The bird, likely a female or juvenile, was buzzing back and forth when suddenly the lake's surface broke into a splash and a large bullfrog, with split second timing and mouth wide open, grabbed the hummingbird from the air, plunged back into the water, and vanished. The bullfrog leapt at least 0.61 m out of the water to capture the bird.

The Wildlife Data Centre databases, housed by the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies in Victoria, include a wide variety of bullfrog prey previously unpublished from throughout the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, and southeastern Vancouver Island. These include: red-legged frog (\textit{Rana aurora}) and green frog (\textit{Rana clamitans}) adults, juveniles, and tadpoles, bullfrog tadpoles, common garter snake (\textit{Thamnophis sirtalis}) young Canada Goose (\textit{Branta canadensis}) goslings, Wood Duck (\textit{Aix sponsa}), Mallard (\textit{Anas platyrhnchos}), Gadwall (\textit{Anas sterpera}), and Blue-winged Teal (\textit{Anas discors}) ducklings, Virginia Rail (\textit{Rallus limicola}) chicks, American Coot (\textit{Fulica americana}) chicks, Spotted Sandpiper (\textit{Actitus macularia}) chicks, Bushtit (\textit{Psaltriparus minimus}), Marsh Wren (\textit{Cistothorus palustris}), flycatcher species, European Starling (\textit{Sturnus vulgaris}) fledgling, Cedar Waxwing (\textit{Bombycilla cedrorum}) juvenile, American Robin (\textit{Turdus migratorius}) juvenile, Yellow Warbler (\textit{Dendroica petechia}), Common Yellowthroat (\textit{Geothlypis trichas}), Song Sparrow (\textit{Melospiza melodia}) juvenile, Dark-eyed (“Oregon”) Junco (\textit{Junco hyemalis}) 

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About the Author

Wayne recently co-authored the book \textit{Birds of the Raincoast – Habits and Habitats}, printed by Harbour Publishing.

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GROSS BILL DEFORMITY AND LONGEVITY IN A NORTHERN Flicker

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Deformities in birds may be caused by accidents, diseases, physiological disorders or may, in some cases, occur as accidents during embryonic development. Some well known physical deformities include larger or smaller bodies, extra wings or legs, a lack of toenails, toes, feet, and legs, broken legs, lack of tail feathers, and bills that are crossed, split, or lack pigment. Banders have the best opportunity to record abnormal growths because they examine a lot of individuals each year. In Ohio, Hicks (1934) banded 10,000 European Starlings (\textit{Sturnus vulgaris}) and discovered that 5.35 \% (535 birds) had abnormalities. Of these 0.038 \% (380 birds) had
deformed bills. Craves (1994) summarizes the incidence of bill deformities in 24 species of passerines and estimates that it is rare and occurs in wild birds at a frequency of 0.5%.

Documenting and reporting deformities in birds, and other animals, especially amphibians, should be encouraged as such incidents help in alerting biologists to environmental health issues and perhaps problems that may exist geographically and locally in the animal’s range (Berger and Howard 1968). For example, Hays and Risebrough (1972) blame the effects of chemical pollutants on deformities in young Common Terns (Sterna hirundo) at Long Island, New York. Such observations could be summarized annually in British Columbia Nest Record Scheme reports.

This note describes observations of a Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus cafer) that visited my bird feeders and neighbour’s feeders infrequently from 9 January 2003 through late October 2004 in the vicinity of McLure, 40 km north of Kamloops, BC.

The woodpecker, an adult hybrid male “Red-shafted” form, was first observed on 9 January 2003 poking at black oil sunflower seeds, suet bits, wild birdseed mix, peanuts, and table scraps on the ground. The bird’s bill appeared twice the normal 4.2-cm in length and had a noticeable downward curve. The mandibles were spaced about 2.5 cm apart at the tip. While both the upper and lower mandibles followed the same downward course, the lower mandible had a slightly more pronounced curve creating a widening gap which prevented the tips from meeting (Figure 1). Neither mandible curved to the right or left, only down.

On 25 January 2004 the bird’s bill had grown in length with the lower mandible curving slightly to the left. The flicker reappeared on 13 June 2004 at which time its overall appearance had changed drastically although it appeared active and alert. The breast feathers were extremely dishelved and the bill had grown significantly longer. It appeared that the upper mandible continued to follow the original downward growth, now approximately 15-18 cm in length while the lower mandible had curved to the left (Figure 1).

Between 13 and 18 June 2004 I had the opportunity to watch the flicker feeding while eating ants and kernels of corn. The behaviour was astounding. While manipulating the upper mandible like a “pry bar” then raking the left side of the bill along the length of a corncob, kernels were loosened and fell to the ground. In order to consume these kernels and bits of fallen suet, the flicker squatted low to the ground and by aligning its head horizontally its bill functioned like “chopsticks” to grasp the morsel of food. With the food secured in its bill, the flicker lifted its left wing and placed its upper mandible under the wing. The bill was slid in and out until its tongue could reach the food.

The flicker also frequented ant colonies located on the front lawn. The bird was quite adaptable to its handicap. The feeding method included poking the tip of the upper mandible into the ant mound with the lower mandible just touching so ants could crawl up the bill and into the mouth.

By 10 August 2004 the flicker’s bill length remained unchanged but the lower mandible appeared weak and floppy. On 25 September the flicker was unsuccessful at eating at the suet cage and unsuccessfully tried to pick up fallen bits of suet dropped by other feeding birds. There was now a more dramatic curve to the lower mandible and it was obvious that the flicker had lost control of its bill.

The flicker was last seen in late October 2004 at a neighbour’s suet feeder and drinking water from a birdbath. The fate of this bird remains unknown. The flicker arrived in apparent adult plumage so it is remarkable that it was able to survive and adapt with its handicap in the wild for at least 760 days.

Acknowledgements
I thank Linda Van Damme for encouragement and assistance in researching this article for publication.
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About the Author

Sherry is an avian artist who captures the true spirits of birds for etchings on glass. She lives in the small community of McLure. She also wrote a regular column “The Feather Factor” for the Thompson Star/Journal in Barriere.

Gray Wagtail (Motacilla cinerea): A New Species for British Columbia

Jerry Etzkorn and Janet Etzkorn

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The Gray Wagtail (Motacilla cinerea) is an Old World species that breeds from the British Isles, southern Scandinavia, central Russia and central Siberia south to northwestern Africa, the Mediterranean region, Asia Minor, Iran, the Himalayas, northern Mongolia, Manchuria, northern Korea, and Japan. It generally winters south of its summer range to central Africa, Sri Lanka, and western New Guinea. In North America it is mainly a casual spring migrant through the Commander and western Aleutians and Pribilof and St. Lawrence islands in Alaska. Elsewhere it is considered accidental (American Ornithologist’s Union 1998).

On 26 October 2004, at 1600 hrs., we spotted a yellow-bellied bird on a small gravel beach on the southeast side of Carmanah Point Lightstation on southwestern Vancouver Island (48°0 36' 52" N, 124°0 45' 37" W). The bird was frequently wagging its tail as it vigorously fed on a huge hatch of kelp flies and smaller midges along the tide line. We watched the bird for about 10 min before it flew, with a strong direct flight, into a nearby Sitka spruce (Picea sitchensis) tree. We returned to the lightstation to complete a weather report. In the meantime, we identified the yellow-coloured wagtail, using the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, as a Gray Wagtail. Forty-five min later we returned to the beach to find the bird feeding in the same area. The wagtail walked and snapped insects off the rocks continuing to wag its tail between feeding events. At one point it preened for several minutes. A series of photographs documenting the occurrence were obtained using a digital Nikon Coolpix 4200 camera pressed against a spotting telescope as the bird continued to feed. These images have been catalogued as B C Photo 3059 (Figure 1) and deposited in the scientific photo files at the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies in Victoria (see Campbell and Stirling 1971).

The Gray Wagtail is an exceedingly rare bird to find in western North America south of western Alaska. Small (1994) lists a single record for California of an immature bird that was present at the mouth of the Salinas River on 9 and 10 October 1988. There are no satisfactory occurrences from the Yukon Territory prior to 2003 (Sinclair et al. 2003), British Columbia prior to 26 October 2004 (Campbell et al. 1997; R. W. Campbell pers. comm.), and Oregon prior to January 1997 (Russell 1997).

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Campbell, R.W., N.K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J.M. Cooper, G.W. Kaiser, and M.C.E. McNall. 1997. The 64 1:2 December 2004 Figure 1. Gray Wagtail, Carmanah Point, BC. 26 October 2004 (Jerry Etzkorn). B C Photo 3059.