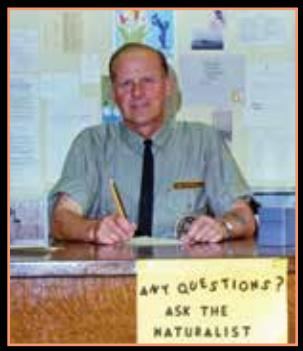
Naturalist and Cloud Watcher

David Stirling
(1920-2018)

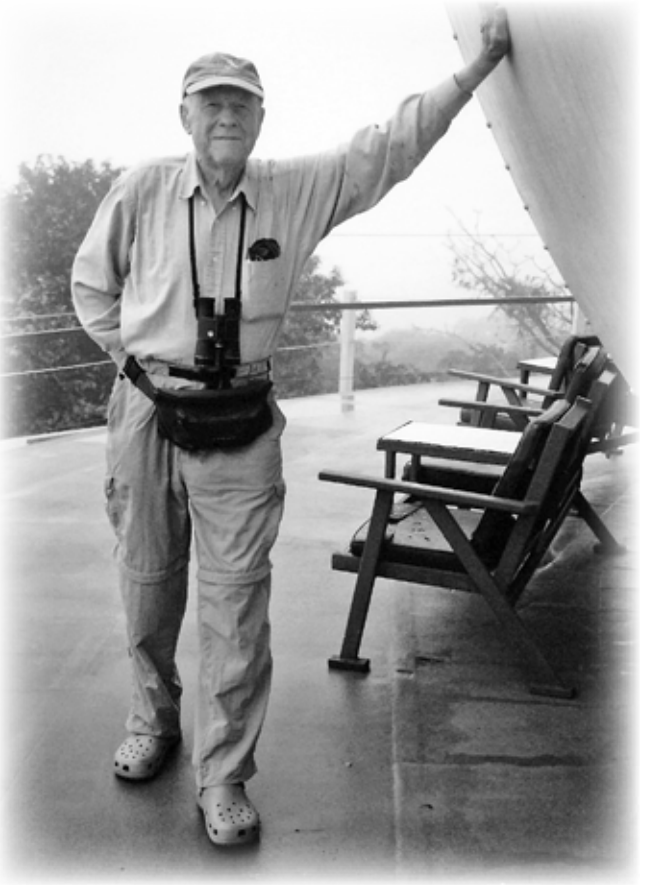


Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies

NATURALISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

David Stirling (1920-2018)

Naturalist and Cloud Watcher



R. Wayne Campbell

Barbara Begg

CONTENTS

Wildlife Afield 14(1):1-80, 2017

NATURALISTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
David Stirling (1920-2018) – Naturalist and Cloud Watcher*

R. Wayne Campbell[1] and *Barbara Begg*[2]

[1]*2511 Kilgary Place, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8N 1J6*

[2]*3-1255 Wain Rd, Sidney, British Columbia, Canada V8L 4R4*

*Throughout the first half of 2018, the authors were in constant contact with David during reviews of various sections of this biography. His health was failing by June and on July 5 David, his final personal e-mail, started with, "I am heading for the last roundup…" He died peacefully in his sleep at home on August 11, 2018 knowing that his legacy would be shared.

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

INTRODUCTION – A SHARED LIFE

People's accomplishments in life may positively influence the lives of others. These endeavours can set an example by showing what an individual did, how they fulfilled goals, how they treated others, their successes and failures, and places they went. David influenced the lives of many people and the stories that follow in this biography attest to his inate sensitivity (Figure 2).

Figure 2. David instilled in people he met an appreciation for all things natural. He was able to accomplish a multitude of life ambitions during his 97 years because he kept learning and having fun along the way.

David was smitten with the natural world as a lad living on a subsistence farm in the boreal forest of central Alberta, surrounded by wildlife and biological events that changed throughout the year. After completing high school, the logical choice for employment was to enlist in the Canadian army – free chow, a place to sleep, and landscapes to see. After five years in the United Kingdom during World War II, David returned home to Athabasca for a few years. He married Ruth Carter and together they left for a life of travel and adventure for two years camping and touring by motorcycle in New Zealand and Australia.

Reality set in when they returned to Canada broke. David needed to find a job and as it turned out his timing was spot-on. He joined British Columbia Parks Branch in 1960 and helped establish an innovative program to use provincial parks to showcase natural history. David was an ideal choice for implementation of a nature interpretation program (Figure 3). He had learned multi-tasking skills growing up on a pioneer farm, enduring five years of war overseas, and spending two and a half years travelling the world.

Figure 3. David Stirling (far right), with park visitors during a morning gathering at Miracle Beach Park, BC, discussing tree identification. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, July 1965.*

The BC nature interpretation program was very successful. The model, which included an education and appreciation component while encouraging public participation, was quickly recognized as something unique and soon similar programs were established in other parts of Canada. Unfortunately, noble and innovative ideas are often short-lived and after two decades the program was decentralized and regional managers controlled its future. The original concept of nature interpretation in British Columbia vanished.

It was during his 23 years as a civil servant that David most impacted aspiring naturalists and biologists and the path chosen for their careers. Like David, many of his students remained focused and later made major contributions to our knowledge and conservation of native wildlife.

Although writing interpretive material for park users was part of David's job description, most of his written and published works, numbering at least 220 titles, was completed after hours. These included books, peer-reviewed articles, contributions to North American bird field guides, wildlife checklists, and personal thoughts on the protection of wildlife. For many years he coordinated, as the British Columbia representative, volunteer programs in North America including the Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys. He also participated in numerous other volunteer activities including *The Birds of British Columbia* project and local wildlife surveys.

David's strong desire to travel and explore the world was fueled in 1965 when he was asked by a tour company to organize and lead a trip to the wildlife sanctuaries of India. He was a popular and trustworthy leader and over the next three decades visited all continents but Antarctica. During 66 trips he tallied an impressive life list of 4,071 species of birds to the end of 2017 (Figure 4). He did not tally lists of trees, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, clouds – nor winds – but wished to experience as many species as possible. In 2017, at 96 years old, although wanderlust was foremost on his agenda, David's family doctor advised against a planned September boat cruise in Ukraine.

Figure 4. Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier), of mountainous areas of Europe, Asia, and Africa, is David's favourite world bird of the 4,071 species on his life list. In British Columbia, one of two top picks is a soaring Turkey Vulture (shown). *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Although birds dominated David's life, he was a generalist and enjoyed everything outdoors, from the formations of clouds to budding flowers. Naturalists are a diverse group of humans who advance their fascination with the natural world differently. David's personal mindset towards all things wild and his selfless and unremitting gift of mentoring and commitment to written works have created a legacy that will be appreciated for years to come.

THE EARLY YEARS (1920-1939) – ATHABASCA

The Setting

David's immediate family – parents David and Margaret, and three sisters, Jean, Peggy (Margaret), and Pat – were all born in Scotland, while David and his younger brother, Jack, were born in Athabasca, Alberta. David was born on December 8, 1920. His father spent most of his early life as a soldier in the army, including stints in the Boer War (South Africa) and Great War (Belgium and India) and returned to Canada in 1919 after World War I. He was very proud of his regiment, Princess Canadian Light Infantry. He found the "Great Frontier" in Athabasca located on the bank of the southernmost loop of the Athabasca River about 145 km north of Edmonton, Alberta. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the area had been transformed from a stopping place of First Nation peoples into a Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post. Originally called Athabasca Landing the name was changed in 1913 to just "Athabasca" and it became known as "the gateway to the north." By 2016, the town had a population of nearly 3,000 residents including a university for distance education and three public schools.[56]

A Place to Live

The *Soldier Settlement Board* was a program established in Canada in 1917 to allow returning servicemen to borrow money at low interest rates to set up farms.[1] The provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were the most popular provinces. David's father picked Alberta because he considered it a frontier area where one could live off the land and there were lots of Moose for meat. He arrived in the

early autumn of 1919, borrowed $4,500 for land and another $2,000 for stock and equipment from the federal government and purchased 320 acres of bush and rocks on the north side of the Athabasca River across from Athabasca. Black cottonwood, trembling aspen, and white spruce were dominant trees (Figure 5). With winter approaching he only had a couple of months to build a house and settle in before his wife, Margaret, and her three daughters arrived before freeze-up; the following year.

Figure 5. Alberta's boreal forest, with its long, very cold, dry winters, is a harsh environment to homestead and raise a large family. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

David's father could only afford a team of horses, a walking plough, and an axe, he immediately started cutting white spruce for a cabin (Figure 6). The horses were used to skid the logs to the building site. Because of the impending winter he didn't have time to take the bark off the timber. The cabin was one room with a bit of a partition off it for a bedroom. The following year he added a lean-to to the cabin and for nearly two decades the family of seven lived together in the frontier home. There was no electric or gas heat, television, radio, electricity, hot water, or telephone and the latrine was often God's great outdoors.

Figure 6. With the help of a low interest loan from the *Soldier Settlement Board* following World War 1,[1] David's father was able to purchase land and build a cabin for his family north of Athabasca. David, his sisters, brother, and parents called the small log cabin home for decades. After returning home from World War II, David found the family homestead was not being maintained because his parents were aging and unable to do the necessary work. *Photo by David Stirling, circa 1955.*

Having come from Glasgow, Margaret had to work very hard to adjust to homestead conditions while raising five children in cramped quarters without the modern amenities of the time. Making do or doing without was the norm. As the girls were the oldest of the children, they were helpful around the house, garden and with the farm animals. When David returned home after World War II he learned his father was still paying off the farm!

The cabin was sealed with tamped mosses and the corners were dove-tailed. Freeze-up occurred in November after which it would remain below-zero until spring. To provide more insulation and "warmth" he would dig a hole, pour in hot water, stir it up, and trowel the clay and add it to chinks on the outside of the cabin. The mixture froze and was good until spring when the "poor man's cement" thawed and fell out. The firewood of choice was white birch and tamarack.

The cabin was inhabited from November 1919 until 1958 when David's parents moved to Victoria, BC.

Living off the Land

Plants and Animals

David's family lived off the land. The staple diet was potatoes and Moose meat – the main source of carbohydrates and protein (Figure 7). In late summer and early autumn there were wild berries – raspberries, hard to find strawberries, saskatoons that were rather seedy and tasteless without a complementary dose of rhubarb, and lots of blueberries. Gardens produced greens in summer and potatoes for winter and made up 90% of their diet. It was good country for potatoes but the crop had to be harvested in September before rain and frost set in. If they weren't picked dry, they wouldn't keep.

When he was as young as 12 years old David was interested in gardening, about the same age natural history had really become a big part of David's life. Seeds were obtained from Winnipeg, four to 10 cents a package, and David vividly remembers the beautiful pictures of the plant on each package. The gardens produced carrots, parsnips, onions, lettuce, and cabbages. The end of June to early September was the time of great abundance. Besides obvious movements of birds overhead and through the trees he actually sat on a stump in a muskeg pond and watched frogs and whirligig beetles catch mosquitos.

Figure 7. Moose meat was the main source of protein and carbohydrates for David's family in his Athabasca years. Early pioneers and thousands of people today still rely on wild game for a significant part of their total diet.[57] *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

The top source of protein was local wildlife so that guns and ammunition were a priority. A daily familiar sound was the rattling of .22 bullets in pockets. Even at school, David traded and talked about new ammo. The cost was also affordable at 25 cents for 50 bullets.

Moose was the main source of meat but in the summer months it had to be eaten within a week or it became putrid. Also, the meat had to be well-cooked as some animals were loaded with bacteria and parasites. Occasionally eating fresh moose meat produced monumental family bouts of explosive diarrhea and a race to the outhouse in the snow and dark, at -30 degrees. Occasionally deer or a Black Bear were shot and eaten.

Some game birds were plentiful and frequently eaten including partridge (Ruffed Grouse; Figure 8) and Prairie Chicken (Sharp-tailed Grouse). A Sandhill Crane was eaten, but only once because it was tough as leather to chew. A few other necessities and luxuries were purchased including flour and coal oil for the lamps and David's father had to have his tobacco.

Figure 8. Ruffed Grouse was not always a reliable food source around the Athabasca homestead because numbers fluctuated with changes in weather cycles. *Photo by Mark Nyhof.*

Trapping – A Meagre Income

Homesteading in the early 20th century in Athabasca was subsistence survival-of-the-fittest living. Extra money to buy personal necessities such as clothes and shoes came from trapping animals for pelts. Unfortunately much of the area had been previously trapped in the 1800s. His father's trap line was 12 or 15 miles north of the farm. To get ready for his regular foray he wrapped his lower legs, from the ankles to the knees with strips of cloth. These puttees provided ankle support and prevented water and forest debris from getting into his pants or boots. With a .303 Lee-Enfield rifle and an axe on his belt he headed for his 10-day trip to a trapping shack which was about the size of a large kitchen table.

Occasionally he trapped an American Mink or Canada Lynx but Red Squirrels (Figure 9) were his sustenance. He returned home loaded with squirrel pelts and went to Athabasca to sell them at 50 cents a pelt. They could bring in $25 a day! The squirrels were skinned daily and the carcasses were thrown out for whiskey jacks [Gray Jays] and Common Ravens. While in town he bought Moose hide moccasins made by local Indians every year which his family wore year-round, as well as a few necessities like flour, lamp oil, and tobacco.

Figure 9. In the early 1920s, Red Squirrels, common in the boreal forest region of Alberta, were trapped and their pelts sold to bring in a much-needed income to supplement the Stirling's family subsistence living. *Photo by Mark Nyhof.*

Homestead Life

A Multitude of Chores

As one might suspect for survival, chores had to be done daily – they were paramount. The Stirling farm had horses, cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, and geese. The children tended to the animals that included feeding, milking and securing the animals for the evening. During the day cows roamed all over the quarter section and had to be fetched from far corners of the land for milking. In summer, especially when it rained, the bells couldn't be heard as the cows were lying down (Figure 10); the search then required more time and often required wandering in soaking wet bush covered in spider webs. Once found the cows had to be herded back to the barn and milked. Since they had been feeding on fresh green grass, stepping in their droppings was unavoidable. The smell lingered but was part of the olfactory ambience of the homestead. After chores it was off to school!

Figure 10. Finding cows, even with bells, was a daily chore on the homestead. When the herd was lying down chewing their cuds the time needed to locate them was greatly increased. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

The chickens had to be fed in the morning but were penned up at night to protect them from marauding Striped Skunks, Red Foxes (Figure 11), and Great Horned Owls. The turkeys had to be enticed nightly to get undercover and not roost in trees where they were easy prey for Great Horned Owls. Other time-consuming tasks included weeding the vegetable patch, digging spuds, digging a well,

bringing pails of water to the house, sawing, chopping, and carrying wood for the insatiable kitchen range and its air-tight heater, and cleaning the outhouse. In autumn, David's dad would slaughter a young heifer or a pig.

The family was part of the land, nature, and earth. They also had to be resourceful. If a can of pork and beans was opened for special occasions, the can was reused until it rusted away. Nothing was wasted.

Figure 11. Most predators are opportunists including the Red Fox. Its main diet is small rodents but readily takes farm animals, like chickens. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Dealing with Emergencies

An injury or sickness on a frontier homestead was a serious event. Medical supplies were not readily available and a doctor may be days' travel away. Still, chores had to be done. David recalls one such incident when he was about five years old; "After lunch, my father returned to the task of clearing land. Father had an axe in his belt and always carried a rifle in case there was something to shoot – a deer perhaps. It was frontier living. I was helping and flung my arm up and hit the axe in my dad's belt. My wrist started to bleed profusely and I thought I was a goner. No doctors, so a rag was stuck on the cut and my arm was put in a sling made of an old bandana or handkerchief (Figure 12)." Everything done on the farm in those days was dangerous.

Figure 12. Mishaps occurred in frontier Canada and doctoring was done on the spot with materials available. In this photo, David Stirling is about five years old with his injured arm in a sling from accidentally cutting his wrist on his father's axe. *Circa 1925.*

Respite from the Homestead

After chores, like milking the cows, the main time away from the farm was for schooling. Elementary education was in a one-room log schoolhouse about two and a half miles away. A mile could be saved by cutting through the neighbour's fields so the round trip could be reduced to three miles. In winter the trek was "bloody terrible." David recalls that in summer the log building was always full of Carpenter Ants which used to get into the students' lunches. High school, grades 10 to 12, was completed in Athabasca. He stayed with his sister's (Jean) family farm during the week which was about three miles from town. He rode his bicycle in summer and walked in winter. He usually went home Friday night and returned on Sunday.

There were school Christmas concerts, box socials and occasional dances held in Sawdy Hall. Music was supplied by three or four locals with guitars and violins, beating out tunes for waltzes, two-steps, and fox-trots. In the early morning hours, when it was time to return home to milk the cows, the dance terminated with either *Goodnight ladies* or *Show me the way to go home*. Coffee was brewed-up in a metal wash tub. Liquor was absolutely taboo but many bottles of booze were stashed outside in the snow or under a bush. A wee dram hastily gulped at -30° F could scar an esophagus instantly and all the way to the stomach. But it was fun!

Saturday evening was the weekly mail night at Sawdy Post Office, northwest of the Stirling's homestead. It was an event! The post mistress had picked-up the mail bags in Athabasca and after she had supper called in the kids that had gathered from miles around. No talking! After an interval of silence and rattling of keys she opened the first bag. Each item was picked out individually and the recipient was called up.

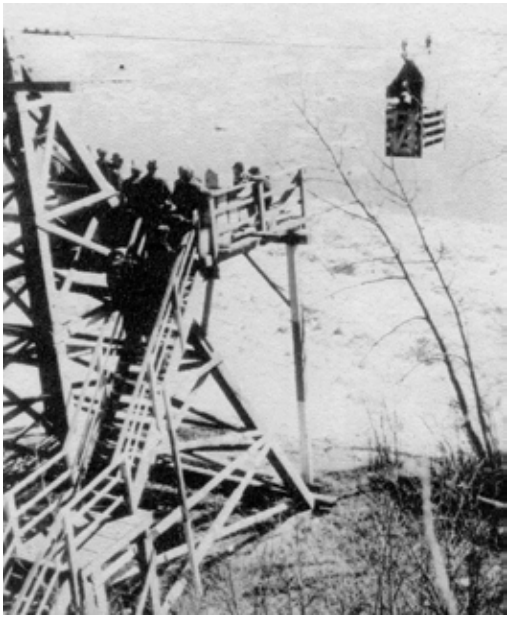


Figure 13. The "cadge", or small wooden cage, was the only way for "northerners" to get to town across the Athabasca River during autumn freeze-up and spring breakup.

Frequently there was a comment, "Two letters from the old country today" or "Feels like a cheque." The kids exited with their loot, often compared and traded stamps, before starting the long walk home. In winter, darkness had to be tolerated.

For farmers living on the north side of the Athabasca River, a trip to town, across the river, was like an expedition. It took about four hours with a team of horses in a steel-wheeled wagon in summer and a sleigh was used in winter. A ferry was powered by the river current in summer. During autumn freeze-up and the spring break-up a 'cadge' on the ferry cable above the ice was used for safety (Figure 13).

A Fascination with Nature and Birds

David's earliest recollection of a fascination with nature came from an unlikely source – noisy beetles in the house logs. With autumn temperatures falling and winter coming David's father never had time to take the bark off the white spruce logs and at night David could hear the tick-tick sound of the insects, like a clock. There were two types of beetle – those that ate the cambium layer and boring beetles that went right into the wood (Figure 14).

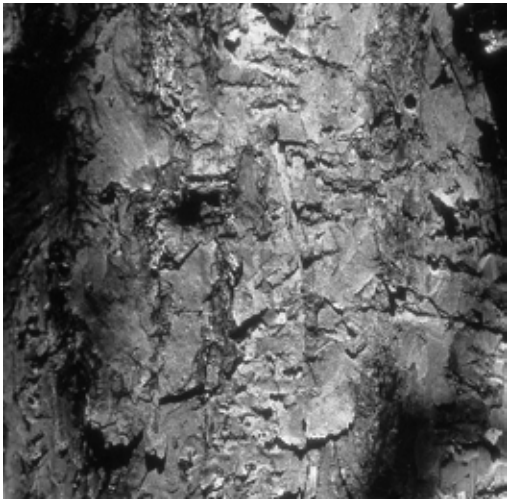


Figure 14. David first became aware of the natural world when the noisy sounds of beetles were gnawing away at logs in their house that had not been stripped of their bark. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*.

On the homestead David lived with nature, especially the ever-present Woodchucks (Figure 15), Striped Skunks, and Coyotes. He noticed great flocks of migrating birds in spring and autumn on his way to school but only knew them by local names such as water turkey (=Sandhill Crane) or muskeg robin (=Pine Grosbeak). David wanted to know the proper names of birds and soon had his father to thank for the source. His dad was a smoker and in the big cans of tobacco he bought were small cards of bird paintings. These were of eastern Canadian birds by BC artist Allan Brooks that first occurred in P.A. Taverner's *Birds of Canada*.[18] As with many old-time naturalists, the identification cards were the primary source for identification.[8] As well, cans of baking soda advertised that if you sent five cents to cover postage and handling you could also receive bird identification cards – again covering eastern Canada. Newspapers, the *Family Herald* and *Weekly Star*, often had articles sent to the editor from locals wanting someone to help identify a new bird. The response usually took several weeks! The cards were a helpful aid for widely distributed species. In winter, for example, the window pane had a quarter inch of ice on it and by blowing for a while a small hole allowed foraging Black-capped Chickadees to be seen and identified. This was also a cue to put out some crumbs and wheat seeds for them and it started a big feeding station that attracted Snow Buntings, redpolls, or Sharp-tailed Grouse. This was the start of true birdwatching.

Figure 15. From April to late September Woodchucks were active around outbuildings on the family homestead. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Bird-feeding also attracted a Northern Shrike (Figure 16) which preyed on the Snow Buntings and redpolls. David couldn't believe it! In the spring, the shrike was heard singing its heart out from a poplar tree. There were no binoculars so in spring, when the warblers were passing through, David would climb a big spruce tree and sit for hours trying to identify them at eye-level.

Figure 16. Besides being interested in identifying birds on the farm David became fascinated with predators, like this Northern Shrike, which learned to exploit small passerines at the bird feeder. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

One winter there was an invasion of Boreal Owls (Figure 17) and Northern Hawk Owls in the area and by March they were calling everywhere. Dave was keen to tie the species to the songs so he asked an old trapper if he knew. He said "it was just one of these mysterious sounds of the bush – perhaps some kind of owl and the Indians say it is the spirits calling and bad luck will stomp you if you try to investigate."

While David's natural history experiences were increasing he was still learning about life in the backwoods. On a summer's evening Dave was talking to a mink farmer at Calling Lake, about 50 km north of Athabasca. He heard the fine high "kreek kreek" of Western Grebes from far out on the lake and mentioned that the calls enhanced the feeling of peace and silence to the evening. They couldn't see the birds because they were looking directly into the sun and the grebes' black-and-white plumage seemed to merge with the water. The mink-man gave Dave a long look and said, "That ain't no bird, them's fish calling." He said, "Come out with me, I have a net

Figure 17. An advantage of living year-round on a wilderness farm over a long period is witnessing rare winter irruptions of birds like the Boreal Owl. To hear it calling in spring was an added bonus. *Photo by Doug Leighton*.

set in close for suckers", a common bottom feeding fish. They pulled the net, dropping a cascade of suckers into the boat with a chorus of "kreek, kreek", from their air bladders deflating – just like Western Grebes calling but the fish could be heard from up to a foot away only. The mink man gave David a hard look. "Well, do you still think them fish are birds," he laughed, "You city guys (from Athabasca!) think you know everything but, admit it, when it comes to the country and the bush you don't know your ass from a hole in the ground."

During his high school years he learned that birdwatching was really good in May and June, especially around sloughs and the 'lake' when migrants were arriving (Figure 18). He often went out at 5:30 am before chores and school.

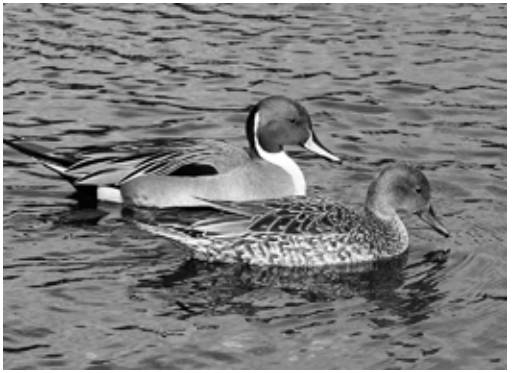


Figure 18. Some of the earliest spring migrants that David saw were waterfowl in melting sloughs and lakes, like Northern Pintail. *Photo by Mark Nyhof.*

In retrospect, looking back on those early years David thought it was a pretty good life, particularly if you were interested in the natural world and didn't know anything better. There was space, you were free to roam unregimented, and constantly learned by trial and error some of the risky activities of living on a remote homestead. David vividly remembers some "spectacles" – a hundred Sharp-tailed Grouse slowly walking over crusted snow, a spring massing of 10,000 Snow Buntings, hundreds of leaping and cavorting mad Snowshoe Hares in March, and masses of geese and cranes during migration.

Aprés La Guerre

In 1945, after World War II and an absence of five years, David returned to his Athabasca homestead to visit his parents. The plan was to have a short visit and start looking for permanent employment. When he arrived at the farm, the homestead was a bit of a shock. The old house was on its last "logs" and the kitchen windows were on slant like a ship listing to port. His father had been ill for years and had not been able to maintain the building. David encouraged his father to sell the farm and move to Victoria where two of his daughters were now living but he didn't want to leave. David had to find work and didn't relish being tied down to horses, cows, and chickens and the harsh existence life of frontier living. Also, the war years had whetted his appetite for travel and adventure.

David stayed around for the next five years, partly to help his parents, especially during the autumn harvest. Post-war jobs were difficult to find and most were short and seasonal and few were in the outdoors. Still, he needed cash and he took jobs when he could. He worked a summer as a "weed inspector" with the Alberta provincial government locating noxious plants like thistles, stink weed, and couch grass. He saved enough money to purchase a second hand 1939 Nash coupe which allowed him to travel farther afield in search of animals. He tried net-fishing locally for Lake Whitefish for two winters but the effort was a bust.

As the town of Athabasca was growing so was exploration and resource use. Dave landed summer jobs as a lumber checker, oil exploration technician, and a temporary fisheries officer in the Northwest Territories at Hay River on southwestern Great Slave Lake. The long-promised bridge over the Athabasca River started and for the first time David had winter work near home.

In spring 1951, the Canada Department of Fisheries offered David a solid job in Winnipeg. He married Ruth Carter, bought a 1941 Mercury coupe, packed everything they owned, and drove 1,300 km to Manitoba. They arrived late by a day due to mostly dirt and muddy roads. But it was a birder's paradise. Great lakes, marshes, and boreal forests were to the north and west, the flat prairie and bur oak groves to the south west, and eastern deciduous forests to the southeast. Every Friday night Ruth and David were off for a naturalist's weekend. They camped out, and usually slept under the stars but when the mosquitos were really irksome they moved into the car. David was thrilled to see his first Burrowing Owls, Scarlet Tanagers, and flocks of American White Pelicans (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Flocks of roosting and preening American White Pelicans on rivers near Winnipeg, Manitoba, were exciting new birds for David. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*, *Lockport, MB, August 2, 1999.*

The new position allowed official side trips to Amisk Lake, Sheridan, and as far away as Reindeer Lake. David and Ruth noted that winter in Winnipeg must compare equally with winters in Siberia except that the wind roaring around Winnipeg's Portage and Main Streets must be worse. In late summer, they took a long dusty Greyhound ride back to Athabasca for David's holidays, found a pair of Northern Hawk Owls nesting on the old homestead (Figure 20) and decided to give up fisheries to start a world tour starting in New Zealand and Australia.[50]

Figure 20. During his accumulated holidays as a fisheries inspector in Manitoba, David and Ruth returned to Athabasca and promptly located a breeding record for the rare Northern Hawk Owl. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

CLOUD WATCHING – AN INEXPENSIVE HOBBY

Many of David's friends attribute his longevity to a combination of good genes, a consistent diet of bacon and eggs, regular exercise from birdwatching… and cloud watching. As a youngster in Alberta, formations of ominous dark cumulonimbus clouds forming on the horizon or high strata cirrus clouds overhead have always been part of his long life.

Poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Nature is a mutable cloud which is always and never the same." For David, cloud watching was relaxing and complemented his nature activities. It could be done anywhere and it was free! When birds weren't flying, singing or feeding, clouds often attracted his attention and challenged his imagination as they constantly morphed into different shapes. Sometimes they looked like dragons or resembled people with big noses and ears – or nothing at all (Figure 21).

David has been a long-time member of the *Cloud Appreciation Society*, a group of united people who love the sky with clouds. One of the organization's manifestos states, "We think that they are nature's poetry, and the most egalitarian of her displays, since everyone can have a fantastic view of them."

Watching clouds caresses the soul and allows for imagination and temporary respite from a world with increasing responsibilities. As David aged, cloud watching evolved from lying on the ground on his back as a prairie lad to the comfort of deck chairs on cruise ships. It was a world-wide activity that he still enjoyed.

Figure 21. In alpine habitats, the diversity and numbers of animal species is low and local. It is often a good time to enjoy the hobby of cloud watching. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Manning Park, BC, September 3, 1999.*






THE YOUTHFUL YEARS. The first two decades of David's life were spent eking out a living on a subsistence farm in the boreal forest of Alberta and completing his schooling. Clockwise from upper left: David (about five years old) and his father; David's younger brother Jack, was killed in action in Germany in 1945; Moose meat was the main source of protein; the annual spectacle of migrating Snow Geese; birdwatching started with Black-capped Chickadees; protecting chickens from Red Foxes was a year-round activity for the Stirling family. *Photos of animals by R. Wayne Campbell.*

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS. After five years in Great Britain during World War II, David was not ready to settle down to a full-time job. He and his wife Ruth spent two years touring New Zealand and Australia enjoying new landscapes, plants, and animals while camping and traveling by motorcycle. Clockwise from upper left: traveling across Queensland in 1958, Home Sweet Home for Ruth and David at Mindel Beach near Darwin in 1957, David boarding *The Ghan*, a slow train to Alice Springs, and new birds included Beach Stone-Curlew, Comb-crested Jacana, and Forest Kingfisher. *Photos by David and Ruth Stirling; birds by Gary S. Davidson*.

THE WAR YEARS (1940-1945)

As a recent high school graduate in 1940 finding a job in the northern frontier of Alberta was difficult David's family's homestead life was subsistence and much of the family's time was spent surviving day to day. His father suggested that he should enlist in the army since World War II had started in 1939 and recruits were being solicited. At least he would be fed and get a pay cheque. With temperatures still below freezing at home at the age of 19 David decided to volunteer for the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in February 1940. Also, it provided the opportunity to travel and see the world and new plants and animals. Filled with anticipation he was shipped from Edmonton to Calgary for basic training. David vividly remembers seeing his first prairie wild flowers (Figure 22), soaring Swainson's Hawks, and flocks of Horned Larks (Figure 23). In July, he boarded a steam train for Halifax, over 4,800 km and eight provinces away. Seeing new landscapes and wildlife was exciting.

Figure 22. During his first trip off the homestead to Calgary, David enthusiastically absorbed the sights of new flowers, like prairie crocuses, and open-country birds. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Figure 23. From the train, Horned Larks could be easily seen. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

From Halifax, David spent a week on board the *RMS Samaria*, an ocean liner used as a troop ship in the Royal Navy, and travelled across the wild, submarine-infested Atlantic Ocean to southern England. He arrived during the Battle of Britain when the Royal Air Force was defending the United Kingdom from attacks from Nazi Germany's air force. Birds were scarce on the ocean in mid-summer; only a few storm-petrels and fulmars were seen but they were new birds for him.

Soon after David landed in the United Kingdom, the Luftwaffe conducted several severe intense air raids in which 500-pound bombs were dropped. Reality had set in and the war adventures had started. Dave's regiment moved around the country and slept in the woods, supplied with only a ground sheet, a blanket, and a trench coat. When the rains came in November they were forced to find billets with private families. He received $1.30 a day, half of which was deferred so money wasn't wasted on wine, women, and gambling. At sunrise over the South Downs, a range of chalk hills in southeastern England, David recalls watching wintering flocks of European Starlings, Rooks, and Common Wood Pigeons.

During lulls in the "ever-alert" period, David visited relatives in Scotland, birded and hiked in England (Figure 24) and Wales (Figure 25) and went birding in the Lake District, a rolling hills

Figure 24. A common sight in the countryside of England was the abundance of dry stone fences that are constructed without mortar, but are very stable. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Figure 25. The diversity of cultural and natural history of Wales, in Great Britain, was enjoyed by David during time off from military duties while overseas. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*, *August 8, 2002.*

region in northwest England. He bought a bicycle and three books on the birds, mammals, and trees of Britain (Figure 26) and since he now had Saturday afternoons and Sundays off he could explore farther afield. It was an idyllic summer! He had a kit bag full of cones, twigs, and leaves that could be identified later. Kew Gardens, southwest of London, was one of his favourite places to visit as it had the "largest and most diverse botanical and mycological collections in the world."[28]

In autumn David was back with the troops for demanding and dangerous field exercises that involved forced marches, lifting dummy mines, charging across fields in knee-deep mud, and using live ammunition. David was quick to learn the arts of modern warfare**,** including rare skills in map reading, and during the war he was promoted to corporal. He was among a small group of select soldiers who were picked by the Canadian military headquarters to enter Sandhurst – a prestigious British Military college, the same academy Winston Churchill went to. He graduated in 1945 as a first lieutenant (Figure 27).

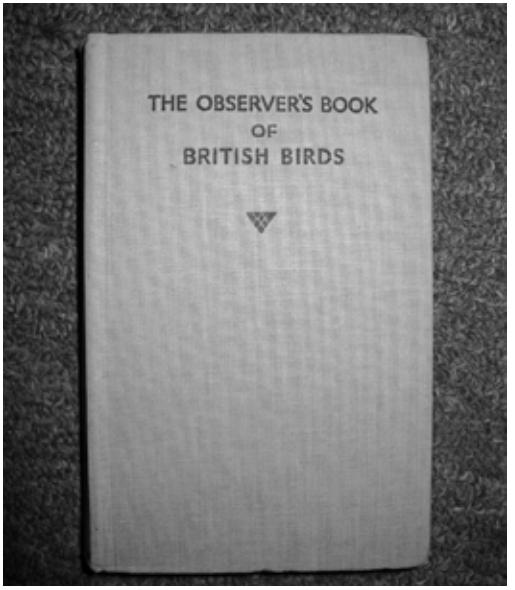


Figure 26. The small "Observer's Book" series for Britain was mostly text with a few black-and-white sketches but were welcome aids in identifying local flora and fauna.

Figure 27. During World War II, David was selected to attend the British Army's official training centre for infantry and cavalry officers at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, in Berkshire, England. He graduated as a first lieutenant in 1945.

At the end of the war, with visions of Hawaii, palm trees, and grass skirts, David volunteered to go to the Pacific region, but instead was put in charge of new conscripts who had just arrived from Canada. He had a month's leave so he decided to return home and while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, somewhere in the Gulf Stream, he watched his first Sperm Whales. The steam train trip to Calgary was pure Canadian Pacific Railway luxury – T-bone steaks, large slices of apple pie with ice cream, shining silverware, and crisp odorless linen.

The old homestead in Athabasca looked pretty shabby but it felt good to see family and old friends again. Towards the end of his leave it was announced that war was over so Dave stayed in Athabasca for the next five years. The vicissitudes of life and the misfortunes of war were thoughts and feelings that were still clear memories all David's life.

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE

David's fascination with nature was kindled during his early years on the homestead. The annual cycle was somewhat predictable. He became familiar with plants and animals in the "bush" on his family's acreage; the cold season lasted about three months, from late November to early March, trees leafed out from late April to early May and changed colours in September and October, and the main Sandhill Crane migration was most visible in April and September (Figure 28).

David heard stories of world travel from his father who had spent time in South Africa and India with the British army. His father was a prodigious reader and either had subscriptions to, or access to, publications like *Family Herald & Weekly Star*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Boys Own Paper*, and *National Geographic*. David read these newspapers and magazines and gleaned information on wildlife and current events.

David's first notable "trip" off the farm was a three-day adventure with his brother and father with a team of horses and wagon to Mill Creek and Bald Hill, about 12 miles away. Travelling at about three miles an hour, over rocky moraine, muskeg, and sand ridges, David had plenty of time to digest the scenery and look for animals. They slept in an abandoned chicken house, caught Northern Pike for breakfast, and climbed Bald Hill. He was impressed with the vast stretches of unbroken boreal forest. An Osprey, not a common bird in the boreal forest in Alberta, soared overhead (Figure 29). For David it was the beginning of a yearning for fresh vistas in other parts of the world.

Figure 29. The historical record of an Osprey in the southern boreal forest of Alberta is noteworthy as the precise status of the species in the province is still unknown today.[38] *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

Figure 28. Often heard before they were seen, migrating flocks of Sandhill Cranes flying over the Stirling family's Athabasca homestead in spring and autumn was a captivating time for David. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Under the Southern Cross

After the war, David returned to Canada where he worked with federal Fisheries at Slave Lake (Alberta), Winnipeg (Manitoba), and Windsor (Ontario). He married Ruth Carter in 1951. His vivid memories of travelling around Great Britain during the war stimulated a pressing feeling of wanderlust.

In April 1956, he and Ruth set out on a two-and-a-half year around the world odyssey.

They spent two years camping, working, travelling by motorcycle, birding, and enjoying the simple life in New Zealand and Australia.

In New Zealand, they had work and happy times on the *Golden Virgia Tobacco Farm*; floated the Wanganui River in a rubber dinghy; circumnavigated both islands, and participated in a "Captain Cooker" (New Zealand for razorback hog) hunt (Figure 30).

In Australia, they left Julia Creek, a small town in north-central Queensland, and headed west. A few days out, Ruth smelled burning oil and noticed a trail of blue smoke from the exhaust pipe. A check of the oil showed only an inch in the tank. This was a crisis. And the couple were down to their last crust of bread and some macaroni! No vehicles had been noticed on the dirt track all day but after a long search they found a sheep station. After explaining their predicament to the sheep man, Aussie hospitality was offered and gratefully accepted. David and Ruth were given steaks "as big as Hudson Bay blankets," slept in the shearing shed where you couldn't tell sheep turds from wild grapes, had magazines to read, were treated to a shower, and given oil for their motorcycle. It turned out that dirt had plugged the oil return. Only

Figure 30. The "razorback hog" is a domestic pig that was intentionally released or accidentally escaped into the wild. A feral population exists throughout New Zealand and may be hunted throughout the year. Here, David (right), is with the hunters and all looking forward to roast pork for dinner.

the scant basics of living could be taken when David and Ruth were travelling by motorcycle. There were times, however, when trivial but clever things are remembered (Figure 31).

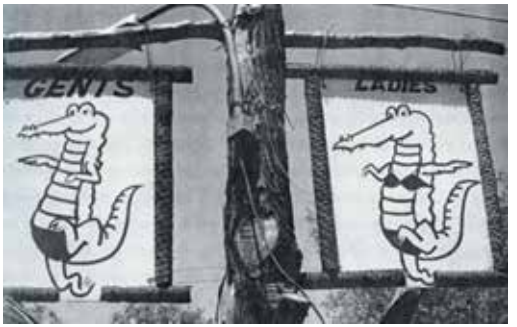


Figure 31. Even before the successful film *Crocodile Dundee* was released in 1986, the Aussies were promoting their Saltwater Crocodile in pubs, on clothing, and even on gender segregated washrooms. *Photo by David Stirling.*

At Cairnes (Australia), bankrupt again, they had to look for work. David considered sugar cane harvesting, a dirty job and slave labour. He was told a ship load of Sicilian cane cutters had just arrived but there might be a job for sugar lumpers later in the season. That sounded good and David envisioned a job of mindlessly moulding little lumps of sugar and counting cubes when they dropped off the conveyor belt. "What's a sugar lumper", David asked. He was told, "Carrying and stacking 100-pound sacks of sugar to the loading dock. What the bloody hell did you think it was, mate?"

In Darwin, tropical Australia, they bought a fine roast for their Christmas meal. Unfortunately, Aided by the heat and humidity, maggots were gorging themselves on the meat. So no Christmas celebration, but instead David and Ruth retired to their humpy (a small temporary shelter; Figure 32) to peruse *Manson's Tropical Diseases: A Manual of the Diseases of Warm Climates* [31] that was borrowed from the library in Darwin on a stormy day.

Figure 32. Only scant basics of living could be taken when David and Ruth were travelling by motorcycle. In this photo they are celebrating Christmas in 1956.

Travelling to remote locations in foreign countries for long periods can pose a significant health risk, especially from Hepatitis A and Japanese encephalitis. The former can be contracted through contaminated food or water, the latter through mosquito bites. David and Ruth, however, avoided most threats but a visit to the library and perusing the coloured plates in *Manson's Tropical Diseases: A Manual of the Diseases of Warm Climates* [31] was gross and unnerving. Ruth ended up with a mango rash (eruptions of tropical ulcers) from sand fly bites and Dave had a bout of tropical ears, a fungus infection, probably caused from bathing in an old swimming hole. David asked a local about the symptoms of Dengue. He said, "You will know mate – it feels like your 'ahsole has dropped out."

It was a top experience to enjoy the waterbird extravaganza that arrived with the monsoon, a season of prevailing wind and rain. Another great experience!

On April 8, 1958, after two years with Kiwis and Aussies, it was time to head back to Canada as both sets of their parents were getting older. The return trip would take 44 days – 42 days at sea with only a couple of shore days. It was wonderful! The voyage included Indonesia, Malaysia, the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Bay of Biscay to Southampton, England. After a quick tour of western Europe and the United Kingdom. David and Ruth departed England July 10 for the final leg of their adventure. Seabirds, except for the ubiquitous Northern Fulmar (Figure 33), were scarce. An added excitement to the crossing was their first iceberg off Labrador. They arrived in Montreal on July 18 and four days later got off the bus in Victoria. Around the world in 817 days!

It had been a great adventure.

David kept copious notes on their movements and happenings. Over five decades later, his popular paperback, *Birds, Beasts and a Bike under the Southern Cross* was published in Victoria (Figure 34).[50]

Figure 33. During the trans-Atlantic crossing in July, seabirds, like the ubiquitous Fulmar, were scarce as most adults were active at nearshore breeding colonies rearing young. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

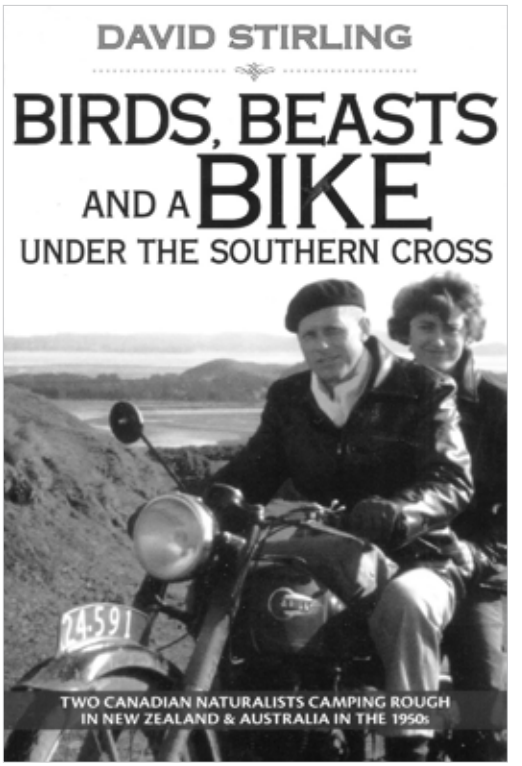


Figure 34. David's book *Birds, Beasts and a Bike under the Southern Cross* (Agio Publishing House, 2008) was dedicated to Ruth who died in 2002. It was edited by local friends Alan MacLeod and Barbara Begg.

Advance comments by Alan MacLeod, published in the book, portray the book's contents:

A rip-snorting tale from those who prefer the extraordinary over the mundane. David Stirling's lively account of a two-year-long motorcycle odyssey among the wonders of Australia and New Zealand is sure to quicken the blood and impel you to pursue your own dreams.

The book is a good read. Each page is jam-packed with stories of personal adventures and unexpected challenges. It was David's personal project to photograph people, places, and wildlife. Some subjects, however, like the wary Emu, were nearly impossible to approach (Figure 35). He recalled an old Aboriginal ploy he had heard that was used to get birds to come within range for hunting. The bird, a curious species, could not resist a pair of moving upside down feet. In Queensland a small flock of Emus was spotted in the distance so Dave lying on his back, pedaled furiously, as the birds came closer. Near exhaustion Ruth finally said, "We have the pictures, you can get up."

Figure 35. The flightless Emu, endemic to Australia, is the second largest bird by height after the Ostrich of Africa. It can reach up to 1.9 m (6.2 ft) in height.

British Columbia Trips

David saw much of British Columbia through his employment with the BC Parks Branch, travelling from the alpine in Manning Park and the arid area in the southern Okanagan Valley to marshes in the Cariboo and seabird colonies on the coast. He kept track of wildlife spectacles in the province and as time permitted visited many each year. With a friend, or on his own, he delighted in viewing the marshaling of Bald Eagles at Harrison, Brackendale, and Duke Point. He seldom missed the huge spring gathering of birds with the spawning Pacific Herring on the shores of southeastern Vancouver Island. He enjoyed pink fawn lilies blooming at Cowichan Lake as much as Grizzly Bears feeding on salmon in the rivers at Bute Inlet. A "must" for him was spring bird song in the Okanagan Valley, especially hearing the first singing Western Meadowlark of the year (Figure 36).

Figure 36. David never tired of hearing the loud, gurgling warbles of the Western Meadowlark. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Richter Pass, BC, May 31, 1998.*

Local trips out of Victoria, especially when there were concentrations of birds, were regular outings year-round. These might include autumn staging of Turkey Vultures in East Sooke Park, aggregations of gulls at Esquimalt Lagoon during spring and autumn migration, wintering Trumpeter Swans and other waterfowl on the flooded agricultural fields on the Saanich Peninsula, especially at Martindale Flats. Of course, when a vagrant bird showed up, David was eager to see it. In 1979, he completed a British Columbia "Big Year" recording 325 species of birds, a record at the time.

Even at his home, about two miles northeast of downtown Victoria, David enjoyed feeding and watching birds from his outdoor patio. His acute observation skills noted migration of warblers, arrival of irruptive Red Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks, and annual activities of resident species. He also noted two incidents that were significant for British Columbia and North America, both of which were published. Two new prey items for Cooper's Hawk, a Barred Owl and Norway Rat, were recorded[51] and predation of eggs in a Red-breasted Nuthatch nest by a Northwestern Crow was photographed.[52] (Figure 37)

Figure 37. Northwestern Crow extracting a Red-breasted Nuthatch egg from a nest located in a stub at the end of a dead limb. *Photo by David Stirling, Victoria, BC, May 1, 2012.* BC Photo 3935b.

Natural History Tour Leader and Ship Cruises

By this time David had considerable world travel experience in Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and south Asia, so when Treasure Tours in Montreal asked him to help organize and lead a pioneer tour to wildlife sanctuaries in India he jumped at the chance. The invitation was attractive because it meant the possibility of future world travel to different countries. During the 35 years between 1966 and 2001, David led, co-led, or was the naturalist on 66 tours for various companies visiting all continents but the ice-covered landmass of Antarctica which he later visited the on his own (Figure 38).

Figure 38. The shy and solitary Saddle-billed Stork is the tallest stork in the world at nearly five feet tall. David added it to his life list in Kenya in 1986. *Photo by Ronald D. Jakimchuk*.

During his years as a public servant David had to take annual leave and compensatory time off in order to participate in tours and also had to pick times that did not interfere with the busy summer months of nature interpretation in BC. He was more interested in adventure and adding to life experiences than being compensated for his time (Figure 39). He willingly helped with local field trips when wildlife conventions were held in Victoria (e.g., Pacific Seabird Group), supported local fund-raising trips (e.g., Habitat Acquisition Trust Fund), helped friends establish tour businesses (e.g., Swiftsure Tours), and rafted rivers in the Yukon and Kamloops area as the trip naturalist.

Figure 39. Witnessing the Red-billed Quelea, probably the most numerous wild bird in the world was a life experience. It migrates in huge flocks in southern Africa feeding on seeds of natural grasses. It is also a serious pest of cereal crops and is locally referred to as "Africa's feathered locust." *Photo by Gary S. Davidson*.

As he aged, David continued his travels using cruise ships as a more leisurely approach to see coastal and riverine vistas and accompanying wildlife. In September, 2017, at 96 years old, David's doctor advised against a planned cruise to Baja California/ Mexico to see whales. He went anyway. The hoped for Blue Whale didn't show up but he had terrific close-up views of the massive Whale Shark.

David frequently shared his world experiences with fellow naturalists and travelers through lectures and publications[49] and many participants later accompanied him on other trips. Tour companies loved him – he was a natural with the right mix of qualities and experiences to assure success.

FIELD NOTES – JOGGING THE MEMORY

David's advice for note-taking is simple but profound –"Keep field notes that suit your needs" and "don't leave important things to memory as they will be lost." He also encouraged friends to publish significant notes because the future of a person's life is unpredictable (Figure 40). David seldom took field notes on a regular basis. He mostly recorded events, places, birds, plants – anything that struck his fancy. Later, these notes could be used for talks, writing an article, or simply to bring back memories.

2013 A few bird notes from Salsbury Way and other close points
(I thinks these species are in the proper taxonomic order)
David stirling

Turkey Vulture: May 20, A group of seven over Mt Tolmie.

Northern Harrier: August 14, two over Mabers Flats.

Sharp-shined Hawk: September 7 one passed through Salsbury Way.

Great Horned Owl: May 14, One at Salsbury Way 3.00 pm to 8:45 pm, mobbed by crows.

Willow Flycatcher: August 31, One at Mabers Flats.

Warbling Vireo: May 15 One singing at SalsburyWay

Cedar Waxwing: May 17, a roving flock of 50 feeding with crossbills at Salsbury Way.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Two at Salsbury Way
There was a paucity of transient passerines both in spring and in fall in the oaks at Salsbury Way.

White-throated Sparrow: October 16, one at feeders,Salsbury Way did not stay.

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Twelve at feedersSalsbury Way (twice as many as last year)came to stay).

Dark-eyed Junco: stayed to breed again.this year. June 18, a family of 2 adults and3 young at Salsbury Way.

Red CrossbiE: the event of the year was the arrival of huge numbers of Red Crossbills attracted by a severe infestation of oak defoliators in mid to late May. Some dates and numbers: May 17 a count of 80 as they moved from one group of oaks to another. May 20 a count of 50. May 31, a count of 40.

House Sparrow: None. Every year I have from 2 to a dozen or more until winter of 2013

David Stirling, December 6, 2013

Figure 40. David regularly submitted monthly and annual reports of noteworthy birds he saw while birdwatching to the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies since its establishment in 2004. In 2013, his notes included an early autumn arrival date for Northern Harrier (August 14) for southern Vancouver Island and Cedar Waxwing (May 17) for Victoria and an absence of the previously resident House Sparrow at his home.

For British Columbia naturalists, there are extremes in how field notes are recorded. At one end are the meticulous and detailed notes of the late Glenn Ryder and J.E. Victor Goodwill who recorded everything they saw with precise locations, weather, numbers, and behaviour.[8] Their combined field notes cover 114 years and include nearly two million records. At the other extreme are notebooks that include simple lists of noteworthy species, sometimes with numbers. All written notes, however, are valuable.

While David mainly kept field notes on noteworthy species and regularly submitted records to *Audubon Field Notes*, *The Birds of BC* project, local annual bird reports, and the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, his main interest was publishing his observations so they reached a wider audience. Nearly half of his 221 titles were published in local and provincial periodicals such as the *Victoria Naturalist* and *BC Naturalist*. Some of these articles were significant and included the first (and only) record for the province of Ross's Gull[46] (Figure 41). Other writings included nature appreciation observations, summaries of field trips, updates on the status of Sky Lark on southern Vancouver Island, and philosophical thoughts on nature. He also published papers in peer-reviewed journals like *Murrelet* and *Canadian Field-Naturalist* on wildlife that were of national or provincial significance.

Because of his experience and knowledge of BC birds, David was invited to co-author several books including *A Naturist's Guide to the Victoria Region*, *An Introduction to Birds of British Columbia*, *Pacific Wilderness*, and *Where to Find Birds in Canada*.

Figure 41. The only record of Ross's Gull for British Columbia is from Clover Point, B.C. David Stirling published the observation and photo of that bird that appeared on the cover of the local periodical *Victoria Naturalist*.[46] *Photo by Ralph Fryer, Clover Point, BC, November 9, 1966*. BC Photo 136.[11]






WORLD TRAVEL. David's impetus to travel to all seven continents was to acquire knowledge of different habitats and the plants and animals that inhabit them. Clockwise from upper left: Scottish highlands, a hunting Spiny-tailed Iguana (Costa Rica), basking American Crocodiles (Costa Rica), the national bird of Kenya, Lilac-breasted Roller (Africa), the monogamous Yellow-billed Hornbill (Africa), and a patterned Gemsbok (Africa). *Photos by R. Wayne Campbell* (highlands and reptiles), *Ronald D. Jakimchuk* (roller and Gemsbok), and *Gary S. Davidson* (hornbill).

DAVID'S LIFEWORK – Clockwise from upper left: worked as a park naturalist with the BC government for 23 years; in the early years gave morning walks and evening talks at Miracle Beach Park; during naturalist training sessions shared photographic skills with seasonal staff such as Ken Kennedy (left) and Tom Stevens; during annual checkups of naturalists at Wickaninnish Park, planned visits to coincide with offshore birding trips; trips to Cleland Island and resultant publication in 1968[10] contributed to the establishment of BCs first ecological reserve; and favourite BC bird is the versatile and intelligent Common Raven. *Photos by R. Wayne Campbell.*

A LIFEWORK IN NATURE INTERPRETATION (1960-1983)

Job Seeking

David and Ruth moved to Victoria in 1958 and he was eager to find a permanent job that related to his interest in nature, travel, and adventure. The BC Provincial Museum was one government department that was deeply involved in field work and keeping track of the province's flora and fauna. His reverence for animal life led him away from the Birds and Mammal Division where collecting vertebrates was a priority. David had no interest in trapping or shooting animals so he arranged to meet with Dr. Adam Szcawinski, curator of Botany (Figure 42).

Figure 42. In the late 1950s, the BC Provincial Museum was the government department actively involved with regular hands-on field work with non-hunted flora and fauna including travel to remote locations including documenting the distribution of the province's plants like this coastal tiger lily. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Mitlenatch Island, BC. June 16, 1967.*

It was fortuitous that Adam steered David towards Yorke Edwards who had just started developing a nature interpretation program in the province. That chance meeting later defined David's lifework.

Yorke Edwards joined the BC Forest Service as a research officer in 1951 after completing his Master of Arts degree at the University of BC. In those days parks and forests were under the management of the BC Forest Service but that would change in 1957 when a wide-ranging distinction was recognized and the management of parks was transferred to the Department of Recreation and Conservation. Yorke was transferred to the new department but before leaving the Forest Service he had introduced the idea of establishing a nature interpretation program in government. In the Parks Branch he was able to continue his advocacy. The program was a ground-breaking trial for government but it was still in its infancy. The program started with a basic tent frame nature house at Manning Park staffed by two naturalists and a one-person show at Miracle Beach, a small seaside park north of Courtenay on Vancouver Island.

Yorke met David and was impressed with David's enthusiasm, knowledge, and craving for natural history and was given work as a seasonal naturalist at Miracle Beach (Figure 43). David was innovative and started the first nature walks and the following year was rehired and built an amphitheatre from salvaged beach logs for evening talks. Every step was a challenge because government bureaucrats in Victoria did not fully understand the interest and importance of nature interpretation. Maintaining the program each year was a hard sell.

For two winters during the off seasons, David worked as a technician with the federal Forest Biology and Pathology Division in Victoria, eagerly awaiting his next season in interpretation.

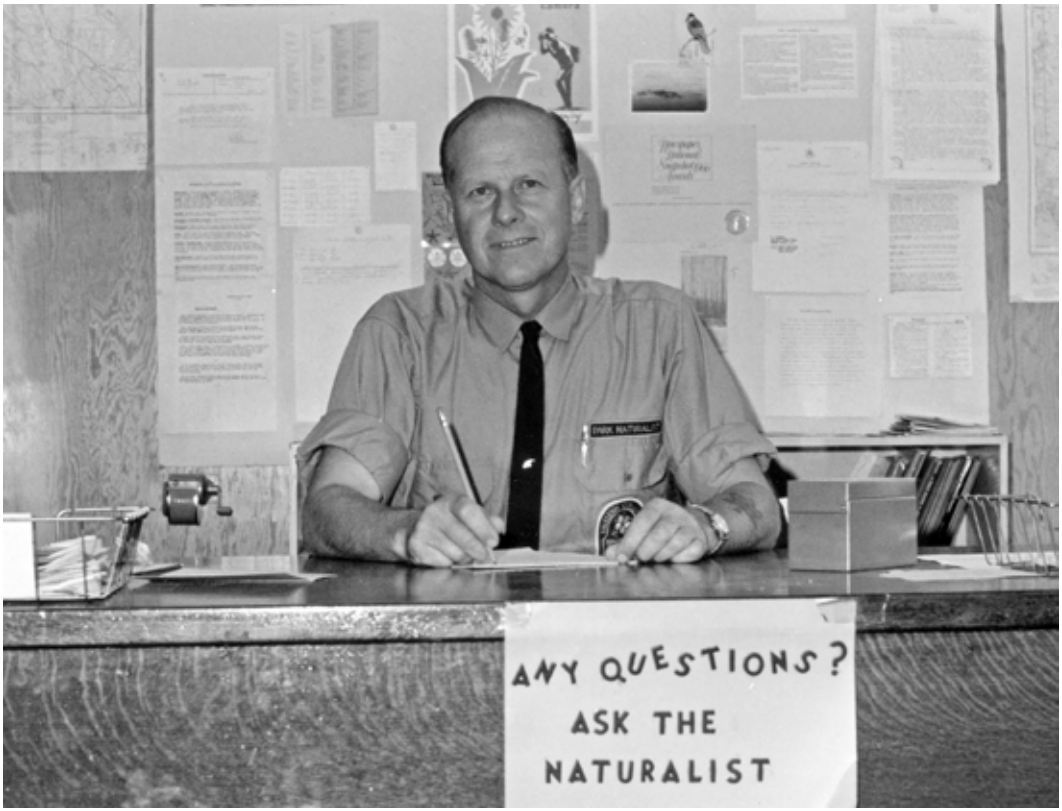


Figure 43. David was hired as a seasonal naturalist with BC Parks Branch at Miracle Beach Park for two summers. In 1960, he was promoted to a permanent position to help establish and operate the nature interpretation program in the province.

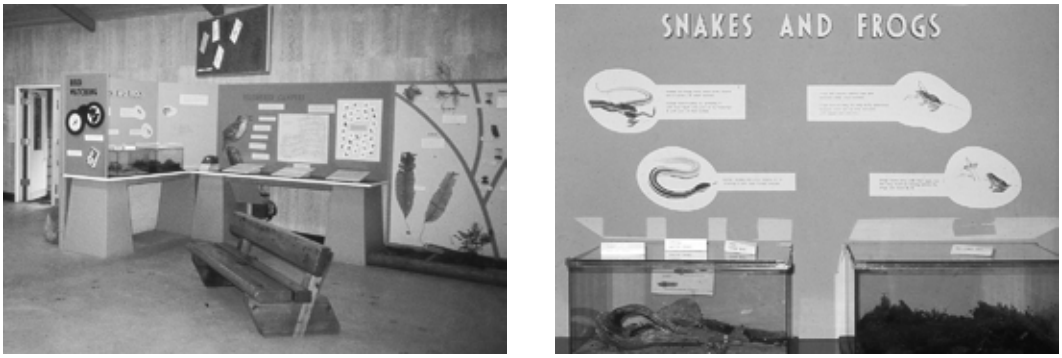


Figure 44. Part of the early success of the nature interpretation program in BC Parks was due to the simple and effective displays in nature houses developed by Ted Underhill. Displays were a mixture of artwork (left) and living plants and animals (right). The latter was regularly replaced with fresh subjects.

A Lifework

A Skeleton Staff

In 1960 the nature interpretation programs in the Parks Branch were gaining popularity with the public and there was a rapid growth in park visits and camping; the budget was increased and David was promoted to permanent staff. Yorke headed the section, David was the field man and natural history specialist, and Ted Underhill was the display specialist producing nature trail signs, bulletin boards, and setting up displays (Figures 44 and 45). Much of the nuts and bolts of the program in the early 1960s had to be done by these three individuals.

During the early 1960s the BC interpretation program was becoming a model across Canada. In 1967 the Canadian Wildlife Service enticed Yorke to eastern Canada to establish a similar program nationally starting at Wye Marsh in Ontario. About the same time, various organizations, schools, and municipalities around BC were now keen to establish their own interpretation centres and David helped set up nature programs at Swan Lake (Saanich), Piper's Lagoon (Nanaimo), and Scout Island (Williams Lake; Figure 46). David was also involved in setting up programs for school children during salmon spawning time in Goldstream and Kokanee parks.

Figure 45. Ian Kennedy, a park naturalist with park visitors, at an aquarium in the Miracle Beach nature house. Building display tanks for animals was always a challenge for Ted Underhill and even more so for the naturalist who regularly had to replace the critters. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Miracle Beach Park, BC, summer 1969.*

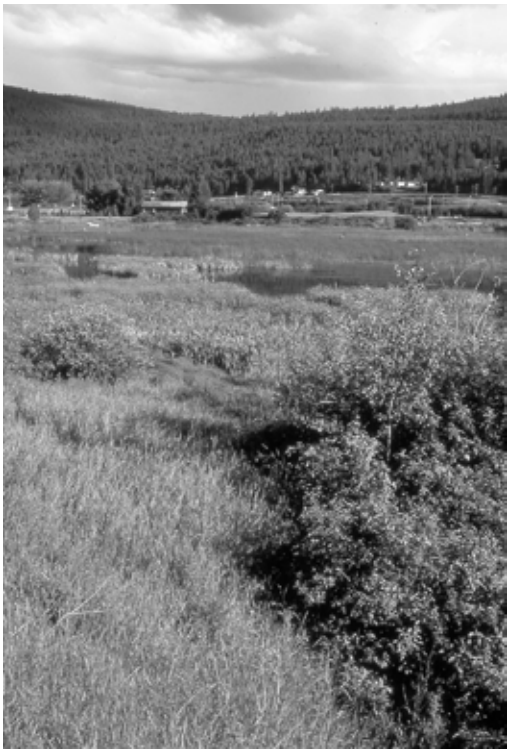


Figure 46. The early protection of Scout Island on Williams Lake as a marsh habitat for wildlife was encouraged by Robert D. Harris (Canadian Wildlife Service), Harold B. Mitchell (BC Fish and Wildlife Branch), and local naturalists. Later David provided valuable advice from his Parks Branch experiences to develop a nature house (top left) and program for the site. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, July 3, 2002.*

A Supervisory Role

As public interest and support spread, permanent nature houses were established at Miracle Beach Park, Manning Park, Shuswap Lake Park (Scotch Creek), Mount Robson Park, and Kokanee Creek Park. In addition, naturalists gave public walks and talks five days a week at Wickaninnish Park, Rathtrevor Beach Park, Mitlenatch Island Nature Park, Cultus Lake Park, and Crooked River Park. As well, a naturalist in a camper van serviced three popular parks in the Okanagan Valley. David's job had now evolved from a grass-roots position into a more supervisory role.

He interviewed and hired 50 seasonal naturalists, gave week-long training courses, and visited and evaluated various programs around the province. He also hired the first female naturalists, Betty Westerborg (later Brooks) and Norma Haas (later Morton). What remained for the rest of the summer season was spent assisting naturalists with various issues and requests. It was always a hectic few months and finding private time was a challenge for David (Figure 47).

Figure 47. On time off during naturalist training courses, David tried to find a private spot on the beach between drift logs to sun bathe au naturel. He should have realized that naturalists in training scour the foreshore for critters! *Sketch by Mark Hobson, Miracle Beach, BC.*

Beyond Interpretation

Inspite of increasing administrative demands and budget constraints, Yorke and David were able to include protection for colonially-nesting birds in their programs (Figure 48). Disturbance to the seabirds breeding on Mitlenatch Island, especially Pelagic Cormorants, was greatly reduced by the presence and education programs of resident naturalists. In addition, observation blinds (Figure 49) were placed in strategic locations to satisfy curious park visitors and photographers. In the early years, direct communication with staff at Miracle Beach Park was not available and increased the stress level for David, especially during storms when local residents departing for Mitlenatch Island were reported overdue on boating trips. Usually they were safe and being fed and sheltered on the island by the park naturalists. In addition, there were matters concerning public insurance, setting up standard Parks Branch information kiosks, signage, outhouses, nature trails, visitor log books for safety reasons, and hoeing firebreaks in sensitive areas where visitors regularly walked.

As use of provincial parks increased so did developments to meet the demand. This meant more campsites, toilets, information boards, walking trails, signage, and access to firewood. David was the government contact and on-site representative to appraise potential impacts to park flora and fauna.

Figure 48. A report on seabirds nesting on Mitlenatch Island in 1963[58] and the increasing interest in tourists visiting the island prompted BC Parks Branch to develop a budget to have wardens stationed on the island during the critical nesting period. In addition, signs were erected to identify the island as a provincial park. From left to right: Bill Merilees, Yorke Edwards, Allister Muir and David Stirling. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, June 18, 1964.*

Figure 49. A bird blind, built mainly from driftwood, allowed park visitors and photographers to observe nesting seabirds on Mitlenatch Island with minimal disturbance. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, August 1965.*

White Pelican Park, a Class A park with an area of 2,763 ha, was established on April 1, 1971 mainly to protect the only breeding colony of American White Pelicans in the province on Stum Lake (Figure 50). The birds are very sensitive to natural and human disturbances and in 1974 the Parks Branch, with David's support and advice, took an audacious step to hire a resident warden to assure disturbances were monitored and minimized. The task was daunting. Stum Lake was in a remote location with access on an unmaintained dirt road only during long spells of dry weather (Figure 51). Communication was intermittent in case of an emergency, warden safety required a camper van (especially from curious bears), getting regular supplies was iffy, a canoe was needed for monitoring, and finding someone experienced and resourceful to live isolated for four months was a challenge.

David hired British Columbia's superlative naturalist – Glenn Ryder. Glenn was the most experienced naturalist in the province and shared a similar reverence for all life with David. He spent four consecutive years, 1971 to 1974, at Stum Lake monitoring disturbances to the pelicans and recording wildlife.[8]

Figure 50. In addition to daily responsibilities in nature interpretation, David promoted the presence of a seasonal warden at Stum Lake from 1971 to 1974, to protect nesting American White Pelicans. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Stum Lake, BC, May 25, 1993.*

Figure 51. Access to Stum Lake was a forest path with deep ruts that filled with water during frequent summer Chilcotin downpours, making progress very slow. Some park visitors turned back, others tried to fill puddles with timber, while others had to sleep in their vehicle until passage was possible. *Photo by Glenn R. Ryder, June 1974.*

White Pelican Provincial Park was established on April 8, 1971 and by the late 1970s, the responsibility for management of waterfowl, waterbirds, and nesting pelicans was given to the BC Wildlife Branch. Annual summer warden activities ceased in 1974 but Parks Branch continued to support and fund graduate student research on the pelicans.[22,29,30]

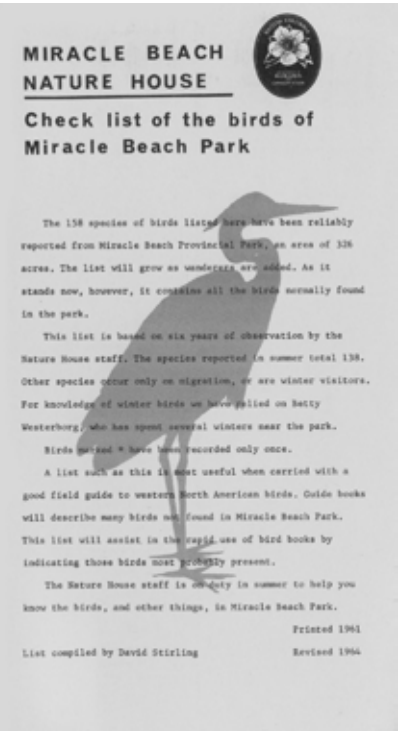
Value-added Information

In the 1960s and early 1970s, at a time when they should have been focused on hunting and fishing, BC Wildlife Branch staff was individually concerned with a wide variety of environmental issues that lay outside their mandate such as land reserves, pesticides, land alienation, and non-harvested species. The BC Provincial Museum and BC Parks Branch were fortunate to be able to put some of their attention on general natural history. The museum had a meagre budget and therefore targeted specific collecting areas, even though there were hundreds of parks, all of which eventually needed plant and animal inventories. When Yorke Edwards joined the BC Forest Service in 1957 he was aware of the merit of summarizing flora and fauna records in unpublished government reports and the intrinsic value of field notes.[23,24] He carried that experience into Parks Branch when he was transferred in 1957 and passed along that knowledge when David was hired full time in 1960.

David could immediately see the value of investing time to record and consolidate incidental records of plants and animals into single reference documents. These included trip reports[39,45] and annotated checklists of birds.[43,47] Some of these unpublished reports were later published in journals to make them available to a wider audience.[48]

The unpublished manuscripts were useful references for developing nature interpretation programs and later many were primary sources of written works for major publications such as *The Birds of British* Columbia[12,13,14,15] A few of the listed records were extensions of breeding ranges (Figure 52).[47] During his 23 years as a civil servant, David's written works and publications list had at least 132 entries including five books (Figure 53; see *Written Works and Publications*, page 60).

Figure 52. The unpublished reports David compiled during visits to BC parks and filed in Victoria were invaluable sources for *The Birds of BC* project. Some records, like this nesting Red-necked Grebe at Mount Robson Park, were eastern breeding range extensions for BC. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.



MIRACLE BEACH
NATURE HOUSE

Check list of the birds of
Miracle Beach Park

The 158 species of birds listed here have been reliably reported from Miracle Beach Provincial Park, an area of 326 acres. The list will grow as wanderers are added. As it stands now, however, it contains all the birds normally found in the park.

This list is based on six years of observation by the Nature House staff. The species reported in summer total 138. Other species occur only on migration, or are winter visitors. For knowledge of winter birds we have relied on Betty Westerborg, who has spent several winters near the park.

Birds marked * have been recorded only once.

A list such as this is most useful when carried with a good field guide to western North American birds. Guide books will describe many birds not found in Miracle Beach Park. This list will assist in the rapid use of bird books by indicating those birds most probably present.

The Nature House staff is on duty in summer to help you know the birds, and other things, in Miracle Beach Park.

Printed 1961

List compiled by David Stirling Revised 1964

Figure 53. As an aid to summer naturalists and park visitors, David regularly updated and published bird checklists for various provincial parks.

The six months between April and September each year was a busy time for David. There was a lot of preparation, administrative accountability, and time required to manage the nature programs. Still, he succeeded in persuading seasonal naturalists to submit reports of their activities before they departed in autumn. These included summaries of flora and fauna observations, recommendations for new nature programs, ways to improve existing programs, and identifying problems that may have been encountered. The reports ranged from a single page to hundreds of pages; all had to be examined and filed, and some of the more comprehensive submissions were copied and sent to authors writing provincial and regional books on birds. For example, the Wickaninnish Park reports[4,5,7] formed the foundation for two major publications on birds along the west coast of Vancouver Island (Figure 54).[20,27] The seabird colony information summarized in the Wickaninnish Park reports was also included in the updated seabird colonies catalogue.[35]

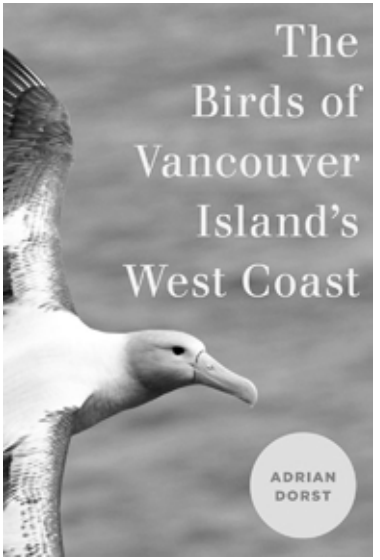


Figure 54. David's persistence and gentle badgering of seasonal naturalists to submit reports each year helped keep Parks Branch publications current and also contributed substantially to many regional and provincial publications by others, as in Adrian Dorst's recent book.

Dissolution of the Interpretation Program

The BC nature interpretation and visitor information program became too successful. Soon regional managers wanted more control. Instead of operating on the rules of logic and public demand, they wanted to be in charge of the programs. The bureaucracy required reports on regional plans and goals, park themes, and budget allocations and in 1984 after two decades of successful nature interpretation activities they became part of the district manager's responsibilities. The next step was privatization and the total demise of a very successful public service.

It was during the "golden years" of nature interpretation in BC that David most impacted the lives and future careers of many young naturalists (Figure 55). Most have retained a deep interest in natural history and many have used their experiences in a multitude of professions; teachers, research scientists, environmentalists, curators, biological technicians, wildlife artists, professors, lawyers, and doctors. As they matured, seasonal naturalists began to fully appreciate and respect David's knowledge, environmental philosophy, and absolute support. They also know those years will never return.

Figure 55. Following a successful lifework as a provincial public servant, David (foreground) continued to share his knowledge and appreciation for wild animals and spaces on world tours as a leader and participant. *Photo by Barbara Begg, Uganda, 1987.*

AFFILIATIONS, ADVOCACY AND AWARDS

Although family, friends, nature, and leading an adventurous life were always David's priority, his driving force was his belief that "Nothing Replaces Nature." David hungered for a broader knowledge and understanding of the natural world, and his friends had with similar mindsets. He stayed inspired, provided mentorship, and documented his experiences and philosophy in a wide variety of sources. He accomplished this through three avenues.

Memberships

David held memberships or was affiliated with 11 organizations because he believed in their causes. Many of the groups participated in co-operative provincial projects, some protected local flora and fauna, a few had periodicals that provided an avenue to publish his observations, other groups promoted birdwatching, while one society's mandate was to preserve field notes of naturalists and biologists. One membership was mostly for enjoyment and curiosity.

David was nominated for membership in the American Ornithologists' Union but after two years he decided that their philosophy was not akin to his. He has long-term memberships in the American Birding Association, Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies (Figure 56), Birdlife International, BC Field Ornithologists, Cloud Appreciation Society, East African Wildlife Society, Nature BC (formerly BC Federation of Naturalists), Nature Canada (formerly Canadian Nature Federation), Nature Saskatchewan (formerly Saskatchewan Natural History Society), Ornithological Society of the Middle East, Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association, and Victoria Natural History Society (Figure 57).

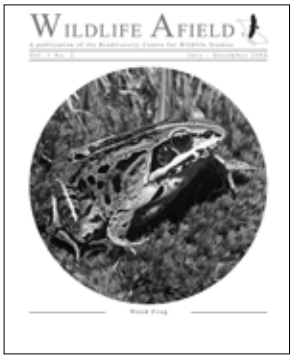


Figure 56. Since its inception in 2004, David has been a member of the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, partly because its journal, *Wildlife Afield*, is the only provincial publication to include all wildlife species.

Memberships supported the objectives and aims of each organization that related to the understanding, protection and conservation of wildlife. For some, like the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, David was a regular donor which helped secure and archive field notes and publish a bi-annual journal – *Wildlife Afield* on historical and current topics.

Figure 57. One of David's favourite birding excursions is to watch the raptor migration, especially kettling of Turkey Vultures, at Beechey Head in autumn. In the early years, David led bird watching trips to the area for the Victoria Natural History Society. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, East Sooke Regional Park, BC, September, 1991.*

Volunteering

Volunteering has been a constant and essential part of David's life. He believed strongly that by working together, the conservation and knowledge of birds, his primary passion, would advance. His organized volunteering also included protection of wildlife and habitats, reducing effects of humans on nesting birds, and other conservation initiatives.

David played an instrumental role in three major international endeavours representing British Columbia.

He was one of three local naturalists who created the official Victoria Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and served as its organizer and compiler for a decade. He also participated in CBCs in North Okanagan, Pender Island, Comox, Salt Spring Island, and Trinidad.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey, a co-operative volunteer project that monitors status and trends, started in 1966 with the United States Biological Survey and was taken over in Canada by the Canadian Wildlife Service. Over 3,000 routes throughout the continent are surveyed annually.[37] The provincial or state task as co-ordinator requires organizing routes, recruiting participants, compiling and submitting results and on occasion filling in for surveyors who get ill. In the late 1960s and early 1970s David represented the province (Figure 58). David was satisfied with his efforts but was disillusioned when the responsibility for Canada was transferred to the Canadian Wildlife Service.

David also served as the Vancouver Island compiler, and contributor, for *Audubon Field Notes*, a bimonthly magazine devoted to the results of bird watching in North America. It was rewarding but time consuming to solicit, compile, and submit noteworthy observations to meet publication deadlines.

When *The Birds of British Columbia* project was formally announced in the early 1970s[12,13,14,15] David was keen to participate. The four-volume project lasted two decades and David's support and encouragement never diminished. He was frequently asked for advice on a species' status, documentation for rare species, personal knowledge on recommendations for conservation, and general natural history. David was highlighted as one of 27 major contributors in the first volume (Figure 59).[12]

Figure 58. For over a decade, David was the Victoria co-ordinator for the North American Christmas Bird Count, a 24-hour survey on a single day in winter. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Sea Island, BC.*

Ornithological History

Figure 68. David Stirling, an experienced field-observer, continues to be active in the conservation and protection of birds. He also encouraged and assisted many young birders, including two of the authors of this book, in the techniques of field-observation.

From the late 1950s to the late 1970s he served long terms as a subregional coordinator for *Audubon Field Notes/American Birds*, including annual Christmas Bird Counts, and provincial coordinator for the continental breeding bird survey. In addition, he held executive positions with the American Birding Association, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists, the Pacific Northwest Bird and Mammal Society, and the Victoria Natural History Society.

He has published about 80 scientific and popular articles on birds in British Columbia, presently leads international nature and bird-watching tours, and remains active in preservation of habitat and bird protection through the International Council for Bird Preservation and other conservation organizations.

Figure 59. For two decades David patiently supported *The Birds of BC* project providing valuable information and advice to the authors. *Reproduced from Campbell et al. 1990.*[12]

Requiring less time, but still adding to his annual personal commitment to volunteering, was David's participation in the BC Beached Bird Survey, BC Breeding Bird Atlas, BC Butterfly Count (Figure 60), BC Coastal Waterbird Survey, BC Nest Record Scheme (Figure 61), North American Great Backyard Bird Count, and National Audubon Society specific habitat surveys for birds.[44] He was also involved in other projects including counting and identifying waterfowl around the perimeter of the Queen Charlotte Islands (now Haida Gwaii) from a fixed-wing aircraft for Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Figure 60. If David felt that a co-operative project was useful, he participated as a volunteer including counting butterflies. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

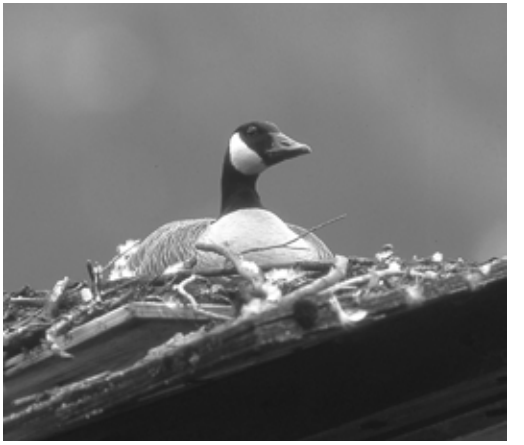


Figure 61. When travelling around the province David regularly recorded obvious nests such as a Canada Goose nesting on an Osprey platform, and submitted cards to the BC Nest Record Scheme. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Activism

David had a reverence for all wildlife – plants and animals. He quickly learned while working with the Parks Branch that most decisions affecting the future of wildlife were made by elected officials with recommendations made by senior staff. He felt strongly about expressing his views and concerns but was not keen on participating in group protests, writing campaigns, and media blitzes. Instead, he quietly but effectively went about getting things done his own way. Some of these methods included making light of a situation, writing "Letters to the Editor" in local newspapers, attending decision-making meetings, and working with policy makers to change rules to decrease disturbance to wildlife.

David joined the Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association, a local organization established in 1957 to maintain the natural qualities of the 1,619-acre Thetis Lake Park, to improve facilities for recreation and education, to prevent loss of park land and to add critical areas to the Park.[60] In the 1970s, there was growing concern about park visitors picking wild flowers in parks and other areas in Greater Victoria. Sometimes humour is the best approach to get a message across. The late Sid Barron, an editorial cartoonist and artist with the Victoria Times, picked up on the naturalist's concern in a delightful apolitical manner (Figures 62 and 63).

A growing number of people in the 1970s, including David, respected the innate nature of wild animals and abhorred their exploitation and confinement for economic and entertainment reasons. The humour of cartoonist Jennifer, reproduced in the *Victoria Times*, really hits home (Figure 64).

Figure 62. "…I'm sorry, Roger…but my rapture over your expression of love is somewhat tempered by my positive loathing of anyone who would pick a wild flower…" *Drawing by Sid Baron*, *Victoria Times.*

Figure 63. "…Imagine…picking wild flowers at his age…lucky we happened along and spotted him…" *Drawing by Sid Baron*, *Victoria Times.*

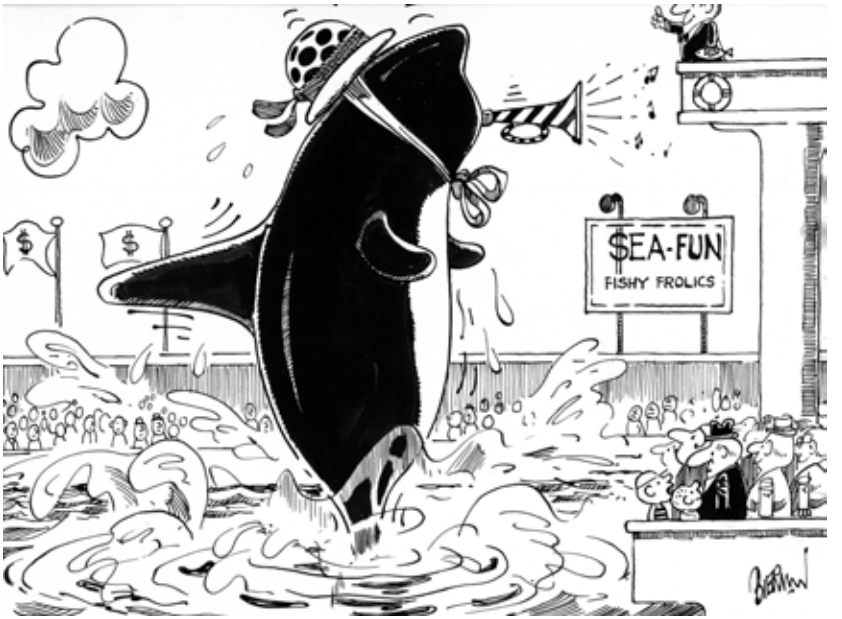


Figure 64. "…Daddy…what's a killer whale really look like?…" *Drawing by Jennifer Berman*, *Victoria Times.*

David often looked for solutions to environmental issues rather than direct confrontation. When a rift was widening between the BC Provincial Museum and birdwatchers in the early 1970s regarding the shooting of rare birds, David, with Wayne Campbell, provided a logical solution. They established the province's first manifesto to obtain and archive photo-records of vertebrates to document rare occurrences.[11] Nearly 50 years later the program is still operating. Within government David also contributed to policies that protected unique breeding populations of colonial-nesting birds. On the recommendations of seasonal naturalists stationed at Wickaninnish Park[4] and Stum Lake,[36] David encouraged new policies of restrictions for fixed-winged airplanes and helicopters flying over these parks (minimum of 1,000 feet) to lessen disturbance to nesting seabirds and American White Pelicans (Figure 65).

Figure 65. Without media attention, provincial public servants in different departments worked diligently behind the scenes to develop a policy to restrict aircraft over-flights on British Columbia's only nesting colony of American White Pelicans. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Stum Lake, BC, May 25, 1993.*

Recognition

Being recognized by your peers in a lifework or in a personal commitment to a cause such as the protection and conservation of birds is always unexpected but fulfilling. David received an *Award of Merit* from Interpretation Canada, an *Award for Ornithology* from the BC Field Ornithologists (Figure 66), a *Distinguished Service Award* and an *Honorary Life Membership Award* from the Victoria Natural History Society. He also was the recipient of the *Queen's Golden Jubilee Canada Visit Medal* for his contributions to knowledge of our birds.

Figure 66. The British Columbia Field Ornithologists issues an annual award for ornithology and in 2007 David Stirling was the second recipient.[59] From left to right are BCFO members: Wayne Weber, Martin McNicholl, David Stirling, and Mike McGrenere. *Photo by Bryan R. Gates, Victoria, BC, November 26, 2007.*

The Saanich Peninsula, on southern Vancouver Island, was the only location on the North American continent where the introduced Eurasian Skylark could regularly be found. Over the years hundreds of birdwatchers from around the world visited the area to see and add the species to their North American and British Columbia life lists. Early monitoring of the species was organized by David[53,55] and Barbara Begg was the local contact person for visiting birders. In recognition of their commitment to learn more about the species and help people enjoy seeing the bird, the updated *Birds of North America* account was dedicated to these committed individuals (Figure 67).[17]

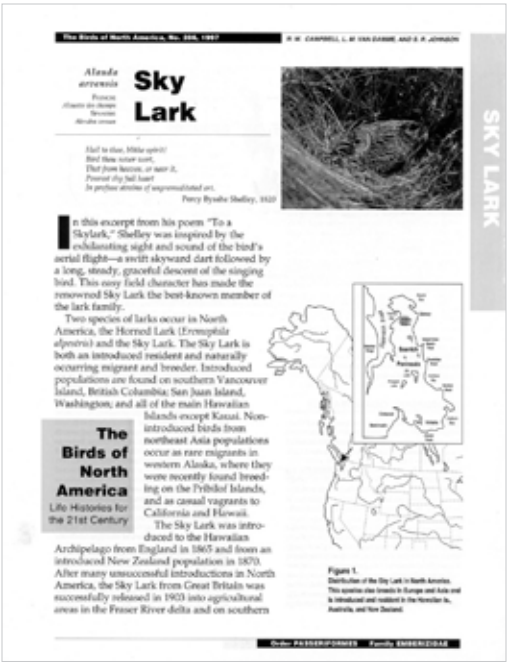


Figure 67. This updated account of the Sky Lark in North America was dedicated to David Stirling and Barbara Begg, members of the Victoria Natural History Society, who monitored the introduced species on southern Vancouver Island since the late 1950s and introduced many visiting birders to a life bird.[17]

REMINISCENCES FROM FRIENDS

Association with David enhanced and influenced the lives of people who knew him whether helping with a career path, working closely as a colleague, or simply learning to appreciate the natural world. The following 10 people, all long-time friends, recall different memories. They are grateful David has been part of their lives.

Nancy Baron (née Buck)

(Science Outreach Director, Communications Partnership for Science and the Sea. Santa Barbara, CA)

David Stirling launched my career as a naturalist, even though I barely knew the meaning of the word at the time. I was a first year student in biology at the University of Victoria. I had signed up for the new Environmental Studies program led by Mark Bell, because I heard they did field trips and as a girl from the Okanagan I was eager to explore the coast and to learn what I could.

Bruce Fredericks was the teaching assistant for the environmental studies course (Figure 68). *He was an exuberant teacher – and a terrific naturalist. Although I knew next to nothing about the specifics of the natural world, he saw my extreme enthusiasm for experiencing the outdoors. One day, Bruce recommended that I might want to apply for a summer job as a park naturalist program run by BC Parks. "Send your $5.00 in to the Federation of BC Naturalists so you can say you are a member and then send an application in to David Stirling who runs the program," he advised. When to my astonishment I received a letter inviting me to an actual interview, signed by David Stirling, I ran to find Fredericks in the lab in the Biology building waving the form. Fredericks told me to come back later that day to the lab and he would give me a primer on what I would need to know for the interview.*

Figure 68. Instructor Bruce Fredericks (left) and student Nancy Baron (née Buck) participating in a field project on animal camouflage for a third-year environmental studies course at the University of Victoria. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Yellow Point, BC, August 1975.*

When I returned, there were objects laid out on a table: small collections of shells, invertebrates, rocks, cones and needles, and stuffed bird skins. One by one he told me what they were: This is an oyster shell, this is a moon snail, this is a butter clam, this is little neck clam, this is a periwinkle… then moving to the rocks – this is shale, a sedimentary rock, this is quartz an igneous rock. On it went through trees, flowers, and mammals. When he came to the bird collections he said, "It's important you know these birds as they are what Stirling loves best. And his favorite bird is the Varied Thrush, which he wants to see named the bird of British Columbia (Figure 69)*."*

At the interview, a sparkly blue-eyed man, wearing a parks uniform met me at the door and shook my hand. I'm David Stirling he said with a grin and clearing his throat a couple of times, which I came to learn was a Stirling mannerism. And this is my assistant Pat Swift. He ushered me into a room and to my amazement the layout on the tables looked remarkably like what I had seen in Bruce Frederick's class room: small collections of shells, invertebrates, cones, needles and leaves and pictures of birds and mammals.

I knew however my knowledge was limited, and said so.

"Well, let's see how much you do know…..," said Stirling. No surprise, I was able to work my way reasonably well through the collections, thanks to Bruce's preparation, but at one point I said, "That's a Douglas-fir pine cone." "Fir pine? Fir pine?" interjected Pat Swift.

Panicked, I blurted out, "And that's my favorite bird: the Varied Thrush."

Figure 69. David frequently got involved in issues concerning birds in British Columbia. When suggestions for the official bird of BC were requested he submitted Varied Thrush, a species of the shaded coniferous forests of the province. To his disappointment Steller's Jay was selected. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson.*

"That's my favorite bird too," said David Stirling beaming.

Ashamed at my disingenuousness, I leaned in and said, "Look, I really don't know much natural history, but if you give me a chance I promise I will learn and you will not regret giving me a chance."

Which he did. About a month later I received confirmation of a summer job as a Park Naturalist at Miracle Beach.

This was the beginning of a life-long friendship with the man who was my first natural history mentor and my boss for over the four summers I worked at Miracle Beach, Mount Robson, Rathtrevor, Englishman River, and Goldstream provincial parks. David knows a lot about many things from natural history, to current events and history. You can spin the bottle and land on just about any topic and he will have something interesting to say about it.

In the years to follow we would often get together to go on birdwatching trips as birding friends. There were trips to Mexico, southern Alberta where we went in search of Burrowing Owls, and our most recent trip where we met in Edmonton at the airport as I had just flown in from my home inCalifornia and we drove up to David's family'shomestead in Athabasca in northern Alberta for a few days of birding.

David has always loved spectacles and skies. In his late 90s, he is still traveling, now mostly on cruises which he enjoys because from the deck of the cruise ship, there is great sky watching. And he is keeping up to date on his bird lists.

Barbara Begg

(Naturalist; friend for 30 years)

It has been my pleasure to know David Stirling for 30 years, having met him through the Victoria Natural History Society (Figure 70). *We have always shared a common interest in things natural, particularly birds. Of the first four organized group birding trips I took part in, David was a leader – an owling trip in BC co-led by Rick Howie; Point Pelee, Ontario, and southeast Arizona with Marilyn Lambert and David. It soon became apparent that David had a vast knowledge of not just birds, but all aspects of the nature, even astronomy. He maintains life lists of birds, flowers, trees, and mammals but never tires of seeing the same ones again. Questions about cloud formations, weather patterns, dates when birds return from migration and when flowers bloom? Just ask David. Interested in a debate on international or Canadian politics, religions, human history, or geography? He is your man. He has the remarkable ability to remember the career paths of acquaintances from years past, facts from books he has read and even snatches of poetry. And how many people would subscribe to a motorcycle newsletter and be a member of a cloud appreciation society?*

Figure 70. Participating in birding trips led by David turned into a long-time friendship that is fulfilling and memory-filled. Barbara's many excursions with David led to adventure and seeing parts of the world that she otherwise would never have been visited. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Victoria, BC.*

David is a gifted story teller and a good portion of his narrations stem from his many travels throughout the world. Antarctica in 1996, when it was more affordable, proved his ability as a sailor – the notorious Drake Passage was crossed twice and still he had the stomach for a hearty breakfast. Apparently some passengers failed to show up. This expedition was in a 38-passenger vessel, not a

large, stable cruise ship. Other tales of adventure, (and mis-adventure), include taking a hard hit in the eye by a large locust (Figure 71) *in Senegal and hit by a bicycle in Madagascar; struggling up and back down a steep, muddy trail in Rwanda to see Mountain Gorillas, (age 86! – David, not the gorillas); and a wild off-road drive by a tour leader through the scrub in Namibia. Other great stories include encountering blowing volcanic ash in Iceland; viewing a Whale Shark at close range in Mexico; watching three species of penguins in the Falkland Islands; coping with sea ice problems in both the eastern and western Arctic; and helping with a human rescue at sea in Indonesia.*

Figure 71. Under certain conditions locusts in Africa become gregarious and swarm, sometimes in immense numbers, that become plagues devouring vegetation in their path. Getting hit in the eye with a migrating locust that is nearly four centimetres long and weighs over a gram can be dire. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

David led many worldwide nature tours (Figure 72) *which increased the risk of encountering problems. There was civil unrest in India and political strife in Suriname. In western Mexico, because of the danger stemming from narcotics activity, well-armed local police took it upon themselves to accompany the tour group for the full time they were there. One could fill a book, or two, with our travel tales.*

Figure 72. David's companion on many world trips was fellow birder Barbara Begg. In this photo they are relishing the plants and animals in the Bangpra non-hunting area in Chonburi Province on the west coast of Thailand. *Photo by Kampol Sukhumalind, March 21, 2016.*

As time relentlessly marched on, less strenuous travel was undertaken in the form of cruises. There were ocean voyages that David and I shared to Alaska, South America, Hawaii, the Black Sea, South and East Asia, and Mexico. In addition we enjoyed ocean cruises in eastern and western Caribbean and cruises on the Volga and Don Rivers in Russia and another on the Rhone River in France. He is still up for traveling to see new, or old, places and birds, though now mainly on sea and river cruises with land excursions from the ship. He is also quite happy to sit in a chair in his back yard to observe bird behaviour, watch clouds, and listen to the rustle of leaves in the wind.

David embodies a mix of generosity and being frugal like so many people of older generations, and prefers to repair things or "make do" rather than discarding and buying new. On the other hand, at age 97, he has put aside his battery-powered weed-eater and bought a new, gas-powered one so he could work longer. He is obviously fiercely independent yet, was early to embrace the modern world of electronics by investing in a computer, cellphone, and GPS unit.

May all David's activities continue in good health.

Betty Brooks

(Naturalist; friend for 57 years)

I first met Dave in 1961 at the Miracle Beach Park nature house which was then a tent. Since I had long been a naturalist, Dave recommended me to his supervisor, Yorke Edwards, for work. In the spring of 1962 I was hired and spent the next four seasons as a park naturalist (Figure 73) *which enabled me to pursue my university studies in biology. These were the golden years of nature interpretation in British Columbia Parks and it is sad to see the decline of this popular service. This summer (2018), the nature house at Miracle Beach is only open weekends.*

Figure 73. While a naturalist at Miracle Beach Park, Betty occasionally visited Mitlenatch Island to see the nesting seabirds and deliver mail to the naturalists. From left: Betty Brooks, Bill Merilees and an unknown visitor. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, July, 1964.*

Dave and his late wife Ruth became good friends and I often accompanied them on hikes and bird outings. Whenever I walk in Miracle Beach Park and pass by the large western hemlock tree with ladder rungs I think of Dave and Yorke Edwards who used to climb up to view the forest canopy birds and other life.

Wayne Campbell

(Retired Royal BC Museum curator and BC Ministry of Environment research scientist; friend for 54 years)

In early winter 1963 I was encouraged by the late Dr. Rudi Drent to apply for a seasonal position as a naturalist with BC Parks Branch. The following spring I was offered employment in the nature houses at either Manning Park or Miracle Beach. I chose the latter because it was on the coast and would allow me to spend time off surveying seabird colonies for Rudi to update his 1961 publication A Catalogue of BC Seabird Colonies (Figure 74).[21]

Figure 74. Wayne (left) and David enjoying a lunch break in Strathcona Park, the oldest park in BC, located in central Vancouver Island. Note, David is airing his bare foot (something he learned in Australia) and his binoculars are close and ready for quick use. *Self-photo, August, 1965.*

Timing is everything. Shortly before I was to report to the Interpretation Section with BC Parks Branch at Miracle Beach, Yorke Edwards and David Stirling decided that seabirds nesting on nearby Mitlenatch Island needed "in situ" protection from an increasing number of curious boaters visiting the island. Dave sifted through the summer's applicants and noticed a letter of support for Wayne from Rudi citing co-operative seabird colony surveys with him and Wayne's personal banding program for Glaucous-winged Gulls (Figure 75)*. Since I would be "stuck" on the island for four months with another naturalist I had to meet with Yorke at UBC who was teaching a weekly course on wildlife management. A few days*

later I received a letter from David confirming that I would be stationed on Mitlenatch with Bill Merilees whom I knew from the Vancouver Natural History Society. That summer started personal growth and focused seabird experiences and turned out to solidify decades of friendship with David.

Figure 75. In the early 1960s, Wayne Campbell initiated a program to band young Glaucous-winged Gulls at colonies in the Strait of Georgia. This experience helped in his appointment on Mitlenatch Island where thousands of gulls were later banded. The information contributed to a paper on mortality and distribution for the species published in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*.[3] Note band on leg. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Mitlenatch Island, BC, July, 1967.*

During my three summers on Mitlenatch Island and two more at Wickaninnish Park, Dave readily shared his birding experiences and subtly provided mentoring by example which carried throughout the entire five years and later helped develop my career path in ornithology. I vividly recall three pieces of early advice he shared:

1. Before identifying a bird consider ALL field marks, immediate habitat, and behaviour (i.e., "jizz"). These comments arose when I included Ruddy Turnstone in a list of winter birds I reported for Mitlenatch Island in 1965. The bird, of course, was a Black Turnstone with orange-brown legs; [Figure 76]

Figure 76. Some Black Turnstones in winter plumage, especially juveniles, can show orange-brown legs. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Esquimalt Lagoon, BC, 20 January 2007.*

2. Keep field notes that suit your needs and publish frequently because future life is unpredictable and noteworthy information will be lost. Dave's early publications in Murrelet and Canadian Field-Naturalist in 1960[40,41] *were a catalyst to follow his model; and*

3. Remember, easy reading is hard writing. Scientific writing has rules and is quite matter-of-fact but a popular article for a general readership is a challenge. After three summers on Mitlenatch Island I decided to let others know about this jewel. I spent a good part of 1967 preparing the article with the intention of submitting it to Canadian Audubon. It was titled, "Wildlife of Mitlenatch Island Nature Park." I sent it to David and Yorke for comment and they were brutal, but honest. They suggested an alternate title "Life on a Pacific Island" and ended penciling my incorrect spelling of "occassionally." I let the manuscript sit for a couple of weeks and during that time I reflected on their sincere efforts to mentor and support my intentions. A couple more drafts and the manuscript and photos were mailed to Canadian Audubon.[6]

During the Parks Branch years David and I collaborated on several controversial and conservation initiatives. In the 1960s, museum collecting of rare birds was still in vogue and the scientific value of such specimens was being questioned by a growing number of people. Shooting

to simply document a bird's occurrence was being hotly debated and by the late 1960s a growing division between professionals and amateurs was developing. Since David was the "go to" person for information on birds we decided to establish a permanent photo file to document vagrant and rare occurrences of wildlife. Over time we hoped that attitudes would shift. Although the paper initially met with resistance, it was published in Syesis, the peer-reviewed journal of the BC Provincial Museum (Figure 77).[11] *Forty-seven years later the catalogue of accessions contains nearly 4,800 documentary images during which museum collecting became passé.*

Figure 77. Crisp, identifiable photographs of rare birds, adjudicated, catalogued and archived in a central repository, are sufficient to document a species' occurrence. The photograph of this Terek Sandpiper was the first Canadian record.[26] *Photo by Tim Zurowski, Goodridge Peninsula, Sooke, BC, July 21, 1987.* BC Photo 1159.[11]

After David discovered the first Canadian breeding record for Brandt's Cormorant off Long Beach in 1965,[54] *he and I monitored the site in 1967 and 1968 and updated the species' status* (Figure 78).[9] *In 1967, Cleland Island, a low 7.7 ha island about 14 km west northwest of Tofino, was also surveyed and it was discovered to have nine of the 16 species of seabirds breeding in BC (56%) with significant numbers of Leach's Storm-Petrels, Black Oystercatchers, and Rhinoceros Auklets. From an economic standpoint the island had no timber or oil and gas resources so there was a distinct possibility that it could be protected as a sanctuary. We prepared an article on our findings and Dr. Clifford Carl, director of the Provincial Museum, agreed to publish it in the museum's annual report.*[10] *Three years later, in 1971, Cleland Island was established as British Columbia's first ecological reserve.*

Figure 78. Finding a new breeding species in British Columbia (and Canada), like Brandt's Cormorant, is an once-in-a-lifetime event. Like an informed naturalist, David published his finding and later as time permitted helped monitor the colony. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Sea Lion Rocks, BC, July 27, 1969.*

In January, 1973, I moved to the Provincial Museum in Victoria, the demands of the new job, which included The Birds of BC endeavour, interfered with our co-operative activities and regular communications. We rarely met but David was regularly contacted over the next two decades for advice and information for the four bird Volumes and each time he encouraged me to continue, knowing the effort and support which was required to finish the project. I was very grateful to have a knowledgeable and dependable friend.

When I retired in 2000 I called David to rekindle our friendship and from then on we met regularly at McDonald's for coffee. On our first visit we relived a failed, but memorable, trip to Westport, WA, to look for pelagic birds. The late Dr. Ken Boyce, Ken Kennedy, and I met David at the Tsawwassen ferry terminal with his plastic bag full of suet, meat scraps, and other morsels that we would use to chum in seabirds. During the sailing David had some explaining to do to passengers as the bag emanated its own aroma. At

the border we declared our stinky bag and fortunately the agent was a keen bird watcher and understood our intensions. The 5-hour drive actually took nearly seven hours because Wayne and Ken, in their early twenties, wanted to stop to eat every couple of hours and again in Westport. Dr. Boyce and David couldn't believe how much food was being consumed! I can't remember where we slept (probably in the car to save money!). We had breakfast, of which the smell of David's standard fried bacon and eggs was not the best way to start a trip to sea. It was windy and we were advised to return in a couple of hours for calmer waters. We walked to nearby sand dunes (after a snack) and were surprised to see so many hybrid Western x Glaucous-winged gulls. We immediately began to question the validity of pure Western Gulls breeding in BC (Figure 79).[33] *On the way back David's bag of goodies was fed to the harbour gulls. We returned* to *the Lower Mainland, after two more food stops, with lifetime memories and friendships. Later, Dr. Boyce gave me 19 field notebooks of his birding activities from 1963 to 1980.*

Figure 79. Due to the numbers of hybrid Western x Glaucous-winged gulls reported in British Columbia, the breeding status of the former species has yet to be determined in the province. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

David appeared in my life at the right time. He provided guidance through the "confidence of youth" years, suggested directions towards a career, supported and encouraged my ambitions, and remained a faithful friend through it all. And I was only one in a long list of people he influenced.

Yorke Edwards

(Deceased; former Head, Interpretation Section, BC Parks Branch, past Director, BC Provincial Museum)

In summer 1967, while David was in the field, Yorke (Figure 80) accepted a new job in nature interpretation with the Canadian Wildlife Service and moved to Ontario. The following note was on Dave's desk when he returned to the office.

Figure 80. A report on seabirds nesting on Mitlenatch Island in 1963[56] and the increasing interest in tourists visiting the island prompted BC Parks Branch to develop a budget to have wardens stationed on the island during the critical nesting period. In addition, signs were erected to identify the island as a provincial park. From left to right: Bill Merilees, Yorke Edwards, Allister Muir and David Stirling. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, June 18, 1964.*

The old order changeth & I suppose it's a damned good thing it does. The trouble is, people get sentimental and this makes it difficult. It won't be the same without old D.S. at the next desk. Keep pencils sharp & bird lists handy, and I'm sure we will be looking at rare ones together sometime. Thanks for all those years.

In 1971, after a five-year appointment in eastern Canada, Yorke was considering returning to British Columbia. An afternoon spent in an observation blind high in the trees to observe nesting Great Blue Herons in Vancouver (Figure 81) helped convince him to start searching for employment. In 1972 he

became the Assistant Director of the BC Provincial Museum and served as its Director from 1974 to 1984 bringing with him invaluable experience in nature interpretation.

Figure 81. When Yorke Edwards returned to Victoria as Assistant Director of the BC Provincial Museum in 1972, he never lost his interest in nature interpretation. He was fascinated with life in the tree tops after reading Marston Bates' book *The Forest and the Sea*[2] and later following an afternoon watching nesting Great Blue Herons in a hide on the University of BC Endowment Lands. From left to right; Eileen Campbell, Yorke Edwards, and Dr. J.C Coulson, an ornithologist from the United Kingdom. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Point Grey, BC, April 4, 1971.*

Rick Howie

(Retired BC Ministry of Environment biologist; friend for 40 years)

1978 was a most memorable year in my life. It was the year that I started work with the British Columbia Provincial Parks Branch and I met David Stirling. Dave worked in the Interpretation Section along with Ted Underhill and their supervisor, Kerry Joy. All were legends in BC natural history but it was Dave whom I had enjoyed vicarious experiences with and was anxious to meet.

Years before meeting Dave, I had read his lyrical account of bird watching in the Okanagan Valley and the detailed descriptions of the many birds and countryside that he had visited evoked many images and excited my desire to spend time there. Prior to that, I had been living out of province for some years and had never spent much time in this special place. Like all good interpreters, Dave ignited a flame that burns brightly to this day (Figure 82).

Figure 82. David instilled an awareness of natural history in everyone he met and willingly shared that gift. Whenever Rick visited Victoria David always had a place for him to bunk wrapped in old Parks Branch blankets. *Photo by Richard R. Howie, Victoria, BC, March 5, 2004.*

So as a new employee to the BC Parks, you can imagine the anticipation of meeting one of the outstanding personalities that I associated with the outdoors in B.C. Dave worked in Victoria and I was posted in Kamloops, but it was not long before we would meet to plan the summer's interpretation activities. It was in April of 1978 that a number of park staff gathered to strategize and we have been friends ever since. Of course Dave "friends" easily, with an open and easy-going manner and a sense of humour that has remained tack sharp over the decades. His knack for seeing the other side of a story with just a bit of hyperbole and a hearty chuckle to juice up his

response is one of my favorite experiences of him when we are together.

Of the many field trips together there are a few that spring to mind as memorable. One was a trip to Cleland Island with Swiftsure Tours with owner Mike Shepard and co-led by Dave. His encyclopedic knowledge of the local birds and sea life was all you would expect and more, but it was his cheerful enthusiasm and humour that kept the trip alive. You see, we were engulfed by one of those famous west coast storms while camping on the island. The torrential rain, mist and torrents of water under our tents could have spoiled the trip were it not for Dave's and Mike's sunny personalities in the 'midst of adversity. David performed a little dance in his bright yellow rain gear as we left the dock for the island which surely set the tone for the weekend.

On another occasion, I visited a Vancouver Island Marmot colony with Dave and Barbara Begg Figure 83).

Figure 83. David enjoyed everything natural and when friends came to town, like Rick Howie (left), special excursions were made to see rare animals like Vancouver Island Marmots. *Photo by Barbara Begg, Green Mountain, BC, June 12, 1988.*

We had a great time exploring the forests and meadows, watching marmots, tracking birds and peering intently at flowers with a stream of background information provided by Dave. And speaking of streams, the warm day could not be completed without a swim in a cooling torrent which fit well with Dave's approach to not only knowing nature but to enjoy it.

In the mid-1980s, I was doing local surveys for Flammulated Owls (Figure 84) *and was preparing a paper for an international symposium on owl biology to be held in 1987. I had made contact with some owl researchers in Colorado and had arranged to drive there to meet with them. I invited Dave along and he enthusiastically agreed. What a treat – a 10-day camping trip to experience birds, mammals, plants or any other aspect of natural history with a naturalist of Dave's calibre. And what a trip it was. Dave seemed to know every new mammal as we descended the latitudes and crossed the longitudes. There was never a bird whose song he did not know and his general knowledge of the changing geography was exemplary. However, I must remark on driving with Dave. His skill level was fine, but he could not wrap his head around the 5-speed, manual shift in my Toyota Land Cruiser. He would get up to 4th gear no problem. Often, I would be gazing out the window lost in thought as the wonderful landscapes rolled by when I would snap back and realize something was wrong. The diesel engine was roaring at too great a pace and I realized that Dave had once again forgotten to shift it into 5th gear for highway cruising. It was often a moment of strained humour as I would yell, "5th Dave, 5th gear." A grumbled "arrgh" would come from the driver as he popped the long lever over another notch and snugged it up to the top gear. I hate to think of the potential fuel bill if Dave was driving alone.*

When visiting in Victoria, I have often bunked in at one of the Stirling residences over the years. Whether it was a couch or a genuine bed, there was always room and out came the old nature house blankets. BC Parks used to operate a bunkhouse to house the naturalists at Miracle Beach Park. They provided a set of gray-brown wooly blankets that had become somewhat thread-bare over the years. When that system was dismantled, the blankets were

destined for the trash. But being a frugal fellow, Dave rescued them and they were retained for guest use over the years. They were always an excuse for a good laugh when Dave brought out the blankets and he admitted that despite past admonitions, he had not sprung for new blankets for his guests. I wonder how many well-known B.C. naturalists have been warmed by those old treasures over the decades. On each and every visit, I marveled at how Dave could eat 2 fried eggs and bacon for breakfast numerous times a week and not worry about his cholesterol. Perhaps that is the secret – not to worry.

Figure 84. Rick Howie was one of the first people in British Columbia to survey parts of the province for Flammulated Owls. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, upper Goose Lake Road, south of Kamloops, BC, May 27, 1995.*

To say that my appreciation for our world around us has been enhanced by David Stirling would be an understatement of the first order. His willingness to share his extensive knowledge is only a part of spending time with Dave. Whether it be a wry comment on the politics of the day, a good-natured jab at some news-worthy personality or mutual friend or just simple enthusiasm over seeing a Glaucous-winged Gull sitting on a piling at the ferry terminal, a day in the field with Dave followed by a friendly dinner and a glass of scotch was always a memorable day. As the years speed by, these experiences become even more valued.

Ken Kennedy

(High school teacher, worked as a naturalist on Mitlenatch Island, zoo keeper; friend for 53 years)

In early 1965, I was encouraged by Wayne Campbell to apply for a park naturalist job with BC Parks Branch. Competition was intense for the few positions but I was hoping that my years with Wayne participating in various conservation projects in the Lower Mainland would help and that his experience on Mitlenatch Island the year before would be a bonus. I vividly recall how excited I was when I got an acceptance letter from Dave Stirling. That summer Wayne and I reported to the nature house at Miracle Beach Provincial Park.

The naturalists' orientation was handled by Dave who made it clear and informative. While out birdwatching, we appreciated Dave's depth of knowledge and experience. He made the job sound exciting but cautioned that dealing with the public daily can be challenging.

The following year, in 1966, Wayne and I spent the entire summer on Mitlenatch which required a more permanent accommodation, proper latrine, radio communication, and arrangements for food and leading nature walks (Figure 85)*. Once again, David took care of us. We were given nine sheets of plywood for the floor and walls of a cabin and some roofing paper. Two old windows came from recycled Parks Branch stock and two Pan-Abode toilets were added to the list* (Figure 86)*. A froe, to split shakes from cedar driftwood completed the material. Dave arranged to have the converted fish boat* Bonnie Belle *transport the goods. Much later, Wayne and I better appreciated Dave's role and responsibilities as an administrator.*

Figure 85. Ken Kennedy leading a group of park visitors on Mitlenatch Island to learn about a seabird colony. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, July, 1966.*

Figure 86. Ready for use! Ken Kennedy with a newly assembled Pan-Abode toilet. As an administrator, David was constantly juggling figures trying to find financial support with a limited budget for unexpected endeavors like a public privy for Mitlenatch Island. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, June 1966.*

In 1967 Wayne was assigned to Wickaninnish Provincial Park and I shared the summer on Mitlenatch with Bob Foottit. The cabin survived the winter but with increasing interest in Mitlenatch we decided a wharf would alleviate visitors getting wet walking to the "Mitlenatach Hilton" and facilitate unloading supplies. Although somewhat hesitant, Dave agreed to supply some cable and bags of cement. The wharf was to be constructed of wood salvaged from driftwood. It served well until a strong southeasterly picked it up and floated it into the bay where it became a pile of broken driftwood, just as how it started. When told of the calamity, Dave was probably relieved from worrying about accidents and insurance issues.

After leaving Mitlenatch, I longed to return to the island. In 2013, I joined the Mitlenatch Island Stewardship Team, a group of naturalists, and others, who volunteered to protect the nesting seabirds and at the same time offer nature interpretative information to visitors. My responsibilities included setting up and dismantling camp, camp maintenance, and spending a week with first year students from Vancouver Island University on the field portion of their Resource Management Officer Technology course. It was a welcome avenue to give back and maintain the legacy established by David 46 years earlier when he supported and encouraged a young, ambitious, and energetic naturalist.

Marilyn Lambert (née Paul)

(Former BC Provincial Museum employee, Nature Tour Leader; friend for 49 years)

David and I first met in 1969 when we worked for the Provincial Government; David for Parks Branch and me with the Fish and Wildlife Branch. He would often come to use the copy machine and would always say hello and occasionally stop for a chat. During the next 10 years, our paths crossed again when I was working with Wayne Campbell at the Provincial Museum and David would stop by for a visit. Wayne had been a park naturalist with David's program at Parks Branch. Another of David's former park naturalists, Michael Shepard, started a natural history tour company, Swiftsure Tours. In 1981, David and I were both involved in Zodiac tours of South

Moresby Island in the Queen Charlotte Islands, (now Haida Gwaii.) After that, David and I led several tours together through the 1980s including Arizona and various places on Vancouver Island.

In 1996 Jan Garnett and Bruce Whittington presented a vision of a regional land trust to the board of the Victoria Natural History Society. Shortly after the non-profit group Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) *was born. The topic of fundraising came up and I thought that a birding trip to Arizona would be a good avenue. As David had led many birding trips for other companies, I asked if he would be interested in leading a trip for a worthy cause. He volunteered right away. We co-led that trip and five other trips to Mexico* (Figure 87)*, Texas, and other popular birding spots in Canada. It was easy filling the trips as folks that had previously been on trips with David knew he was an excellent birder and tour guide leader. All the profits from these trips were donated to HAT which was very helpful in the early days of that organization.*

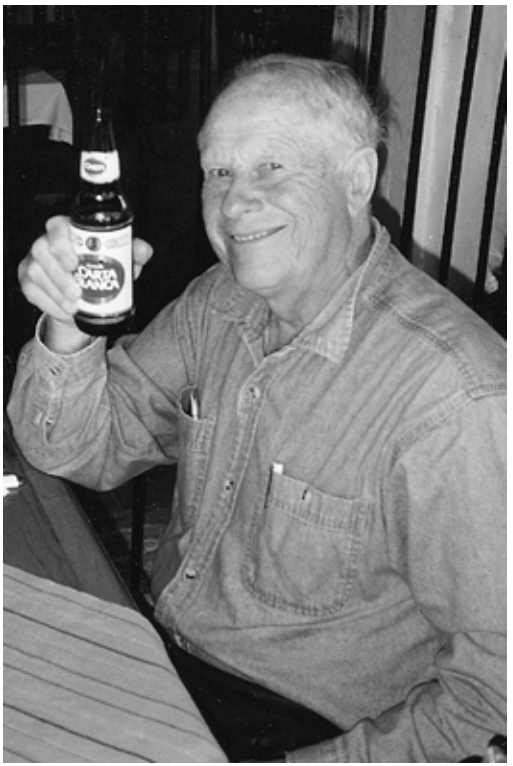


Figure 87. David voluntarily participated in leading natural history trips to raise money for local conservation initiatives. In some places he suggested that beer to drink was safer than water! *Photo by Marilyn Lambert, Copala, western Mexico.*

For several years David and I covered an ocean route for the Victoria Christmas Bird Count. We would motor out to the islands off Oak Bay in my small Zodiac and count birds seen between Trial Island and Ten Mile Point. I have a fond memory of one count where the weather was not really conducive for a small boat to be out. We went anyway. We weren't out long before we found a Red Phalarope, a rare find for the Victoria count. Battling rather high waves, we turned around and headed back to the ramp. David got out of the boat, knelt down and kissed the ground, thankful to be back safely.

Over the years we have had many adventures together, shared a love of barbecued chicken skin, beer, and many of the finer things in life (Figure 88)*. We meet occasionally for lunch and I always looked forward to sharing stories of recent travels with him. I have long been impressed and awed by David's vast knowledge of just about everything. He is charming, smart, funny and a wonderful raconteur. I am proud to be his friend.*

Figure 88. Marilyn and David celebrating his 90th birthday at a brunch with family and friends at the Oak Bay Marina. *Photo by Alan MacLeod, December 2010.*

Alan L. MacLeod

(Retired union negotiator, birder, and writer)

In my early adult years I had a significant but non-obsessive interest in nature and birds, but after moving in my late 20s to Victoria from Nova Scotia in the mid-1970s I soon realized that the southern end of Vancouver Island featured birds I had never seen before – and plenty of them. Quickly enough I was transformed from a dabbler to a hardcore birder. It didn't take long before there was a crossing of paths – perhaps it was in the Martindale Valley – with Dave Stirling. Something else didn't take long: the realization that Dave was someone to reckon with. We became friends.

One thing led to another. In the early 1980s I contracted a bad case of bigdayitis, a dreaded affliction that turns otherwise sensible people into pathetic obsessive compulsives driven by a desperate need to see as many bird species as they can cram into 20 hours of serious birding, perhaps even 24. My very first big day cohort was none other than Dave Stirling. In early May of 1982 we mounted our first collaboration, and found more than 100 species in a good long day of south-Island birding. Dave thought a hundred birds was a pretty respectable outcome. I thought, nah, we can do better than that.

A year later I organized another big day. This time we improved the team by the addition of Bruce Whittington. I took the planning effort to a whole new level and told Peggy Goodwill, operator of the Victoria Rare Bird Alert at the time, that I guaranteed my pals and I would get 120 species. Stirling was appalled at the brazenness of this prediction, and the resulting pressure it put upon us. We got 121!

Dave had one more chance to do a big day with me: the year after – May 5, 1984. It was a three-man team again, this time with Harold Hosford joining the crew. May 5 was a glorious day in every way – fine weather, boon companionship, excellent birding conditions – and by early afternoon, with half a day still ahead of us, we were already at a remarkable 126 species. That is when the train went off the rails. Hosford and Stirling demanded a lunch break. Lunch featured a beer or three. Perhaps it was the beer; whatever, my pals revolted and decided the big day was over. I was horrified but no amount of cajoling or insulting could get the train back on track. What could I do? Well, I fired them both. With a new crew – Bruce again, and Ron Satterfield – we went out just a week later and pushed the total to 135 species. To this day, decades later, I am convinced that had I managed to get "the old guys" to carry on we would have finished the May 5 effort with 140 species or better. Such is life. Somehow I managed to forgive both Dave and Harold and we remained fast friends – though neither of them ever got a second chance to mess up a big day.

In the early 1980s I also discovered Rocky Point, the military establishment at the extreme southern tip of the Island, and somehow managed to get the military people to let me have regular access to this marvelous birding area. Stirling, Hosford, Satterfield, and Whittington all took turns at joining me for glorious birding days in this special area. We savoured the spectacle of the September Turkey Vulture and hawk migration. I have the fondest memories of days such as that one –days of good birding with great friends in beautiful outdoor circumstances (Figure 89).

Our paths continued to cross as the years went by, sometimes intentionally, other times through happy serendipity. From time to time we joined forces in a Christmas Bird Count. Bruce and I happened to spot Stirling on a memorable occasion in Kamloops while we were all out on birding trips. In the year 2000 Jan Brown and I were in High Island, Texas, reveling in a spectacular warbler fallout when I suddenly spotted Stirling. Twice he has visited me at my summer shangri-la in Cape Breton. Happily, the most productive single morning of birding I ever had at my place on Boularderie Island NS happened to be one Dave was with me.

It was not just birds and birding that cemented my friendship with The Great Stirling. We have shared enthusiasm for books, ideas, history, travel, and – above all – politics. Over the years we have got together on innumerable occasions – over calamari at Eugene's on Broad Street or chowder and beer at Swan's pub – to share notes on what each of us has been up to, exchange book recommendations, swap birding stories, and travel adventures.

In terms of our love of the natural world Dave and I have much in common. We often like the

Figure 89. From left to right: Ron Sattefield, Alan MacLeod, Bruce Whittington, David Stirling, and Harold Hosford enjoying a dram of single-malt Scotch during a raptor-watching trip. *Photo by Alan MacLeod, Rocky Point, BC, circa 1983.*

same books, have similar opinions as to what are the most beautiful places in British Columbia. We substantially agree on which places in North America make the best birding destinations. But one thing we definitely do not see eye to eye on is politics. Which I say is not a bad thing: how can a friendship that features nothing to fight about possibly be perfect? I see politics through a left-leaning filter, Dave through one that tilts somewhat to the right. One of us liked Stephen Harper and George W. Bush, the other preferred Ed Broadbent and Barack Obama. Even now, three and a half decades after he was prime minister, the mere mention of the name Pierre Trudeau can turn Stirling purple with apoplexy.

There have doubtless been times that people at nearby tables in Swan's or the Four Mile pub judged from the commotion erupting at our table that a fistfight was about to break out. But of course that never happened. Those who know me are well aware that I love the old fellow, and I like to imagine that Dave has a smidgeon of affection for me too. My life has been well enriched not just for the birding lore I have harvested from Dave, and the marvelous accounts of his boyhood in the wild Athabasca country, and the stories of his days as a Canadian soldier of the Second World War, and the book recommendations and travel accounts – but for something else: all those marvelous rows we've had at Swan's, the Four-Mile, my Cape Breton porch and all the myriad places in between.

Jeremy B. Tatum

(Retired Professor, Physics and Astronomy, University of Victoria)

It is hard to believe that it is more than half a century when I first arrived in Victoria from the United Kingdom, wondering if there was any interest in birdwatching or other aspects of natural history here. It didn't take me very long to discover that there most certainly was, and I found myself taken in hand and encouraged by the legendary giants of

Victoria birdwatching of the early 1960s – "Davy" Davidson, Ralph Fryer, Enid Lemon, Allen Poynter, Ron Satterfield, and of course David Stirling (Figure 90)*. In those days Peterson was the standard field guide used by most observers. Good binoculars were very expensive, and cameras used something called "film". And of course the Internet was decades into the future. Yet these early birders built a firm foundation on which the younger generation has built.*

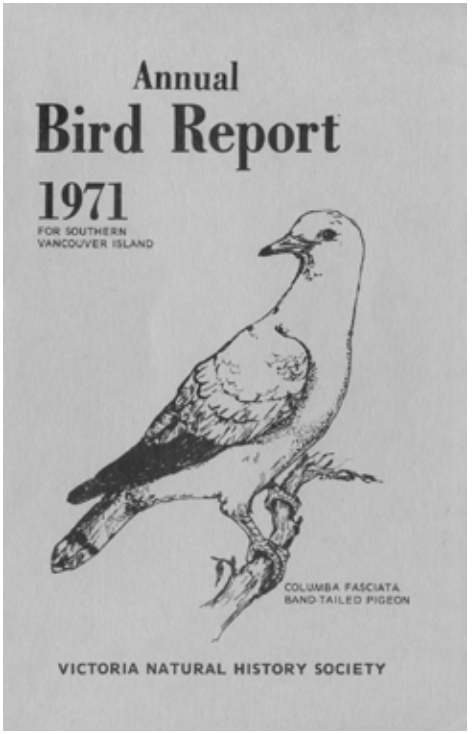


Figure 90. Jeremy is past president of the Victoria Natural History Society and served as editor of the annual bird reports for southern Vancouver Island. David participated in the ABRs, helped proof the manuscripts, and served on the records committee to adjudicate rare bird sightings.

Ornithological records had long been the purview of professional collectors, whose mantra had been that "no bird record can be officially accepted unless substantiated by a specimen" – that is unless someone went out and shot it. David was prominent among that early group who were resolved to reverse this. He was a founding member of the Ornithological Records Committee for southern Vancouver Island. This was a group which compiled, critically reviewed and published the evidence for the occurrence of rare birds in the area in a manner that was so utterly overwhelming that it would have been manifestly unscientific to reject the records. David was also a member of the short-lived but effective "Pan-American Society for the Protection of Birds" – a grandiose title for a very small group (fewer than 20 as I remember, with members from Canada and the United States and I think one member from Costa Rica to justify the title).

I remember a few things that David said during these early days, just a few words that he may have regarded as passing casual remarks, but which I think expressed much of his personal philosophy and which certainly influenced me. I remember feeling vaguely guilty that I did not read all the professional ornithological research papers and did not even find them particularly interesting. I found it reassuring to hear David remarking that it is possible to appreciate birds without necessarily fully understanding them (Figure 91)*. It was a simple enough remark, but*

Figure 91. While David kept lists of birds he had seen during his local and world travels, it was the bird itself, despite the number of times it had been seen like this Great Blue Heron, which captured his appreciation and wonder. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Esquimalt Lagoon, BC, October 14, 2004.*

so very true on many levels. I also remember his remarking that "once a bird is dead, it is no longer a bird." Again, this was a deceptively simple remark, which I am sure David does not remember making, but hugely significant. Or again, while questioning the "scientific" necessity of shooting a rare bird, he remarked that surely the scientific thing would be to ask: "What is the bird going to do next?"

Victoria has many highly-skilled birdwatchers that pursue their passion with single-minded devotion. David is certainly among them, birdwatching is not for him a single-minded devotion, for he has an immense knowledge of the whole of the natural world. Many in society regard animals and plants as a "resource", and "conservation" means conserving them for our use. David regards the natural world as important whether we "use" it or not. I remember David remarking that to him the Kelp Greenling is just as important as salmon. Indeed, salmon could scarcely be regarded as wild animals; they are, to him, he once remarked, as much farmed animals as are cattle.

WRITTEN WORKS AND PUBLICATIONS (1959-2017)

Some of the pursuits people follow during their life contribute to their legacy. Written works can have a major impact that can serve as an example of personal commitment and diligence. Easy reading is hard writing and time invested to share experiences and thoughts in print can be challenging, but rewarding. David set an example early by leaving an impressive trail documenting his experiences and exploits as a naturalist. These include a wide variety of publications, from unpublished government reports and trip summaries to peer-reviewed articles and books. It was always his intent to make information available and share his discoveries and thoughts about nature.

David penned at least 220 articles over 59 years that include the following titles.

Campbell, R.W. and D. Stirling. 1968. Notes on the vertebrate fauna associated with a Brandt's Cormorant colony in British Columbia. Murrelet 49(1):7-9. [Figure 92]

Figure 92. After discovering the first Canadian breeding colony of Brandt's Cormorants in 1965, off Long Beach,[54] Dave and Wayne Campbell monitored Sea Lion Rocks for other nesting birds and marine mammals including Steller Sea Lions. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Campbell, R.W. and D. Stirling. 1968a. Notes on the natural history of Cleland Island, British Columbia, with emphasis on the breeding bird fauna. Pages HH25-HH43 *in* Report of the Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology for the Year 1967, Victoria, BC.

Campbell. R.W. and D. Stirling. 1968b. British Columbia nature houses – sea stars. British Columbia Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet.

Campbell, R.W. and D. Stirling. 1971. A photoduplicate file for British Columbia vertebrate records. Syesis 4:217-222.

Edwards, R.Y. and D. Stirling. 1961. Range expansion of the House Finch into British Columbia. Murrelet 42(1):38-42. [Figure 93]

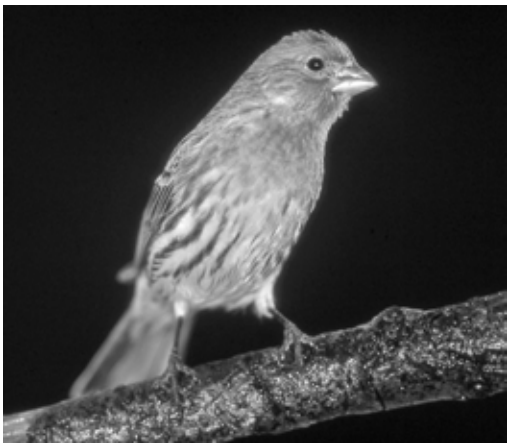


Figure 93. The House Finch arrived in British Columbia, at Penticton, in 1935, and was found nesting in Victoria by 1937.[19] Its rapid expansion in the province occurred during the 1950s and today it occurs throughout much of the southern interior of the province. [15]*Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*.

Edwards, R.Y. and D. Stirling. 1963. Birds seen from Clover Point, Victoria, B.C. Pages 19-26 *in* Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology Report for the year 1962, Victoria, BC.

Edwards, R.Y. and D. Stirling. 1966. Miracle Beach nature house – What tree is that? A guide to the trees of Miracle Beach Park. B.C. Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet. [Figure 94]

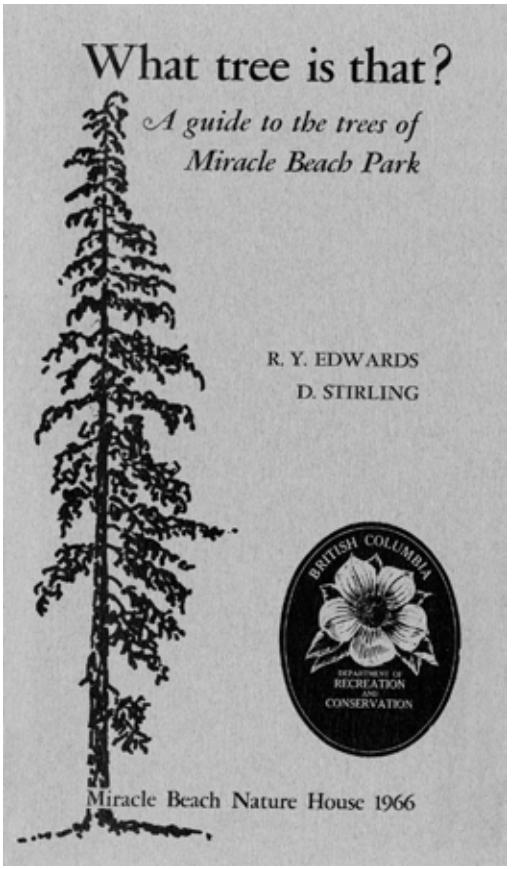


Figure 94. Public information leaflets were frequently prepared by David (and others) and were very popular with provincial park users.

Edwards, R.Y., D. Stirling, and B. Westerborg. 1962. Twenty-sixth breeding bird census – disturbed Douglas-fir coast forest. Audubon Field Notes 16:524.

Goossen, J.P., R.W. Butler, B.G. Stushnoff, and D. Stirling. 1982. Distribution and breeding status of Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*, in British Columbia. Canadian Field-Naturalist 96:345-346.

Grass, A. and D. Stirling. 1977. Adopt a tree. Wildlife Review 8(3):26-28.

Grass, A and D. Stirling. 1978. Owls. Westworld 4(5):42-47.

Grass, A. and D. Stirling. 1981. Nature had it first. Wildlife Review 10(7):19-20.
Hancock, D. and D. Stirling. 1973. Hancock's ferry guide to Vancouver Island. 1973. Hancock House Publishers, Saanichton, BC. 50 pp.
Hancock, D. and D. Stirling. 1973 and 1989. Some of the common and uncommon birds of British Columbia. Hancock House Publishers, Saanichton, BC. 68 pp.
Hancock, D.L. Hancock, and D. Stirling. 1974. Pacific wilderness. Hancock House Publishers, Saanichton, BC. 95 pp.
Stirling, D. 1959. Quail hunt. Victoria Naturalist 15(9):107-108.
Stirling, D. 1960a. Mitlenatch Island – 1960. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 4 pp.
Stirling, D. 1960b. Two records of the Mockingbird in British Columbia. Canadian Field-Naturalist 74:176. [Figure 95]

Figure 95. The Northern Mockingbird was first reported in British Columbia in 1931 and through 1960 was recorded as a vagrant eight more times.[14,34] Two of those records were published by David Stirling. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Stirling, D. 1960c. Sight records of unusual birds in the Victoria area for 1959. Murrelet 41(1):10-11.
Stirling, D. 1960d. Notes from Salt Spring Island. Murrelet 41(1):11.
Stirling, D. 1960e. Bird life at Esquimalt Lagoon. Victoria Naturalist 16(5):61.
Stirling, D. 1960f. A sight record of the Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis say*a) on southern Vancouver Island. Victoria Naturalist 17(1):11.
Stirling, D. 1960g. Swallows pirating Black Swifts. Victoria Naturalist 17(4):55.
Stirling, D. 1961a. The Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker. Blue Jay 19(2):68-69.
Stirling, D. 1961b. Summer birds at Miracle Beach. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 14 pp.
Stirling, D. 1961c. Check list of the birds of Miracle Beach Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. Leaflet.
Stirling, D. 1961d. Sixty-first Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 15:102.
Stirling, D. 1961e. Birds and insects at sapsucker workings. Murrelet 42(3):43.
Stirling, D. 1961f. A sight record of the Yellow-billed Loon. Murrelet 42(3):44-45.
Stirling, D. 1961g. In defence of useless animals. Victoria Naturalist 17(8):110-111.
Stirling, D. 1961h. Sight records of unusual birds seen in the Victoria area in 1960. Victoria Naturalist 17(8):110-116.
Stirling, D. 1961i. Purple Martins. Victoria Naturalist 18(3):33-34.
Stirling, D. 1962a. How to visit a seabird colony. Blue Jay 20(3):114. [Figure 96]

Figure 96. In the early 1960s, BC Parks Branch issued a one-page leaflet of guidelines to minimize disturbance at a seabird colony by park visitors. Since many of the recommendations also apply to other colonially-nesting birds, David published the announcement in *Blue Jay*, the publication of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, to reach a wider audience. He was especially concerned about nesting cormorants, like Pelagic Cormorant. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Stirling, D. 1962b. Birding in the snow. Victoria Naturalist 18(7):102-103.
Stirling, D. 1962c. When the herring spawn. Victoria Naturalist 18(8):108.
Stirling, D. 1962d. Activities of the bird group for the year 1961. Victoria Naturalist 18(9):121-122.
Stirling, D. 1962e. Sixty-second Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 16:91.
Stirling, D. 1962f. Annotated checklist of the birds of Miracle Beach Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 16 pp.
Stirling, D. 1962g. Another Western Grebe colony in British Columbia. Murrelet 43(3):48. [Figure 97]

Figure 97. The discovery of Western Grebes nesting on Shuswap Lake in 1963 was encouraging as several historical colonies had been abandoned. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Shuswap Lake, June 6, 1996.*

Stirling, D. 1962h. Some bird notes from Vancouver Island – 1961. Victoria Natural History Society Mimeo, Victoria, BC. 9 pp.
Stirling, D. 1963a. Twenty-seventh breeding-bird census: Disturbed Douglas-fir coast forest. Audubon Field Notes 17:499-500.
Stirling, D. 1963b. Shuswap Lake nature house – trees of Shuswap Lake Park. British Columbia Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet.
Stirling, D. 1963c. Exotic conifers of Victoria. Victoria Naturalist 20(3):39.
Stirling, D. 1963d. Ginkgo, the living fossil. Victoria Naturalist 20(4):45.
Stirling, D. 1964a. Long Beach campsite, July 11th and 24th, 1964 and September 12 and 13, 1964. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 4 pp.
Stirling, D. 1964b. Western Grebe colony on Shuswap Lake re-visited. Murrelet 45(1):8-9.
Stirling, D. 1964c. Cedrus, true cedars. Victoria Naturalist 20(7):84.
Stirling, D. 1964d. Mitlenatch Island Park. Victoria Naturalist 21(3):29-30.
Stirling, D. 1965a. Birding on southern Vancouver Island. Canadian Audubon 27(2):49-52.
Stirling, D. 1965b. Two new heron records for Vancouver Island. Murrelet 46(1):15.
Stirling, D. 1965c. A sight record of Emperor Goose at Victoria, British Columbia. Murrelet 46(3):36.
Stirling, D. 1965d. Collecting spider webs. Victoria Naturalist 21(5):45-46.
Stirling, D. 1965e. Inkaneep Park (Oliver campsite). Victoria Naturalist 21(8):89.
Stirling, D. 1965. A breeding bird census. Victoria Naturalist 21(9):111-112.
Stirling, D. 1966a. Summer birds wintering on southern Vancouver Island. Canadian Field-Naturalist 80:45-47. [Figure 98]

Figure 98. Rufous Hummingbird, a common nesting bird on southern Vancouver Island, is rarely seen there in winter. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson.*

Stirling, D. 1966b. Day dreaming. Victoria Naturalist 22(6):73.
Stirling, D. 1966c. Roadside raptor count. Victoria Naturalist 22(8):89.

Stirling, D. 1966d. Wildlife in India. Victoria Naturalist 22(9):106-107.

Stirling, D. 1966e. First nesting record of Brandt's Cormorant in Canadian waters. Victoria Naturalist 23(1):1-2. [Figure 99]

Figure 99. Even though the discovery of Brandt's Cormorants nesting off Long Beach was published as a peer-reviewed paper, most local naturalists do not subscribe to such journals and often new information is included in local publications. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Sea Lion Rocks, July 3, 1967.*

Stirling, D. (editor). 1966f. Bird report (Victoria) number four– 1965. Victoria Natural History Society Mimeo, Victoria, BC. 6 pp.

Stirling, D. 1961-1966g. Miracle Beach nature house – Check list of the birds of Miracle Beach Park, B.C. Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet.

Stirling, D. 1961-1966h. A report of the flora and fauna of Shuswap Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 25 pp.

Stirling, D. 1967a. A sight record of the Glaucous-winged Gull for Alberta. Blue Jay 25(3):131.

Stirling, D. 1967b. Okanagan birding holiday. Canadian Audubon 29(3):91-93.

Stirling, D. 1967c. We like loopers. Daily Colonist Newspaper, July 9, 1967, Page 7. Victoria, B.C.

Stirling, D. 1967d. Ross' Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, rarest of accidental stragglers. Victoria Naturalist 23(5):49-50. [Figure 100]

Figure 100. David always published noteworthy sightings of birds in peer-reviewed journals or natural history magazines. This photograph of a Ross's Gull, still the only record for British Columbia, appeared on the cover of *Victoria Naturalist*.[46] *Photo by Ralph Fryer, Clover Point, BC, November 9, 1966*. BC Photo 316.[11]

Stirling, D. 1967e. Broadleaf maple, *Acer macrophyllum*. Victoria Naturalist 23(8):89.

Stirling, D. 1967f. In search of Sage Grouse, one of British Columbia's "lost species." Victoria Naturalist 24(1):2.

Stirling, D. 1968a. A naturalist at Wickaninnish. Canadian Audubon 30(5):139-144.

Stirling, D. 1968b. Notes on the food and feeding habits of some wintering birds. Canadian Field-Naturalist 82(1):14-17.

Stirling, D. 1968c. Sea lions on display. Daily Colonist Newspaper, November 24, 1968.

Stirling, D. 1968d. Sight record of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, *Muscivora forficata*, on southern Vancouver Island. Murrelet 49:14.

Stirling, D. 1968e. Arbutus. Page 13 *in* R. Chambers, ed.) A net of Naturalists: Some notable naturalists in the Pacific Northwest. Victoria Natural History Society, Victoria, BC. 39 pp. [Figure 101)

Figure 101. David's favourite tree was the arbutus but when asked to write about it he was quick to point out that in autumn and winter the tree's orange-red berries invite hungry American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Varied Thrushes. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Victoria, BC, October 16, 1996.*

Stirling, D. 1968f. A check list of birds of British Columbia. British Columbia Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet.

Stirling, D. 1968g. Arbutus. Victoria Naturalist 24(8):113.

Stirling, D. 1968h. Before man - flight. Victoria Naturalist 25(1):50.

Stirling, D. 1968i. Dawn redwood and bald cypress. Victoria Naturalist 25(3):31.

Stirling, D. 1968j. Sea stars. Victoria Naturalist 25(5):53.

Stirling, D. 1969a. Shore things: A beach watcher's introduction to the shores of Miracle Beach Provincial Park and vicinity. Published by the author, Victoria, BC. 23 pp. [Figure 102]

Stirling, D. 1969b. The last wolf. Daily Colonist Newspaper, February 23, 1969, Page 2. Victoria, B.C.

Stirling, D. 1969c. Allan Brooks. Victoria Naturalist 25(7):81-82.

Stirling, D. 1969d. Pelagic birding off Tofino. Victoria Naturalist 26(3):28-29.

Stirling, D. 1969e. The Christmas bird count. Wildlife Review 5(4):9-10.

Stirling, D. 1970a. An annotated list of birds of Mount Robson Provincial Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 15 pp.

Figure 102. David was passionate about introducing people to the world around them, including plants and animals of the seashore. As environments and habitats became threatened he often wrote booklets and published them privately.

Stirling, D. 1970b. A sight record of the Barred Owl on Vancouver Island. Murrelet 51:19.

Stirling, D. 1970c. Exploration tide pool. Victoria Naturalist 27(4):54.

Stirling, D. 1971a. Mammals of Mt. Robson Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Mimeo, Victoria, BC. 3 pp.

Stirling, D. 1971b. Notes on the birds of Mt. Robson Provincial Park, 1970. Blue Jay 29:66-72.

Stirling, D. 1971c. A sight record of the Wheatear in British Columbia. Canadian Feld-Naturalist 85(3):258.

Stirling, D. 1971d. Driftwood. Victoria Naturalist 27(5):65.

Stirling, D. 1972a. Birds of Vancouver Island for birdwatchers. Published by the Author, Victoria, BC. 27 pp. [Figure 103]

Figure 103. Local and regional historical summaries of bird records were very helpful in researching and writing *The Birds of British Columbia*.[12,13,14,15] David was the first to state that for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo "there are no records for the past 40 years and it certainly should not be considered as a breeding species here nor should it be included in any current Vancouver Island checklist." Later, specimens were found and single birds were observed indicating the species was a vagrant on Vancouver Island.[16] *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

Stirling, D. 1972b. Summary of the Christmas bird count. Federation of British Columbia Naturalists Newsletter 10:6.

Stirling, D. 1972c. More Franklin's Gulls in southeastern British Columbia. Vancouver Natural History Society Discovery (New Series) 1:37.

Stirling, D. 1972d. An ill eagle. Victoria Naturalist 28(5):49.

Stirling, D. 1972e. Sand Dollars. Victoria Naturalist 28(6):77. [Figure 104]

Stirling, D. 1972f. More aids for birdwatchers. Victoria Naturalist 28(7):84.

Stirling, D. 1972g. A nature walk. Wildlife Review 6(4):20-23.

Stirling, D. 1973a. Birding on southern Vancouver Island. Birding 5:213-217.

Stirling, D. 1973b. A report on some rare and endangered species in British Columbia. Federation of British Columbia Naturalists, Vancouver, BC. 16 pp.

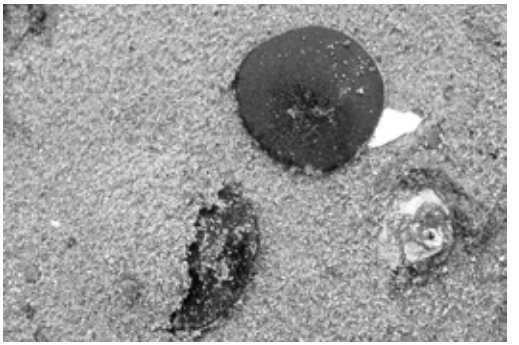


Figure 104. David was enthralled with intertidal life, including the Sand Dollar, or Sea Cookie, a flattened, burrowing sea urchin. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Powell River, April 17, 1995.*

Stirling, D. 1973c. Birds of prey in danger. Victoria Naturalist 29(7):81-82.

Stirling, D. 1973d. A cormorant – but which one. Victoria Naturalist 29(10):111.

Stirling, D. 1973e. Birds of BC. Wildlife Review 6(10):30.

Stirling, D. 1975a. Birding on southern Vancouver Island. Pages 41-47 *in* R.Y. Edwards (ed.) A naturalist's guide to the Victoria region. Federation of British Columbia Naturalists and Victoria Natural History Society, Vancouver, BC. 47 pp.

Stirling, D. 1975b. Falconry and captive propagation. The Raptor Report 3(1):3-4.

Stirling, D. 1975c. The pivot of the heavens. Victoria Naturalist 31(6):89.

Stirling, D. 1975d. The zodiac. Victoria Naturalist 31(7):115-118.

Stirling, D. 1975e. Birds in the heavens. Victoria Naturalist 31(8):130-131.

Stirling, D. 1975f. Summer sky watch. Victoria Naturalist 31(9):152.

Stirling, D. 1975g. Book Review. Field Studies of Falconiformes of British Columbia by F.L. Beebe. Victoria Naturalist 31(10):172-174.

Stirling, D. 1976a. Summer birds wintering on southern Vancouver Island. Canadian Field-Naturalist 90(4):506.

Stirling, D. 1976b. Book review: For a Lark. Nature Canada 5(1):32.

Stirling, D. 1976c. Stars of '76. Victoria Naturalist 32(6):95.
Stirling, D. 1976d. Nature's island. Western Living 6(6):24-28.
Stirling, D. 1977a. Birds of British Columbia – A checklist. British Columbia Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet.
Stirling, D. 1977b. Recent scientific opinions. Pages 134-135 *in* M. Moon. The Okanagan mystery: Ogopogo. J.J. Douglas Ltd, Vancouver, BC. 195 pp. [Figure 105]

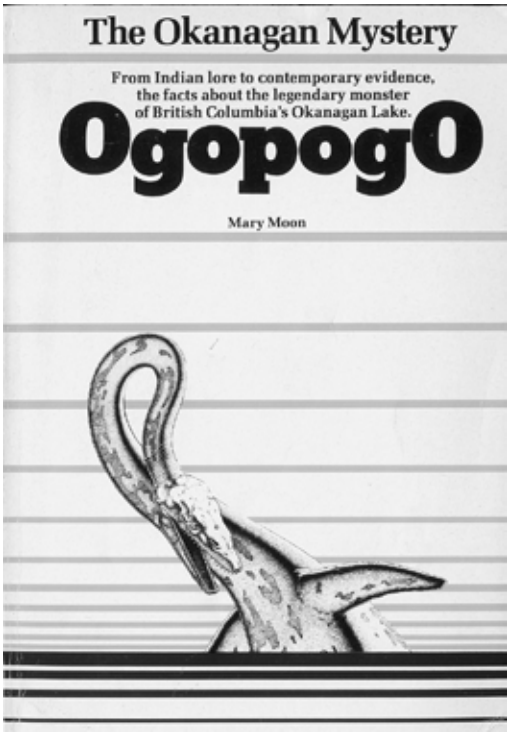


Figure 105. In 1975 Mary Moon wrote David asking for his opinion on the serpent "Ogopogo" in Okanagan Lake for a book she was researching. Dave provided his views, with logical support from literature and personal experience, stating, "I am very much a sceptic in regard to Ogopogo, the Loch Ness Monster, The Abominable Snowman and Victoria's own Caddy. I do, however, find the lore of mythical monsters a fascinating subject and I firmly believe that we must have a few mysteries to stir our imaginations."

Stirling, D. 1979. Book review: Ravens, Crows, Magpies and Jays by Tony Angell. Wildlife Review 9(2):27.
Stirling, D. 1980. Gone birding. Discovery (New Series) 9:20-26.
Stirling, D. 1981a. Those were the days! Discovery (New Series) 10:4.
Stirling, D. 1981b. The gnome plant (*Hemitomes congestum*). Discovery (New Series) 10:87.
Stirling, D. 1981c. Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Pages 8-12 in P. Alden and J. Gooders. Finding birds around the world. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA. 683 pp.
Stirling, D. 1981d. Project ptarmigan: A request for information re White-tailed Ptarmigan on Vancouver Island. Island Bushwhacker 9(2):3-4.
Stirling, D. 1981e. Book review: The Outfitting & Source Book for Bird Watchers by M. Scofield. Wildlife Review 10(9):31.
Stirling, D. 1982a. A note: A record-breaking sponsored bird count. B.C. Naturalist 20(1):6.
Stirling, D. 1982b. 1984 A.B.A. conference coming to Vancouver. Discovery New Series 11:109.
Stirling, D. 1982c. Sandhill Cranes. Wildlife Review 10(2):23.
Stirling, D. 1983a. Northwestern Crow (*Corvus caurinus*). Page 318 *in* J. Farrand (ed.). The Audubon Society master guide to birding – gulls to dippers. 398 pp. [Figure 106]

Figure 106. For species like Northwestern Crow, whose coastal North American range encompassed mostly British Columbia, David was asked to contribute accounts to continental field guides. *Photo by Mark Nyhof.*

Stirling, D. 1983b. Crested Myna (*Acridotheres cristatellus*). Page 94 *in* J. Farrand (ed.). The Audubon Society master guide to birding – Old World warblers to sparrows. 399 pp.
Stirling, D. 1983c. Ptarmigan ptracks – My view from the Johnson Street bridge. B.C. Naturalist 21(3):7.
Stirling, D. 1983d. Ptarmigan ptracks – Pelicans. B.C. Naturalist 21(4):6.
Stirling, D. 1983e. Dippers. Nature Canada 12(1):12-15.
Stirling, D. 1984a. Finding birds in British Columbia – an introduction. Birding 16(1):9-14.
Stirling, D. 1984b. Ptarmigan ptracks – Muskeg. B.C. Naturalist 22(1):5.
Stirling, D. 1984c. Ptarmigan ptracks – Birding games. B.C. Naturalist 22(2):9.
Stirling, D. 1984d. Ptarmigan ptracks – A day in Bermuda. B.C. Naturalist 22(3):5.
Stirling, D. 1984. Ptarmigan ptracks – Hares, rabbits and a pika. B.C. Naturalist 22(4):5.
Stirling, D. 1985e. Ptarmigan ptracks – Bird spectacles of southwestern British Columbia. B.C. Naturalist 23(1):5.
Stirling, D. 1985f. Ptarmigan ptracks – Sapsuckers. B.C. Naturalist 23(2):5.
Stirling, D. 1985g. Ptarmigan ptracks – Cathedral Grove. B.C. Naturalist 23(3):5.
Stirling, D. 1985h. Ptarmigan ptracks – Stone the crows! B.C. Naturalist 23(4):5.
Stirling, D. 1986a. Ptarmigan ptracks – On the ferries. B.C. Naturalist 24(1):5.
Stirling, D. 1986b. Ptarmigan ptracks – Marmots: B.C.'s best sleepers. B.C. Naturalist 24(2):5. [Figure 107]
Stirling, D. 1986c. Ptarmigan ptracks – Day #2 on the Coquihalla. B.C. Naturalist 24(3):5.
Stirling, D. 1986d. Mountain Quail returns? BC Naturalist 24(4):5.
Stirling, D. 1986e. Birding in the Victoria region. Pages 145-192 *in* J. Weston and D. Stirling (eds.). The naturalist's guide to the Victoria region. Victoria Natural History Society, Victoria, BC. 198 pp.
Stirling, D. 1987a. Ptarmigan ptracks – Spring in the Cascades. B.C. Naturalist 25(1):5.

Figure 107. The alpine Hoary Marmot may hibernate for at least eight months a year emerging in early May and returning to its den in October. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell*.

Stirling, D. 1987b. Ptarmigan ptracks – High country moods. B.C. Naturalist 25(2):5.
Stirling, D. 1987c. Ptarmigan ptracks – The Dempster. B.C. Naturalist 25(3):5.
Stirling, D. 1987d. Ptarmigan ptracks – Birding the high seas. B.C. Naturalist 25(4):5.
Stirling, D. 1988a. Ptarmigan ptracks – Dead on the road. B.C. Naturalist 26(1):5.
Stirling, D. 1988b. Ptarmigan ptracks – Summer shores. B.C. Naturalist 26(2):5.
Stirling, D. 1988c. Ptarmigan ptracks – Getting there on a low energy budget. B.C. Naturalist 26(4):5.
Stirling, D. 1989. Ptarmigan ptracks – Cranes. B.C. Naturalist 27(2):5.
Stirling, D. 1992a. Down the Yukon's Firth River on a raft. Canadian Birding 3:18-19.
Stirling, D. 1992b. McRaven. Victoria Naturalist 48(6):16.
Stirling, D. 1993a. Book Review: BC Wildlife Viewing Guide. British Columbia Birds 3(1):23-24.

Stirling, D. 1993b. Getting there on a low energy budget. Victoria Naturalist 49(6):6-7.
Stirling, D. 1994. Beecher Bay headlands – a place for raptors. BC Birding 4(2):14-15. [Figure 108]

Figure 108. Beecher Bay headlands, in East Sooke Park on southern Vancouver Island, is a popular site to watch migrating raptors in spring and autumn. From mid-September to early October, hundreds of Turkey Vultures form large circling kettles prior to migrating south. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Stirling, D. 1995a. The great herring spectacle. Cordillera 2(2):3-5.
Stirling, D. 1995b. Gold in them thar hills. Victoria Naturalist 52(3):8.
Stirling, D. 1996a. ABA and the Utah convention. BC Birding 6(4):8-9.
Stirling, D. 1996b. *Playboy* and Castor de Montage. BC Naturalist 34:8.
Stirling, D. 1996c. People in natural history – J.E. (Ted) Underhill: A practical naturalist. Cordillera 3(2):6-7.
Stirling, D. 1996d. Beecher Bay headlands: A place for raptors and their watchers. The Raptor Report 22(1):11.
Stirling, D. 1996e. Beyond Alaska. Victoria Naturalist 53(3):4-6.
Stirling, D. 1997. Book Review: Nature Alaska. British Columbia Birds 7:17.
Stirling, D. 1998a. Bushtits in the bamboo. Victoria Naturalist 54(5):22.
Stirling, D. 1998b. Ghosts of Christmas (bird counts) past. Victoria Naturalist 55(3):10-11.
Stirling, D. 1999a. Book Review: Birding Northern California. British Columbia Birds 9:23.
Stirling, D. 1999b. Driving the smoke. Daily Colonist Newspaper, January 31, 1999, Page 6. Victoria, B.C.
Stirling, D. 1999c. Obituary: Chester Peter (Ches) Lyons. Victoria Naturalist 55(5):27.
Stirling, D. 1999d. Mt. Tolmie. Victoria Naturalist 56(3):9-10.
Stirling, D. 2000a. My catalyst bird. BC Birding 10(3):13.
Stirling, D. 2000b. Bali Aye? Birding and other adventures in Indonesia. Victoria Naturalist 56(4):10-12.
Stirling, D. 2001a. Increased sightings of Broad-winged Hawks on southern Vancouver Island. British Columbia Birds 11:13-16. [Figure 109]

Figure 109. Knowing that the Broad-winged Hawk is a species of the Peace River area of the province David published the first documented movement of the species in migration on the south coast. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

Stirling, D. 2001b. The smoking gun: Remembering the good old days of tobacco. The Journal of Medical Humour Stitches 108:56-61.
Stirling, D. 2001c. Under the oaks. Victoria Naturalist 57(5):9-10.
Stirling, D. 2002. Mountain moods. Victoria Naturalist 59(3):6-8.
Stirling, D. 2003. Frogs, frogs, frogs. Victoria Naturalist 59(5):8.

Stirling, D. 2004. No dancing in the lagoon – notes on the grebe implosion. Victoria Naturalist 60(5):6-7.
Stirling, D. 2005a. River of raptors. Victoria Naturalist 61(4):9.
Stirling, D. 2005b. Facing extinction – The BC belly bird. Victoria Naturalist 61(4):20.
Stirling, D. 2005c. Obituary: Cy Morehen. Victoria Naturalist 61(5):5.
Stirling, D. 2006a. Wind, sand and birds: A bird bazaar in Senegal. BC Birding 16(3):1, 10.
Stirling, D. 2006b. More biking news from the "Good Old Days." Canadian Vintage Motor Cycle Group News 39(5):12-13.
Stirling, D. 2006c. Macadamized. Victoria Naturalist 62(6):10-11.
Stirling, D. 2007. Tête à tête with a Gorilla family. Victoria Naturalist 64(3):9.
Stirling, D. 2008. Birds, beasts and a bike – under the southern cross: Two Canadian naturalists camping rough in New Zealand and Australia in the 1950s. Agio Publishing House, Victoria, BC. 167 pp.
Stirling, D. 2009. Woodpecker workings. Victoria Naturalist 66(3):19. [Figure 110]
Stirling, D. 2011a. Note on the ignominious demise of my Barred Owl. Victoria Naturalist 67(6):13.
Stirling, D. 2011b. Cooper's Hawk feeding on Barred Owl and Norway Rat in Victoria, British Columbia. Wildlife Afield 8(1):120-122.
Stirling, D. 2012. Red-breasted Nuthatch nest destroyed by Northwestern Crows. Wildlife Afield 9(1):66-69.
Stirling, D. 2013a. Chicken power, how I became a hawk watcher. BC Birding 23(3):16.
Stirling, D. 2013b. Tobacco and birds. BC Birding 23(3):21.
Stirling, D. 2014a. Deceiving the chooks. BC Birding 24(4):14.
Stirling, D. 2014b. No problem or did this Canadian compromise help to end the cold war. Islander Writer Magazine 12(1):14-16.
Stirling, D. 2017a. A national bird for Canada. BC Birding 27(1):26.
Stirling, D. 2017b. Identification & misidentifications. BC Birding 27(2):23.

Figure 110. David was always writing about his encounters with nature and passing along his experiences like this Pileated Woodpecker excavating a dying tree for grubs. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Stirling, D. and R. Becket. 1969. Operation Skylark. Victoria Naturalist 25(8):104-105.
Stirling, D. and F. Buffam. 1966. The first breeding record of Brandt's Cormorant in Canada. Canadian Field-Naturalist 80(2):117-118.
Stirling, D. and R.W. Campbell. 1968. Mitlenatch Island Nature Park – Check list of the birds. B.C. Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. Leaflet. [Figure 111]
Stirling, D. and R.Y. Edwards. 1962. Notes on the Skylark on Vancouver Island. Canadian-Field Naturalist 76(3):147-152.
Stirling, D. and C. Finlay. 1999a. Christmas bird counts in Victoria and other BC sites. Victoria Naturalist 55(5):13-14.

MITLENATCH ISLAND
NATURE PARK

Check List of the Birds

Late each spring thousands of sea birds congregate to breed on Mitlenatch Island. Glaucous-winged Gulls are the most numerous breeding species but Pelagic Cormorants and Pigeon Guillemots also breed here in considerable numbers. For this reason Mitlenatch Island is known locally as "the island for the birds".

This list contains 121 species recorded by park naturalists since 1960. Birds known to breed on the island are marked with a star.* Most records are from summer observations; winter records are few. Some of the species on this list are rare or only accidental visitors. A visitor to the island might see 30 species in one day and more than 60 in a summer.

The first banding of young gulls on Mitlenatch was done by Mr. Theed Pearse in 1922. Now, park naturalists band more than a thousand every summer.

Bird watching is a popular outdoor activity. Binoculars, a good bird book, a check list, notebook and pencil are all the equipment needed.

This check list will serve as a permanent record of your visit to "the island for the birds".

Park naturalists are on duty throughout the summer to help you know birds and other things in Mitlenatch Island Nature Park.

By David Stirling and Wayne Campbell

Printed 1968 PARKS BRANCH

Figure 111. David regularly updated bird checklists for parks, especially Miracle Beach and Mitlenatch Island, so visitors had a current reference and could check birds seen on a visit.

Figure 112. Birdwatching was growing in popularity during the 1960s and 1970s and to encourage the activity Dave and Al Grass decided to tell a wider audience the personal benefits of getting outside and looking for birds. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

Stirling, D. and C. Finlay. 1999b. List of old bird names. Victoria Naturalist 55(5):14-15.

Stirling, D. and J. Fisher. 1976. Wintertime bird feeding. Nature Canada 5(4):7-8.

Stirling, D. and A. Grass. 1976. Watching birds. Wildlife Review 11(7):8-11.

Stirling, D. and A. Grass. 1977. An introduction to birdwatching. Westworld 3(3):28-29, 52. [Figure 112]

Stirling, D. and B. Merilees. 2007. Victoria birds – plus or minus 9. Victoria Naturalist 63(6):14.

Stirling, D. and M. Robichaud. 2017. Clover Point 1962 and 2009. Victoria Naturalist 73(5)9-12.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1963. Sixty-third Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 17:87.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1964. Sixty-fourth Christmas bird count – Vancouver, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 18:92-93.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1965. Sixty-fifth Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 19:101-102.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1966. Sixty-sixth Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 20:114-115.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1967. Sixty-seventh Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 21:100-101. [Figure 113]

Figure 113. A total of 129 species and 65,024 individual birds was counted on the 1966 Christmas Bird Count in the Victoria area. A flock of 20 Bohemian Waxwings, a very rare bird in the area, were recorded by the David Stirling party. *Photo by Alan D. Wilson*.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1968. Sixty-eighth Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 22:113-114.

Stirling, D. and R. Stirling. 1969. Sixty-ninth Christmas bird count – Victoria, B.C. Audubon Field Notes 23:136.

Stirling, D. and J. Woodford. 1975. Where to go birdwatching in Canada. Hancock House, Publishers, Saanichton, BC. 127 pp. [Figure 114]

Stirling, D., J. Grass and A. Grass. 1977. A backyard for birds. Wildlife Review 8(4):26.

Stirling, D., P. Swift, K. Allies, and J. Beckett. 1975. Annotated list of birds of Goldstream Park – spring 1975. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 5 pp. [Figure 115]

Ziller, W.G. and D. Stirling. 1961. Sapsucker damage in coastal British Columbia. Forestry Chronicle 37:331-335.

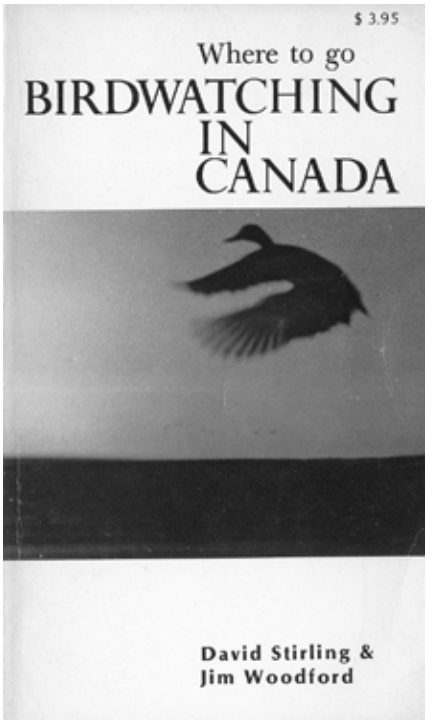


Figure 114. By the mid-1970s, David's reputation as an experienced and knowledgeable birder had spread across Canada and he was invited to write a pocket guide to birdwatching.

Figure 115. By the mid-1970s, Western Screech-Owl was considered a "rare resident" in Goldstream Provincial Park. Today the species is very rare anywhere on southern Vancouver Island. *Photo by Mark Nyhof.*

REFERENCES CONSULTED

[1]Barnett, J., E.J. Ashton, and S. Maber. 1921. Soldier settlement of the land: Report of the soldier settlement board of Canada. Government of Canada, Ottawa, ON. 164 pp.

[2]Bates, M. 1960. The forest and the sea. Vintage Books, New York, NY. 277 pp.

[3]Butler, R.W., N.A.M. Verbeek, and R.G. Foottit. 1980. Mortality and dispersal of the Glaucous-winged Gulls of southern British Columbia. Canadian Field-Naturalist 94:315-32.

[4]Campbell, R.W. 1967. Summer naturalist report, Wickaninnish Provincial Park – 1967. Report for British Columbia Ministry of Recreation and Conservation, Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. 163 pp.

[5]Campbell, R.W. 1968a. Summer naturalist report, Wickaninnish Provincial Park – 1968. Report for British Columbia Ministry of Recreation and Conservation, Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. 104 pp.

[6]Campbell, R.W. 1968b. Life on a Pacific island. Canadian Audubon 30:44-47.

[7]Campbell, R.W. 1969. Summer naturalist report, Wickaninnish Provincial Park – 1969. Report for British Columbia Ministry of Recreation and Conservation, Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. 85 pp.

[8]Campbell, R.W. and P.S. Henderson. 2013. An old-school naturalist: Glenn Roderick Ryder (1938-2013). Wildlife Afield 10: 84-256. [Figure 116]

[9]Campbell, R.W. and D. Stirling. 1968a. Notes on the vertebrate fauna associated with a Brandt's Cormorant colony in British Columbia. Murrelet 49(1):7-9.

[10]Campbell, R.W. and D. Stirling. 1968b. Notes on the natural history of Cleland Island, British Columbia, with emphasis on the breeding bird fauna. Pages HH25-HH43 *In* Report of the Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology for the Year 1967, Victoria, BC. [Figure 117]

[11]Campbell, R.W. and D. Stirling. 1971. A photoduplicate file for British Columbia vertebrate records. Syesis 4:217-222.

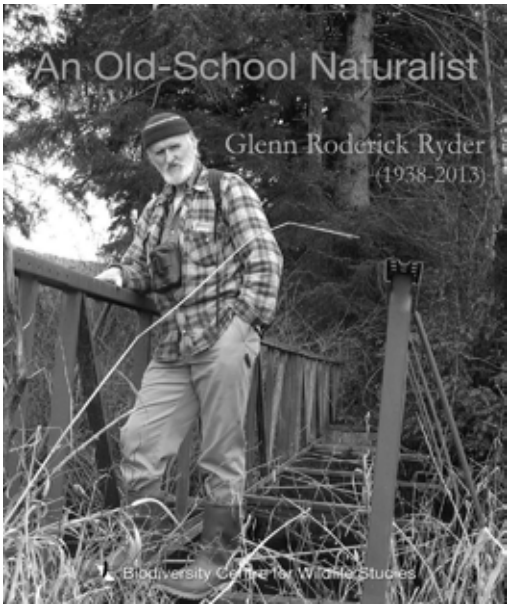


Figure 116. For the past several decades, the teaching of natural history has been dying in educational institutions and to compound matters so are the older naturalists.[25,32] Even in British Columbia, we are experiencing the loss and experience of bona fide naturalists like Glenn Ryder.

Figure 117. After visiting Cleland Island for the first time in the mid-1960s, David later returned to the island as a tour leader. On one trip, the group became marooned and had to spend the evening in foul weather. To lessen a tense situation, David showed how a puffin could hold fish in its bill and still catch more.

[12]Campbell, R.W., N.K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J.M. Cooper, G.W. Kaiser, and Michael C.E. McNall. 1990a. The birds of British Columbia – Volume 1: Nonpasserines (Introduction, loons through waterfowl). Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, BC. 535 pp.

[13]Campbell, R.W., N.K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J.M. Cooper, G.W. Kaiser, and Michael C.E. McNall 1990b. The birds of British Columbia – Volume 2: (Diurnal birds of prey through woodpeckers). Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, BC. 632 pp.

[14]Campbell, R. Wayne, Neil K. Dawe, Ian McTaggart-Cowan, John M. Cooper, Gary W. Kaiser, Michael C.E. McNall, and G.E. John Smith. 1997. The birds of British Columbia – Volume 3: Passerines (flycatchers through vireos). University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, BC. 693 pp.

[15]Campbell, R.W., N.K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J.M. Cooper, G.W. Kaiser, A.S. Stewart, and M.C.E. McNall. 2001. The birds of British Columbia, Volume 4: Passerines, wood-warblers through Old World sparrows. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, BC. 739 pp.

[16]Campbell, R.W., S.G. Sealy, T.J. Underwood, and G.W. Breault. 2014. An updated account of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo in British Columbia, 1881–2013: Status and distribution, first breeding, habitat, and conservation. Wildlife Afield 11:190-231.

[17]Campbell, R.W, L.M. Van Damme, and S.R. Johnson. 1997. Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*). *In* The Birds of North America, No. 286 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. 20 pp. [Figure 118]

[18]Candy, R. and R.W. Campbell. 2012. Allan Brooks: Naturalist and wildlife illustrator (1869-1946). Wildlife Afield 9(1):88-106.

[19]Cowan, I. McT. 1937. The House Finch at Victoria, British Columbia. Condor 39:225.

[20]Dorst, A. 2018. The birds of Vancouver Island's west coast. UBC Press, Vancouver, BC.559 pp.

Figure 118. The introduced Eurasian Skylark, once a common, breeding species on the Saanich Peninsula on southern Vancouver Island, is today (2017) rarely reported.[14] *Photo by Tom Sowerby, University of Victoria, Saanich, BC, July 17, 1965.*

[21]Drent, R.H. and C.J. Guiguet. 1961. A catalogue of British Columbia sea-bird colonies. Occasional Papers of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, No. 12, Victoria, BC. 173 pp.

[22]Dunbar, D.L. 1982. The breeding ecology and management of White Pelicans at Stum Lake, British Columbia. M.Sc. Thesis, Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.139 pp.

[23]Edwards, R.Y. 1949. A faunal investigation of E.C. Manning Park, British Columbia. British Columbia Forest Service Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 89 pp. [Figure 119]

[24]Edwards, R.Y. and R.W. Ritcey. 1967. The birds of Wells Gray Park, British Columbia. British Columbia Parks Branch Report, Victoria, BC. 37 pp.

[25]Frazer, J. 2014. Natural history is dying, and we are all the losers. Available online at https://blogs.scientificamerican.com.

[26]Goodwill, M.E. and J.E.V. Goodwill. 1988. Terek Sandpiper in British Columbia, Canada. American Birds 42:177.

[27]Hatler, D.F., R.W. Campbell, and A. Dorst. 1978. Birds of Pacific Rim National Park. British Columbia Provincial Museum Occasional Paper Number 20, Victoria, BC. 194 pp.

[28]Kew Gardens. 2018. Kew's scientific collections. Online at: https://www.kew.org/science/collections.

Figure 119. The purpose of the faunal report on E.C. Manning Park was to help develop a government policy to manage wildlife species in BC Parks. During four months in summer 1949, Yorke Edwards recorded five amphibian, four reptile, 96 bird, and 48 mammal species. The investigation emphasized game, predatory, and fur-bearing species. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, September 7, 1999.*

[29]Koza, L.J. 1978. Status and biology of White Pelicans in British Columbia. B.Sc. Thesis, Department of Agriculture, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC. 37 pp.

[30]Koza, L.J. 1981. Birds and bird habitat of White Pelican Provincial Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 81 pp.

[31]Manson, P.H. (ed.). 1960. Manson's tropical diseases: a manual of the diseases of warm climates. Cassell & Co., London, United Kingdom. 960 pp.

[32]Noss, R.F. 1996. Editorial: The naturalists are dying off. Conservation Biology 10:1-3.

[33]Pearse, T. 1946. Nesting of the Western Gull off the coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and possible hybridization with the Glaucous-winged Gull. Murrelet 27(1):39-40.

[34]Racey, K. 1933. Western Mockingbird on Vancouver Island, B.C. Canadian Field-Naturalist 47:159.

[35]Rodway, M.S., R.W. Campbell, and M.J.F. Lemon. 2016. Seabird colonies of British Columbia – A century of changes. Part 1. A history to 1990 (with current updates): Introduction and provincial summary. Wildlife Afield 13(1&2):1-297.

[36]Ryder, G.R. 1972. Pelican Park – naturalist report for 1971. British Columbia Parks Branch, Victoria, BC. 91 pp. [Figure 120]

Figure 120. The strength of Glenn Ryder's comprehensive, seasonal naturalist reports was the thousands of breeding records he amassed over four summers. The colony of breeding Black Terns at Stum Lake was a new locality as well as at maximum elevational limit for the province. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

[37]Sauer, J.R., J.E. Hines, G. Gough, I. Thomas, and B.G. Peterjohn. 1997. The North American Breeding Bird Survey Results and Analysis. *Version 96.4. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD.*

[38]Semenchuk, G.P. (ed.) 1992. The atlas of breeding birds of Alberta. Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Edmonton, AB. 391 pp.

[39]Stirling, D. 1960a. Mitlenatch Island – 1960. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 4 pp.

[40]Stirling, D. 1960b. Two records of the Mockingbird in British Columbia. Canadian Field-Naturalist 74:176.

[41]Stirling, D. 1960c. Sight records of unusual birds in the Victoria area for 1959. Murrelet 41(1):10-11.

[42]Stirling, D. 1960d. Bird life at Esquimalt Lagoon. Victoria Naturalist 16(5):61.

[43]Stirling, D. 1962. Annotated checklist of the birds of Miracle Beach Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 16 pp.

[44]Stirling, D. 1963. Twenty-seventh breeding-bird census: Disturbed Douglas-fir coast forest. Audubon Field Notes 17:499-500.

[45]Stirling, D. 1964. Long Beach campsite, July 11th and 24th, 1964 and September 12 and 13, 1964. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 4 pp. [Figure 121]

Figure 121. While travelling around British Columbia as a public servant visiting parks David always wrote a trip summary for future reference. In one report he listed the Steller's Jay at Long Beach. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

[46]Stirling, D. 1967. Ross' Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, rarest of accidental stragglers. Victoria Naturalist 23(5):49-50.

[47]Stirling, D. 1970. An annotated list of birds of Mount Robson Provincial Park. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 15 pp.

[48]Stirling, D. 1971. Notes on the birds of Mt. Robson Provincial Park, 1970. Blue Jay 29:66-72.

[49]Stirling, D. 2000. Bali Aye? Birding and other adventures in Indonesia. Victoria Naturalist 56(4):10-12.

[50]Stirling, D. 2008. Birds, beasts and a bike – under the southern cross: Two Canadian naturalists camping rough in New Zealand and Australia in the 1950s. Agio Publishing House, Victoria, BC. 167 pp.

[51]Stirling, D. 2011. Cooper's Hawk feeding on Barred Owl and Norway Rat in Victoria, British Columbia. Wildlife Afield 8:120-122.

[52]Stirling, D. 2012. Red-breasted Nuthatch nest destroyed by Northwestern Crows. Wildlife Afield 9:66-69.

[53]Stirling, D. and R. Becket. 1969. Operation Skylark. Victoria Naturalist 25(8):104-105.

[54]Stirling, D. and F. Buffam. 1966. The first breeding record of Brandt's Cormorant in Canada. Canadian Field-Naturalist 117-118.

[55]Stirling, D. and R.Y. Edwards. 1962. Notes on the Skylark on Vancouver Island. Canadian-Field Naturalist 76(3):147-152.

[56]Statistics Canada. 2018. Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, and census subdivisions (municipalities), 2016 and 2011 censuses – 100% data (Alberta). Ottawa, ON.

[57]Titus, K., T. L. Haynes, and T. F. Paragi. 2009. The importance of Moose, Caribou, deer and small game in the diet of Alaskans. Pages 137-143 *in* R.T. Watson, M. Fuller, M. Pokras, and W. G. Hunt (eds.). Ingestion of lead from spent ammunition: Implications for wildlife and humans. The Peregrine Fund, Boise, ID. Available online at DOI 10.4080/ilsa.2009.0312

[58]Van Tets, G.F. 1963. A report on the seabird colony at Mitlenatch Island. British Columbia Parks Branch Unpublished Report, Victoria, BC. 133 pp.

[59]Weber, W.C. 2008. David Stirling winner of the BCFO award for ornithology. BC Birding 19(1):12-13.

[60]Woollett, J.M. 1974. Natural history of Thetis Lake Park near Victoria, British Columbia. Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association, Victoria, BC.

ACKNOWLEDGEMETS

In the mid-1980s, Alan MacLeod sat down with David in Swan's brewpub in Victoria and discussed his remarkable life. Copious notes were penned by Alan that were very helpful in developing the initial format for this biography. Alan was invited as an author but timing was inopportune; he was in the midst of editing his second book *From Rinks to Regiments* (Heritage, 2018). He is a native Nova Scotian and a lifelong birder, naturalist, and lover of the outdoors. He worked for close to three decades in labour relations in Nova Scotia and British Columbia. Before that, in 1969-70, he was a lecturer in English at Baring, a college affiliated with the University of Punjab at Batala, Punjab. After retiring from the labour relations confrontations at the end of the last century, he has squandered his time in various ways: travel, hiking, wildflower photography, history and writing. He divides his time between Victoria and Big Bras d'Or, Cape Breton Island. When in Victoria, he and David frequently shared time afield.

Over the past two years, David and Wayne met frequently at a local McDonald's for coffee to clarify various aspects of his life, especially details for his long list of written works and obtain photographs of his early life and world travel.

Eight of David's long-time friends, Barbara Begg, Betty Brooks, Nancy Buck, Wayne Campbell, Yorke Edwards, Rick Howie, Ken Kennedy, Marilyn Lambert, Alan MacLeod, and Jeremy Tatum, prepared accounts of their memories and stories.

We are appreciative to photographers Gary S. Davidson, Bryan R. Gates, Richard R. Howie, Ronald D. Jakimchuk, Ken Kennedy, Marilyn A. Lambert, the late Douglas Leighton, Alan L. MacLeod, Mark Nyhof, the late Glenn R. Ryder, the late Tom Sowerby, Kampol Sukhumalind, Alan D. Wilson, and Tim Zurowski for use of their images which are acknowledged throughout the text. Drawings and sketches were provided by Sid Baron, Jennifer Beiman, and Mark Hobson. Wayne Weber kindly provided details for David's BCFO award and Patricia, David's daughter, helped locate early photographs and other details of her father's life.

Several drafts of the manuscript were reviewed by David for accuracy and content. Also providing editorial help were Dennis A. Demarchi, Spencer G. Sealy, and Patricia Huet. Mark Nyhof prepared the text and photographs for publication.

Daughter, Patricia Stirling, her husband Cyril Barnard, and grandchildren Siobhan and Rory (Figure 122), live in Duncan, British Columbia. Patricia has given top of the world assistance to David in these difficult latter years.

Figure 122. David, on his 94th birthday, with grandchildren Rory (left) and Siobhan Barnard. *Photo by Patricia Stirling, Victoria, BC, December, 2014.*

This publication has been made possible by support from the Ron Jakimchuk Wildlife Heritage Foundation, 28 Life Members of the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, and personal donations from friends of the late Douglas Leighton, Fred McMechan, M.W. Prowse, Chris Siddle, Dr. Tom Stevens, the late Howard A. Telosky, and Dr. John and Mary Theberge.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Wayne has been a friend of David's since he hired him as a seasonal park naturalist in 1964. He and the late Dr. Rudi Drent thoughtfully supported and encouraged Wayne's early ambitions and facilitated a career path by example. Along the way Dave and Wayne enjoyed joint field trips, conservation projects, writing papers, and stimulating tête-á-tête over coffee. The initial meeting with David was fortuitous. [Figure 123]

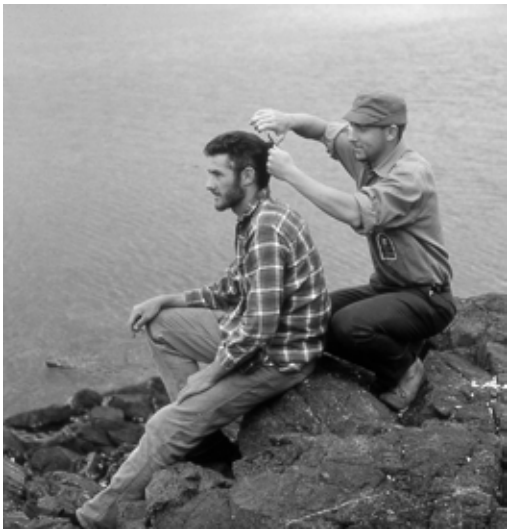


Figure 123. Even on Mitlenatch Island, Park Branch employees had to maintain an acceptable dress code. In this photo, Wayne is getting his hair trimmed by fellow naturalist Ken Kennedy. *Self-photo, July 1966*.

Wayne is co-founder of the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies and has been associate editor of its bi-annual journal *Wildlife Afield* since the inaugural issue in 2004. He was lead author in the four-volume set *The Birds of British Columbia* (1997-2001). His other biographies include *An Old-School Naturalist: Glenn Roderick Ryder* (1938-2013),[8] *Allan Brooks: Naturalist and Wildlife Illustrator*,[18] and *Ian McTaggart-Cowan (1910-2010): A Century with Wildlife* with colleagues Ron Jakimchuk and Dennis Demarchi (Harbour Publishing, 2015).

Barbara enjoyed the outdoors from an early age while growing up on acreage on the Saanich Peninsula before so much of the wild land was lost to development. In later years, along with raising a family, birding and travel for nature, experiencing new places and unexpected adventures became a passion. Barbara has taken part in numerous provincial bird counts, censuses, and surveys (Figure 124).

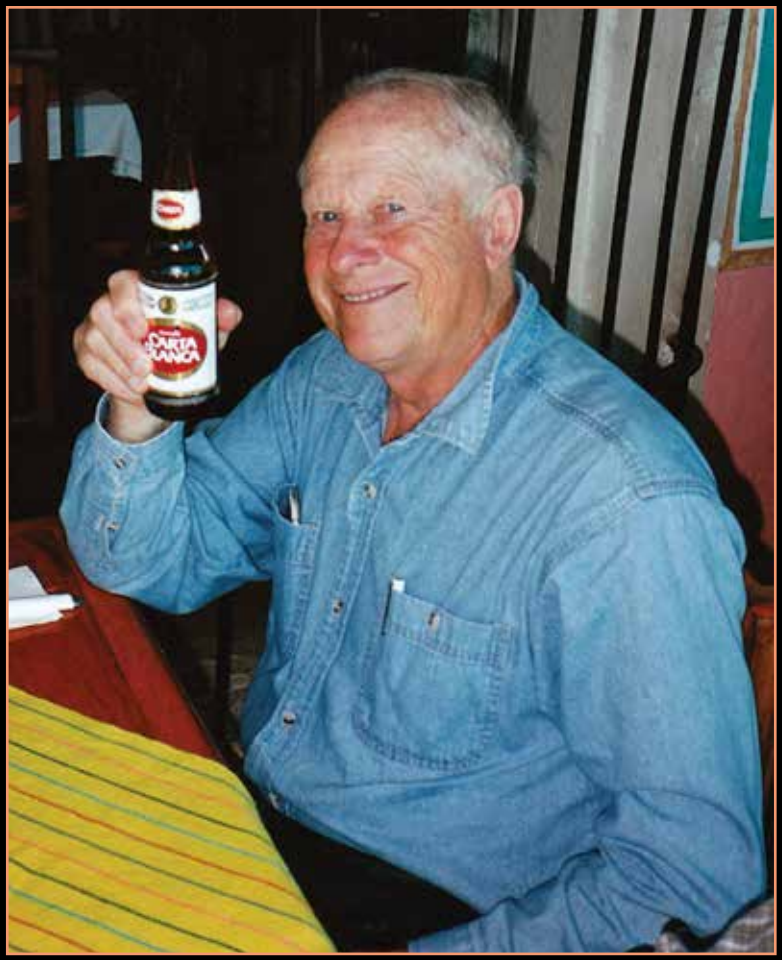
Figure 124. David shared his knowledge of birds with Barbara during an initial field trip with Swiftsure Tours. Over the next several decades, she and David toured the world together enjoying natural and cultural experiences. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell, Saanich, BC, April 2006.*

She has known David for many years, first meeting him through the Victoria Natural History Society. In the early years there were organized birding tours led by David, sometimes with a co-leader. The focus was on owls (notably Spotted Owls) in southwestern BC, Point Pelee for birds in spring in Ontario, and the deserts of southeastern Arizona. Farther afield were group trips with David to the Antarctica on a 38-passenger boat from Ushuaia in Argentina when costs were lower. Other trips included birding in the Republic of Gambia and adjacent Senegal where hordes of locusts were present and Uganda and Rwanda where Mountain Gorilla was the highlight. In all places hundreds of species of birds could be seen.

Exploring on our own was also rewarding in different way – the satisfaction of successful planning and the freedom. Notable places Barbara visited were Iceland, Florida, France, the Maritime provinces, Northwest Territories, Alberta, and of course, different areas in BC. On southern Vancouver Island there was weekly individual birding, hiking, and botanizing outings.

Barbara has benefited from David's vast knowledge of the natural world while they birded, hiked, and travelled together [Figure 125].

Figure 125. In 2014, Barbara and David (centre) enjoyed a trip to Costa Rica.


CARTA
BLANCA