

IBA in the Spotlight: Chehalis River Estuary IBA

Imagine fifty Bald Eagles gathered on a single tree. This is not an impossible site in the Fraser Valley during the fall and winter. The Chehalis River Estuary IBA attracts large numbers of Bald Eagles from December through February, which gather to feed on spawning Coho and Chum Salmon. As many as 400 to 500 eagles are regularly seen from the Harrison Mills bridge on Highway 7 in mid-November or December, and the area total is generally around 1,000 birds at that time (1% of the global population). The total number of eagles counted in the area during the 1997 Christmas Bird Count was 1,235 birds. This eagle concentration is globally significant and is perhaps the third largest in the world after the Chilkat River, Alaska, and the Squamish River, another IBA in BC.

Chehalis River Estuary IBA is also notable for Trumpeter Swans. During the Christmas Bird Count in 1997, 413 were counted in the area. This represents 2% of the world's population of this species. Numerous other waterfowl species also use this highly productive area.

To celebrate the incredible diversity of the Chehalis River Estuary and surrounding areas, April Mol first organized a local festival in 1995, which is now known as the annual Fraser Valley Bald Eagle Festival (FVBEEF). The FVBEEF takes place the third weekend in November each year (November 20-21, 2010).

Photo: Kathy Stewart



Fifty Bald Eagles gathered on a cottonwood tree.

During the festival, many exciting venues offer excellent eagle watching opportunities and a range of activities and adventures from Mission to Chilliwack (e.g., jet boat eco-river tours; a Chehalis River walking tour; environmental presentations, naturalists and interpreters; historic and ancient aboriginal sites; displays by local artists; and lots of hands on activities and entertainment). Most of the festival is free as costs are covered by festival sponsors, grants, and the hard work of countless volunteers. Tickets are required to attend some workshops and presentations. If you are thinking of attending this year, be sure to check out the FVBEEF website at www.fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca for more information on the various sites included in the 2010 festival.

Over the years, as many as 2,500 people have attended the FVBEEF on a single weekend. Along with other local festivals such as the Brackendale Winter Eagle Festival & Count, which is held in Squamish in January each year, the FVBEEF is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of particular sites in BC for birds, and promote activities and behaviours that will help conserve these invaluable sites for generations to come.

By Krista Englund (BC Nature IBA Coordinator) & Kathy Stewart (Caretaker for Chehalis Estuary IBA)

Inside this issue:

IBA in the Spotlight: Chehalis River Estuary	1
Nature Network—IBA Caretaker's Portal	2-3
Outreach Expands to Local Governments & First Nations	4
BC Wins Award for IBA Efforts	5
National Push to Update Site Summaries	5
New IBA Brochure	6

Websites of Interest

www.ibacanada.ca
www.bcnature.ca
www.birdscanada.org
www.naturecanada.ca
www.birdlife.org



Photo: Michael Dunn

BirdLife
IBA
IMPORTANT BIRD AREA

Photo: Kathy Stewart



Swans on the Chehalis River in the fall.

The Canadian Nature Network—IBA Caretaker's Portal

Have you ever wondered whether Caretakers in Nova Scotia or Quebec deal with similar IBA issues as Caretakers in BC or how they address them? How convenient would it be if you could download a variety of IBA related resources from a single location, including example communication materials, such as articles, signs, presentations? Thinking of traveling to another IBA and wish you could contact the local Caretaker?

Now there is a new tool that allows you to do all this and more: The IBA Caretaker's Portal. Developed by Nature Canada on the Canadian Nature Network website (Figure 1), the main objective of the Portal is to develop a strong network of IBA Caretakers across Canada. Establishing such a network will help Caretakers achieve their shared goal of ensuring the long term conservation of their IBAs for the benefit of birds, people and other wildlife that depend on these sites.

The network portal has **three main features**:

- 1) An interactive map that allows Caretakers to locate other IBAs and contact information for other Caretakers (Figure 2)
- 2) A resource room that contains useful information and materials to assist Caretakers in their roles (Figure 3)
- 3) A discussion forum that enables Caretakers to dialogue about different topics and share ideas and experiences (Figure 4)

To access the portal, simply visit www.canadiannaturenetwork.ca and create a username and password and then notify Krista at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca that you wish to be added to the portal. Brief instructions on using the portal will be emailed to you.

Once you are on the portal, you'll find the **interactive map** easy to use—simply click on an IBA marker and a box opens with the Caretaker's name and contact information. You'll see that there are currently only 3 IBA markers in BC (Figure 2)! Krista will be contacting all Caretakers soon to ask for permission to include your contact information on the portal. Note that this site is only accessible to other Caretakers and members of the IBA Canada committees, not the general public.

Accessing **resources** for the BC IBA program will be as easy as a click of a button. As shown in Figure 3, there are already a variety of resources



Figure 1. The Canadian Nature Network website (www.canadiannaturenetwork.ca) houses an exciting new communication tool called the IBA Caretaker's Portal.

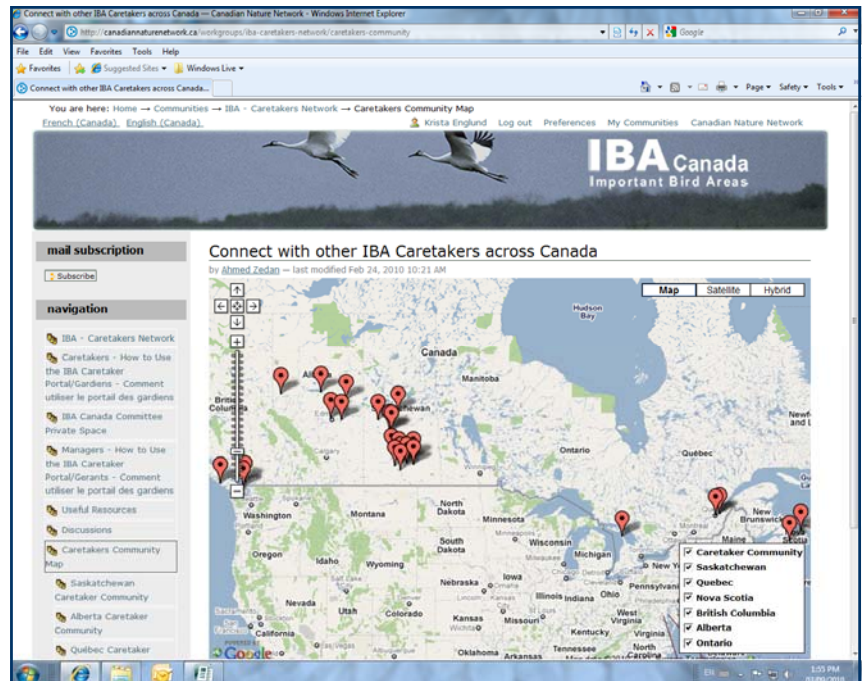


Figure 2. Caretakers who have been added to the IBA Caretaker's Portal can locate other Caretakers across Canada. Note that only three IBAs have been added to the map in BC. Krista Englund, BC IBA Caretaker Coordinator, will be contacting all Caretakers soon to ask for permission to add their name and contact information to this site, which is only accessible to other Caretakers and IBA Committee members.

An Exciting New Communication Tool!



Figure 3. The portal is a one stop shop for a variety of useful resources for Caretakers—from previously delivered presentations or previously written articles that can be used as a template for future presentations or articles, to the Caretaker Manual, newsletters, brochures, example signs, posters, etc.



Figure 4. The portal makes it easy to communicate with Caretakers across the country. Through the discussion forums, Caretakers can learn from each other and share their experiences, successes and frustrations with other Caretakers. Current forum topics include disturbance issues at IBAs and involvement of local governments in IBA conservation—and there is room for many more.

available for BC Caretakers, including the Caretaker Manual, previous presentations and articles about the IBA program, and the IBA newsletters & brochures. Using a previously written article or presentation as a template may help Caretakers develop communication materials for their own IBAs—and save valuable time! More examples of signs, posters, and photos will be added as they become available. Caretakers are encouraged to email example materials to the IBA coordinators so they can be posted on the portal. Accessing useful resources from other provinces is also possible for Caretakers who are interested to see how other provinces are managing.

Sharing ideas, discussing different topics and bringing forward solutions to challenges for managing IBAs is another feature of the portal available to Caretakers (Figure 4). Through the portal's discussion feature, Caretakers can learn from fellow Caretakers across Canada and share their own expertise. There are already several forum topics that might be of interest to BC Caretakers—one discusses disturbance issues in IBAs and the other provides examples of how local governments are being encouraged to participate in IBA conservation. It is possible to create different conversations within each discussion forum (e.g., separate conversations for disturbance by dogs vs. air traffic vs. boaters) and additional forums can be created for different topics. As with the resource room, this is a great opportunity for Caretakers to interact with each other and learn about other IBA activities from the comfort of your own home or office!

It was Nature Canada's vision that the engagement of IBA Caretakers on the portal would help Caretakers succeed in their conservation efforts. The portal's three main functions—finding other IBAs/Caretakers, accessing useful resources, and participating in discussion forums—are very user friendly and valuable. We encourage all Caretakers to sign up for a username at www.canadiannaturenetwork.ca and contact Krista at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca for further instructions. We look forward to Caretakers coming together on the IBA Caretakers Network and turning the Network into the "Facebook" of the Canadian IBA Program.

*Krista Englund (BC Nature IBA Coordinator)
& Ahmed Zedan (Nature Canada)*

BC IBA Outreach Efforts Expand to Local Governments and First Nations



Photo: Karen Barry

Approaching Hesquiat Harbour on the West Coast of Vancouver Island in August 2010.

“A visit and formal presentation from provincial IBA representatives can provide a broad overview of the IBA program and underscore its importance, while encouraging greater support of Caretaker efforts and conservation initiatives.”



The BC IBA Program would like to once again thank Mountain Equipment Coop for its support of our outreach activities, which are helping to build awareness and support for the IBA program across the province.

We owe thanks to Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) who have stepped up to the plate again to support our IBA program. Following the success of last year's agency outreach project (2008-2009), MEC has committed to fund a second phase of outreach for the BC IBA Program in 2009-2010. This outreach project provides funds necessary for IBA Coordinators and Caretakers to meet with Local Governments, First Nations and other local organizations. These levels of government are particularly influential over IBAs in many areas, especially on Vancouver Island, in the Okanagan and on Haida Gwaii.

The purpose of meeting with First Nations, Local Governments and other organizations is to increase their awareness and involvement in conserving BC's IBAs. Caretakers have an important role to play in this outreach project. Many Caretakers have already established a relationship with their Local Governments and First Nations and will be in a great position to assist in setting up a meeting. In these cases, a visit and formal presentation from provincial IBA representatives can provide a broad overview of the IBA Program and underscore its importance, while encouraging greater support of Caretaker efforts and conservation initiatives. Other Caretakers may benefit from making contact with local representatives through a formal meeting and presentation. We hope that connections made through these initial meetings will promote conservation activities in IBAs that also benefit local communities, such as:

- Building greater awareness and promoting conservation behaviours amongst community members through interpretive signage, outreach at local festivals, etc.
- Providing opportunities for people to become involved in monitoring, stewardship and conservation activities,
- Working to resolve people-wildlife or user conflicts in IBAs (e.g., disturbance of birds by recreational users),
- Expanding parks, protected areas or other conservation lands within IBAs,
- Recognizing IBAs through official community plans or in other ways, and
- Strengthening the protection of IBAs through local government plans/policies.

Several Caretakers are already working with their Local Governments to gain further recognition and protection for their IBAs. For example, Kerry Finley has been encouraging local councils to recognize and provide greater protection for Sidney Channel IBA. In July 2010, North Saanich council agreed to consider making alterations to the Official Community Plan to create more protection for the Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, one important part of the larger IBA. IBA coordinators are also working with Kerry Finley to develop more signage about the IBA and its birds for display in the Town of Sidney. Examples and experiences like this will benefit Caretakers in other areas.

In addition to promoting awareness amongst Local Governments and other organizations, we are strengthening our connections with First Nations whose traditional territories overlap IBAs. This is particularly valuable in areas where IBA density is the highest—on Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii. In these areas, First Nations are in an excellent position to watch over IBAs and the IBA Program is a great opportunity to build capacity within the local First Nation to undertake monitoring and conservation activities. A great example comes from Haida Gwaii, where Bird Studies Canada and the Delkatla Sanctuary Society are strengthening Haida community capacity to participate in the conservation and recovery of bird species at risk (e.g., Ancient Murrelet, Marbled Murrelet, Peregrine Falcon, Great Blue Heron, Northern Saw-whet Owl, etc.) through an Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk (AFSAR) grant. IBA Program Coordinators are keen to build relationships with other First Nations and welcome suggestions from Caretakers or other program partners.

We are looking forward to this opportunity to meet with Caretakers and representatives of Local Governments, First Nations and other local organizations to promote IBA conservation activities at the local level.

The BC IBA Committee



BC IBA Caretakers Win Nature Canada Award

BC Nature is the proud recipient of Nature Canada's 'Affiliate' award for 2010. BC Nature was selected for this award because of our "tireless work towards the goal of building the foundation for the long-term conservation of British Columbia's Important Bird Areas." Through this award, Nature Canada recognizes the significant contributions that BC's Caretaker Network has made to the IBA program, which has served as a model for other partners to follow and provided important direction to the Canadian IBA

Program. Each year, Nature Canada recognizes the conservation efforts of an organization affiliated with Nature Canada for implementation of an action that supports a Nature Canada conservation initiative or that directly implements a conservation program supportive of their mission. BC Nature is proud to accept this award on behalf of all Caretakers in BC—who are the foundation of the BC IBA Program.

John Neville, President, BC Nature

Photo: Dick Cannings



Flammulated Owl.

National Push to Update IBA Site Summaries

It has been over a decade since the IBA site summaries on the IBA Canada website were first written. Thanks to several Caretakers, the descriptive text of the online site summaries for approximately 20 IBAs have been updated. Updating the bird data included in the site summaries will proceed in the near future, as soon as up-to-date bird population thresholds are available from BirdLife International.

Providing current bird data on the IBA Canada website is a high priority for the National IBA program because other organizations, agencies and individuals are increasingly using this data for assessing development projects and for conservation related purposes (e.g., risk planning and assessment for the energy sector, protected areas planning, and land securement efforts).

Fortunately, new bird population thresholds are expected any day and IBA Canada Technical Coordinator Janet Moore, together with BC IBA Technical Coordinator Karen Barry, have been developing a protocol for updating site summaries that is consistent with BirdLife standards. Once the new thresholds are available and the protocols are finalized, the BC IBA Program will begin a significant push to update all online site summaries.

Updating all of BC's IBA site summaries will be no small task. Caretakers will have an extremely important role to play in helping to locate and compile bird data for the IBAs. Most sources of data will be accepted, but references must be provided (e.g., publications, field notes, etc.).

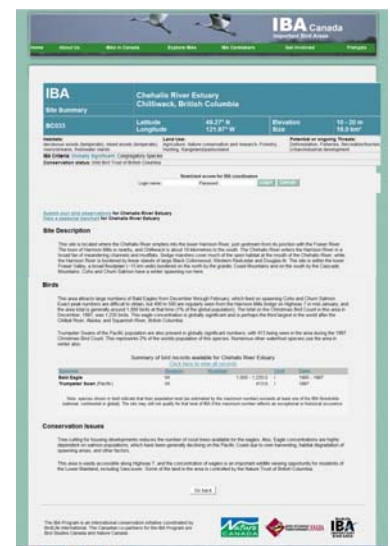
In addition to updating the descriptive text and bird data, we will be seeking to update the land use, habitat type and conservation threats data. Updating these fields requires an in depth knowledge of the site—something that Caretakers likely already possess or are in an excellent position to acquire. Updating these other three sections will be simplified by the provision of a list of possible land use, habitat and threat types, complete with detailed descriptions and examples.

The updated site summaries will also include a new section for conservation activities. This section will include a description of stewardship or conservation related activities as well as a summary of conservation lands within the IBA (e.g., parks or fee simple lands).

Having up-to-date online summaries is an essential component of a successful IBA program in Canada—one that provides information that highlights the need to conserve IBAs over the long term. Ongoing efforts of Caretakers and other agencies and individuals who have data, knowledge or other information that can help with updating site summaries is much appreciated. BC IBA Program Technical Coordinator Karen Barry will be proceeding with several pilot site summary updates through 2011 and will update Caretakers and partners on our progress and next steps in due course.

The BC IBA Committee

“Having up-to-date online summaries is an essential component of a successful IBA program in Canada—one that provides information that highlights the need to conserve IBAs over the long term”



The site summaries on the new IBA Canada website sport exciting new features—like the ability to generate a seasonal barchart for the area or submit your bird data online through eBird.org.

IBA Program Materials Available: New Brochure for the Public



Many Caretakers across the province participate in outreach and awareness building activities. A variety of materials exist to support IBA outreach. Our first brochure, designed in 2008 for a more technical audience (e.g., government agencies, environmental NGOs, naturalists, biologists), explains the goals and criteria for IBAs and the history of the program in BC and Canada. Earlier this year, a new brochure was designed for the general public. This brochure (front cover pictured at left) seeks to increase awareness and appreciation for birds and their habitat. It also provides examples of how people can get involved in the IBA program and highlights a number of publically accessible IBAs, many of which have annual festivals celebrating their birdlife and natural history. These brochures are ideal for distributing at public events or to landowners. Please contact Krista Englund at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca if you would like to request some brochures to distribute.

Recently, we have worked with a number of Caretakers to produce signs and posters for their IBAs. In most cases, these signs and posters are customized for each IBA, but contain similar messages and an overall look to ensure that the program is recognizable from IBA to IBA. Now that we have several “templates” available for different sizes and layouts, producing custom signs or posters for other IBAs is much simpler. We are also now encouraging the National IBA Committee to work towards producing a small, IBA identification sign that is consistent across the country. Please contact Krista at kenglund@alumni.sfu.ca if you are interested in having a sign or poster developed for your IBA or if you have any suggestions for other materials that would help Caretakers conduct their outreach activities.

Krista Englund (BC Nature IBA Coordinator)

IBAs in British Columbia are a partnership program of:



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Support the IBA Program

If you are not already a member of BC Nature and Bird Studies Canada, please consider taking out a group or individual membership. Supporting these two organizations helps to keep the IBA program progressing towards its goal of conserving birds and their habitat. As a bonus, you will receive regular communications about the programs and bird conservation (e.g. BirdWatch, BC Nature magazine and the Focus on IBAs articles,) and hear about opportunities to go birding at BC Nature camps and field trips.

Please contact: manager@bcnature.ca
and/or generalinfo@birdscanada.org

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“To know nature and to keep nature worth knowing”

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