

NIMPO LAKE TRIP, JUNE 21ST TO 29TH, 2025

Bob, myself, Nora, Anne and Lisa left Bob's house at 7:30 am and after quick stops in Hope, Spences Bridge and Cache Creek, we stopped for lunch near the Hat Creek Ranch where Ellen, Wim and Tineke joined us. After an interesting break watching the activity, including a Bullock's Oriole trying to get rid of an Osprey and an American Crow trying to catch baby Spotted Sandpipers, we travelled on to Williams Lake and checked into our hotel for a night. After dinner we visited Scout Island Nature Reserve to walk the trails where the highlights were a Red-necked Grebe on its floating nest, a couple of American White Pelicans and a pair of Blue-winged Teal.

Day 1

After a good night's sleep we met at 9 am, when John and Sandee joined us, and set off on Highway 20 to drive to Nimpo Lake, making a number of stops along the way. We stopped to look at a wide expanse of grassland where there were a large number of crows and ravens. When Wim got his scope out to scan the area, he spotted an unusually high number of Swainson's Hawks, nearly a hundred of them, on the grass where we presumed they were feeding on grasshoppers. Further on we stopped at Eagle Lake hoping to see the Arctic Terns which regularly breed there and were rewarded with the sight of two of them. At Towdystan Lake we added a number of species to our list: Northern Shoveler, Sora, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs and Green-winged Teal. We arrived at Stewart's Lodge at 4 pm where we were welcomed by the owner, Jesse, and moved into our home for the next week, a well-appointed cabin overlooking Nimpo Lake.

It was raining lightly and warm so the mosquitoes were out in force, but thanks to the screens on the doors very few got into the cabin. Luckily this was the worst day for mosquitoes and we saw relatively few for the rest of the week.



Nimpo Lake from the cabin

Photo: Bob Puls

Day 2

We were all up in good time and set off at 8:45 headed for Anahim Lake, where we took Christensen Road, then turned off to the Anahim Lake Resort. There we found plenty of roadside parking space and explored the area for a couple of hours. We found a good place to scan the wide grassland spread out below us and located two pairs of Sandhill Cranes. From there we walked along a road that took us near the lake, crossing over two creeks. These had an abundance of Willow bushes which are always excellent habitat and yielded a variety of birds including a pair of Dusky Flycatchers, a couple of Northern Waterthrushes and an American Redstart that posed for us on some overhead wires.



Photo: Gareth Pugh

We returned to Christensen Road, continuing northward until we found a wide spot where we could park. This proved a very lucky choice as a Wilson's Phalarope flew in to what was obviously its nest site in the grass close to the road, so it was easy to photograph. By now it was time for lunch so out came the chairs for us

to sit on the roadside. While eating we heard the unmistakable sound of two Long-billed Curlews further out which we were able to view through Wim's scope, another good sighting! From there we travelled further up Christensen before turning back to explore several side roads, but neither heard nor saw much of note for the rest of the afternoon. In the evening a Red Fox came to visit and we were told that people had been feeding two of them so they were looking for food.



Red Fox

Photo: Gareth Pugh

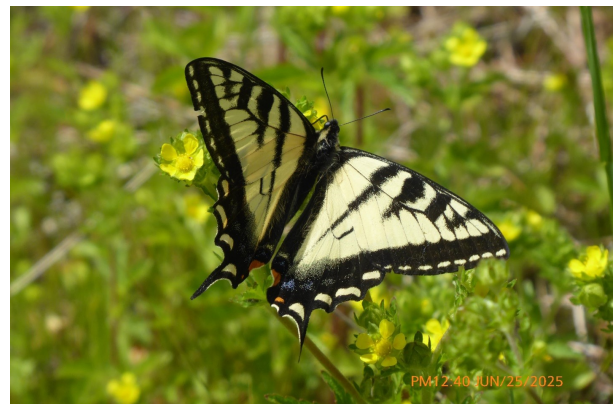
Day 3

We wanted to check out the Nightjar Survey route, so headed up the highway and turned off on a Forest Service Road which starts at a sawmill that is in the process of being decommissioned. Our first stop was along Beef Trail FSR Road at a shallow branch of Wawa Lake. There we counted seventeen Greater Yellowlegs, a couple of Lesser Yellowlegs, a pair of Solitary Sandpipers and a number of other species. Going on we drove to the shore of Wawa Lake, where we found a pair of Trumpeter Swans and several Bonaparte's Gulls. From there we retraced our steps to Charlotte Lake Road, heading south until we

located the first station for the survey at the intersection with Hooch Main. There we stopped for lunch and took a short walk along an old logging road. We continued southwards for about ten kilometers, stopping at interesting spots along the way before turning back and taking Hooch Main FSR, ending up at Towdystan on Highway 20 at the end of the survey route. Along most of this route, the trees had been clearcut and new trees were starting to grow, creating what appeared to be good nighthawk habitat and an easy road to survey with almost no traffic.

Day 4

We started our day in warmer weather at Anahim Airport where we found a number of Swallows (Tree, Barn, Rough-winged and Cliff) which were nesting in boxes and the adjacent buildings, but we did not find the Say's Phoebe which we had hoped for. We took the Kappan Mountain FSR, stopping at various places, including a large wetland, part of the Pelican Lakes system, which was alive with birds (Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, Marsh Wren etc.) plus several butterflies, all of which kept us occupied for an hour.



Western Tiger Swallowtail

Photo: Gareth Pugh

Wanting to check out Kappan Lake, we followed the signs for the Kappan Lake West recreation site which proved to be a rough gravel road, so part way along it we stopped at an open area for lunch and to discuss whether or not it was worth proceeding. This was a fortunate stop as we heard an American Three-toed Woodpecker calling as it flew into a nearby tree before taking

off again. We heard young birds calling but failed to locate the nest. However, the woodpecker returned calling again so we guessed its nest was nearby. After lunch our brave drivers decided to risk continuing on, which they did successfully as we enjoyed the amount of bird activity at the lake and also saw a Snowshoe Hare.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Photo: Bob Puls

On the way back we stopped to check out interesting places, including the Dean River Recreation Site, before heading back to our cabin. After supper six of us set off to do the survey, turning off at the old sawmill site where the navigator slipped up and instead of taking the Charlotte Lake Road, we found ourselves being waved down by a contractor who informed us we were entering a construction site where the local First Nation are building a solar farm. However, when he learned that we were naturalists he told us we were welcome to proceed and look at an Osprey nest which they were observing. So we drove on into the site where we had excellent views of an adult Osprey carefully taking apart a fish and feeding its chicks. As we turned around to leave, we noticed a family of foxes which were obviously living under a half demolished structure. A black adult was standing guard while the red and black cubs played around and a red adult could be seen in the background.

After taking a short walk along an old logging road, we started the Nightjar survey and also

tried using the bat monitor. Despite our expectation that the habitat was suitable, we only found Common Nighthawks at four of the first nine survey stations before it started to rain and did not pick up any bat calls.

Day 5

Hoping to see a Moose, we took Morrison Meadows Road which we had been told was a good place to see them. Our first stop was at a bridge over the Dean River where we found a Northern Waterthrush, a fairly common species in the area, before taking a trail into the forest where we found Pileated, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and a Red-breasted Sapsucker. Continuing along the road, we stopped at a couple of locations to scan the grassland for Sandhill Cranes and found two pairs.

It rained off and on as we drove along. Much of the vegetation by now was dwarf willow, ideal habitat we thought, but no sign of the Moose we were hoping for.

Eventually we turned around and met a rancher going the other way who stopped to talk to us for a little while. He was very interesting as he told us about the wolves and grizzlies that take moose, caribou and cattle.

On the way back, we stopped at the bridge where most of us walked into the forest again but did not find any woodpeckers this time.

After supper Bob and I explored the roads at the south end of Nimpo Lake where we found a Barrow's Goldeneye, the first for this trip, and saw five Snowshoe Hares along the roadside.



Western Meadowlark

Photo: Bob Puls

Day 6

We started the day by driving to the Eagles Nest Resort, located on a bluff on the west shore of Anahim Lake, where we were given permission by the manager to take a look around. We walked around the property checking out the cabins they have available in addition to hotel rooms and also, of course, recording the birds we could find. Returning to the Highway, we took Reed Road towards Abuntlet Lake. We came across a deer feeding at the roadside which seemed quite accustomed to humans as we were able to get close to it and take photos. We turned off to briefly visit the Red Cariboo Resort which had cabins for rent but the roadway was still unfinished and muddy from the recent rain, so we drove on further and found a spot to stop for lunch. By this time of the day there was very little bird activity so after going a bit further, we decided to turn back.



Tawny Edge Skipper

Photo: Gareth Pugh

Our last stop at the south end of Anahim Lake was the best location of the day. We saw a number of Black Swifts, Black Terns, Bonaparte's Gulls, Yellow-headed, Red-winged and Rusty Blackbirds and lots of ducks. We also flushed a Short-tailed Weasel which gave us great views as it ran from bush to bush, a rare sighting and a first for most of us.

Day 7

For our last day we decided to explore Dusty Lake Road. At our first stop we walked into a lightly treed area bordering a dried up wetland and spent nearly an hour there. We recorded fifteen species, including a Northern Flicker nest with noisy youngsters, a displaying Wilson's Snipe, four Western Wood-Pewees and a pair of Sandhill Cranes calling nearby while a White

Pelican flew over. We saw Pelicans in a number of places on this trip as they seem to be quite widely spread, both breeding and non-breeding birds. Further on we took a walk along an old forest road on the north side of the road where we found several Canada Jays, Dark-eyed Juncos and Yellow-rumped Warblers. With the sun warming up a number of butterflies were flying and we managed to get a couple of photos although they did not stop for long.

On the way back, we stopped at a small wetland on both sides of the road at Towdystan, where we found Rusty, Red-winged and Brewer's Blackbirds plus a pair of very agitated Lesser Yellowlegs and several other species.

The evening was spent packing up, ready for an early start the next day.

Day 8

We were all up early and got away by eight o'clock on a warm sunny day. Bob and I stopped at Alexis Creek to see if we could see the Swainson's Hawks that Wim had reported and were rewarded with the sight of a large number of them flying overhead and on the fields. We met two birders from Williams Lake who had come out to see what they described as an unprecedented spectacle as these hawks are a rare sighting in the Chilcotin. They had counted 140 birds and a large number of Common Ravens feeding on the swarms of grasshoppers that were everywhere (one of Nature's mysteries, how did all those birds know about the grasshopper feast?).

When we got to Clinton we found that the road was closed for several hours due to an accident so we turned off to take the gravel road over Pavilion Mountain and got back on the highway at Lytton. From there on it was a steady drive but a longer day than we had hoped, the end of another great trip on which we recorded 140 species for e-Bird from Spences Bridge onward and 125 species in the Nimpo Lake area. We also carried out a Nightjar Survey for Birds Canada and managed to photograph a number of butterflies.

Gareth Pugh