



British Columbia Shorebird Migration (Self-drive Tour) - Aug 2021 Trip Report

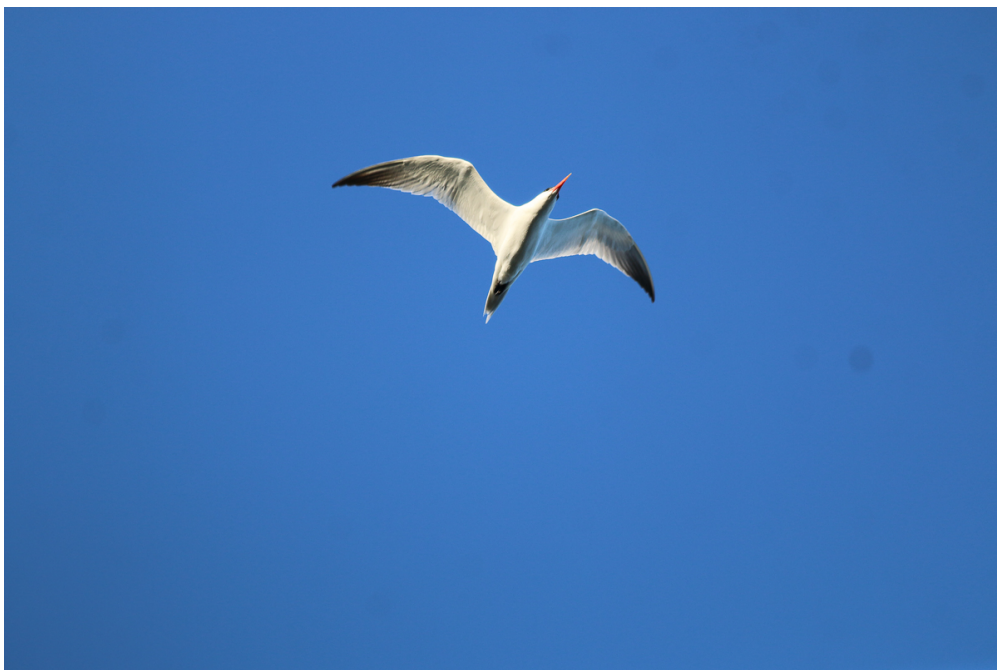
[Link: British Columbia Shorebird Migration \(Self-drive Tour\) - Aug 2021 Trip Report](#)

Day 1: Aug 22, 2021

Our group met at Iona Island, a fitting location to kick off our self-drive Lower Mainland Shorebird Migration Tour. Iona, like other locations we will visit is within the Fraser Estuary Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, and has had more species recorded than anywhere else in the Metro Vancouver Area. Uncharacteristic for the time of year, there was strong winds were coming in off the water, but that did not stop us from having a great start to the trip. A quick jaunt up the base of the South Jetty allowed for closer looks at a group of our first shorebird, **Western Sandpipers**. Good examples of **Glaucous-winged** and **Ring-billed gulls**, and **Caspian Terns** were in attendance, as was our second shorebird species, **Semipalmated Plover**. The high winds were keeping birds low over the Outer Ponds, and we also enjoyed our first swallows, **Barn**, **Northern Rough-winged**, **Violet-green**, **Tree**, and **Purple Martin**. A trio of **Peregrine Falcons** swooped and played in the wind right above us – it seemed everytime we looked up, a Peregrine was in view! We also had some good luck spotting our first mammals, North American River Otter, and Coyote.



Western Sandpipers at Iona © Yousif Attia



Caspian Tern © Yousif Attia



Peregrine Falcon at Iona © Yousif Attia

We then checked into the Inner Ponds, where things really picked up. As soon as we arrived, a lovely **Red-necked Phalarope** greeted us, followed by an uncommon shorebird, a **Stilt Sandpiper**. After we enjoyed these birds, we teased out a number of new shorebirds including **Pectoral, Baird's, Least, and Semipalmated**. Side by side views of **Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs** were opportunities we took to study the field marks. We picked up a couple **Long-billed Dowitchers** before leaving the Inner Ponds for a well-earned lunch.

Our first afternoon stop was Terra Nova Park, in Richmond. Here, we hoped to add more songbirds, and have a chance at American Bittern and Green Heron. Like clockwork, shortly after arriving, we spotted an **American Bittern** in flight. Close-range **Pied-billed Grebes** were at the pond and we also tracked down some Lower Mainland specialties, **Bewick's Wren** and **Bushtit**. Songbird migration was also underway and we snagged **Wilson's Warbler**, and quite a few **Warbling Vireos**. We had time for one more quick stop at Garry Point Park, near the historical fishing village of Steveston. Highlights here included **Northern Harrier**, many **Great Blue Herons**, and some distant **Black-bellied Plovers**.



Pied-billed Grebe © Yousif Attia



Northern Harrier © Yousif Attia

Day 2: Aug 23, 2021

Light drizzle subsided just as we met this morning at Blackie Spit/Crescent Beach, in South Surrey. A **Merlin** was the first bird of note, and perched for great views above the parking lot. We noted

California Gulls of all ages chilling out in the park, which was a great opportunity to study them up close. Not long after walking onto Blackie Spit, two obliging **Marbled Godwits** made an appearance. Scoping the water produced a high count of **Red-necked Grebes** and a few **Common Loons**. **Purple Martins** circled above us as we scoped a large group of 80 **Caspian Terns** loafing among the gulls towards Mud Bay. Further exploration of the spit provided our first **Short-billed Dowitcher** and some **Western Sandpipers**.



California Gull © Yousif Attia

We moved on to Kwomais Point Park where we switched gears to songbirds, which were migrating in full throttle. Upon arrival, we were greeted by one of three bright Townsend's Warblers and our first looks at Chestnut-backed Chickadee. The woods near the parking were hopping with other songbirds including **Orange-crowned**, **Black-throated Gray**, and **Wilson's warblers**, **Swainson's Thrush**, **Western Tanager**, and **Black-headed Grosbeak**. A noisy pack of **Steller's Jays** made us look up, and we counted three **Olive-sided Flycatchers**! Also present were **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**, and both Hutton's and **Warbler vireos**. We scoped the water from the viewpoint where we had a lone **Pigeon Guillemot**, more **Red-necked Grebes** and both **Surf** and **White-winged scoters**. **Rufous** and **Anna's hummingbirds** were in abundance. All in all, a very successful stop!



Birding at Kwomais Point © Yousif Attia

A very quick stop at White Rock Pier provided the hoped for **Black Turnstone**, yet another shorebird to add to our growing collection. After lunch in White Rock, we decided to take a siesta before meeting at Boundary Bay to greet the rising tide. Boundary Bay is well known as one of the most important stopover sites for migrating shorebirds. Here we added **Sanderling, Killdeer,** and **Black-bellied Plover** in addition to improved close looks at a half dozen other shorebird species. An **Osprey** was spotted first on a log on the foreshore then later flying over, and a **Bank Swallow** was picked up – both being good birds for the location. After we had our fill and the tide reached the dyke, some of the group went on to try to see a **Long-billed Curlew** I stumbled upon earlier. The curlew was there, and even showed well for other rarity seekers in the area.





Lunch in White Rock

Day 3: Aug 24, 2021

Our final day of the tour started at another popular birding location – George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary. This is a great place for close looks at shorebirds as well as a chance to see waterfowl and woodland species. We had a great opportunity to compare both **Long-billed** and **Short-billed Dowitcher** among the high numbers of **Lesser Yellowlegs**. We had one more **Stilt Sandpiper** here for good measure as well as nine **Red-necked Phalaropes**! Other species new for the trip included **Wood Duck**, **Cooper's Hawk**, **Sandhill Crane**, **Cedar Waxwing**, **Purple Finch**, **Brown-headed Cowbird**, and **Yellow Warbler** to name a few. We made one final quick stop on Westham Island for a cooperative **Barn Owl** before heading into Ladner for lunch.



Greater Yellowlegs with Short-billed Dowitcher at Reifel © Yousif Attia



Dowitchers (mostly Long-billed) at Reifel © Yousif Attia



Sandhill Crane © Yousif Attia

After lunch we found our way to the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal. This surprisingly productive location was recently popular among birders because of up to three **Brown Pelicans** that had been frequenting the area. We were fortunate enough to catch up to two of them! Also along the jetty break wall were all three species of cormorant: **Brandt's**, **Double-crested** and **Pelagic**. Our last new species of shorebird was added here, and fittingly it was the distinctive and entertaining **Black Oystercatcher**. We had a little more time in the afternoon, which was left open for going after any targets we had missed. This time was spent back at Iona, where although we didn't add any new shorebirds, we did get improved looks at a few species including great comparisons of similar species. We also had both **Blue-winged** and **Cinnamon teals** and a flyover **Turkey Vulture** to end what was a truly enjoyable and productive three days of birding.



Yousif and EET group