

Welcome to Rocky Point Bird Observatory

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This Issue's Highlights

Name Our Newsletter!

After years of promises, promises, promises, we have finally created a Rocky Point Newsletter for our volunteers and supporters. We hope you find our first installment informative and interesting! But we're still missing is a clever name. "*Dendroica*" (the genus of our logo bird) is one suggestion, but we're interested in hearing yours. If you have an idea for a name for our seasonal newsletter, an idea for an article, or if you'd like to submit an article for the newsletter, please drop us a note at rpbo@rpbo.org.

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David Allinson Named RPBO President Emeritus



You can't really talk about Rocky Point Bird Observatory without mentioning David Allinson. He is a co-founder of RPBO and has volunteered with us since the organization began in 1994, serving as its President from inception until 2004 and remaining on the Board as Past-President until 2008. He is still very much involved with RPBO as its data manager, an area near and dear to his heart, as he is a licenced bird bander and holds the observatory's master permit. When David left the Board last spring, the remaining Board members struggled to find a way to recognize his huge contributions to our organization. We hope that bestowing the title of "President Emeritus" demonstrates our gratitude and respect for his work over the years. Although David's role at RPBO is well known, he rarely talks about himself. We managed to ferret out a bit about David "behind the scenes". [more...](#)

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Gone But Not Forgotten

This summer, Rocky Point Bird Observatory lost three important people to illnesses. For a small organization to lose even one is difficult, so 2008 has been challenging for us in this regard.

Past President David Kelly lost his battle with multiple myeloma on July 1st, and a few weeks later, our Honourary President, Fenwick Lansdowne passed away. Despite these losses, the families of both David and Fenwick volunteered at RPBO this fall. Volunteer Susan Karens, (Ed Pellizzon's sister and Chris Harris's wife) also lost her life to cancer in October. In previous years we have mourned the passing of other RPBO contributors Bev Glover and Michael Porter. To commemorate the lives of RPBO members who have gone, we are launching a [Gone But Not Forgotten](#) page on our website. [more...](#)



David Kelly's family at RPBO. Son Evan was not able to attend due to the birth of a new baby. (L-R Marilyn Lambert, Sharon Kelly, Jane Kelly, Ann Nightingale, Jason Kelly, Cheryl Mackie, Gabe David)

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Watch The Birdie! RPBO's Flickr Site

<http://flickr.com/groups/rpbo/>



Long-billed Dowitcher photo by Robin Robinson

Over the years, many volunteers and bander have taken thousands of wonderful photos our our activities, but we haven't always received copies of them for our files. If you have RPBO pictures you would like to share with us, we now have a Flickr Group where you can post them. The photos will be available for the world to see on the Flickr site, and some may even make their way into publications and presentations featuring RPBO. If you have any

questions, please contact Ann Nightingale (motmot@shaw.ca) or simply request to become a member of our Flickr group from our page.

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Regular Features

Thanks For Your Support!

RPBO can't operate without a cast that seems to number in the thousands at times. From the banders and volunteers at the banding station to the staff at DND Range Control, the Environmental Sciences Advisory Committee (ESAC) and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) to the unseen "behind the scenes" volunteers and donors, it takes more than a village to monitor Western Canada's avian populations. [more...](#)

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Migration Monitoring News

2008 marked the return of Rocky Point Bird Observatory's monitoring programs after a hiatus in 2007. Under the expert guidance of Bander-in-Charge Gabe David, a total of 3213 new passerines were banded during a season fraught with site access issues. [more...](#)

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Northern Saw-whet Owl News



A record number of Northern Saw-whet Owls were banded this year at Rocky Point. Two new sites were also tested in 2008 with an eye to expanding this project and getting a better picture of this rarely seen but often banded species' migration route. [more...](#)

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MAPS News

A fifth season of participation in the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program was completed in 2008. Royal Roads University and Rocky Point Bird

Observatory sites were both in full operation this spring and summer. [more...](#)

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David Allinson Named RPBO President Emeritus

David Allinson grew up in Toronto, Ontario, but made the big move west to British Columbia in 1990. David graduated from the University of Toronto in 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, English and History double-major (and with a minor in Astronomy!). For most of his employment career, he worked in corporate and technical sales. At present, he is working part time at the Wild Bird Center of Langford while building his entrepreneurial empire with a network marketing opportunity.

He has been an avid birder and naturalist for more than 19 years -- a visit to Tiny Marsh Provincial Wildlife Area in southern Ontario on a chilly day on April 10, 1989 was his first formal introduction to birding and he has not looked back since! First and foremost a birder, nevertheless he is fascinated by all forms of nature (particularly entomology). David's birding interest lies especially with both diurnal and nocturnal birds-of-prey. However, he is also interested in pelagic species and neotropical songbird migration. David is a Past-President of the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS), and serves as the chair of the VNHS Bird Records Committee (<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>). In 2001, he received VNHS's 'Distinguished Service Award'.

Since 1990, he has led hundreds of public walks, field trips and birding tours for many organizations such as the VNHS, CRD Parks, American Birding Association, Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific, British Columbia Field Ornithologists, Parks Canada, BC Parks, Friends of Hatley Park Society, Seacoast Expeditions, Scouts Canada, Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, as well as 'The field naturalist' and 'Wild Bird Center' retail stores. He also regularly conducts slide presentations and lectures on birds for the VNHS, CRD Parks, Swan Lake, elementary schools, as well as a variety of outdoor and recreation clubs. During the annual Brant Festival Big Day birding competition at Parksville-Qualicum Beach, David co-led a team (the "Get-a-Lifers") which won the event seven times between 1993 and 2003, and they received the honorary title "Best Team of the 90's" in 2001.

He is a member of: RPBO, VNHS, BCNature, British Columbia Field Ornithologists, American Birding Association (ABA), Hawk Migration Association of North America (life member), Bird Studies Canada, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Western Bird Banding Association, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, and Long Point Bird Observatory.

David's current World bird list is 943 species, his ABA (North America) life bird list stands at 622, his Canada list is 444, and his United States list is 536. Closer to home, his British Columbia list is 405, while tallying 345 species on Vancouver Island and 330 species in the Victoria checklist area alone.

He enjoys travel and photography, and has traveled across Canada and the United States in the pursuit of his birding passion. A regular participant in Bird Studies Canada's Baillie Birdathon raising funds on behalf of RPBO, David was the lucky recipient of the 2006

participant grand prize with the Baillie Birdathon: an ecotour with Eagle-eye Tours! In March 2007, he traveled for the first time to the tropics on a two-week tour of Costa Rica with Eagle-eye Tours. David recorded 321 lifers out of the phenomenal 470 species recorded on the tour (of which he saw 457): <http://www.eagle-eye.com/Locations/costarica.html> . For the complete list, see here: http://www.eagle-eye.com/pdf/EET_CostaRica_2007.pdf

David Allinson has also published bird summaries and reports, book reviews, natural history articles and even poems in: "The Victoria Naturalist" magazine, "BC Naturalist" magazine, Canadian Book Review Annual, Bird Studies Canada's "Birdwatch Canada" newsletter, "Metchosin Muse" community newspaper, Long Point Bird Observatory's newsletter, ABA's "North American Birds", "Birder's Journal", and British Columbia Field Ornithologist (BCFO) newsletter "BC Birding". He has also served as a regional sub-editor (Victoria) for ABA's 'North American Birds' (<http://americanbirding.org/pubs/nab/index.html>).

In November 2004, David published a bar-graph checklist for the birds of the Rocky Point area for the RPBO Society (however, a simplified version is available in PDF format here http://www.rpbo.org/rpbo_checklist.pdf).

He maintains a photo website of with his photos of birds, insects, and critters: <http://getalifer.smugmug.com> <<http://getalifer.smugmug.com>> . David's many other interests include: American Civil War History, Hollywood movies and trivia, astronomy, Latin poetry, and word origins (etymology). In his youth, David was very active in the sport of Judo, and holds a 'nidan' or second-degree black belt. He was a four-time Ontario provincial champion, and in 1982 he was the bronze medalist at the Canadian Judo Nationals.

Among the people he'd most like to meet are: Bruce Willis, Donald Trump, Christopher Walken, Annie Lennox, and Cesar Millan (aka "The Dog Whisperer"). His all-time hero is Terry Fox.

In July 2003, David married Marcy McKay -- the world's greatest OR nurse -- and they live happily in the Happy Valley area of Langford along with their SPCA-adoptee, a Black LabXHusky named "Mischa" (aka 10-year old puppy). Marcy and David are both excited to be going on their third cruise vacation in December 2008 with a 14-day trans-Atlantic cruise from Barcelona to Miami (they will be visiting Cartagena, Gibraltar, Casablanca, Agadir, and the Canary Islands!).



Gone But Not Forgotten

The following article appeared in The Victoria Naturalist magazine, Victoria Natural History Society, Sept/Oct 2008

In Memoriam: David Kelly and Fenwick Lansdowne

By Ann Nightingale

July 2008 was a sad month for the members and volunteers of Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Two very important contributors passed away—David Kelly, president from 2004 to 2006, and Fenwick Lansdowne, renowned wildlife painter and honorary president of RPBO.

David Kelly took the reins from long-time president David Allinson in 2004, bringing with him a wealth of knowledge from his experience as a public servant and uber-organizer. I don't think we fully appreciated the scope of his expertise until his memorial service, where accolades were flowing from politicians, former colleagues, and many people he had mentored over the years. David was able to use his formidable people skills to get the best out of the RPBO Board members and to focus our attention on the potential of the organization. It was during David's term of office, and with the encouragement of Michael Porter, that Fenwick Lansdowne agreed to become our honorary president. For a small organization with almost no public profile, this was a truly significant event.

Fenwick Lansdowne was internationally known for his bird paintings, considered by many to be superior to those of Audubon. Fenwick is perhaps best known to the general public for his 5 volume large format series of books containing his representations of many of the birds of Canada, and for his series "Rare Birds of China", a decade long project in which he recorded that country's bird species most threatened by environmental hazards and habitat loss.

Both of these men were lost to us at a relatively young age—David, on July 1, 2008, nine days short of his 63rd birthday, and Fenwick, on July 27, less than two weeks before his 71st birthday. By any standards, though, they contributed more to their communities than their years would suggest. It is my hope that their lives, and not their deaths, will continue to inspire us to pay attention to both the creatures and the people of this planet. Their shortened lives can also serve as a reminder that we don't know how long any of us have and that it's important to live our lives, as they did theirs, to the fullest.

Our condolences to the Kelly and Lansdowne families, and to all who knew and cared for these very special men.



Thanks For Your Support!

RPBO can't operate without a cast that seems to number in the thousands at times.

From the volunteers at the banding station to the staff at DND Range Control, Formation Environment, the Environmental Sciences Advisory Committee (ESAC) and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) to the unseen "behind the scenes" volunteers and donors, it takes more than a village to monitor Western Canada's avian populations.

Our 2008 season was aided by the efforts of the following long list of individuals. Apologies for anyone who has been inadvertently omitted. If your name should be here, contact rpbo@rpbo.org and we'll make sure you are listed in the next newsletter!

Canadian Wildlife Service - Wendy Easton

Formation Environment - Andrea Schiller, Mike Waters

Range Control - Fraser Thompson, W.K. Gaudet (and others whose names I don't know-Sorry!)

The Commissionaires at the Rocky Point gate

Moralea Milne - trailer site

Pedder Bay Marina - trailer site

Terry Sterling for Leefield (training site)

Capital Region District Parks - Colleen Long

Paul and Kirsten Goudy - Skirt Mountain test site

Volunteers:

David Anderson

Tracy Anderson

Karen Barry

Florence Bovay

Christine Carrieres

Dannie Carsen

Chris Chutter

Myke Chutter

Darren Copley

Ian Cruickshank

Jim Cruickshank

Gabriel David

Eric Demers

Moretta Frederick

Tom Gillespie

Chris Harris

Kristen Harrison

Jane Kelly

Jason Kelly

Sharon Kelly

Adrian Koolman

Marilyn Lambert

Barry Lancaster

Emma Lansdowne

Helen Lansdowne

Dominique Lejour

Kelsey Low

Megan Lyden

David Lynn

Agnes Lynn

Colin Jennings

Cheryl Mackie

Amy Medve

Christian McCarty

Mike McGrenere

Barb McGrenere

Rod Mitchell

Cindy Munro

Donna Murray

Ann Nightingale

Belen Paredes

Robb Paterson

Ed Pellizzon

Mary Robichaud

Robin Robinson

Donna Ross

Rick Schortinghuis

Margie Shepherd

Michael Simmons

Stephen Stobart

Katie McCreesh

Gordon Usipiuk

A special thanks to Tracy Anderson, who put in a lot of hours at RPBO this year, on all of our projects. Her animal rehab skills and banding experience were great assest for us. Tracy has recently moved away from Victoria and her absence will leave a big hole for us to fill at RPBO.



Migration Monitoring News

After a hiatus in 2007, we were very happy to be back on the ground at Rocky Point in 2008, and resumed where we left off with Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS), Passerine Migration Monitoring and Northern Saw-whet Owl Migration Monitoring. Gabe David was hired once again as our Bander-in-Charge, and through the auspices of the Science Horizons Youth Initiative, we were given a grant to help hire an Banding Intern, Kelsey Low. Many of our past volunteers and a few new ones rounded out the personnel to get us off to a good “re-start” at Rocky Point, Royal Roads University, Witty’s Lagoon Park and a couple of other places—more on that later.

You’d expect that the more and more we do this, the easier it would get. Unfortunately, that’s not been true in our case. The main migration monitoring site at Rocky Point was chosen because it is highly attractive to migratory birds. Birders identified this particular chunk of land as a special bird area--the best in the region--both for diversity and numbers of migrants that pass through its fields and forests. However, Rocky Point is valuable to others for completely different reasons. Use for military training, exercises and ammunition demolition take priority over environmental uses such as our monitoring programs, and this year we lost a full 24 days out of our 90 day migration period to these types of activities. We lost two additional days due to weather. This is the greatest number of monitoring days we have ever lost in a season, and certainly causes some concerns regarding the comparability of the data collected to previous years. Migration is unlike many other scientific monitoring programs in that by its very nature, the birds present on one day are often not in the area the next.

Despite the lost days, we still had a very productive year with 3213 new passerines of 56 species banded and 47, 487 individuals of 158 species observed at Rocky Point during the 90 day migration period. In addition to our two full-time banders, more than 1200 hours of

volunteer effort was contributed on site.

This year, we took advantage of having a bander on hand on the "no access" days and set up banding at an alternate site for volunteer training. Terry Sterling (Central Mountain area) made his property available for training purposes. Although the site wasn't a close match to our banding area at Rocky Point, it also allowed us to see what was happening a few miles away for comparison. The number of captures and species diversity didn't match what we were seeing at Rocky Point (as expected), but we did get to have a good look at a number of Red-breasted Sapsuckers, a real rarity at Rocky Point.

Gabe is working on his final report for the season, which will be posted on our website as soon as it is available.



Northern Saw-whet Owl News

A record number of Northern Saw-whet Owls(NSWOW) were banded this year at Rocky Point. Two new sites were also tested in 2008 with an eye to expanding this project and getting a better picture of this rarely seen but often banded species' migration route. We began our NSWOW banding on September 16, expecting few, if any, birds that early in the season, but ended up banding 11 that first night. It was a sign of things to come. Nightly records were broken several times with the new one-session record now at a whopping 54 NSWOW set on October 14. The owls were definitely not watching the election results!

Over the 6 weeks, a total of 636 NSWOWs were banded at RPBO. We also had several interesting recapture records. A few owls banded in 2008 were caught on subsequent nights, an uncommon occurrence in previous years. Our first "out-of-season" recapture was made on a bird banded as a hatch year individual in 2006, suggesting that at least some of these owls are following an established route. An owl we banded on October 8th was recaptured on Bainbridge Island (Seattle) on October 10, meaning it covered the 76 miles in less than two full nights. One unfortunate owl was found on Jenkins Ave and taken to Wild Arc, but succumbed to injuries it had received in the wilds of downtown Langford.

Our trapping location changed slightly in 2008 from our previous area due to extreme wind damage to the original site in 2006. The new location is a little closer to the banding station than the original, in the riparian area to the southwest of the station, but well within earshot of the original site. We believe we are monitoring the same population as we were during the earlier years of the project.

The owl project was also affected by site closures, although not to the same extent as

passerine monitoring. The Capital Regional District Parks office was very helpful in fast-tracking a request to band at a location near Witty's Beach where we were hoping to determine if the NSWOW flyway extended that far east. Unfortunately, the weather was not the best, so our results weren't as strong as we hoped they might be, but we did band 13 NSWOWs in three nights of banding there. After the end of the official season on October 31, we also looked at some different habitats as possible migration routes and set up a test site on Skirt Mountain with permission of the property owner, Paul Goudy. Again, weather played havoc with our plans, and by the time we had a good weather night on November 10, we did not detect any owls. We are certainly interested in testing both sites again next year, equipment, licensed banders and volunteers permitting.



MAPS News

A fifth season of participation in the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program was completed in 2008. Royal Roads University and Rocky Point Bird Observatory sites were both in full operation this spring and summer. Unlike the constant effort monitoring required during migration, banding only occurs at each site once in each ten-day period. It's possible to sample this way as we are banding local birds which are breeding in the area rather than migrants passing through. Closures at the Rocky Point site required us to monitor outside of the regular dates for two observation periods, but still within the allowable "envelope". Habitat changes (invasive species removal) at both Rocky Point and Royal Roads University resulted in a need for a few new net lanes, complicating our results. Our most productive net at Rocky Point, which has caught up to 1/3 of the total for the site, had to be closed on several occasions this year due to high winds. As in our migration monitoring, bird safety is the top priority, so we don't trap or band when there is an increased risk of injury to the birds.

The MAPS protocol is set by the Institute for Bird Populations which collects the data from several hundred MAPS stations in North America. RPBO banding intern, Kelsey Low is currently working on the MAPS data and more information on the season will be posted on our website once it has been finalized and reviewed.