

Trip Report – Vancouver Island 2022 – Greentours Natural History Holidays

Day 1 – Aug 25th: Alf and Hannah had already checked in to the Coast Tsawwassen Inn from their earlier flight from Gatwick the day before, so upon picking up Phil and Linda we all met in the rather cacophonous Brown’s Social House pub next door to make acquaintances and set out the next day itinerary, after which all retired for a rejuvenating sleep on very comfortable beds. Tania would join us later in Zeballos.

Day 2 – Aug 26th: Everyone was up bright and early for breakfast, the vehicle was loaded with luggage, and we were off! Our first native species of birds—other than the introduced House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) which I heard chipping nearby—would be seen from the ferry jetty en route to our appointed check-in time of 0915hrs. From a pullout near the toll booths, we were able to spot a large group of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) lounging in the roadside reclamation ponds, along with some nearby Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*), three Black Oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*) flying noisily by, numerous Common Loons (*Gavia immer*), a single Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) and both Pelagic (*Urile pelagicus*) and Brandt’s Cormorants (*Urile penicillatus*). The third, Double-crested (*Phalacrocorax auratus*), would have to wait for the middle of the crossing, which we thankfully were able to make, on time, and ahead of a full afternoon of ferry cancellations that would have made our day extremely hectic.

Parked immediately behind us was the first of two very different VW’s—the second comes later in the trip.

Lunch consisted of sandwiches purchased on board and consumed in the parking lot of a craft brewery just off the freeway – in the parking lot because the owners would not let us sit at any tables for beer unless we ordered a meal, and everyone just wanted to eat and



get on to our delightful visit to Little Qualicum Falls (left). A full two hours of botany on the trails, and photography of these cascading falls, set us up well for the two-hour drive to the Canadian Princess Hotel in Ucluelet. As short break for some delicious home-made ice-cream on the outskirts of Port Alberni afforded not only too many calories, but also our first butterfly, a Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides*). Finally, after a short stop at the



roadside to view the water-sculpted riverbed of the Ellis River, 90 minutes or so of winding road took us to Ucluelet and our hotel for the next four nights.

Dinner at the Floathouse Restaurant was excellent, and after everyone completed the on-line waivers for the following two days of Jamie's Whaling Station excursion. The only remaining item was the checklist, then it was off to bed and an early start for tomorrow.

Day 3 – Aug 27th: Well first there was breakfast – well at least we tried for breakfast. The only restaurant that advertised an early opening didn't open at 7 – actually it didn't open all day it turns out—staff shortages. And as this was the final long weekend before school returns, the entire town was crazy busy, with long lineups awaiting 8 o'clock opening times. We finally elected to have muffins, coffee and warmed up, but very tasty, sausage rolls at the Grey Whale Deli before heading to the Lighthouse circuit in hopes of getting a head start on the whales, but no luck. Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), American Crows (*Corvus barchyrhynchos*), Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*), raucous Steller's Jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri*), an adult American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) feeding berries to the young,



and a multitude of new flowers, shrubs, ferns and fungi meant that we did not complete the entire circuit, rather electing to return to the parking area and take in the newly-completed Bog Walk, where we were looking at Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*), numerous unidentified sphagnum mosses, and the delightful, carnivorous, Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) (photo above). We returned to Ucluelet only to find the lunch options were also limited so we opted for a very satisfying picnic lunch back at the hotel under the shade of umbrellas and overlooking the small harbour full of boats of all shapes, sizes, and colours. By 1330 hours we were in the midst of the safety briefing prior to setting off with Yarrow, our young boat captain from Ocean Falls, now a permanent resident of the "big town" of Ucluelet (Ocean Falls has a population of 50!). She adeptly manoeuvred the 1-2 metre swells and the first major, and unexpected, sighting was a family group of Sea Otters (*Enhydra lutris*)



lounging in a bed of Bull Kelp. It took a bit longer to locate a couple of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) feeding on the edge of the Broken Islands Group, but we were all able to witness numerous dives and tail flukes disappearing into the depth, only to often



reappear a km away. Some witnessed a full breach. The bird life was interesting, with many cormorants of various species, Common Murres in large rafts, hundreds of Red-necked Phalaropes (*Phalaropus lobatus*) (photo left) feeding on the surface, and the final bird species, a flock of Rhinoceros Auklets. One more mammal species of interest – a Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) – sauntered along the shoreline as we returned to the dock at the end of the boat tour. Dinner at the Current, the restaurant at the Black Rock Resort, lived up to earlier billing, and all present were delighted with the exquisitely prepared grilled salmon. Then it was off to bed in preparation for an

0540 departure for Tofino and the next adventure.

Day 4 – Aug 28th: We needed to arrive at the bear viewing locations at a low tide, which necessitated an early boat departure from Tofino, so we were up at 0500 to leave the hotel by 0545. All were keen and ready for the “Bear Trip”, and what a trip it was. It started out with a mother Black Bear with her yearling cub throwing aside rocks as if they were made of foam. We observed this couple for about half an hour before moving along, eventually watching over ten bears in a span of two hours



or so. Also, Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*), Short-billed Gulls (*Larus brachyrhynchos*), California Gulls (*Larus californicus*), Glaucous-winged Gulls (*Larus glaucescens*), brief sightings of the triangular dorsal fin of the Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) and the occasional Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) rounded out the first 3 hours of this

busy day.

As we had not had any breakfast yet, we were off to the ROAR Restaurant at the Zed Inn, where we were served delicious eggs, juniper sausages – no they didn’t have any juniper berries in them–thick deliciously toasted bread, beans, and “spuds”. Did I mention that all this was cooked over an open fire in cast iron personal sized frying pans and served on cedar planks? And our second VW, this one was constructed entirely of driftwood, even the tires!





Once we were done feasting it was off to the Art Gallery in Tofino, where the display of Roy Henry Vickers art was inspirational to say the least. His ability to blend



colours, first nation themes, and subliminal images into dramatic works of art is not to be missed.

Parking the car in the Park required signing up for an app to be able to pay by phone, so while I was completing this task the group spotted our first Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) in a tall dead cedar nearby. Then it was off to walk the sands of Chesterman Beach where we were greeted by literally 100's of shorebirds, with over 150 Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*), (rightmost bird in photo below), 50 Semipalmated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) (left 3 birds in photo below) and smaller numbers of Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*)(photo below left), with their yellow legs – sometimes obscured somewhat by the grey sand. The occasional Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) filled out the many flocks that spent their time alternating between quietly resting in the lee of mounds of seaweed, and then frenetically feeding, often nearly at our feet, in particularly the tiny Least (photo below). We ventured across the exposed sands and out to a nearby island and discovered a new mix of plants, including Oregon Gumplant (*Grindelia stricta*), Beach Strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Great Red Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*), some *Juncus* rushes, and others.



Since we had so enjoyed the brunch

at ROAR, it was back there for delicious dinners of salmon, chicken, burgers or pork belly – all equally delicious and served with a flair. Mike was our server and did so with panache. Returning to the hotel, a drive by of the restaurant that was supposed to be serving breakfast earlier didn't look too promising, so breakfast tomorrow may be another adventure.

Day 5 – Aug 29th: No need to be up too early today, but still we finished breakfast at the now open aforementioned eatery by 0745 and we were soon

headed for a 3-hour morning hike on the Ancient Cedars Loop and Rocky Bluffs sections of the coastal trail.

“The Ancient Cedars Loop showcases old-growth Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and giant red cedars (the oldest trees on Ucluelet peninsula). Two behemoths are estimated at over 800 years, and one measures more than 12 metres around its base.”

Then it was back to the Co-op to top up lunch makings before our final lunch overlooking the small boat harbour of Ucluelet. Our first warbler species made an appearance here, with adequate viewing of the still breeding plumage of a Townsend’s Warbler (*Setophaga townsendii*) high up in the conifers. A slightly vocal Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*) made an appearance briefly, as did some Pelagic and Brandt’s Cormorants, and a juvenile Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) offshore.

The afternoon saw us hiking along a wide trail and a raised boardwalk through a stand of massive Red Alders (*Alnus rubra*) and chest-high Western Sword Ferns (*Polystichum munitum*) down to Comber’s Beach, a 3 km long sandy beach with booming surf – but no surfers– and many interesting types of seaweed and shells left behind as the tide receded. While looking out over the surf at a Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) a flock of 20 shorebirds flew by at wave-top height–later identified as Sanderlings.

A bit further on down the beach Hannah had just paced off a beached Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), root structures and all, at 30m, when Alf shouted to us to look down the beach. An American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) was carrying its



catch into the forest from the water across 100 meters of sand and in front of some surprised beach walkers. We later were able to find the tracks of this sometimes-elusive marine mammal that is equally comfortable in salt or freshwater environments. They are very accomplished fishers!

Another 500 m. down the beach we were all enthralled by the balletic movements of a large flock of white Sanderlings as they danced with the incoming waves in search of what seemed to be minute insects too small to provide enough calories for their continued southward migration



to South America. It was quite warm by this time, and the group strongly considered a mutiny unless cold beer was awaiting them at the parking area. Since this is a Federal Park however, I was off the hook as drinking alcohol is not allowed in Parks! Pheww!

Dinner at the Cedar Restaurant proved to be a winner, with specialty pizzas, lamb shanks, fish & chips, and a single order of low-calorie “lava-cake”, topped with ice cream—you know who you are!!

Day 6 – Aug 30th: Today is a travel day, as we head for our date with larger numbers of Sea Otters in Zeballos. This is a 6-hour drive from Ucluelet, but before leaving the parking lot a quick scan of the mudflats in the harbour yielded another Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), and a small flock of Long-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*). Great way to start a travel

day! There are a couple of important stops along the way, so after a light breakfast at the Grey Whale Deli we were loaded up and off to Stamp River Provincial Park and a hike to view the falls, watch the Pink Salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) attempt to leap the foaming cataracts and watch them on the underwater cameras located in the counting sluice. Not to be left out, the birds did appear—a single Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) preening on the rivers edge along with six or more American Dippers (*Cinclus mexicanus*) feeding in the fast currents.



Then it was off to view the 800-year-old trees in the Cathedral Grove, along with some new plants such as Devil’s Club (*Oplonanax horridus*), which apparently makes the best artists charcoal. After completing this walking circuit and marvelling at the extensive windfalls from the 1997 wind event, it was time to head east in search of a lunch spot, which we found on the shores of Cameron Lake at the BC Parks Beaufort Picnic Site. Here we enjoyed our lunch, watched a couple of polygonias – likely Green Commas– and marveled at the serenity of the location considering its proximity to the main highway.

This was the final stop other than a fueling stop for the vehicle, as we now drove non-stop to the Woss General Store to meet Tania, only to find that she had already made her way to the Cedars Inn in Zeballos. A one-hour drive on a newly-improved Forest Service Road brought us to our rooms at the Cedars Inn for the next two nights, a dinner of salmon or ribs, and then some deck time observing the constellations and, utilizing a Wildlife Acoustics Echo Meter 2, monitoring for bats of which we identified three—Hoary (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Silver-haired (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*). Tomorrow, we head out to observe Sea Otters and whatever else we can see. The great weather looks to be continuing, 31 deg C today.

Day 7 – Aug 31st: After an early breakfast it was a 10-minute walk to the government dock and the waiting skiff for an 0800hrs departure on a mirror-flat Zeballos Inlet, bound for the outer islands, including a portion of Nuchatlitz Provincial Park. In total we sighted 5 bears working the shoreline for tasty morsels before the tide would push them inland for berries. Dan took us to a spot where he regularly sees Harbour Porpoises, and sure enough, there was a small shoal of 5 or 6 animals chasing a school of feed fish around a rocky outcrop. Looking onshore was yet another Black Bear! Soon we headed further out the inlet to an area where there were eventually dozens of Sea Otters, some singly, others mother and pup, others in groups of 3-5 adults. Offshore, but in the inaccessible heavier surf, we could see a raft of at least 75 otters bobbing in the surf-driven kelp beds. On our way home we were able to see a mother and a young



pup as the pup rode on mum's belly drifting with the tides. Another otter was resting, all wrapped up in the kelp to maintain



position despite the tidal action.

New birds were Pigeon Guillemot (*Cepphus columba*) with their bright red legs and feet, both plumages of Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) (photo right), plus Surf (*Melanitta perspicillata*) and White-winged Scoters (*M. deglandi*). We saw, in addition, good numbers of adult and juvenile Bald Eagles and the "Eagle Hilton", a massive nest sporting its own fern garden.

After another delicious lunch, starting with scrumptious seafood chowder, it was off for a walk



over the bridge and upstream along the Zeballos River. Here we were entertained by a very accommodating American Dipper feeding in the shallows, and obviously well versed at catching insect larvae off the bottom of the channel. Circling back by a different route on the return trip we picked up Chestnut-backed Chickadee (*Poecile rufescens*) (heard only), Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*), and a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers (*Dryobates villosus*).

Two butterfly species added to our slowly growing lepidoptera list. A very worn Lorquin's Admiral (*Limenitis*



lorquini) (photo right) and a Hydaspe Fritillary (*Speyeria hydaspe*) (photo below). Numerous ferns were present, aside from the ever-present Western



Sword Fern, including Maidenhair (*Adiantum aleuticum*) and Lady Ferns (*Athyrium filix-femina*). Before returning to the

hotel we decided to walk along the trail to the estuary, but it was closed. We did manage to scan the estuary from a viewing platform, but nothing of interest appeared other than a couple of Belted Kingfishers (*Megaceryle alcyon*). Along the roadside the first orchid – Hooded Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*) – showed well.

After dinner it was off to check out a spot on the access road to see if we could locate any owls, but this proved to be a no-go. We did, however, add a new species of bat, the California Myotis (*Myotis californicus*), to the mammal list, plus the three heard the previous evening.

Time to end the day in preparation for our drive to Port McNeill and onward to Alert Bay tomorrow.

Day 8 – Sep 1st: Breakfast at 730, packed and off by 0900 with lunches in hand. First stop was in “Lower Zeballos” for the Hooded Ladies' Tresses that had been missed by some of the group – still in flower! Then we drove the FSR towards Highway 19, stopping at a rock wall near a bridge and waterfalls, where a Spotted Sandpiper was “climbing the wall” at the base of the falls in its search for food. Extensive Maidenhair Ferns adorned the rock wall, some with notably long stalks up to 18” (40 cm). A bit further along the dirt road we stopped at a marshy area where a new species of aster, Great Northern Aster (*Canadanthus modestus*) was heavily in bloom, a boon for any butterflies that still may be in flight. A new species, Pacific Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*), had passed the blooming stage and had just started to produce fruit. Next stop a small pond with 4 Blue-winged Teal (*Spatula discors*), and then it was off to Port McNeill and on to the Cluxewe Beach access, hiking through a magical stand of dense Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and a few scattered Sitka Spruce. Covering the understory was a mix of Western Sword Fern, Waved Silk-moss, Mock Azalea, numerous *Russula* species, and even the appropriately named myxomycete—Dog Vomit Slime Mold (*Fuligo septica*) (photo right). Lower down near the beach we traversed American Dune Grass (*Leymus mollis*), interspersed with Sea Sandwort, American Searocket (*Honckenya peploides*), Seaside Pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*) and the invasive Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*).



Once on the beach the vista opened up to the Coast Range mountains on the mainland of BC, with the Homathko Icefields gleaming in the distance, in the direction that we would head in a few days en route to the Orford River Grizzly Bear tour. Small

flocks of Sanderling, Semipalmated Plovers, and Western Sandpipers seemed oblivious to our presence and continued feeding to within a few meters of us if we remained motionless. Offshore there was a new grebe, the Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) along with Common Loons and large numbers of Red-necked Grebes (*Podiceps grisegena*) foraging beyond the Bull Kelp beds. A small rock outcropping, soon to disappear with the rising tide, was a dry haven for 4 female or juvenile Harlequin Ducks (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). Hopefully some males in full breeding plumage will show themselves before the end of the trip. Looking west along the beach a flock of over 200 gulls lifted off temporarily, likely spooked by a marauding raptor— Bald Eagle or Peregrine would be possibilities.

Soon it was back along the trail to return to Port McNeil, where our BC Ferries luck continued, as we were able to board a ferry that had been delayed by an earlier marine emergency, so we arrived on Cormorant Island, and Alert Bay, two hours ahead of schedule. Once checked into the Alert Bay Lodge, a converted church, some of us walked the 20 minutes to the westerly tip where again loons, gulls, and a Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) were spotted by some members of the group.

Soon it was time for Pablo and Paula's hor d'oeuvres, tender brisket, veggies, and dessert. Tomorrow is a whale trip so off to bed after the checklist with hopes for many new sightings tomorrow.

Day 9 – Sep 2nd: After a delightful breakfast--shakshuka, pancakes, eggs benedict and dessert--once again, it was off, first to the U'Mista cultural museum for a couple of hours before heading back to the lodge to prepare lunch to take on the Whale Watching trip. Duchess, a well-known local elder, had produced deep fried Bannock dusted with cinnamon sugar, as well as oven-baked Bannock. Then it was off on the Seasmoke Whale Tours where we saw dozens of Orcas (*Orcinus orca*) (photo right),



obliquidens), and a large haul-out of Steller's Sealions (*Eumetopias jubatus*). In addition, we

at least 10 humpbacks (photo left), Dall's Porpoises (*Phocoenoides dalli*) (photo below), Pacific White-sided Dolphins (*Sagmatias*





added a few new bird species to the list, now approaching 60 species for the trip so far. A single, and late, Sooty Shearwater (*Ardena grisea*) and many Fork-tailed Storm Petrels (*Hydrobates furcatus*) (photo left) were visible from the boat.

After a bit of a rest following the whale watching tour, Linda chose to explore the “town” on a walk along the main road, past the many burial poles standing in the Namgis First Nation burial grounds. For the rest of the group, it was off to the Ecological Reserve at the top of the island. The raised boardwalk crosses a magical wetland ecosystem with massive skeletons of Western Redcedars

(*Thuja plicata*) the official tree of BC, with Common Cotton Grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) waving in the breeze. Phil spotted some darnier dragonflies (*Aeshna spp*) which rarely perch unless eating large prey. There was an impressive assortment of fungi, including Upright Coral Fungus (*Ramaria stricta*), *Clavulina spp.* and various *Russula* mushroom species in the forest trails leading to the boardwalk. Hannah finally found our first liverwort, Ring Pellia (*Pellia neesiana*), along with Western Bunchberry (*Cornus unalaschensis*) and Mock Azalea (*Rhododendron menziesii*) to round out the selection.

Then it was back for a delicious “mock-tuna” dinner done in the Basque style, followed by Paula’s other-worldly Burnt Basque Cheesecake for dessert. Everyone left Paula their email addresses so she could send them her recipe. She did!

After completing all our online waivers for the upcoming Orford River Grizzly Bear Tour, it was off to bed. Tomorrow is Telegraph Cove, the Cetacean Museum, and then off to Campbell River, our final stop before finishing the trip back in Tsawwassen.

Day 10 – Sep 3rd: Today we took an early breakfast and headed to the BC Ferry terminal. Alf & Hannah had taken a pre-breakfast walk and had seen a Humpback Whale surfacing in the distance. Walking from the First Nations cemetery there was a small flock of Black Turnstones (*Arenaria melanocephala*) (photo right) on the foreshore. On the ferry we had more Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots (*Cepphus columba*), Great Blue Herons, Common Loons (photo below) and miscellaneous gulls. Before heading out for the 3-hour drive



to Campbell River we stopped at Telegraph Cove to visit the Whale Interpretive Centre, where full skeletons of Orcas, Sea Otters, and Humpbacks, amongst others, hang from the ceiling. A detailed history of the whaling industry in British Columbia shows that the destruction of whales continued until the early 1950’s.

Luncheon on the deck at The Killer Whale Café & Restaurant prepared us for the drive to Campbell River.

High overhead was a small flock of actively hawking Black Swifts (*Cypseloides niger*) and three Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) kettling even higher. Arriving at the Anchor Inns & Suites we met to sign everyone onto iNaturalist so that all could contribute their photos to the Vancouver Island Greentours 2022 [project](#) and then it was off to the hotel restaurant and planning for tomorrow's Orford River Grizzly Bear boat tour. The weather looks a bit iffy, so it will be important to be dressed appropriately for this trip.

Day 11 – Sep 4th: Early breakfast and then we were off to join Campbell River Whale Watching for 9 hours of boat and land tours into the depths of Bute inlet and the Orford River First Nations Grizzly tour. The weather was very different from our boat departures to date. The wind was clipping along at 25-30 knots, there was fog and low-lying clouds obscuring the mountains to the point that we could rarely see more than half-way to the top of the surrounding



peaks. Passing through Discovery Passage, past Stuart Island and on up Bute Inlet, we docked at the mouth of the Orford River, the traditional territory of the Xwemalkwu, the Homalco First Nation. After a delicious lunch we were picked up by two buses and transported to the Welcome Centre for a safety talk before heading out to the various viewing sites and platforms in search of the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*). The first three locations were interesting, but no bears, and we were wondering—silently of course—if this was to be a no-bear day. All changed when we arrived at the next new viewing platform overlooking the junction of two channels of the Orford River as we soon spotted our first “Griz” downstream. As he was slowly ambling towards our location a second bear was spotted upstream on the side-channel and it became clear that there would be a meeting in the middle, which there was. There was a bit of a non-violent altercation between the two, with one chasing the other, and then they both carried on their way, with our first griz continuing up the side channel directly below us. Many photos were taken before we moved upstream a short distance to the next viewing platform where we had yet another bear ambling down the channel edge. Just as we were leaving there was a final bear spotted approaching from downriver. Stuart, our driver, had to start the bus and threaten to drop off sleeping bags to finally have everyone reluctantly climb back on board the bus.

Then it was back to the visitors' centre and to the boat for a return trip that included some heavy thunder nearby, a drenching rain squall, and then broken cloud and sunshine to take us back along our original route. A flock of Bonaparte's Gulls (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) (photo right) made a close fly-by. Discovery Passage had one final Humpback Whale encounter and an explanation of the history of Ripple Rock, a major navigation hazard



to shipping in the middle of Discovery Passage that claimed over 100 ships prior to its levelling. April 5th, 1958, the underwater twin peaks of Ripple Rock were blasted apart by the then-largest man-made non-nuclear explosion in history. The event was broadcast coast-to coast on national TV and is considered a National Historic Event. Returning to the dock it was time to say goodbye to the staff and head back to the hotel to freshen up for dinner at Moxie’s—most had another delicious presentation of salmon!

Day 12 – Sep 5th: We were met with another cloudless sunrise and no wind, so the prospect for a pleasant visit to Forbidden Plateau seemed to be in the offing. An hour drive into the alpine and we were ready to hike the boardwalk around the small lakes. The view of 6837’ Mount Albert Edward (photo right) was worth the drive. Subalpine Fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), Western White Pine (*Pinus monticola*), Yellow



Cedar (Nootka Cypress) (*Cupressus nootkatensis*), One-sided Wintergreen (*Orthilia secunda*), Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), Slender Bog Orchid (*Platanthera stricta*) and Pipecleaner Moss (*Rhytidiodopsus robusta*) (photo left) were some of the 30+ species of plant life seen on the hike.

Canada Jays (*Perisoreus canadensis*) (photo right and Canada’s National Bird) some of them banded, followed us



along part of the wooded trail, while their raucous cousins, the Steller’s Jay (photo left), scolded us from above.



A sheltered area with strong sun

exposure afforded enough warmth for a Zephyr Comma (*Polygonia gracilis zephyrus*) (photo right) to bask on the low-lying vegetation.



After an outdoor lunch taken with a view over the Salish Sea looking towards the mainland, we headed down the mountain and visited the First Nations Gallery in Campbell River before heading to the local Museum to complete the day’s activities. Dinner at Moxie’s once again, this time outdoors under overhead heat lamps, was enjoyed by all, even if we did need to have the

server sweep the oak leaves from the floor area before we sat down to order. Where the oak leaves came from remains a mystery as no one could find any nearby oak trees of any description?

Day 13 – Sep 6th: Today we are scheduled to return to the mainland via Duke Point, but one major stop at the Elk



Falls Provincial Park remained. At around 90' high, with white-water



rapids above the main falls, this is a spectacular waterfall. Viewing from the

suspension bridge, or from the viewing platforms, one can feel the power of the water tumbling to the dark canyon below.

A short drive to a seaside lunch stop at Union Bay provided both a great picnic spot and a few new intertidal plants—Silver Beachweed (*Ambrosia chamissonis*) and Pacific Glasswort (*Salicornia pacifica*). A little further along Highway 19A brought us to the French Creek Estuary, where there were a few random gulls resting along the shore, but also a couple of new birds arrived. First, I heard a Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) call, and it was viewed with the spotting scope. Then some yellowlegs (*Tringa spp.*) (photo right) flew in. But of more interest was a bird looking away and sitting low in the



water just behind the Killdeer. My initial thought, with the limited view we had at the time, was a Wilson's Snipe, but once it moved and stood up, it was ultimately decided to be a Pectoral Sandpiper (*Caladris melanotos*) (photo left), a new bird for the trip. From here it was on to Duke Point and

the return ferry ride to the mainland, which fortunately left 30 minutes late! Why fortunately—because we had the most amazing sunset and simultaneous moonrise just before arriving at the terminal, which we would have missed had the ferry been on schedule. (Photos next page)



Arriving at our hotel, it was time for our final dinner of the tour at Brown's Social House and then off to bed to prepare for tomorrow's departure home. We were met for dinner by Tony Greenfield, the tour leader from prior tours, who would accompany us on our final morning session at the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Phil and Linda had been on this same tour three years earlier with Tony.

Day 14 – Sep 7th: The final day started as usual – breakfast early and packing the luggage into the SUV. We drove across the flat farmlands of the Fraser Delta looking unsuccessfully for any raptors that might be hunting the fields, but the wind was so strong from an interior weather system that nothing much was airborne. We arrived as the Bird Sanctuary opened at 0900 hrs and spent the next 3 hours walking the trails—some protected, others not. Duck species added to our list included Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*), Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clavata*). American Coots (*Fulica americana*), Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) and a couple of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinas*) made an appearance. The bird of the trip waited until the last minute to show. A Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) (photo right), perched barely above head height in a Red Alder on the edge of the trail and was totally unconcerned with our presence. We finally had walk-away photographic views of this majestic silent hunter. This effectively capped off the day's birding as the wind was howling and not many birds were flying when we visited Iona Island Beach Park on the north side of YVR, the international airport. A picnic lunch was taken at the Bird Sanctuary and the group was dropped off at YVR mid-afternoon for their flights back to the UK.



Trip Summary

Observations of the main taxa, at time of writing, were as follows, and may be revised as additional photos are reviewed by the participants and the tour leader:

Birds - 93 species (5 heard only)

Mammals - 18 species

Plants – 125 species approx.

Fungi & lichens – 30 species approx.

Butterflies – 5 species

Odonata – at least 5 species of dragonflies and damselflies

On iNaturalist, the Vancouver Island Greentours 2022 [project](#) recorded 286 species with 462 photographs, with more to be added as participants contribute their observations in the future.

Date of tour - August 25 to Sept 7, 2022

Tour Leader – Rand Rudland, Sunshine Coast, BC

Photos – Rand Rudland

Submitted by Rand Rudland, B.Sc. (Hons.), MD

Species Lists for the 2022 Tour

Notes: (I) – introduced (H) – heard only

Bats were heard using bat monitoring technology

Birds:

Common Loon

Pacific Loon

Red-necked Grebe

Horned Grebe

Eared Grebe

Western Grebe

Fork-tailed Storm Petrel

Brandt's Cormorant

Pelagic Cormorant

Double-crested Cormorant

Sooty Shearwater

Great Blue Heron

Canada Goose

Wood Duck

Mallard

Gadwall

Green-winged Teal

American Wigeon

Northern Pintail

Northern Shoveler
Blue-winged Teal
Ring-necked Duck
Surf Scoter
Black Scoter
Harlequin Duck
Common Merganser (Goosander)
Red-breasted Merganser
Hooded Merganser
Bald Eagle
Osprey
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Virginia Rail (H)
Turkey Vulture
Black Oystercatcher
Semipalmated plover
Killdeer
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Spotted Sandpiper
Red-necked Phalarope
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Surfbird
Dunlin
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Common Murre
Pigeon Guillemot
Marbled Murrelet
Rhinoceros Auklet
Bonaparte's Gull
Heerman's Gull
California Gull
Short-billed Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Glaucous-winged Gull
Common Tern
Rock Dove

Eurasian Collared Dove (I)
Barred Owl
Black Swift
Anna's Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Northern Flicker (H)
Red-breasted Sapsucker
Steller's Jay
Canada Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch (H)
Bushtit
Pacific Wren (H)
American Dipper
Golden-crowned Kinglet (H)
American Robin
European Starling (I)
Townsend's Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Savannah Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird
House Sparrow (I)
Red Crossbill

Mammals:

Pacific Harbour Seal
Steller Sea Lion
Harbour Porpoise
Dall's Porpoise
Pacific White-sided Dolphin
Orca
Humpback Whale
Minke Whale
Sea Otter
Northern River Otter
Columbian Black-tailed Deer

Grizzly Bear
American Black Bear
American Red Squirrel
Eastern Grey Squirrel (I)
Eastern Cottontail (leader only)
California Myotis (H)
Little Brown Myotis (H)
Hoary Bat (H)
Silver-haired Bat (H)

Lepidoptera:

Lorquin's Admiral
Hydaspe Fritillary
Zephyr Comma
Woodland Skipper
Cabbage White (I)

Indicator Plant List for Coastal Douglas-Fir & Coastal Western Hemlock Ecozones, incl. subalpine area:

Trees:

Common Douglas-fir
Shore Pine
Ponderosa Pine
Western Hemlock
Western Redcedar
Yellow Cedar (Nootka Cypress)
Pacific Silver (Amabilis) Fir
Subalpine Fir
Sitka Spruce
White Spruce
Arbutus (Pacific Madrone)
Red Alder
Green Alder
Black Cottonwood
Bigleaf Maple
Vine Maple
Mountain Maple
Western Flowering (Pacific) Dogwood
Cascara
Scouler's Willow
Sitka Willow
Pacific Crabapple

Shrubs:

Common Juniper
Salal
Cascade Oregon Grape
Tall Oregon Grape
Red Huckleberry
Trailing Blackberry
Baldhip Rose
Nootka Rose
Ocean Spray
Common Snowberry
Mock Azalea
Blueberry species
Devil's Club
Goatsbeard
White-flowered Rhododendron
Sitka Mountain Ash

Others:

Western Trumpet Honeysuckle
Twinflower
Vanilla Leaf
One-sided Wintergreen
Three-leaved Foamflower
Bunchberry
Western Skunk Cabbage
Rattlesnake Plantain
Cow Parsnip
Yarrow
Pearly Everlasting
Aster spp.
Heather spp.
Arctic Lupin
King Sceptre Gentian
Common Butterwort
Sedge spp.
Rush spp.
Poa spp.
False Lily-of-the-Valley
Large Twisted Stalk
Tall White Bog Orchid
Hooded Ladies Tress

Ferns & relatives:

Western Sword Fern

Lady Fern

Maidenhair Fern

Spreading Woodfern

Leathery Polypody Fern

Bracken Fern

Deer Fern

Licorice Fern

Giant Horsetail

Common Scouring Rush

Mosses:

Electrified Cat's Tail Moss

Stairstep Moss

Waved Silk-moss

Pipecleaner Moss

Fan Moss

Sphagnum Moss spp.

Common Haircap Moss

Badge Moss