

Y u k o n  
**WARBLER**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YUKON BIRD CLUB - WINTER 1993 (Vol.1, No.4)  
P.O.Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 5P7

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*Snowy Owl, by Pam Sinclair*

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, WINTER FIELD TRIP, and EVENING EVENTS SCHEDULE**

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS** - Field and feeder watchers are welcome to participate! There is a \$6.25 participation fee which covers Christmas Count publication costs. For more information about specific counts call the count coordinator (listed below) before the count date.

**Sunday 19 December. *The Marsh Lake Count.*** Call Helmut Grünberg at 667-6703.

**Sunday 26 December. *The Whitehorse Count.*** Call Wendy Nixon at 668-7572 or Jim Hawkings at 668-2639.

**Tuesday 21 December. *The Kluane Lake Count.*** Call Todd Heakes at 841-4561.

**WEEKEND DAY TRIPS:** Dress warmly, bring a lunch and binoculars. For more information on specific outings call Pam Sinclair at 667-4630.

**Sunday 30 January. *The Tagish Birding Tour: Winter Edition!!*** This very popular and scenic birding tour will explore open water areas from Whitehorse to Carcross in search of wintering ducks, and dippers, with an eye open for finches, owls, waxwings, woodpeckers, and chickadees!! Bring a lunch, and meet at the **SS.Klondyke at 10:00 am.** Leader: Helmut Grünberg.

**Sunday 27 February. *Winter Birds South of Whitehorse!*** Longer days, thoughts of spring, and perhaps a Northern Shrike. This outing will be on the look-out for those undiscovered winter birds and the earliest of the early spring migrants. Meet at the **SS.Klondyke at 10:00 am.** Leader: Pam Sinclair.

**EVENING EVENTS.** Seminars, slide shows, and identification workshops ... for more information call Dave Mossop at 633-2390.

**Wednesday 8 December. *Birding New Mexico's Rio Grande.*** Share the highlights of this very interesting birding area! Meet @ 7:00 pm. at Yukon College, Rm 1440 (The Glass Class). Speakers: Julie Lefebvre & Michael Carter.

**Wednesday 12 January. *Bird life of the MacKenzie Mountains ... at Oldsquaw Lodge.*** Birding in one of our most spectacular wilderness areas! Meet @ 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library. Speaker: Norm Barichello.

**Wednesday 26 January. *Something About Birds ... T.B.A.*** Meet @ 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library. Speaker: T.B.A.

**Wednesday 9 February. *From Gizz to Gee Whizz: An Identification Workshop.*** A slide presentation exploring the behaviour and identification of Yukon's beautiful birds. Meet @ 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library. Speaker: Cameron Eckert.

**Wednesday 23 February. *Kluane Raptor Populations.*** Highlights of the fascinating research on raptor populations at Kluane's Arctic Institute. Meet @ 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library. Speaker: Frank Doyle.

**Wednesday 9 March. *An Illustrated Tour of Alaskan Birds.*** This slide show presentation will highlight a selection of Alaska's stunning bird life. Meet @ 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library. Speaker: Jim Hawkings.

**Wednesday 23 March. *Birding Adventures in Kluane Country.*** A birding photographer's travels in one of Yukon's great wild spaces - Kluane! Meet @ 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library. Speaker: Lee Kubica.

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*Put on your parka, and defrost your binoculars ...*

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## YUKON'S CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS!!

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Christmas Bird Counts, organized by the National Audubon Society, were initiated in 1900 by Frank Chapman as a protest against the horrifying Christmas Day Side Hunts, in which groups of "*sporting*" hunters would divide into teams and revel in a day of non-discriminate killing. The "*winning*" team was the one which killed the most birds, including non-game species. Almost one hundred years later, the North American Christmas Bird Count has grown to become a truly remarkable achievement in bird monitoring and conservation. On December 25th 1900, twenty-seven people conducted 26 different Christmas Bird Counts, 2 of which were in Canada. In 1990, 42,686 individuals participated in 1607 counts and tallied 54,194,718 birds of 587 species. In recent years the Christmas Count tradition has spread to Hawaii, Guam, Central and South America, Bermuda, and the West Indies.

Each count is a one day survey within a count area 24 kilometres in diameter. Rather than being held only on Christmas Day, counts can now be held on any day within a 2 week period around December 25th. This standardized counting procedure means that counts can be compared between areas, and that abundance trends can be assessed over time. Christmas Bird Counts welcome all birders regardless of their experience and there is no limit to the number of birders that can participate in a count. In 1991, the Edmonton count, which is characterized by unusually enthusiastic participation, had 147 birders observing in the field, and 663 birders tallying birds at backyard feeders!

In 1972, Dave Mossop began the Christmas Count tradition in Whitehorse, and in 1973, the Whitehorse count was formally centred at the intersection of the Alaska Highway and the Mayo Road. In 1979, two different Christmas Bird Counts were conducted in the Whitehorse area; Whitehorse *north* (the original count), and Whitehorse *south*, a new count which centred at the Alaska Highway and the Copper Mine Road. However, in 1985 the two Whitehorse counts were discontinued in favour of one which centres at the Alaska Highway and Two Mile Hill. A highlight of last year's Whitehorse count was a House Finch observed at Barbara and Bob Studd's feeder.

In 1974, Wayne Neily established two Christmas Counts in the Kluane area - one at Haines Junction, and a second at Kluane Lake. While these counts have been conducted somewhat irregularly over the years, the Kluane Lake count will be conducted this year. In past years a variety of interesting species have been observed including Willow and White-tailed Ptarmigan, Great Horned and Northern Hawk Owls, Northern Harrier, and Golden Eagle.

The Marsh Lake Count was initiated in 1980 by Helmut Grünberg and has been conducted every year since. Its central point is M'Clintock Bay and its circle takes in open water around the Lewes Marsh Dam, a diverse area of mixed forest, and a few backyard bird feeders. Last year's participants found 13 species including Canvasback, Hairy and Three-toed Woodpeckers, Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees, Spruce Grouse, American Dipper, and Willow Ptarmigan.

This year three Christmas Counts will be held in the Yukon; Whitehorse (call Wendy Nixon @ 668-7572 or Jim Hawkings @ 668-2639), Marsh Lake (call Helmut Grünberg @ 667-6703), and Kluane Lake (call Todd Heakes @ 841-4561). These counts provide an excellent opportunity for all birders to experience our beautiful winter birds and contribute to an extremely valuable continent-wide conservation programme. Whether you want to spend all day trekking the woods on snowshoes, or a couple of hours out skiing along a pleasant trail, or recording birds at your backyard feeder - your participation in any or all of the counts is welcome! Interested birders should contact the count area coordinator (noted above) a few days before the count. *See you there!*

*Cameron Eckert*

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**FALL FIELD TRIP REPORT**

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On September 12th, Helmut Grünberg led a lively group of 9 birders on a fascinating trip to one of Yukon's best birding areas - *Swan Lake!!* The group had excellent observations of 32 species including 3 Spruce Grouse, 2 Northern Harriers, 17 Bohemian Waxwings, 2 Common Snipe, 15 American Tree Sparrows, 200 American Pipits, 3 Lapland Longspurs, 3 Red-necked Phalaropes, and 10 species of waterfowl. Particularly stunning was a Peregrine Falcon which flew low over the lake and disappeared beyond the trees. Eight Long-billed Dowitchers and 5 Pectoral Sandpipers were very obliging and offered ample opportunity for close study.

The Fall Field Trip Schedule proposed that Pam Sinclair's September 19th trip to Wolf Creek would turn up "*Golden-crowned Kinglets among the Ruby-crowned ... and possibly a Three-toed Woodpecker*". Well, the 9 birders who came out with such expectations were not disappointed! Fifteen species were observed on the outing and highlights were 20 Golden-crowned Kinglets which outnumbered 6 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 30 Boreal Chickadees, 15 Rusty Blackbirds, 1 Lincoln's Sparrow, 1 adult Bald Eagle, 2 Spruce Grouse, 1 Fox Sparrow, and 2 (1 male and 1 female) Three-toed Woodpeckers! Five Yellow-rumped Warblers constituted a migrant wave and 1 Hammond's Flycatcher was particularly astonishing!

Lee Kubica's trip to Stony Creek on September 26th traversed a variety of habitats from the river valley to the alpine. Nine people braved relatively high winds in search of ptarmigan. Unfortunately, though many tracks were seen, the ptarmigan themselves did not brave the winds and make an appearance. However, 6 Golden Eagles, 1 Northern Harrier, and an American Kestrel put on a good show. We also crossed paths with a fast moving flock of 70 Common Redpolls!

On October 2nd, Jim Hawkings led 8 birders on a very successful trip to Shallow Bay in search of migrant waterfowl and lingering shorebirds. A diverse group of waterfowl species on the bay included 20 Canvasback, 7 Surf Scoter, 20 Red-breasted Mergansers, 2 Ring-necked Ducks, 50 Bufflehead, 200 Mallards, 4 Lesser Scaup, 35 American Widgeon, 1 goldeneye, and 39 Tundra Swans. Seven Rough-legged and 3 Red-tailed Hawks were observed moving south over Shallow Bay. Eleven Rusty Blackbirds and 2 species of shorebirds, Pectoral Sandpiper and Common Snipe, rounded out the morning at Shallow Bay. However, the outing did not end there! In a moment of glorious spontaneity, the group continued on to one of southern Yukon's best gull-watching sites - the Whitehorse Landfill! Birders were treated to exquisite views of a variety of gull species including 2 adult and 31 immature Thayer's Gulls, 1 adult and 1 immature Glaucous Gull, and 60 Herring Gulls. Two Bald Eagles kept things lively!

On October 16th, Cameron Eckert's *Tagish Birding Tour* followed the birding trail from Whitehorse to Tagish, on to Carcross, and back to Whitehorse. Twenty-eight species were tallied along this very scenic route. Highlights included 2 Horned and 2 Red-necked Grebes, and 2 Common and 1 Pacific Loon on Schwatka Lake, 2 immature Bald Eagles flying over Schwatka Lake, 8 Tundra Swans at M'Clintock Bay, 2 Thayer's Gulls at Army Beach, a flock of 49 Bohemian Waxwings at Marsh Lake, a male Northern Harrier along the Tagish Road, 1 Boreal Chickadee at the Tagish Campground, an impressive flock of 200 Bufflehead, 15 Lesser Scaup, 40 Common Goldeneye, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers at Nares Lake.

On November 21st, Wendy Nixon led a hardy group of 7 birders on a feeder-hopping quest in search of hardy birds. While bulk numbers were relatively low, an interesting variety of birds made for a very enjoyable outing. Café Lattés were served while the group watched a Mountain Chickadee cavorting with 4 Black-cappeds at Cameron and Pam's Porter Creek feeder. A male Three-toed Woodpecker quietly foraged near a Schwatka Lake feeder. A Red-breasted Nuthatch was the star of the show among a feisty group of Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees at Wendy's Wolf Creek feeder where hot chocolate was enjoyed by all!

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REPORT ON THE 1993 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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The Yukon Bird Club's 1993 AGM was well attended and participation was very enthusiastic! Joyce Podhora suggested the winning name for our newsletter, *Yukon Warbler*, and was awarded a copy of National Geographic's Field Guide to North American Birds. *Congratulations Joyce!*

Pam Sinclair gave an overview of the club's field trip activities and reported that, to date, the Yukon Bird Club has organized over 25 field trips!! Over 125 different species have been observed on field trips including Pacific and Red-throated Loon, Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, Hooded Merganser, Eurasian Wigeon, Long-billed Dowitcher, Willow Ptarmigan and Spruce Grouse, Boreal, Great-horned and Northern Hawk Owls, Golden and Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcon, Three-toed Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Boreal, and Black-capped Chickadees, Lapland Longspur, and Brewer's Sparrow!! A great thanks to the many field trip leaders who have made the outings so enjoyable!!

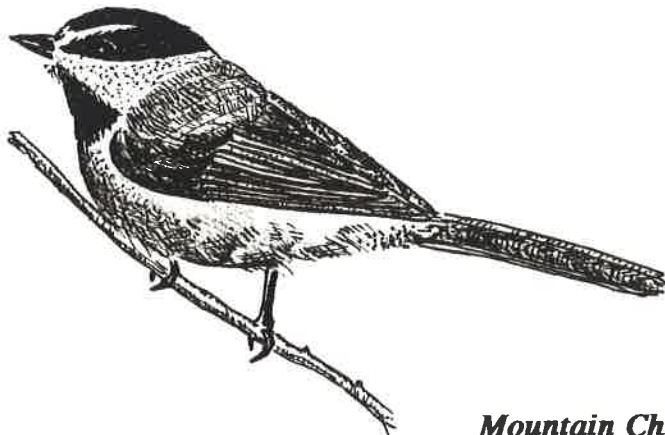
Jeremy Baumbach presented an organized and concise treasurer's report. The report indicated that the Yukon Bird Club's newsletter is currently the major club expenditure. Participants at the AGM strongly felt that the newsletter is a worthwhile expenditure. Since the AGM, the Yukon Bird Club has received its portion of the Bird-a-thon funds, approximately \$800.00, from the Yukon Conservation Society. At this point, it seems that YBC can afford a quarterly newsletter based on memberships revenue supplemented with a percentage of the Bird-a-thon funds.

The election of the 1994 Board of Directors was extremely efficient with the entire 1993 board being re-elected. Two members were elected to newly created positions on YBC's Board of Directors; *Bird-a-thon Coordinator* and *Sightings Coordinator*.

The success of the 1993 Bird-a-thon showed that this once-a-year event is a very fun and effective way to raise funds for both YBC and the Yukon Conservation Society. In past years, informal Bird-a-thon coordinators have ensured the success of this event since it began in 1986. This year René Carlson has officially taken on the task of *Bird-a-thon Coordinator* for the Yukon Bird Club.

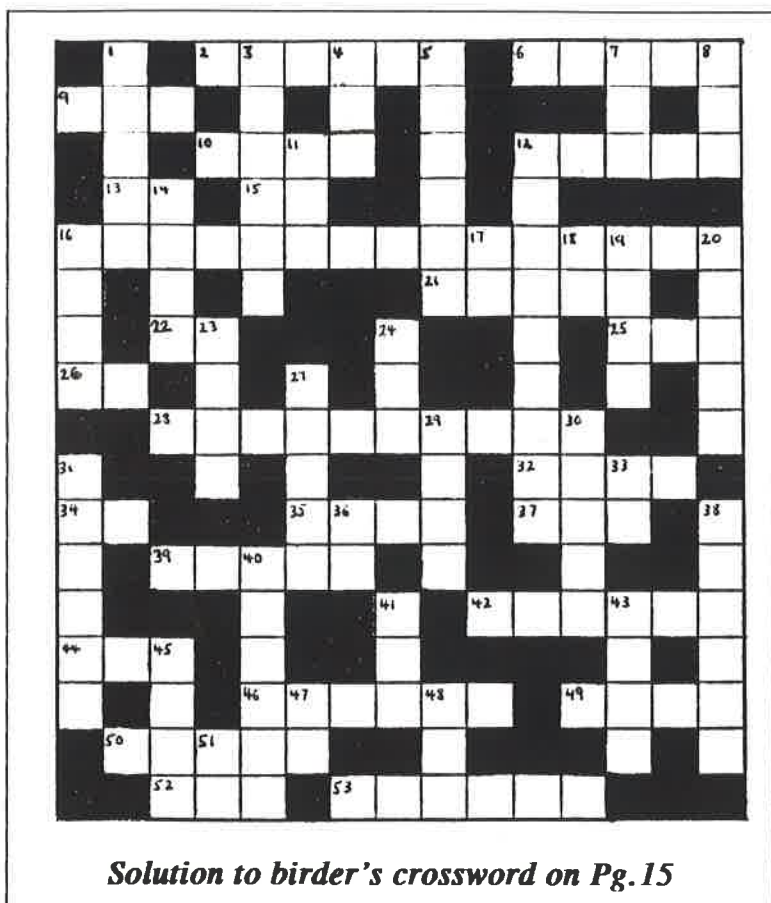
Helmut Grünberg has long been one of Yukon's primary bird sightings coordinators. At the AGM he was elected to the Board of Directors as YBC's *Sightings Coordinator*. Birding coverage of the Yukon has always been relatively low and it remains a place where any birder can make interesting and novel discoveries. We encourage all Yukon birders to record their sightings, make notes about unusual sightings, and forward a copy to Helmut c/o the Yukon Bird Club.

One position, *Special Projects Coordinator*, remains vacant on the Board of Directors. It is hoped that at some point YBC will initiate some specific conservation oriented projects. The Yukon Bird Club is open to ideas members have about projects, and welcomes any volunteers to the position of *Special Projects Coordinator*. Interested members should plan on attending YBC's Business Meeting on Wednesday Feb 2, 7:00 pm. at the Whitehorse Public Library.



*Mountain Chickadee, by Cameron Eckert*

**A YUKON BIRDER'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE: By Jeremy Baumbach**



**Solution to birder's crossword on Pg. 15**

**ACROSS**

- 2. Colourful prairie shorebird (6).
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ 16 Down (5).
- 9. A good time to bird: \_\_\_\_ up (3).
- 10. Popular spring field trip: 48 Down \_\_\_\_ (4).
- 12. Frequently seen this past August (5).
- 13. Learn bird songs from a \_\_\_\_ recording (2).
- 15. Ma\_\_\_\_ard (2).
- 16. Unexpected find near Sheep Mountain (6,9).
- 21. Fills 20 Down's niche in Southern Canada (1,4).
- 22. Birding could be considered \_\_\_\_ (2,abbreviation).
- 25. C\_\_\_\_asback (3).
- 26. Shri\_\_\_\_ (2).
- 28. Subject of the greater/lesser debate (10).
- 32. The way a bird \_\_\_\_ is a clue to identity (4).
- 34. Common binocular direction (2).
- 35. Leave at home when birdwatching (4).
- 37. What birds and birders do in the heat of the afternoon (3).
- 39. Buteo habitat (5).
- 42. The saying "don't judge a book by its cover" applies to this bird and its song (6).

- 44. T\_\_\_\_ (3).
- 46. Bird of prey (6).
- 49. Sanderling's species name (4).
- 50. Common local swallow: 3 Down \_\_\_\_\_ (5).
- 52. The \_\_\_\_ to accurate identification is careful observation (3).
- 53. Common local warbler (6).

**DOWN**

- 1. Do I hear a Chipping Sparrow, or is it a \_\_\_\_\_? (5).
- 3. Common local (Whitehorse area) swallow: \_\_\_\_\_ 50 Across (6).
- 4. Birder's anathema (3).
- 5. Species of 19 Down (6).
- 7. There is a \_\_\_\_ in knowledge of Yukon birds (3).
- 8. Siberian \_\_\_\_ (3).
- 11. Never too \_\_\_\_ to bird (3).
- 12. Chicken, Alaska got its name because early settlers could not spell the name of this often eaten local bird, and so called it "chicken" (9).
- 14. Extinct bird (4).
- 16. A diurnal owl (4).
- 17. Initials of Sandhill Crane's scientific name (2).
- 18. Answer to 36 Down (2).
- 19. Arrival of this bird portends spring (4).
- 20. Passed on June 14, 1985, Bill No.12 of the 26th Legislative Assembly made the \_\_\_\_\_ the official Territorial Bird (5).
- 23. Another common local swallow (4).
- 24. This gull calls out its name (3).
- 27. Another common local swallow (5).
- 29. It might be a 53 Across-billed \_\_\_\_\_ (4).
- 30. Another greater or lesser question (5).
- 31. Common local warbler: 53 Across-\_\_\_\_\_(6).
- 33. "Beaver fever" necessity (2,abbreviation).
- 36. Field trip question: Do you know what \_\_\_\_ is? (2).
- 38. Raspy voiced chickadee (6).
- 40. If this bird is too greedy, it drowns (6).
- 41. Non-avian "flycatcher" (3).
- 43. A yearned-for warbler (4).
- 45. This bird and a species of owl share the first part of their common names (4).
- 47. \_\_\_\_ ornithologist (2).
- 48. Popular spring field trip: \_\_\_\_ 10 Across (3).
- 51. \_id\_r (2).

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**FOCUS ON: *The Three-toed Woodpecker***

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Uncommon in southern Canada and even rarer in the east, the Three-toed Woodpecker can be an elusive bird which many birders encounter for their first time in our northern forests. This distinctive and beautiful woodpecker is tame by nature and usually rewards the patient observer with a full and lasting view.

Three instead of four toes on each foot distinguishes the Three-toed Woodpecker from all other woodpeckers

except the Black-backed Woodpecker. While toes are difficult to count, the Three-toed can also be identified by a number of distinctive plumage features. While Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers have pure white undersides, Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers have heavily barred sides. The Black-backed Woodpecker, which is much less common in the Yukon than the Three-toed, has an entirely black back while the Three-toed shows a variable white patch on its back which ranges from heavily barred to pure white. Both Three-toed and Black-backed males are topped with a distinctive yellow crown. Listen for the Three-toed Woodpecker's "pik" call similar to the Black-backed yet lower in pitch than a Downy's call and softer than a Hairy's resonant "peek" call.

Rather than drilling directly into trees in search of insects, a Three-toed Woodpecker forages by flaking bark from trees with a sideways peck and eating the insects and grub which live beneath the bark. As a result Three-toeds feed more quietly than other woodpeckers. When searching for Three-toeds, birders should be on the lookout for the flakes of bark which accumulate beneath well used trees.

Three-toed Woodpeckers are most often found in coniferous forests and in the southern Yukon they show a preference for older White Spruce forests. Three-toeds breed throughout the Yukon as far north as tree line. Males attract females by drumming in the late winter and pair bonds are formed through head swaying and calls between the sexes. Similar behaviours may facilitate antagonistic interactions between territorial males.



Like all woodpeckers, the Three-toed is a cavity nester and tends to excavate a new nesting hole each year, typically in a standing dead (snag) conifer. Females generally lay 4 eggs and both parents share incubation and feeding duties. Young hatch after 11 days and fledge from the nest approximately 22 days after hatching. Individual birds show strong site tenacity and will breed in the same area for many years. Similarly, pair bonds typically last for many years and mated birds may continue to associate through the non-breeding season.

While the Three-toed Woodpecker is likely Yukon's most common and widespread resident

woodpecker, it is probably less often seen than other species because, unlike Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, the Three-toed does not frequent bird feeders and forages more silently in the forests. In the Whitehorse area, Three-toeds can often be found at Wolf Creek and Army Beach Campgrounds which are characterized by large White Spruce. Walk quietly through the trees, listen for the soft tapping, and watch for the small flakes of spruce bark falling to the forest floor.

*Cameron Eckert*

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FIELD NOTES: *Observations from the field*

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A mixed group of 50 **Common Loons** (49 adults and 1 immature), 2 adult **Red-throated Loons**, and 1 adult **Pacific Loon** was on Lake Laberge on Sept 9 (CE,PS). 1 winter plumage **Pacific Loon** was on Schwatka Lake on Nov 11 (GK,LK). YBC's fall newsletter pondered that "*in the magic of autumn a lone loon just might turn out to be a Yellow-billed Loon!*" Well, that was exactly the case when one winter plumaged **Yellow-billed Loon** was observed fishing near the dam on Schwatka Lake on Nov 11 (JB,CK). The **Yellow-billed Loon** was seen again at the same location on Nov 15 and 16 (CE,GK,LK,DO,PS).

A flock of 11 **Snow Geese** observed near Teslin on Aug 22 was very unusual (MG). A lone immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Swan Lake on Sept 5 (HG). An impressive flock of 203 **Buffleheads** was on Shallow Bay on Oct 11 (GK,LK). A male **Canvasback**, first observed on Schwatka Lake on Nov 11 (HG,GK,LK), was still present on Nov 17 (CE). Two female **Harlequin Ducks** were on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on Sept 26 (HG,GK,LK,DO).

Large movements of **Sandhill Cranes** were observed at a number of locations during September. Approximately 2000 cranes were observed passing over the upper Liard River between Sept 9 and 11 (JB), and a second movement of 2000 cranes passed over the Upper Nisutlin River on Sept 19 (VE). A flock of 300 **Sandhill Cranes** flying over Marsh Lake on Sept 18 was unusual (RM).

8 **Long-billed Dowitchers** and 5 **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Swan Lake on Sept 12 (HG,YBC). One winter plumage **Red Phalarope** made a stop-over on Shallow Bay on Oct 6 (JH,BM).

The fall movement of **Glaucous Gulls** through the Whitehorse area peaked on Oct 15 at 8 birds (7 first winter and 1 adult) (CE,HG,PS). The last **Glaucous Gull** was seen on Nov 6 (HG). An unprecedented movement of **Thayer's Gulls** through the Whitehorse area began with one adult bird on Aug 1 and peaked on Oct 15 at 94 birds (93 first winter and 1 adult). No **Thayer's Gulls** were observed after Oct 30 (CE,HG,PS). Yukon's second **Iceland Gull**, a first winter bird, found on Oct 6 in Whitehorse, delighted birders until its departure on Oct 20 (CE,JB,HG,NH,WN,PS).

A **Ruffed Grouse** was at Marsh Lake on Sept 27 (RM).

7 **Rough-legged Hawks** were moving south over Shallow Bay on Oct 2 (JH,YBC), and a lone **Rough-legged Hawk** was sighted at Kluane on Oct 15 (TH). Six **Golden Eagles** were flying south over Stony Creek on Sept 26 (LK,YBC). 2 adult **Bald Eagles** were at Lewes Marsh on Nov 7 (CE,CK,PS). 1 **Peregrine Falcon** provided the second record for the Swan Lake area on Sept 12 (HG,YBC). One dark-phase **Gyrfalcon** and 2 **Merlins** were at Swan Lake on Sept 23 (CE,PS). One **Merlin** was at Hungry Lake in Kluane on Oct 9 (FD).

A **Short-eared Owl** seen on Oct 15 along the Mount MacIntyre trails was unusual (WN). **Northern Hawk Owl** sightings included one bird on the Dempster Highway on Oct 9 (KS,YS), 2 birds along the Yukon section of the Haines Road on Nov 12 (CE,PS), 2 more birds along the BC section of the Haines Road on Nov 13 (CE,PS), and one bird at Christmas Creek near Kluane on Nov 24 (TH). A very unusual movement of **Snowy Owls** through alpine areas was recorded in southern Yukon during November with up to 5 different sightings (DM). One **Snowy Owl** was observed hunting 3 kilometres south of the Haines Summit, BC, on Nov 13 (CE,PS).

An immature **Northern Shrike** was chasing redpolls at Swan Lake on Oct 31 (CE,HG,PS). Another **Northern Shrike** was at Kluane Lake on Nov 10 (FD).

4 **American Dippers** were sighted along the Yukon River Trail on Nov 11 (CK). Another **American Dipper** was foraging in open water along the Fish Lake Road on Nov 28 (CE,PS).



**FIELD NOTES: More Observations From the Field ...**

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** has continued to frequent a Wolf Creek feeder through November (WN). Another **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was visiting the feeder at Swan Haven on M'Clintock Bay in early November (JL). A **Mountain Chickadee**, rare in southern Yukon, has been visiting a Porter Creek feeder from Sept 18 through November (CE,PS). A pair of **Mountain Chickadees** which bred near Tagish this summer has continued to visit a feeder at the same location through the fall (HG,WH).

25 **Alder Flycatchers** were observed at Swan Lake on Aug 28 (CE,PS). One **Hammond's Flycatcher** provided a record late-date on Sept 19 at Wolf Creek (PS, YBC).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet** observations included 20 at Wolf Creek on Sept 19 (PS, YBC), and 1 at Teslin on Sept 25 (CE,PS). 30 **Mountain Bluebirds** were at Haines Junction on Sept 4 (CE,PS). One **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was foraging along the Swan Lake Road on Sept 23 (CE,PS). Late **American Robin** sightings included one at Hungry Lake in Kluane on Oct 31 (TH), and 2 birds at Deep Creek on Nov 21 (MW). A vociferous **Varied Thrush** was singing loudly at Shadow Lake on Oct 13 (SR). A **Townsend's Solitaire** provided the second record for the Swan Lake area on Sept 5 (HG).

A female **Red-winged Blackbird** was lingering at Kluane Lake on Oct 25 (TH). 1 adult male **Brown-headed Cowbird** was at Champagne on Sept 4 (CE,PS).

A very late **Palm Warbler** was frantically searching for food in downtown Whitehorse on Nov 11 (CE).

An adult **White-crowned Sparrow** was lingering at Marsh Lake until Nov 2 (RM). An immature **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was a late migrant along the Yukon River Trail in Whitehorse on Nov 6 (CK). An **American Tree Sparrow** was surviving despite an iceball on its foot at Shallow Bay on Oct 24 (CE,PS). Up to 3 **Dark-eyed Juncos** were present at a feeder in Whitehorse through November (HG).

300 **Snow Buntings** were at Shallow Bay on Oct 24 (CE,PS), and a lone **Snow Bunting** was moving south along Marsh Lake on Nov 7 (CE,CK,PS). A spectacular movement of hundreds of **Lapland Longspurs** and hundreds of **American Pipits** was recorded in the Ruby Range near Kluane Lake on Oct 9 (GK,LK).

Four **Hoary Redpolls** were spotted in a flock of 120 **Common Redpolls** at Swan Lake on Oct 31 (CE,HG,PS). The first flock of **Common Redpolls** (4 birds) arrived at a feeder on the Hotsprings Road on Nov 7 (NH). **Redpolls** have not been reported from most other southern Yukon feeders.

**They're Back!!** Considered accidental in the Yukon, **Evening Grosbeaks** staged a remarkable invasion in southern Yukon last winter. The latest reports indicate that at least 2 pairs of **Evening Grosbeaks** have returned to Watson Lake this winter (RF, MG).

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**Observers:** Frank Doyle, Cameron Eckert, Vic Enns, Rob Florkiewicz, Mary Gamberg, Margaret Garolitz, Helmut Grünberg, Wilhelm Harms, Jim Hawkings, Todd Heakes, Nancy Hughes, Carole Kierulf, Greg Kubica, Lee Kubica, Julie Lefebvre, Bruce McLean, Dave Mossop, Richard Mueller, Wendy Nixon, Dave Odium, Sharon Russell, Keith Schraeder, Yoshi Schraeder, Pam Sinclair, Mary Whitley, Yukon Bird Club.

Observers are encouraged to record their sightings and report any interesting, unusual or rare birds to the Yukon Bird Club, Box 31054, Whitehorse, Y1A 5P7, or Call Helmut at 677-6703 or Cameron at 667-4630.

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## BIRDS and BIRD FEEDERS

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Feeding birds all year round is easy and satisfying, if you know what type of food each bird prefers and how to present it. The variety of life, colour, and drama that a feeder concentrates outside your window could scarcely be found in the wild. Children as well as adults are fascinated by watching birds at a feeder.

Cleanliness is important at the feeding station. Spoiled or mouldy food can be dangerous to birds and can attract undesirable customers. Do not be over-generous; set out only enough food that will be eaten in a few days. Occasionally clean the feeder.

High energy mainstays of most bird feeding programmes are a source of fat, usually suet, and a selection of grains, seeds and grit - especially in winter when snow covers the natural supply. Birds have no teeth and rely on fine particles of grit in the gizzard to grind up hard seeds. Finely ground oyster shells or coarse sand will do. Scatter grit on a feeding platform or offer it in a shallow dish.

To suet, seeds, grains, and grit, a wide variety of foods may be added, including nuts, dried fruit, and peanut butter.

**Suet:** Beef suet is the most readily available source of animal fat for birds. Suet begins to melt at 20 °C and quickly turns rancid, so it should be offered with caution during warm weather.

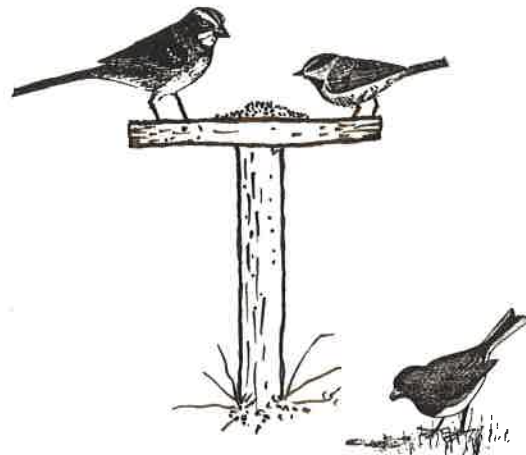
**Seeds:** Wild bird seed mixtures are available from garden centres, nurseries, feed stores, grocery and hardware stores. Try to shop for seed mixture that is low on wheat, oat, and corn kernels as most of Yukon's birds pass those seeds up.

**Fruits:** Fruits should be chopped into tiny bite-size pieces before being offered. Coconut can be served with the shell. Larger fruits such as apples and banana can be cut in half and served at the feeding station. Other fruits to try include cranberries, currants, prunes, and raisins.

**Peanut Butter:** Minced with corn meal and suet, peanut butter is an inexpensive way to offer high protein foods to birds. Protein is scarce for birds in winter and this addition will be helpful.

**Nuts:** Nuts are high in protein, fats, and minerals and are excellent bird food. Although expensive to feed in large amounts, they can be offered as special treats. Nuts should be broken into small pieces.

*Tracie Harris*



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THE JOY OF COOKING ... FOR BIRDS

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*These basic recipes are designed to appeal to a wide variety of birds.*

**High Protein Suet Mix**

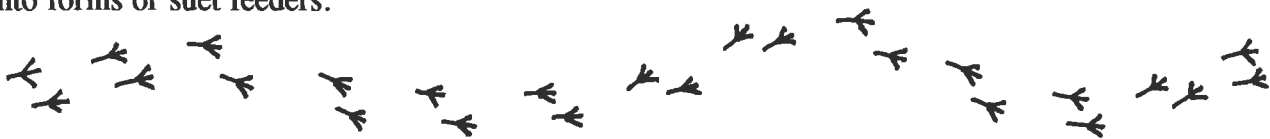
4½ cups ground fresh suet.  
½ cup raw unsalted sunflower seeds.  
¼ cup white millet  
¼ cup chopped fruit (berries, raisins, currents).  
1 cup dried finely ground meat.

Melt suet in saucepan. Allow to cool slightly and add other ingredients. Mix well. Pour or pack into forms or suet feeders.

**Soft Peanut Butter Mix**

1 cup freshly ground suet  
1 cup peanut butter  
3 cups yellow cornmeal  
½ cup whole wheat flour.

Melt suet in the saucepan and add peanut butter followed by the dry mixture. Mix well. Great for packing into forms or smearing on tree trunks.



**Presenting Food to Birds:** Suet feeders can be plain or elaborate. Mesh onion bags make great inexpensive suet holders that can be hung from tree branches. Strawberry baskets stapled to a thin piece of plywood also make great holders for suet mixture. Or simply use a plain platform feeder.

**Location of Feeders:** Birds are creatures of habit and do not respond well to abrupt changes in the position of the feeders. A wide variety of feeding spots and types of feeders are important. Different birds feed at different heights. A well-rounded programme includes ground feeding areas, a platform on a post about 5 feet off the ground, hopper or tube-type feeders for seeds, and some suet feeders mounted at different heights on trees. In winter, birds favor sheltered locations - the south side of a building is generally the warmest.

**Protect Your Feeder:** Unwelcome guests may include squirrels, nuisance birds like Starlings, and cats. If squirrels are a problem, the feeder should be elevated at least 5 feet off the ground, and 8 to 10 feet from adjacent objects. For hanging feeders, a good trick is to hang an old LP record half way down the line. Only the most agile squirrel can make its way around Barry Manilow!

While feeding birds brings great pleasure, it also constitutes a special responsibility. Birders who attract birds to their yards should also provide a safe environment. Cats can be a highly destructive problem at feeders. Conservative estimates indicate that cats kill hundreds of millions of birds in the U.S. every year. Do not tolerate cats. If cats become a problem then place bird feeders well off the ground, and at least 15 feet from shrubbery and hiding places. Identify the places that cats use to launch their attacks and block these areas. Low fencing around feeding areas can effectively disrupt a cat's ability to pounce on birds.

Windows are another potential hazard for birds using feeders. There are few feeder watchers who have not been saddened when a bird flies directly into an unseen window. Hanging a few strips of flagging tape in front of the window and pasting a hawk-silhouette on the window will greatly reduce window collisions. If problems continue, increase the distance between feeders and windows.

Winter birds may come to depend on the feed that you supply. When you go on vacation, your birds are still hard at work trying to survive. Enlist the help of a neighbor to fill your feeders when you are away.

*Tracie Harris*

## THE BIRDS OF YUKON PROJECT

The Yukon is home to Canada's only breeding Surfbirds, Bluethroats, and Yellow Wagtails. Some songbird species which are declining in eastern North America have large breeding populations in the territory, and many bird species reach the northern or western edge of their breeding range in the Yukon. Despite the importance of the Yukon to a diverse array of species, basic information on the distribution and ecology of Yukon birds is not readily available.

In 1991, the Birds of Yukon project was initiated by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), in cooperation with YTG Renewable Resources and local birders, in order to compile data on Yukon birds. The purpose of the project is to build a data set of bird records, and present a summary of the data in a book, which would include detailed range maps and ecological information for all bird species recorded in the Yukon. About 60,000 bird records have been gathered so far, from published reports, museum collections, environmental impact studies, bird surveys, academic studies, and field notes from local and visiting birdwatchers.

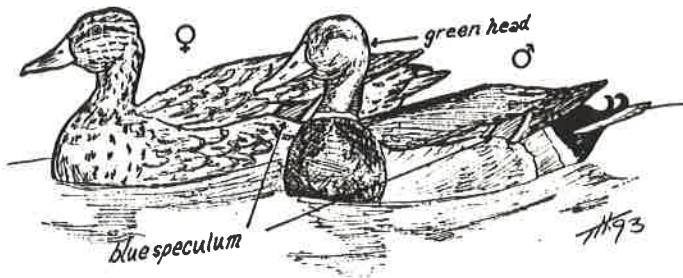
All of Canada's provinces and territories have similar projects at various stages. Three breeding bird atlases have been published (Ontario, the Maritimes, and Alberta), and the third of the four volumes of "Birds of British Columbia" will soon be available. Most breeding bird atlases represent about five years of intensive field work by an army of volunteers, each adopting a gridsquare and surveying it repeatedly, to document evidence of breeding for each species. The distribution map for each species indicates the evidence of breeding in each grid square. Birds of Yukon is not a breeding bird atlas project. Instead, like Birds of British Columbia, it is a compilation of historical and current bird records, summarized to show non-breeding as well as breeding distributions. Finally, when the book is published, we will have accessible and comprehensive information on the distribution and basic ecology of Yukon's birds.

### Recording Observations

We enjoy watching birds for all sorts of reasons. For many birdwatchers, the enjoyment is increased when we record our observations and contribute them to various databases, studies, and surveys. Writing down your sightings also makes you either decide what that funny-looking warbler was, or let it go unidentified this time but make sure you notice the crucial field marks next time. And of course, if you record your sightings, you can compare this year's observations with previous years, and not just *wonder* whether this junco is really three weeks ahead of the usual migration time, or whether there are fewer longspurs this year.

What should you write down? The basics are species, date, location, and number of birds. You may want to take note of sex and age (eg. adult vs immature Bald Eagle), behaviour, plumage (eg. winter plumage loon, dark-phase Parasitic Jaeger), habitat, and evidence of nesting (eg. nest found, adult carrying food, broken-wing display). If you don't have the time or energy to write down everything you see every time you go birding, then start by just recording the less common species, or by listing the species without numbers.

If you submit records to the Birds of Yukon project, we need fairly specific locations in order to include your sightings in the distribution maps. The grid squares are the outlines of 1:50,000 scale topographic maps, which are about 30 x 30 km. So, "Alaska Highway, Whitehorse to Haines Junction" is not specific enough to be mapped, but "10 km west of Champagne" is.



Mallards, by Tanya Handley

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**MORE BIRDS OF YUKON ...**

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***Unusual Sightings***

If you see something unusual, like a Great Blue Heron, or a Snow Bunting in Whitehorse in June, it's a good idea to write a description of what the bird looks like (and take a photograph if possible), even if it's something obvious like the heron. Birds of Yukon, like all projects of its kind, requires documentation for unusual sightings. Like a museum specimen, your written description or photograph is a permanent record of the sighting, and provides lasting evidence that you identified the bird correctly. The Birds of Yukon project has a standard Rare Bird Report form, available from CWS.

***Contributing Your Sightings***

Our goal is to produce the Birds of Yukon publication in 1997. We will be compiling data for at least another two years, and we hope to continue to update the database after publishing the book. We encourage all birdwatchers to submit records. All contributions will be acknowledged in the publication. We are especially interested in:

- locations away from highways and towns
- breeding evidence
- early and late dates
- species rare in the Yukon, and/or at the edge of their normal range

One thing that makes birdwatching exciting in the Yukon is that so far, little is documented, and anyone interested in birds can easily make a significant contribution to written knowledge of the territory's bird life. All you have to do is get out and make careful observations, and write them down!

If you have questions or suggestions, feel free to drop in to the Canadian Wildlife Service at 100 Hamilton Blvd, or call us at 668-2285.

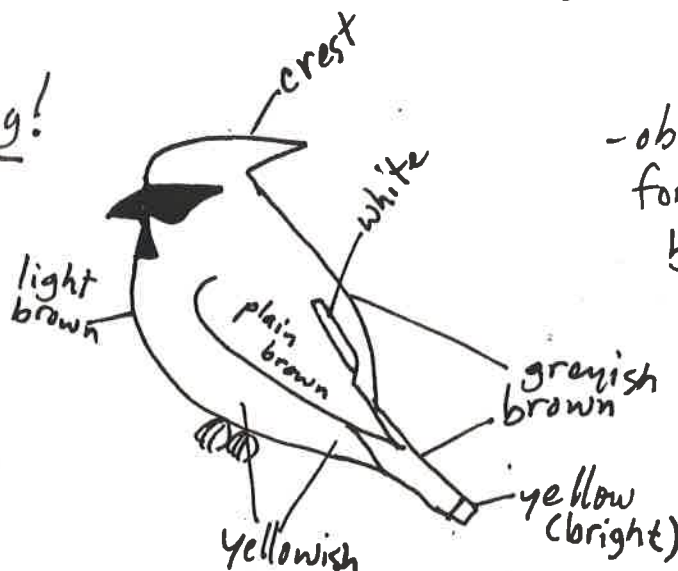
*Pam Sinclair*

*Wendy Nixon*

Cedar Waxwing!

17 July 1994  
2:00 pm.

- at Johnson's Crossing  
just south of  
bridge on west side  
of the river.



- observed one bird  
for 20 minutes eating  
berries.

- high thin call.

***If you see an unusual bird, try drawing a simple field sketch ...***

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**LITTLE BROWN BIRD No.2: *The Chipping Sparrow***

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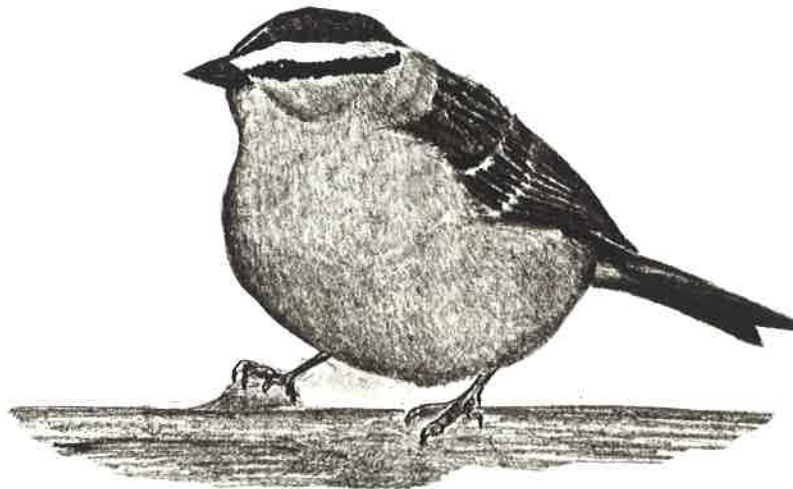
The Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) is one of the many smaller sparrows that is colored by shades of grey, brown and rufous. As the name implies, the song is a single note, dry "chipping" trill that could be mistaken for a Dark-eyed Junco's song, but is usually less melodic and longer than the Junco. (I think of a Dark-eyed Junco's song as more of a musical trill). The call note is a single "chip".

The first field marks to look for (ie. the obvious ones) include: a rufous cap with white eyebrow stripes bordering the cap, an unstreaked grey chest and belly, and a whitish chin and throat. The second field marks to look for (ie. the details) include: a narrow black line through the eye, two faint white wing bars, a light brown back streaked with black, a grey rump, and legs pale brown or flesh colored. Immature birds have a brown cap with a light stripe down the middle of it (in fall the brown cap is streaked with black) and buffy eyebrow stripes and underparts.

In spring, watch out for another sparrow with a rufous cap and "clean" (ie. unstreaked) grey chest - the American Tree Sparrow. Just look for a white eyebrow stripe and black eyestripe to determine if it is a Chipping Sparrow. The American Tree Sparrow has a grey eyebrow stripe and a brown stripe behind the eye, and a dusky spot in the center of the breast.

Chipping Sparrows are fairly common throughout southern and central Yukon in spring and summer. They are generally found in openings and edges of spruce and mixed forest, and in thickets or treed areas bordering open grassy areas. They usually nest in trees, and feed low in trees or in dense cover on insects and seeds. In winter they are found throughout Mexico.

***Wendy Nixon***



***Chipping Sparrow, by Pam Sinclair***

**YBC BUSINESS MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday 2 February.

**Time:** 7:00 pm.

**Location:** Whitehorse Public Library.

**Agenda:**

- spring migration projects.
- a review of membership dues.
- a review of goals for '94.

*All Members Are Welcome!!*

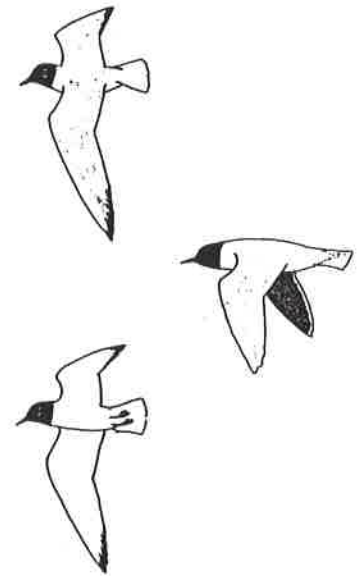
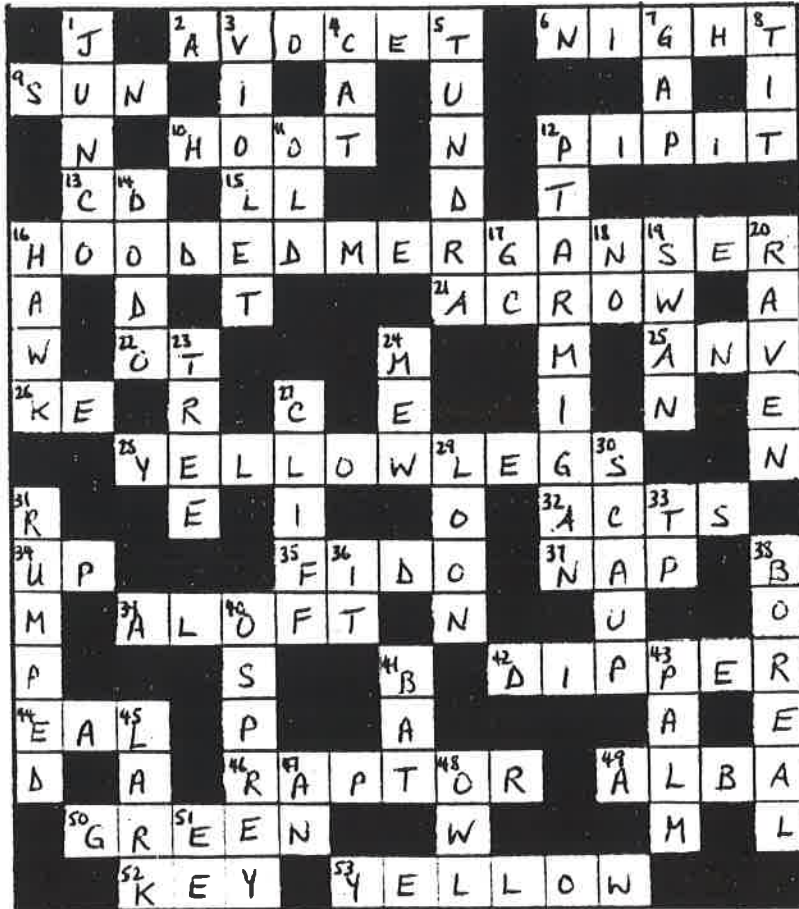
**WINTER DIPPER WATCH**

A beautiful and lively songster, the *American Dipper* is one of the great charms of winter birding.

During winter, Dippers frequent open water areas across southern Yukon. Birders can observe winter Dippers at a number of locations near Whitehorse;

- 1) Open water areas along the Fish Lake Road, especially near the fish farm where MacIntyre Creek passes under Fish Lake Rd.
- 2) Check open water areas along the Yukon River Trail in Whitehorse especially at the Power Dam.

**Solution to A Yukon Birder's Crossword ...**



**THE YUKON BIRD CLUB**

*1993 Board of Directors*

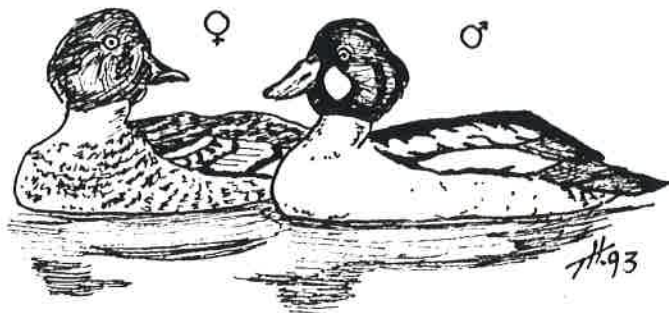
President:	Cameron Eckert
Secretary:	Wendy Nixon
Treasurer:	Jeremy Baumbach
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Events Coordinator:	Dave Mossop
Sightings Coordinator:	Helmut Grünberg
Newsletter Editors:	Cameron Eckert Tracie Harris
Youth Coordinators:	Greg Kubica Sam White
Bird-a-thon Coordinator:	René Carlson
Special Projects:	vacant

*"The goals of the Yukon Bird Club are to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Yukon birds and their habitats".*

The Yukon Bird Club is a registered non-profit group and membership is open to everyone!

\$10.00 for individuals.  
\$25.00 for families.  
\$5.00 for full time students and individuals 65 years of age or older.

For more information contact:  
The Yukon Bird Club, Box 31054,  
Whitehorse, YT, Canada, Y1A 5P7



*Common Goldeneye by Tanya Handley*

**BIRDER'S CLASSIFIEDS**

*Gyrfalcons and Snowy Owls*

Don Shanahan, a birder from Ontario, is currently working on a paper focusing on Gyrfalcon - Snowy Owl interactions. He would be very interested to hear from any Yukon birders who have observed interactions between these two species. Please write; Don Shanahan, Box 519, Brighton, Ontario, K0K 1H0.

*British Columbia Field Ornithologists*

BCFO is a non-profit society open to anyone with an interest in the study and enjoyment of wild birds in British Columbia. Their objectives include fostering cooperation between amateur and professional ornithologists, promoting cooperative bird surveys and research projects, and supporting conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve birds and their habitats.

BCFO publishes quarterly newsletter and a biannual journal. Individual memberships are \$20.00 per year. For further information or to join, write; The Treasurer, BC. Field Ornithologists, P.O.Box 1018, Surrey, BC, V3S 4P5

*Classified Adds for Birders*

The Yukon Bird Club will publish ads and notices of interest to its members. *Members and non-profit or non-commercial organizations may submit non-business-related ads at no charge.* Business-related ads will be published at a reasonable rate.

All Yukon birders are invited to write articles for this newsletter!! Contact Cameron (Ph.667-4630) or Tracie (Mobile Phone: Laberge 2M-4554) with your ideas or;

**Please send your submissions to:  
Cameron Eckert, 14-11th Ave.,  
Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 4H6**