

AUTUMN OCCURRENCE OF A BOREAL OWL (*AEGOLIUS FUNEREUS*) IN THE COAST MOUNTAINS

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Abstract -- A Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) was heard singing on the evening of 26 September 1998 at treeline in the Lizzie Creek drainage 10 km. east of Lillooet Lake, British Columbia.

Key words: *Aegolius funereus*, Boreal Owl, British Columbia, Lillooet Lake, treeline.

Campbell *et al.* (1990) classify the Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) as a *rare resident* of higher elevations in the southern interior of British Columbia and *casual* in autumn and winter west of the Coast Mountains, suggesting some post-breeding wandering. Here I report an early autumn occurrence in the Coast Mountains.

On 26 September 1998, during a clear, cool (4° C), windless evening, I heard a Boreal Owl singing at treeline (1860 m.) at the top of an unnamed tributary of Lizzie Creek. The site is 10 km. due east of Lillooet Lake (50° 11' N, 122° 19' W) and 32 km. southeast of Pemberton, British Columbia. Singing was vigorous for 10 minutes in duration starting at 20:25 Pacific Daylight Time and terminating quickly after that. Interestingly, the song heard was the *primary song* (Staccato Song) as described in Hayward and Hayward (1993), which is delivered by males adjacent to nest cavities and used in pair formation. Hayward and Hayward (1993) made no mention of fall singing.

The owl was situated on a steep south-facing timberline slope (Figure 1) in the Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir (ESSF) biogeoclimatic Zone (Meidinger and Pojar 1991). The owl was singing from a cluster of Subalpine Fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), the predominant tree species, surrounded by lush herbaceous alpine meadow with some blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.) shrubs and Indian Hellebore (*Veratum viride*) among a myriad of alpine wildflowers.

Historically, there are few published records from coastal British Columbia, all from the autumn/winter period (Campbell *et al.* 1990). However, a Boreal Owl was recently confirmed breeding in the Coast Mountains (Weir 1997), when a post-fledged juvenile was observed carefully and photographed at close range at Garibaldi Lake (1520 m.), British Columbia.

The known distribution of Boreal Owls in British Columbia is limited by difficult access to their favoured montane



forested areas (Campbell *et al.* 1990) and by the species' normal vocal crypticity during the non-breeding period (Cannings 1986). Future inventories in such places during the peak singing period of late January to early April (Cannings 1986) or mid-February to late April (Hayward and Hayward 1993) could be most revealing.

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BOOK REVIEWS



THE BIRDS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA. VOLUME 3. PASSERINES-FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS, by R. Wayne Campbell, Neil K. Dawe, Ian McTaggart-Cowan, John M. Cooper, Gary W. Kaiser, Michael C. E. McNall and G. E. John Smith. U.B.C. Press, Vancouver, B.C. 1997. 693 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00

The birds of British Columbia is the most important reference to the province's birds ever written. The three volumes published to date, with a final volume in progress, constitute a storehouse of information, giving not only such basics as the distribution of every bird species ever recorded in the province, but also a plethora of information about non-breeding and breeding habitats, life history, reproductive information and conservation notes. Since their publication in 1990, volumes 1 and 2, which covered loons through woodpeckers, have impressed birders and ornithologists, and are now standard references worldwide.

Some regional works of ornithology are so detailed and comprehensive that their usefulness extends far beyond the political borders of their state or province. Edward H. Forbush's *Birds of Massachusetts and other New England states* is a classic example. Published between 1925 and 1929 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, these three volumes became common sources of information for anyone studying birds anywhere in North America. By mid-century they were gradually replaced by the detailed species accounts of A. C. Bent's *Life histories of North American birds*. Like *Birds of Massachusetts*, *The birds of British Columbia* has already become such a classic work. This is because B.C.'s bird list contains about 60% of the species of North America, and because the accounts in the set are so detailed. The reputation of *The birds of British Columbia* continues to grow with the appearance in 1997 of volume 3 -flycatchers through vireos. Even with the final volume still in preparation, *The birds of British Columbia* represents a milestone in detailed distributional and life history information, and has become not only the province's standard reference, but also one of the most informative sets about birds which occur in other regions of Canada and the United States of America.

Much of the difference between *The birds of British Columbia* and other contemporary regional works, such as *The atlas of breeding birds of Alberta* (edited by Glen P. Semenchuck), is one of size, content and scope, reflecting the B.C. authors' incredible attention to detail. *The atlas of breeding birds of Alberta* concerns only breeding birds; *The birds of British Columbia* covers all species, including non-breeders, casual and accidental species. The Alberta atlas devotes one page to each species; in the first two volumes of