

## Best Places to Bird in British Columbia

By Russell Cannings and Richard Cannings. 2017. Greystone Books. 212 pages, 22.95 CAD, Paper.

The father and son duo of Richard and Russell Cannings are on the road again, birding throughout their home province and taking us along for the ride. Dedicated birders will already be familiar with their nearly 500-page tome, *Birdfinding in British Columbia* (published in 2013 by Greystone Books), which in turn built on earlier guidebooks by other authors. Their most recent book, *Best Places to Bird in British Columbia*, will be more appealing to the general naturalist and less intimidating to beginning birders.

The Cannings have chosen 30 of their favourite birding locations in B.C. While their chosen sites represent all the ecological regions in this vast province, it is more heavily weighted to the southern part, because that's where most birders live or visit. However, they do include some remote sites, such as Triangle Island (off the northwest tip of Vancouver Island), Haida Gwaii, and the Haines Highway in the very northwestern triangle of the province.

Each of the 30 destinations has its own chapter and follows a similar format, starting with a short narrative of what's special about the area and why birders should go there. This is followed by the bulk of the chapter, titled "Birding Guide", which details how to get to the site (including "sub-sites"), a brief description of the habitat, what common birds to expect as well as what rarities have been recorded, when the best time to go is but also what might be seen if you are stuck with visit-

ing in other seasons, too. There is an excellent sidebar called "Getting There" with a clear, simple map and instructions for finding the right roads. All chapters have a photo of a species that you can expect to see in the area, and occasionally a photo of typical habitat.

The authors share personal anecdotes, where appropriate, but don't overdo it. There are also touches of light humour, as when they are describing Iona Island in the lower mainland, where millions of gallons of sewage pour into the Strait of Georgia every day, and note that "The sad thing is, I know some of you read that last passage and get sincerely excited" (p. 51).

Perhaps it was a function of the lead time to getting published, but the authors perpetuate the popular myth that Snowy Owls that irrupt south, for example to Boundary Bay at Vancouver, leave the north to escape low lemming and other rodent populations, arriving exhausted and starving. Recent research is showing that the story is much more complicated – the biggest irruptions may actually be the result of high lemming numbers during the previous breeding season resulting in a large number of birds competing for food, and many being forced to forage farther afield.

This book is an excellent primer for birders who are new to the province or novice birders who might be overwhelmed by the larger guidebook.

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