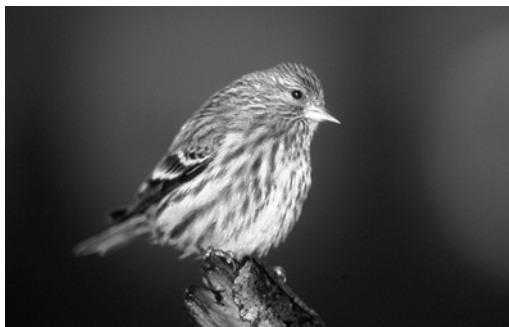
**Breeding:** There are no breeding records.

**Comments:** There have been reports of redpolls thought to be Hoary Redpoll, but none have been convincing.

### **Pine Siskin** *Carduelis pinus*

**Status:** *Status is variable from year to year and from season to season. At times, abundant in all seasons, but may be absent for many months at a time; breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** In his 1926 paper Kelso says Pine Siskin (Figure 207) is, "Resident. Common most years. Often seen in big flocks." Strangely, there is no mention of the species in his much longer and more detailed 1931 paper.



**Figure 207.** Pine Siskin is an irruptive species that cannot be predicted to be in the study area at any time of the year. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat: Year-round:** The species occurs in towns, agricultural areas, open woodlands, and in all wooded habitats, including coniferous forests from valley

bottom to at least 2,200 m.

**Occurrence:** There is no pattern for the occurrence of Pine Siskins. When they are present, they are equally numerous throughout the year, although flocks tend to break up during the breeding season. Periods of absence also follow no pattern and can occur at any time of year.

**Breeding:** A common breeder but only two nests has been observed. A nest with eggs was found in Nakusp on 17 May 1975. Young had hatched by 2 June and fledged on 11 June. In 2012, an inaccessible nest was built in a cedar hedge in Nakusp. Activity of the adults suggested that the young hatched on 27 May. Other adults with recently fledged young have been observed much earlier than this, however. The breeding season appears to be quite protracted (Figure 208). Adults feeding fledglings have been observed as early as 22 April.



**Figure 208 .** The breeding season for Pine Siskin in British Columbia lasts over five months and occurs from mid-March to late August. In this photo, a fledged Pine Siskin (right) is being fed seeds from a bird feeder in Nakusp on 3 June 2011. *Photo by Paul Whalen.*

**Comments:** Pine Siskins suffer heavy losses on highways throughout British Columbia in the winter where they are attracted to salt (Bennetts and Hutto 1984). They are slow to move when traffic approaches and hundreds may be killed in a single collision. See Campbell and Preston (2006) for a synopsis of a program in British Columbia established to record vehicle-induced mortality of wildlife.

Pine Siskin is one of the most affected species by *Salmonellosis*, a disease that is passed from bird to bird, mainly through contact with fecal matter at bird feeders (Dawson 1997). Outbreaks can kill thousands of songbirds locally. Sick birds can be identified by their lethargic behaviour, puffed-up appearance, and often are found resting with their beak tucked under a wing (Figure 209). If dead or dying siskins are noticed immediately remove feeders and disinfect with a 10% solution of bleach.



**Figure 209.** A puffed-up Pine Siskin or one noticed with its head tucked into body feathers may indicate the symptoms of *Salmonella* poisoning. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

Pine Siskin has been recorded on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 27 times (90%) in 30 years, in numbers ranging from one to 2,508 birds. The latter number was tallied on 4 January 2003.

### **American Goldfinch** *Carduelis tristis*

**Status:** *Common in spring, very rare in summer, uncommon in early autumn but becoming common by late autumn, and very common in winter; occasionally breeds.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso did not record American Goldfinch (Figure 210) during his first two years in Edgewood. His first observation was in 1915. The species became increasingly regular during the next several years. In 1926 he says, “Winter migrant, occurring singly or in small flocks.” He later describes some larger flocks but does not provide numbers (Kelso 1926, 1931).



**Figure 210.** Small flocks of American Goldfinches occur annually during winter, especially at bird feeders, but the species is rarely seen during the breeding season. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

**Habitat: Breeding:** The only breeding record was from the agricultural fields in Brouse. **Non-breeding and Winter:** Most records are from towns and are associated with feeders. There are a small number of records from other open habitats such as agricultural fields and golf courses.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The wintering flocks break up in March and overall numbers decline slowly through the season; there are very few May records. **Summer:** There are seven records scattered through June, July, and August. **Autumn:** There are a few September records, but the species generally returns in mid-October. Numbers increase through November but populations are never large, rarely exceeding 20. **Winter:** Most years there are one or two flocks present throughout the season. The flock size is generally 20 to 40 but has on occasion been much larger. A flock of about 100 was seen in Nakusp on 9 December 2010.

**Breeding:** The species is very rarely present during the breeding season. However, on 19 August 1982, a juvenile American Goldfinch in company with an adult was observed in Brouse. They were feeding amongst thistles.

**Comments:** American Goldfinch has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 23 times (77%) in 30 years in numbers ranging from one to 204 birds.

**Evening Grosbeak**  
*Coccothraustes vespertinus*

**Status:** *Common in spring, uncommon in summer, and common (at times very common) in autumn and winter; possibly breeds. Status is variable from year to year. Some years the species is absent in some or all seasons. Status definitions given are for those years in which the species is present.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926) writes about Evening Grosbeak (Figure 211) as follows, “With us this handsome species is nomadic, and seen occasionally in small flocks. Two pairs undoubtedly bred in Edgewood in 1924.”



**Figure 211.** Evening Grosbeak, irregular in occurrence throughout its North American range, is primarily a winter visitor to the Nakusp-New Denver-Burton study area. *Photo by Gary S. Davidson.*

**Habitat: Non-breeding and Winter:** Most records are from within towns or around residences in agricultural areas, often in association with feeders. **Breeding:** There seems to be very little change in habitat preference. The species was rarely seen away from human influenced habitats. One exception was a single bird at 1,500 m in a coniferous forest above Summit Lake on 29 July 1993.

**Occurrence: Spring:** The species is present in small numbers throughout the season most years. It is absent entirely in some years. **Summer:** Most summer records are from the latter half of August and may represent early autumn migrants. There are relatively few records for June and July. **Autumn:** It occurs irregularly from mid-August to the end of November. In some years a small flock of up to 20 birds may visit Nakusp, whereas in other years only two or three birds are present. **Winter:** Its numbers vary from year to year; flocks of up to 85 birds have been noted but 10 to 20 are more typical.

**Breeding:** There are no records of actual nests but there are two records of adults with juvenile birds. On 14 July 1997, an adult and one juvenile were at a feeder in Nakusp. Earlier, on 5 August 1979, a mixed flock of 20 adults and young were noted in Brouse. Since this is within the time that autumn migrants may be arriving, it is not possible to determine where these young originated.

**Comments:** The status and occurrences listed here are based largely on data from 1990 to 2010. Prior to 1993, the species occurred much more regularly and in much larger flocks during autumn, winter, and spring. There has been little change in summer status. This has been reflected in the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count data. The species has been reported on the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count 15 times (50%) in 30 years, in numbers ranging from six to 249 birds. However, the average number counted between 1980 and 1992 was 83.2 birds; the average from 1993 to 2010 was 10.7 birds.

## OLD WORLD SPARROWS

### House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

**Status:** *At present, this species is absent from the study area. Populations have varied in the past and this species was, for a time, a very common resident in Nakusp and casual in New Denver. It bred in Nakusp.*

**Ornithological History:** Kelso (1926, 1931) does not mention House Sparrow (Figure 212).



**Figure 212.** It remains a mystery why a population of House Sparrows in Nakusp, estimated at 100 birds in the mid-1990s, suddenly plummeted soon after. None were reported between 2003 and 2012. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

**Habitat:** All sightings have been from the town sites of Nakusp and New Denver. All recorded nests have been located in artificial boxes. Most were in a strip of residential gardens along the Upper Arrow Lake shore at Nakusp.

**Occurrence:** This species was recorded in varying numbers from 1970 to 2003 (see *comments* below). There have been no records since 2003.

**Breeding:** Formerly a regular breeding bird in Nakusp.

**Comments:** It is difficult to explain the changes in status of this bird. In the 1970s, House Sparrow was rare and was only seen intermittently, sometimes with gaps of a few years between sightings. After a few observations of one or two birds in 1976 and 1977, there were no more sightings until 1980. The first occurrence of more than three birds was in 1983 when a group of nine was seen in Nakusp. But sightings continued to be sporadic and nesting was not reported until 1992. Numbers then began to increase and by 2000 there were between 50 and 75 resident birds in Nakusp. For the next two or three years the numbers remained steady at about 100. Then the population inexplicably crashed. The last reported sighting was in May 2003. †

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper would have not been possible without the advice, encouragement, and assistance of R. Wayne Campbell, who spent considerable time editing my early attempts at writing species accounts. His patience and encouragement through this learning process were invaluable, and very much appreciated!

Some of the material in the introduction was written by Dennis Demarchi. His generous offer of time and expertise greatly improved the paper and saved me many hours of research. Thank you, Dennis.

Leonard and Kathy Smith provided the specific information about the forest ecology of the study area, Jack Bowling added his expertise on some of the climate information, and Mark Nyhof prepared the maps. Although most of the bird data were my own, I made use of others' data where appropriate. In particular, I want to recognize the contributions of the late Marilyn Pasieka whose data were made available to me by Walter Pasieka. Other local birders who have contributed to the data-set include: Brian Scott, Terry Burnett, Paul Whalen, Sue McLean, Kathy Smith, Denis Stanley, Nancy Anderson, Richard Johnson, Eric Day, Shelley Bortnick, Ken Cross, and Nigel Matthews. In addition to the local birders, interested residents often called me to report the comings and goings in their yards. A number of such calls have



added significant records. These contributors include: Mike George, Jerry Krivsky, Marlene and Jackie Allard, Terry and Suzanne Story, Lucille Wells, Dave Grimshire, Ruth Waterfield, Chris and Jean Spicer, Janet Spicer, Linda Norman, Ed Koochin, Eileen Worthington, Henning Von Krogh, Hillie Wells, Jim Crawford, John Koper, Karen Friedenberger, Klaus Mageneau, LeeAnne Marshall, Pat Dion, Penny Fahlman, Don Cunningham, Susan Bampton, Wendy Moser, Sandy Coates, Bill Sones, Laurie Page, and Elaine Matchett. Visiting birders pass through the study area periodically and I appreciate their efforts in making me aware of their sightings; additional thanks go to: Rick Howie, Francis King, Linda Van Damme, Tony Salmon, Jeremy Gatten, Jamie Fenneman, Chris Charlesworth, Michael Force, Ed Beynon, Dirk Pidcock, Janice Arndt, Robert Worona, and last but not least, my good friend Chris Siddle (Figure 213).

The final stage in producing a quality paper is the back and forth editing of the completed manuscript.

This can be time-consuming and requires patience on both sides. It is these final edits that transform an amateur's writing into a polished document. For this I sincerely thank R. Wayne Campbell, Patricia Huet, Dennis A. Demarchi, and Spencer G. Sealy. Additional thanks go to Mark Nyhof who laid out the manuscript and prepared the photos. Photos are an integral part of a paper such as this, adding to the appearance and the content of the text.

In addition to my personal photos, others were generously donated by Kevin Atkins, R. Wayne Campbell, Hector Chu-Joy Sr., Marie Davidson (Figure 214), Brian Scott, Mark Nyhof, Gail Spitle, Alistair Fraser, Linda M. Van Damme, and Paul Whalen.

Finally, I add my very special thanks to my wife Marie, who has put up with my wanderings around the country-side for over 40 years. Without her patience and support this article would not have been possible!



**Figure 213.** Since 1983, Gary Davidson (right) and Chris Siddle have been friends and have shared many provincial and international birding trips together, always keeping separate field notes. In this photograph, they are recording birds seen and heard in the subalpine above the Arrow Lakes. *Photo by Marie Davidson,*

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### **About the Author**

Gary was born in England but moved to Vancouver as a young boy in 1958. His interest in birds began in the late 1960s while he was a student at UBC. A flash of yellow as he and a friend walked along a forest trail near Pemberton, piqued his curiosity. After locating a field guide, the flash was identified as a MacGillivray's Warbler; thus started an interest in identifying birds. In 1973 he and his wife, Marie, moved to Fort Nelson where Gary taught high school mathematics. A chance meeting with Anthony J. Erskine, who was conducting bird studies in the Fort Nelson area, solidified Gary's interest in birds. Tony introduced Gary to birding by ear, and taught him the importance of keeping good field notes. In 1975, Gary, Marie, and their new son Derek moved to Nakusp. Rachael was born the following year and the family remained in Nakusp. From 1975 to the present Gary has been monitoring birds in the West Kootenay region; his personal data base contains close to 100,000 records from around the Kootenay region of southeastern British Columbia.

In the late 1970s, Gary met Wayne Campbell. He learned of the British Columbia Nest Record Scheme and has been a contributor ever since (Campbell et al. 2012). Later, he also contributed many thousands of records to *The Birds of British Columbia* project. Gary's interest in birds has never waned but it has taken a new direction from time to time. In 1983, he met Chris Siddle and the two became life-long friends. They began taking annual birding trips, which started quite modestly, but eventually led to far off places such as Texas, Florida and Peru. Their friendship eventually led Gary in yet another direction when he and Chris had the opportunity to do some contract fieldwork. Subsequently, Gary has conducted over 30 years of Breeding Bird Surveys, has been the coordinator of the Nakusp Christmas Bird Count since 1975, served as the first chairperson of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists' Bird Records Committee, has worked as a co-leader with Avocet Tours, taught introductory bird identification classes, contributed weekly bird articles to his local newspaper, and worked as a guide in a birding lodge



**Figure 215.** Gary Davidson and his grandson Kyle looking at a Barn Swallow nest on the Galena Bay ferry. *Photo by Marie Davidson, 2 August 2012.*

in northeastern Australia. The latter was one of five trips that Gary and Marie have made to Australia. In 1987, he was accepted into the teacher exchange program and spent 12 months teaching in Queensland. In 2004, he repeated the experience teaching for a year in Tasmania.

Gary retired from teaching in 2005. The following year he and Marie made their fifth trip to Australia where they spent five months travelling around the country in a campervan. Other post-retirement trips have included Peru, Costa Rica, and Jamaica with an African safari on the books for 2014.