

## Brant Counts -2020 –PQBWMA

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### **Brant Count #1 - full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total: 196 Brant**

**-February 13, 2020. 12:45 pm - 4:00pm**

-Rathtrevor -196

-The first Brant Count of the season was typical with Brant found only at Rathtrevor Beach. Most Brant mixed with ~150 gulls were adjacent to the main beach with some spread out in front of the resorts. 500+ Dunlin mixed with Black-bellied Plover and Black Turnstones were flying often. Very few beach walkers today. A noteworthy and noisy flock of ~750 Bonaparte's Gulls were flying as a cloud, landing on the water, hovering and diving in Craig Bay. At Rathtrevor I listened to three Conservation Officers instructing the current class of ~20 students on how to do their future beach patrols looking for off leash dogs. PV Bay had 6 dogs off leash with many more on & off leash along the beachfront walk and two Conservation Officers were seen writing a ticket for 2 off leash dogs. The mouth of French Creek had ~80 Canada Geese, 150+ dabblers, 250+ gulls. Area 2 and 3 had scattered dabblers, gulls, goldeneye, Bufflehead, a few sea lions. At the mouth of the Little Qualicum River there were ~400 dabblers mixed with gulls and several sandbars covered with resting gulls. Gull numbers are climbing but no frenzied gull activity yet on the Strait of Georgia. No herring boats.

-Conditions: Mostly sunny, light winds, good viewing conditions, lowest daytime tide.

-1 counter: Sandra Gray

### **Brant Count #2 - full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total: 131 Brant**

**-February 17, 2020. 1:15 pm - 2:50 pm**

-Rathtrevor -131

-For our 2<sup>nd</sup> primary count of the season we split into 3 groups. Rathtrevor had all 131 Brant seen today, ~500 Dunlin, Black-bellied Plover, 30 people and 2 dogs on the beach. PV Bay had 2 dogs off leash and 8 beach walkers. Area 2 & 3 had a great mix of our winter birds: mallard, wigeon, goldeneye, bufflehead, harlequin, scoters, mergansers, grebe, eagles, 11 oystercatchers at QB viewing stand, dunlin, gulls. Harbour seals and sea lions were scattered. Many people were on the beach today for Family Day.

-Conditions: Sun-cloud mix, 6 d Celsius, light winds, choppy seas.

-9 counters: Sandra Gray, Evelyn Constable, Claire Summers, Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Sue Wilson, Jim Goodwin, David Helem, Toni Wyckoff

### **Brant Count #3 - full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total: 326 Brant**

**-February 24, 2020. 10:15 am- 12:15 pm**

-Rathtrevor -122. Mariner Way -198. PV Com Park -2. French Creek marina -4.

-We split into 3 groups today. Brant were spread out along 1.5 kms of shoreline at Rathtrevor, feeding with their heads down most of the time and were mixed with gulls, very active 400+ Dunlin, Black-bellied Plover and a mix of dabblers and divers. At the mouth of the Englishman River we found a large group of ~150 Brant floating 1km offshore and saw several small groups flying toward Craig Bay. PV Bay and the north end were fairly quiet with a mix of our typical winter dabblers, divers and gulls whose numbers have all increased since last week. We saw Mallard, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, goldeneye, Bufflehead, Harlequin, scaup, grebe, Common Loon, Pacific Loon further out in deep waters, Common & Red-breasted Mergansers, Bald Eagles, Black Oystercatchers, Dunlin, Black-bellied Plover, Black Turnstones. Sea lions and harbour seals were popping up or swimming by occasionally. Very few beach walkers were out today and no dogs were seen on beaches. Herring assessments have started recently, the season is upon us.

-Conditions: Light-medium winds, good visibility, a light chop on the SOG.

-9 counters: Sandra Gray, Lynne Brookes, Evelyn Constable, David Helem, Claire Summers, Helen Davidson, Duncan Campbell, Bonnie Mullin, Sue Wilson

**Brant Count #4 - full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total : 883 Brant**

**-March 2, 2020. 1:15 pm – 3:00 pm**

-Rath Trevor -246. Mariner Way -45. Butterball -335. Seacrest -257.

-We split into three groups today. Brant were scattered along the waterline at Rath Trevor feeding with gulls, Dunlin, plovers and dabblers with very few beach walkers on this cool day. At the mouth of the Englishman River small flocks of Brant were flying on the SOG, most heading toward Rath Trevor. Parksville Bay had numerous Northern Pintail, Mallard, American Wigeon, goldeneye, Bufflehead and a few scoters. Brant have moved a bit north this week, feeding with gulls and dabblers the full length of Area 2. Qualicum Beach had more dabblers and a mix of divers, 9 Black Oystercatchers, 1 heron and numerous eagles. Scoter numbers are still fairly low and no frenzied gull activity observed. Brant were up and flying often due to wind, gull movements and eagle flights. Exposed sandbars were covered with resting gulls at many locations, their numbers have risen since last week. Two Orcas were seen off the mouth of the Englishman River.

-Conditions: Overcast, windy, choppy waters.

-11 counters: Sandra Gray, Jim Goodwin, Sue Wilson, Lynne Brookes, Helen Davison, Bonnie Mullin, Duncan Campbell, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable, David Helem, Claire Summers

**Brant Count #5 - full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total: 406 Brant**

**-March 9, 2020. 10:15 am – 12:00 pm**

-Rath Trevor -58. PV Bay -3. Admiral Tryon W -290. Butterball -50. Surfside Dr W -5.

-We split into 3 groups today, all hoping to catch the **herring spawn & fishery activities that started March 6**. Rath Trevor was quiet with Brant feeding along the water line with scattered gulls, Dunlin and dabblers. From PV Bay we saw 50+ Red-breasted Mergansers, numerous goldeneye & Bufflehead, groups of Pacific Loons and several gull frenzies out on the Strait of Georgia. A large raft of divers at least 1.5 km long of mostly Surf Scoters, were mixed with Brant and other diving ducks off Johnstone Rd. The north end had another large raft of divers off Kincaid Rd that also held mostly Surf Scoters, bunched up and very dense, with other species at the edges of the raft ... 200+ scaup, 150+ goldeneye, Bufflehead, Harlequin, dabblers, Horned Grebe and frenzied gulls. The brisk winds kept people and dogs mostly off the beaches. Herring spawns, rafts of sea lions and sandbars covered with gulls were seen the full length of the PQBWMA. The herring gillnet vessels were active, most between the Little Qualicum & Big Qualicum Rivers. It is likely we missed counting many Brant today with some hidden among the scoters and other divers, some likely remained out on the SOG.

-Conditions: Sun, partly cloudy, winds and seas were calm at some sites but picked up by noon with a steady onshore wind. Good visibility.

-10 counters: Sandra Gray, Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Sue Wilson, Duncan Campbell, Jim Goodwin, Toni Wyckoff, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable, Helen Davidson

**Brant Count #6** - full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total: **1291 Brant**

**-March 16, 2020. 1:00 pm -3:15 pm**

-Rathtrevor – 1050. PV Bay – 216. Surfside Dr -25.

-We split into 3 groups. There have been many recent herring spawns along the shoreline with fishery activity, numerous rafts of barking sea lions and migratory birds arriving in large numbers. Rathtrevor Beach had a spectacular flock of Brant wheeling about often due to the 40+ beach walkers, one pushy photographer and 3 dogs off leash. At PV Bay we saw: over 150 very active Bufflehead; a cloud of Dunlin; over 600 dabblers feeding on roe; several sea lion rafts; 5000+ gulls; 2 flocks of Brant up and down several times due to the numerous walkers and 5 dogs on the beach. From Columbia to Seacrest we saw: well over 3000 gulls; a raft of 231 Pacific Loons; Black Turnstones, Black Oystercatchers, many 100s of wigeon; more sea lion rafts; at least 26 beach walkers. From the Qualicum Beach viewing stand to Surfside Dr a raft of 15-20k diving ducks, mostly Surf Scoters, were resting and feeding. Scaup, Long-tail Ducks Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Harlequin, grebes, dabblers and gulls were mixed in the raft and feeding along the shore.

-Condition: A beautiful sunny day with calm seas and light winds.

-11 counters: Sandra Gray, Dan Gray, Dave Erickson, Lynne Brookes, Derrick Grimmer, Bonnie Mullin, Jim Goodwin, Claire Summers, Helen Davidson, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable.

**Brant Count #7** – full length of PQBWMA – Estimated daily total: **1909 Brant**

**-March 23, 2020. 10:00 am – 12:15 pm**

-Rathtrevor - 1848. PV Bay -61.

-We split into 3 groups traveling in separate cars except the two family groups to keep our 'social distances'. Brant at Rathtrevor were nervous, flying often due to 3 persistent beach walkers. The 1848 Brant were mixed with 3000+ gulls, 7 herons were flying overhead, dabblers and divers were few. At Parksville Bay Brant were mixed with 550+ American Wigeon, 150+Mallard & 100+ Northern Pintail. There was also a loose raft of divers with 800+ Bufflehead, 350+ scoters, 150+ Long-tailed Ducks. Columbia Beach to Seacrest had 32 people on the beach, some with dogs, some family groups with youth who were running at the numerous gulls to flush them and another loose raft of divers off Seacrest. The very large raft of mostly scoters continues east of the Little Qualicum River towards Qualicum Beach. Gulls by the 1000s and dabblers by the 100s at many sites over the full distance of our survey today.

-Conditions: Mostly sunny, clouds moving in from the west, good visibility, calm to start with choppy seas by noon.

-8 counters: Sandra Gray, Dan Gray, Al Kirkley, Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Claire Summers, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable

**Brant Count #8** – full length of PQBWMA - Estimated daily total: **2259 Brant**

**-March 30, 2020. 12:45 pm - 3:45 pm**

-Rathtrevor -1500. Admiral Tryon W -753. Beach Creek -6.

-We split into 3 groups, all traveling in separate cars to keep our 'social distances'. Rathtrevor Park was closed to vehicles. One counter walked in to the main beach area to find at least 1500 Brant feeding alongside gulls at the waterline, no dogs and very few people. Parksville Bay held a raft of over 6000 divers, mostly scoters, and over 3500 gulls. At Admiral Tryon pool 753 Brant were a welcome sight. Area 2 beaches held over 5000 gulls and another large mixed raft of over 10,000 divers, mostly scoters. Area 1 had another raft of mixed divers, scattered dabblers, 6 Great Blue Heron, 14 Black Oystercatchers, 2 river otters and 1 dead deer on the beach. Beach walkers were few today.

-Conditions: Cold, breezy, overcast with off and on rain.

-6 Counters: Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Dave Erickson, Claire Summers, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable.

**Brant Count #9 -- full length of PQBWMA – Estimated daily total: 2139 Brant**

**-April 6, 2020. 10:00 am -12:00 pm**

-Rathtrever – 850. PVBay -1080. Admiral Tryon W -18. Johnstone Rd – 28. Butterball – 46. Seacrest – 31. Surfside E -86.

-Our 3 groups either walked their area alone or travelled in separate cars to keep our 'social distances'. Viewing has become challenging at Rathtrever with restricted access. Lately PV Bay has held large numbers of Brant regularly. Areas 1 and 2 counters saw most Brant flying south along with 1000's of scoters and 4 dogs off leash. Other species seen: Great Blue Heron, wigeon, Mallard, Bufflehead, Bald Eagle, Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, Black-bellied Plover, Bonaparte's Gull, Northwestern Crow.

-Conditions: Some cloud but mostly sunny with a cool breeze.

-6 counters: Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Dave Erickson, Claire Summers, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable.

**Brant Count #10 --full length of PQBWMA – Estimated daily total: 769 Brant**

**-April 13, 2020. 1:00 pm -3:30 pm**

-Rathtrever -550. Admiral Tryon West - 42. Kincaid -27. Surfside E -150.

-Brant counters were challenged again this week with the continued social distancing, no access to Rathtrever and numerous people walking and recreating on the beach. Views of Brant at Rathtrever were from further west than we like but the flock was up and flying so that an approximate number could be tallied. PV Bay and the west side of the Englishman River estuary had no Brant, however 34 people and 3 dogs on the beach, with a very low tide likely resulted in no space for Brant to feed. Area 2 beaches had more people than Brant, 71 people were counted on the beach, many walking at the waterline where birds usually feed. Area 3 held some Brant, Great Blue Heron and 6 kayakers. Other species seen: Mallard, wigeon, scoters, 200+Common Mergansers, Bald Eagle, numerous Bonaparte's Gulls, Black Oystercatcher. Scattered gulls and scoters were seen in all areas of our survey, their numbers have dropped from the highs in late March.

-Conditions: Sunny and warm.

-6 counters: Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Dave Erickson, Claire Summers, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable.

**Brant Count #11 – full length of PQBWMA -- Estimated daily total: 429 Brant**

**-April 20, 2020. 10:00 am – 12:30 pm**

- Rathtrever -330. Admiral Tryon W -78. Johnstone Rd -18. Surfside E -3.

-The largest group of 330 Brant were gathered in front of the resorts in Craig Bay. All other Brant were flying.

-Conditions: Calm waters and winds. Partly cloudy.

-6 Counters : Lynne Brookes, Bonnie Mullin, Dave Erickson, Claire Summers, Tom Constable, Evelyn Constable.

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