



## Earliest Occurrences of Ruddy Turnstone in Interior British Columbia

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Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), a Holarctic shorebird, breeds in tundra regions in far northern parts of North America and Eurasia and winters on southern seacoasts throughout the world. It is a long-distant migrant, with no resident populations, and travels great distances across oceans and equators between breeding and wintering grounds (Nettleship 2000).

In British Columbia, Ruddy Turnstone is a common spring migrant on the outer coasts but less common there in autumn. In the interior, this species occurs infrequently as a casual spring and very rare autumn transient. Only single birds have been reported in the interior (Campbell et al. 1990a,b). Brooks and Swarth (1925) and Munro and Cowan (1947) did not list early records for the interior of the province. If present, Ruddy Turnstones surely would have been noted because of the unmistakable breeding plumage of adults and, even in nonbreeding and juvenile birds, the orange legs are diagnostic. Campbell et al. (1990b) listed the earliest interior record as 11 September 1970 for an unaged bird seen near Prince George.

Between 1942 and 1954, Glenn Ryder (GRR) and his brother Donald lived for 12 years in foster homes in the vicinity of Penticton and Kelowna in the Okanagan valley and Celista in the Shuswap Lake area (Campbell and Henderson 2013). In summer 1962, GRR returned to Scotch Creek, on the north shore of Shuswap Lake, to help build a house for Donald. During the 13 years GRR and Donald spent in this area, GRR kept extensive notes on wildlife observed and, on six occasions, recorded Ruddy Turnstone, two

in spring and four in late summer/early autumn. The following sets of observations comprise the earliest reported dates for Ruddy Turnstone in the interior of British Columbia.

All sightings of Ruddy Turnstones by the Ryder brothers were generally described as small to medium-sized shorebirds with stocky/chunky bodies and short orange legs and necks. The chisel-shaped bills were pointed, all-black, and were upturned towards the tip. Most turnstones were seen flipping over rocks and beach debris on lakeshores and beaches with their bills searching for food. The sex of adults was not recorded. Additional descriptions of the plumages of individual birds when recorded is included in each observation below along with other shorebirds seen.

On 20 August 1947, a single Ruddy Turnstone was seen foraging on the beach on Shuswap Lake below Evans Road in Celista (11U 334869E 5645866N) with four Semipalmated Plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*). Elevation is 347 m. Other shorebirds foraging nearby included two Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), five Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularius*), and six Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*). The turnstone appeared to be a juvenile with a well-defined separated breast pattern, brown back with buffy-edged feather coverts, and orange legs (Figure 1). The bird was not seen the following day.

On 6 September 1947, GRR stopped to let his horse drink from Shuswap Lake on his way to Brown and Smith's general store to pick up mail and supplies. The store was located about 0.42 km southwest of Celista. While at the beach (11U 334544E 5646082N)



**Figure 1.** Ruddy Turnstone exhibits differential timing between age classes during autumn migration. Juveniles, as Paulson (1993:217) indicates, show a diagnostic white-centred bi-lobed breast pattern, buff-covered coverts on back feathers, and orange legs. The plumage of the bird seen on Shuswap Lake was similar to the juvenile photographed here on Great Bear Rock, Barkley Sound, BC, on 25 August 1970. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

he noted six species of shorebirds feeding: three Semipalmated Plovers, eight Killdeer, six Spotted Sandpipers, three Greater Yellowlegs (*T. melanoleuca*), nine Lesser Yellowlegs, and a lone Ruddy Turnstone. The turnstone was turning over stones near the wharf to find food. It was in faded adult plumage but was still brightly coloured. It had reddish brown upper parts contrasting with white underparts. Dark patterns were evident on the face and the breast was fading to dark brown.

On 4 May 1948, GRR observed two “very colourful” Ruddy Turnstones feeding in a rocky area under the wharf on Shuswap Lake below the schoolhouse east of Celista (11U 336016E 5646388N). The adults had rusty backs, white bellies, striped black-and-white heads, and bright orange legs. They were turning over stones with their bills (Figure 2).

The following year, on 26 May 1949, two adult-plumaged birds were feeding together along a rocky portion of the beach south of the schoolhouse, close to the previous year’s location. Other shorebirds feeding nearby included five Killdeer, three Spotted Sandpipers, and two Lesser Yellowlegs.

In summer 1962, Glenn returned to Celista to help his brother build a new house. They frequently took time off, especially on weekends, to go birdwatching. On 5 August 1962, they visited the south end of Adams Lake, about 25 km (15 mi) northwest of Celista in the Shuswap region of British Columbia. In the morning they had already recorded 49 species on the lake and in the woods, including a rare Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*), and decided to walk north along the west lakeshore across from Indian Point (11U 310194E 5649857N). Elevation was 409 m. During the beach



**Figure 2.** In breeding plumage, the black-and-white face pattern, reddish-brown upperparts, black breast markings, and orange legs of the Ruddy Turnstone are distinctive. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

hike they counted 14 Spotted Sandpipers (adults and large young), 12 Killdeer, seven Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*), and three Ruddy Turnstones that were feeding close together. The general plumage of the body suggested adults (possibly failed breeders) rather than juveniles. The Ruddy Turnstones did not have the bi-lobed breast patterns diagnostic of hatch-year birds.

On 1 October 1962, three Ruddy Turnstones were observed feeding on mud flats at the mouth of Scotch Creek (11U 323660E 5643324N), about 12 km (7 mi) southwest of Celista, with five Semipalmated Plovers, one American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*), at least 72 Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*), three Lesser Yellowlegs, and six Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*).

In the Pacific Northwest, Paulson (1993) noted that “returning adults appear by mid-July and peak in late July and early August. Juveniles appear later in August.” In British Columbia, Ruddy Turnstone has been recorded infrequently in the interior of the province from early August (date unknown) to 15 September (Campbell et al. 1990).

The 1947 record of a Ruddy Turnstone at Celista predates the previous early record for the interior of British Columbia by 24 years and establishes a specific date (5 August) for the species arriving in the interior of the province from their Arctic breeding grounds. Incorporating the six records above with those listed

by Campbell et al. (1990b), Ruddy Turnstone has been recorded in the interior of the province in spring from 4 to 26 May (four records) and in late summer and early autumn from 5 August to 1 October (14 records) through 1990. Although it was not recorded for the above observations, Paulson (1993) suggests observers record the ratio of males to females during spring and autumn passage to determine whether there is differential timing in migration. †

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