

BC Coast & Pelagic Trip Report (Aug 23-28, 2025)

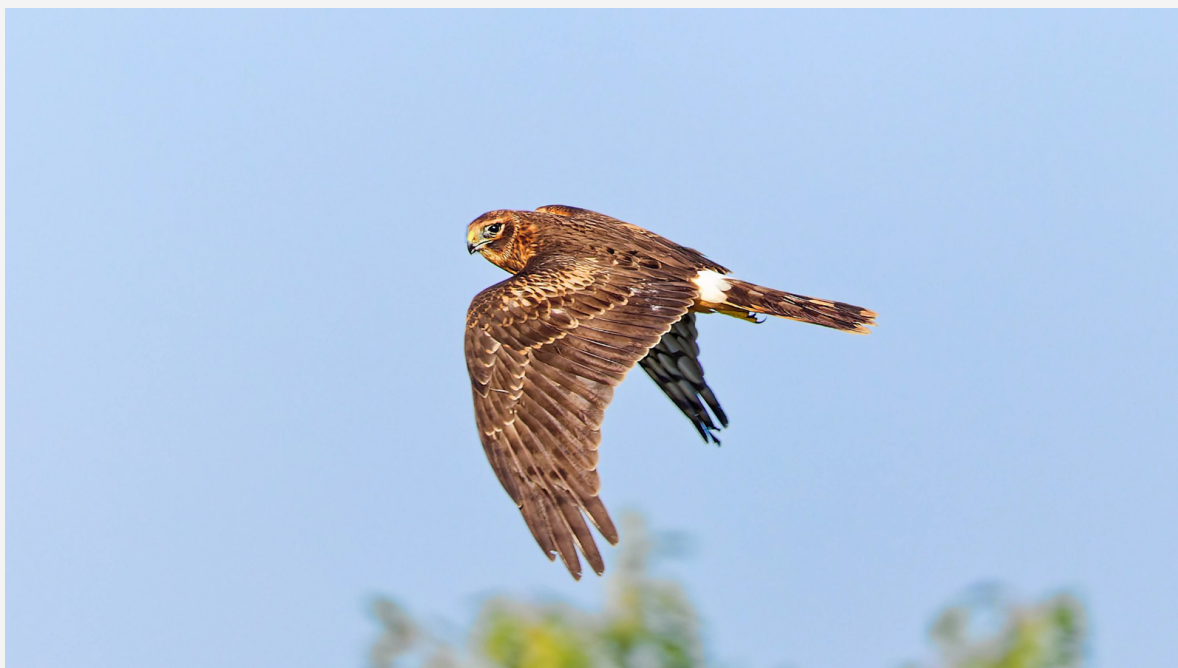
[Link: BC Coast & Pelagic Trip Report \(Aug 23-28, 2025\)](#)

Day 1: Richmond

The group gathered at 6:30 pm for our first dinner, where we laid out plans for the following day and took the opportunity to get to know each other.

Day 2: Richmond - Ucluelet

After an early breakfast, our first birding stop was Boundary Bay, part of the vast Fraser Delta—one of the most important stopovers and wintering sites for Pacific waterfowl and shorebirds. We observed thousands of Green-winged Teal and other dabbling ducks, along with hundreds of Canada Geese and a rare Cackling Goose that had apparently arrived early from Arctic breeding grounds. The diversity of shorebirds included Baird's, Pectoral, Least, Western, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. We also explored the shrubby shoreline habitat, where migrating passerines such as Orange-crowned, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, and Wilson's Warblers, along with many Common Yellowthroats, were active. BC specialties like Bewick's Wren and Spotted Towhee were highlights.



Northern Harrier © Sumeet Mukherjee

Next, we took the ferry from Tsawwassen to Nanaimo. The ferry jetty offered excellent views of

Black Turnstones, Black Oystercatchers, and Harlequin Ducks, alongside a large colony of Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants. During the crossing, we spotted a pair of Common Terns and a distant Humpback Whale. Upon arrival in Nanaimo, we enjoyed a quick picnic lunch at the Nanaimo River Estuary. Even though it was hot and bird activity was moderate, we observed a large flock of Common Ravens, Cooper's Hawks, Barn Swallows, and Cedar Waxwings. Then, we headed across Vancouver Island to Ucluelet, where we had an early dinner before preparing for the next day's boat trip.

Day 3: Boat Trip to Cleland Island

We departed from Tofino Harbour toward Cleland Island, one of the last points of land on the west coast before the open ocean. The island is home to several pairs of Tufted Puffins, which we observed on the water for several minutes. The waters surrounding Cleland Island teemed with seabirds, including numerous Common Murres and Rhinoceros Auklets. An unexpected influx of Short-tailed Shearwaters—typically pelagic—allowed a close comparison with the more numerous Sooty Shearwaters. We also spotted several Wandering Tattlers on rocky islets; these elegant shorebirds are hard to see on the mainland, so this was a special opportunity.



Tofino Harbour © Blair Dudeck



Common Murre © Blair Dudeck



Heerman's Gull © Blair Dudeck



Horned Puffin © Blair Dudeck



Marbled Murrelet © Blair Dudeck



Wandering Tattler © Blair Dudeck



Tufted Puffin © Blair Dudeck



Tufted Puffin © Blair Dudeck



Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters © Blair Dudeck



Short-tailed Shearwater © Blair Dudeck



Short-tailed Shearwater in flight © Blair Dudeck



Rhinoceros Auklet © Blair Dudeck



Pigeon Guillemot © Blair Dudeck

Though the weather prevented us from reaching the continental shelf, we managed to see Pink-footed Shearwaters and a Northern Fulmar about halfway out. Returning to Cleland Island, the bird life continued to impress with large flocks of murres and auklets. The highlight came when a juvenile Horned Puffin was spotted among the murres—a rare BC visitor and a challenging species to observe in Canada. We spent over ten minutes watching this plump bird diving and surfacing,

making it the trip's most memorable highlight.

Day 4: Birding in Pacific Rim National Park

Our second full day on Vancouver Island involved exploring the area between Ucluelet and Tofino. Foggy conditions made birding challenging but added to the adventure as we explored the park's stunning old-growth forests. At Amphitrite Lighthouse, we observed Stellar's Jays and Orange-crowned Warblers. Before lunch, we added Semipalmated Plover, Fox Sparrow, Pacific Wren, Red Crossbill, and Brown Creeper to our list. During lunch in Tofino, we were delighted by an adult Western Gull perched nearby on a roof. The afternoon included a walk around Ucluelet Harbour and the gardens downtown, where we spotted several Rufous Hummingbirds.



Birding in the fog in Tofino © Blair Dudeck



Orange-crowned Warbler © Sumeet Mukherjee



Pacific Wren © Sumeet Mukherjee

Day 5: September 11th - Ucluelet to Vancouver

After breakfast, we bid farewell to the west coast, and headed back across Vancouver Island with a stop at Cathedral Grove—home to some of the last remaining ancient Douglas Firs, many of these trees are over 800 years old! We also explored Little Mountain near Parksville, where we saw

species including Anna's Hummingbird, Oregon Dark-eyed Junco, Hutton's Vireo, and a very cooperative Northern Pygmy-Owl.



Cathedral Grove © Blair Dudeck



Northern Pygmy-Owl © Blair Dudeck



Steller's Jay © Sumeet Mukherjee

Our next stop was the Englishman River Estuary for lunch and some ocean birding. We observed a Western Grebe floating offshore, and during our coastal exploration, we noted flocks of Western Sandpipers. On our ferry ride back to Vancouver, we spotted Short-billed Gulls, Black Turnstones, and several Humpback Whales. We concluded the day with a final group meal at Horseshoe Bay before returning to our hotel.



Our group © Blair Dudeck