

## ROCKY POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY SOCIETY

### Annual General Meeting, March 14, 2013

St. Andrews Kirk Hall, 860 Courtenay St, Victoria, BC

#### **Present:**

40 attendees, including 21 members

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Ann Nightingale, Co-President.

#### **Agenda:**

Michael Simmons presented the agenda of the meeting for approval.

Moved By: David Fraser  
Seconded By: Alison Moran            APPROVED

#### **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

The minutes of the AGM held on March 15, 2012, were presented. Motion to accept the minutes:

Moved By: Tom Gillespie  
Seconded By: Cheryl Mackie            APPROVED

#### **Rocky Point Bird Observatory Overview**

A slide illustrated overview of the operations of RPBO was presented by Jessie Fanucchi.

#### **Presidents' Report:**

Michael Simmons presented the Presidents' report for the 2012 year. The report is attached. Highlights from the report are:

- Fall migration in 2012 saw almost 5900 birds banded at our two monitoring sites (Rocky Point—since 1994, and Pedder Bay, new in 2012).
- 814 Northern Saw-whet Owls were banded at Rocky Point during nocturnal monitoring and another 36 either at Pedder Bay or during daytime monitoring..
- MAPS banding continued at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park and at Madrona Farms.
- Staff hired in 2012 were Brian Pomfret, as Bander-in-Charge and Christina Lam as intern for migration monitoring at the Rocky Point site, and Rick Schortinghuis as Bander-in-charge for the MAPS program and the Pedder Bay migration monitoring site.
- The Hummingbird Project of BC saw a rebound of breeding hummingbirds after the abysmal season in 2011. A new nest monitoring project was launched at the Matson Lands in Esquimalt.
- Education programs included the annual bird banding workshop at RRU in March, International Migratory Bird Day in May with the CRD and VNHS, an

Open House and, our third Bird Barbecue Fundraiser at Pedder Bay. Several presentations were given to community groups throughout the year.

Moved By: Michael Simmons

Seconded By: Ann Nightingale APPROVED

**Treasurer's Report:**

It has been a good year financially for RPBO with income of \$108,835. and expenditures of \$50,881. We were able to fund all of our projects including opening a second banding station at Pedder Bay. We had a generous donation of more than fifty thousand dollars from Microsoft Corporation directed to us by long-time volunteers Megan Lyden and Sam Mann. We also had more than four thousand dollars of private donations; some thru Canada Helps and Wisser Earth programs.

We had a \$10,000 grant from Public Conservation Assistance Fund and received \$13,600 from the Victoria Foundation. Our raffle, bird id. courses, owl barbecues, pelagic bird trips and other fundraising activities brought in many more thousands of dollars. The largest producer of funds was the Bird Banding Workshop we conducted for 18 participants last March.

Even without the large donation from Microsoft we still brought in more funds than we spent even though we had to provide for an assistant to the bander-in-charge at Rocky Point out of our own funds. For several year that position was funded in partnership with the Federal Science Horizons Project. Full financial statements are attached.

We have 54 households on our membership list with 18 of them being family memberships. As BC Nature counts two for one family that would mean we have 72 total members.

Moved By: Tom Gillespie

Seconded By: Jessie Fanucchi APPROVED

**Elections:**

Ann Nightingale chaired the elections of the board for 2013. The following people have agreed to stand for board positions:

Returning board members: Jessie Fanucchi Jeremy Gatten, Tom Gillespie, Jeremy Kimm, Marilyn Lambert, Jonathan Moran. Alison Moran, Mike Motek, Ann Nightingale, Ann Scarfe, Michael Simmons,

New board members elected by acclamation: John Costello, Marianne Dawson, Jo Motek

The executive for 2012 are:

Co-president – Michael Simmons

Co-president – Ann Nightingale  
Vice-president – Jessie Fanucchi  
Treasurer – Tom Gillespie  
Secretary – Donna Ross

The business meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM

**Presentation:**

The Avifauna of the St. Elias Mountains was presented by David Fraser.

**Presidents' Report  
Rocky Point Bird Observatory  
2013 Annual General Meeting**

**What a year we have had !** Our second site at Pedder Bay was fully operational for the entire fall migration. At Rocky Point more Northern Saw-whet Owls were banded than ever before and we recaptured five birds banded elsewhere. For the first time we started a project using new tracking technology. We received the largest single donation in the history of RPBO, and we have just hired our first Executive Director.

For the second year **Ann** and I have been Co-Presidents, sharing the responsibilities. But for the second time in two years I have to say that Ann has carried the largest burden, even more so this year than last. With the expansion in our activities the volume of work assumed by Ann became unsustainable. As one of our Board famously informed us either RPBO does less or the organisation needs staff. We have staff, more on that later.

Full reports on our projects are available on our website, but I'm going to cover some of the highlights here.

We broke a lot of records in 2012. Almost 5900 birds were banded during fall migration between the two sites. 814 **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were banded during nocturnal banding at Rocky Point. A record number of individuals were recaptured at least a year after their original banding. Of the 58 birds of 11 species recaptured the two earliest were a Song Sparrow and a Chestnut-backed Chickadee both originally banded on 26 July 2008 at Rocky Point. On 5 October 2012 an Orange-crowned Warbler banded near Seaside, Oregon on 29 April 2012 was recaptured at Rocky Point.

For the first time we have a direct comparison between **Rocky Point** and a nearby site. At the highest level we captured a lot fewer birds per unit of effort at Pedder Bay than at Rocky Point, just about 65%. While the species counts were similar (59 and 63) the species composition was very different. For example the most frequently captured species at Pedder Bay was Fox Sparrow and at Rocky Point it was Pacific Slope Flycatcher.

Observations of diurnal migrants dramatically demonstrate the significance of Rocky Point. Of six selected migrant species (Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned, Copper's and Red-tailed Hawks, Band-tailed Pigeon and American Pipit) more than twice as many of each species were observed at Rocky Point than at Pedder Bay. While these results need to be checked carefully to ensure more consistency in observational effort they do seem to confirm the findings of our banding efforts.

What do these results tell us ? Our first conclusion is that Rocky Point is, as we have always thought, the most significant fall migration site on Vancouver Island. This doesn't mean that the data obtained at Pedder Bay was insignificant, though, as they added a lot of information about our target species, some of which occurred in greater numbers than at Rocky Point. Also, our open site at **Pedder Bay** allowed many new volunteers to experience fall migration and many others to learn about bird behaviour by casual and organised interaction with the Pedder Bay site. Finally we are able to seriously address our mission to educate the wider public about the importance of conserving birds and their habitats.

Despite the high numbers of newly banded birds, recaptures were the highlight of this year's owl season. Two Northern Saw-whet Owls banded as second-year birds at Rocky Point in 2011 were recaptured in 2012. An unprecedented five birds banded elsewhere were recaptured at Rocky Point last year.

Two owls banded at Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory (TLBO) were recaptured at Rocky Point within two weeks. Two owls banded in the fall of 2012 by Andy Stewart in Cobble were recaptured at Rocky Point and one of the owls banded in 2011 at RPBO was recaptured by him in 2012. A Northern Saw-whet Owl banded on its release from the Orphaned Wildlife Society in Surrey in Jun 2011 was recaptured at Rocky Point in Oct 2012, establishing that it had indeed returned to the wild and survived for more than one year. Last month, an owl banded at Rocky Point in 2012 was recaptured on Bainbridge Island.

The nesting Northern Saw-whet Owl project in Boardman, Oregon got underway in 2012, with 41 adults and 88 young banded last spring. A fall visit resulted in 13 unbanded birds and one banded bird captured, showing that the tree plantation is used by both breeders and migrants.

**MAPS** continued both at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park and Madrona Farms in 2012. It was a fairly average season with 493 new birds banded. A surprising 125 of these were hummingbirds. The year's rarest capture, a Black and White Warbler, was caught at Witty's Lagoon on July 24. RPBO's MAPS project is part of a network of more than 500 stations across North America. Thanks go out to CRD Parks, The Land Conservancy, and David and Nathalie Chambers for access to these great locations.

The 2012, the **Hummingbird Project** saw numbers jump back a little from the abysmal spring of 2011. After discussions with other banders in the west, we've concluded that a lot of migrating hummingbirds were likely killed by poor weather during their travels in 2011. As we know from isotope studies, though, each breeding population has a distinct winter home, too, and fortunately some groups escaped the damage. There were also a number of impressive recaptures of hummingbirds, including a second exchange between Curtis Kulp in Dunster, BC, and Fred Basset in Alabama.

Last year, an Anna's Hummingbird nest monitoring study was undertaken on the Matson property in Esquimalt. This project was different than most of our work in that no

birds were banded. Volunteers spent their time in the field locating nests (special kudos to Eric Pittman for his nest-finding skill), then watching the behaviours of the birds while rearing their young. The Anna's Hummingbird is known to nest several times a year, but a lot of the details are missing. Team leader Christina Lam and her crew are starting to fill in some of those gaps. Social media was also a big part of communication on this project.

**Miniaturisation technology** is driving a revolution in migration research and spawned a new project for RPBO for the winter of 2012. Very little is known about where any of our migrants nest nor do we know the location of their winter destinations. When we were approached during the summer by the Purple Martin Stewardship & Recovery Program asking if RPBO could use geolocators to assist our migration research we were excited. By October we had created a research proposal, assembled a team and received 32 geolocators from the Stutchbury Laboratory at York University. The approximate value of this donation is \$6,000. As no one in RPBO had experience with geocator technology we have been very fortunate to draw on the experience of Bruce Cousens from the Purple Martin recovery project who has used geolocators to track Purple Martins from Vancouver Island to wintering areas in Brazil. We now have 29 geolocators deployed on After Second Year (ASY) Fox Sparrows and a larger number of banded Second Year birds. We are expecting about a 30% return of geocator carrying birds next fall to the same wintering sites (more than twenty backyards around Victoria and two in Nanaimo). If all works as we expect the results will show us northward migratory travel routes and breeding locations.

2012 was without a doubt our most significant in terms of fundraising. Early in the year we were thrilled to learn that one of our volunteers, Megan **Lyden**, who has been coming to Rocky Point for many years from her home in Seattle, had arranged for a donation of US\$50,000 from **Microsoft Corporation**. Her husband Samuel Mann works for Microsoft and had won an award for his work which included a donation to a charity of his choice. The receipt of the cash spurred us on to work on a Strategic Plan for RPBO (still in draft form) which most of the Board has helped to create and will guide our activities and fund raising over the next few years.

Significant grants and donations were also received from the Victoria Foundation, Public Conservation Assistance Fund, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Victoria Natural History Society. Several private donations were also received, including some company initiatives for employees who also volunteer with RPBO. Other fundraising events contributed to our bottom line.

We were able to raise sufficient funds to support our operations in 2012 without drawing on the Microsoft donation. Operational costs are predominantly for **staff** and for the first time RPBO hired four staff in 2012:

- Brian Pomfret, as Bander-in-Charge Rocky Point with Christina Lam as Assistant Bander,

- Rick Schortinghuis as Bander-in-Charge for MAPS and Pedder Bay with Andrea Follett as the volunteer Intern at Pedder Bay, and
- Jessie Fanucchi as Bander-in-Charge Northern Saw-whet Owl monitoring

Our most important organisational change was made this winter when we decided to hire an **Executive Director** for one year. Our seed funding for this initiative is the Microsoft donation.

Our expectation is that the successful candidate, Stacey Hrushowy, who first volunteered for the Fox Sparrow project, will lighten the administrative burden on our volunteer board members, helping us to sustain our current activities and raise additional funds for new programs especially in the areas of research, education and training. We will evaluate progress through the year with the possibility that the position can be expanded to full time.

All our new activities, especially the start-up of the Pedder Bay migration monitoring site created strains on the RPBO activity model which depends very substantially on **volunteers**. The second site required more hours from those with specialised skills especially for the daily census, extraction of netted birds and training of new volunteers. With the start of the owl migration in mid-September, these demands for volunteer time reached nearly to the breaking point. Soon after the end of migration the Board decided to conduct a Volunteer survey. The survey was organised by Jessie Fanucchi with assistance from a small group of volunteers. Results include many suggestions for making volunteering easier, for offering more training, and increasing the number of volunteers. These suggestions will be implemented this year.

Public education and outreach in 2012 included International Migratory Bird Day events with the Victoria Natural History Society and Capital Region District Parks, bird identification courses, our annual banding workshop and owl barbecue, and several presentations to local groups. We're expecting to see growth in this area in 2013.

We had several scientific posters at the North American Ornithological Conference in Vancouver last August. Research projects are also a high priority going forward.

## **The Board**

Thanks go out to our "retiring" board members, Mike McGrenere our long time Secretary, Dave Fraser who after one year found that his continuing governmental responsibilities were too demanding for him to make the contribution he planned, Christina Carrieres, whose work rescuing and rehabilitating injured wildlife have created a very difficult schedule and Emily Barnewall who has moved from Victoria. There are very few people who have contributed as many hours to our organization as Mike has, from clearing net lanes to conducting the daily Census to leading bird walks. We hope he will continue to be as active in the future. His input has been very much appreciated. Dave Fraser will continue to advise us on educational programming, and of course, he's leading the rafting fundraiser on the Tatshenshini River in June. Christina will still

volunteer with us and serve as the liaison between RPBO and the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre in Metchosin, and Emily will remain involved in projects that can be done from a distance. People rarely actually leave the RPBO community!

Special thanks go out to those who are continuing on the board: Jessie Fanucchi (Vice President), Jeremy Gatten, Tom Gillespie (Treasurer), Jeremy Kimm, Marilyn Lambert, Alison Moran, Jonathan Moran, Mike Motek, Ann Nightingale (Co-President), Donna Ross, Ann Scarfe, and Michael Simmons (Co-President), as well as the volunteers who collectively contributed more than 6,000 hours to RPBO projects in 2012.