

Y u k o n *WARBLER*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YUKON BIRD CLUB - SPRING 1994 (Vol.2,No.1)
P.O.Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 5P7

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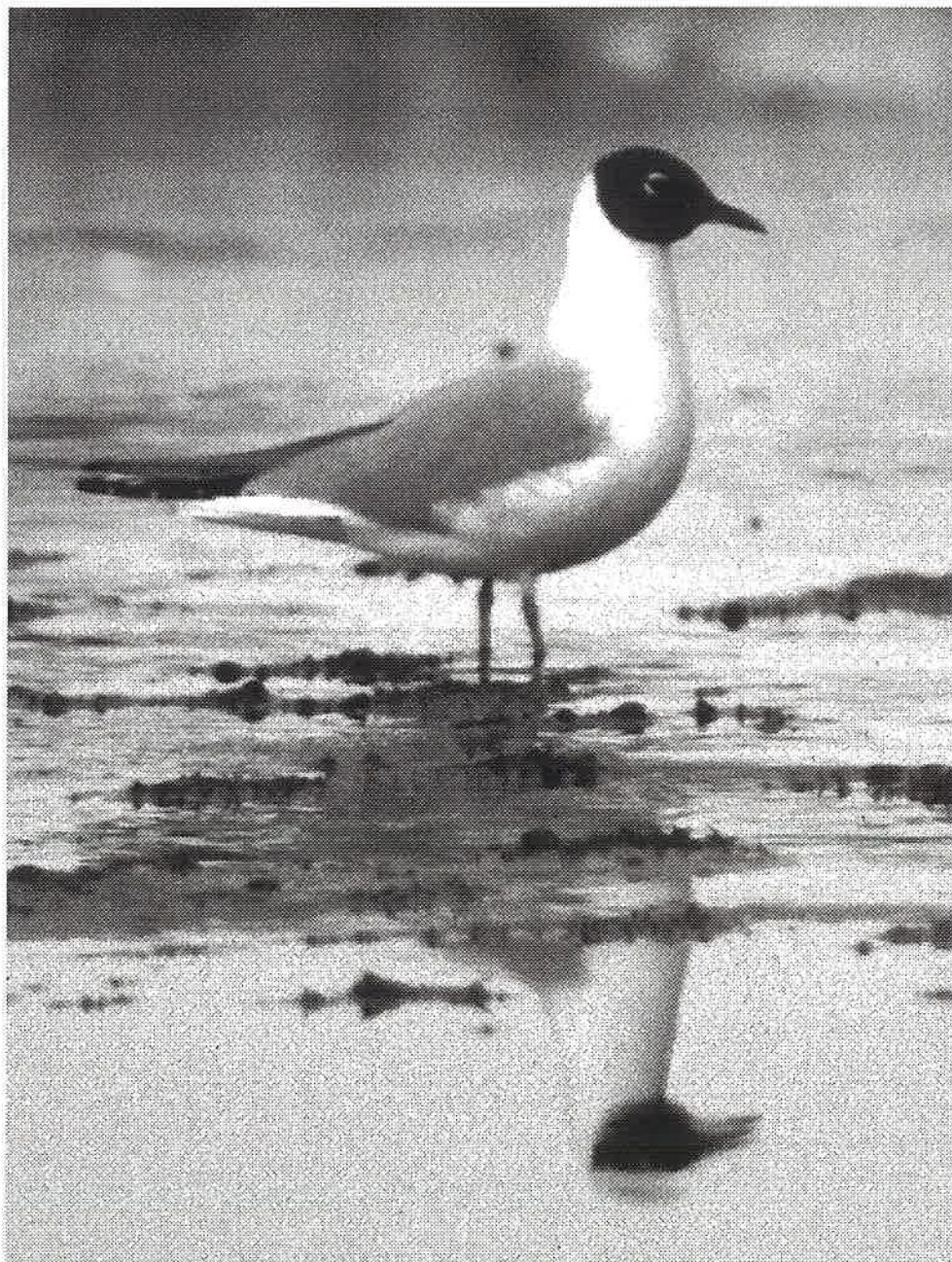
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*One of Yukon's beautiful breeding birds - watch for the first
Bonaparte's Gull of spring in early May. Photo by Cameron Eckert*

YUKON BIRD CLUB'S SPRING FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

WEEKDAY EVENING OUTINGS: Dress for the weather, and bring binoculars. For more information or to arrange a ride call Pam Sinclair (667-4630) or Wendy Nixon (668-7572).

Thursday 31 March. *Spring Owl Hoot.* For owls, spring is well underway - it's already nesting season! Listen for the diminutive Boreal Owl as well as Great Horned Owls. **Meet at 8:00 pm at the SS Klondike.** Leader: Helmut Grünberg.

Thursday 21 April. *Spring Waterfowl at Shallow Bay.* Experience swan migration in full swing, and ducks showing off their beautiful breeding plumages! **Meet at 5:30 pm at the Porter Creek Super A.** Bring rubber boots. Leaders: Nancy Hughes and Richard Mueller.

Tuesday 26 April. *Swans at M'Clintock Bay and Lewes Marsh.* The peak of swan migration - learn about their behavior and biology. **Meet at 5:30 pm at the SS Klondike.** Leader: Jim Hawkings.

Wednesday 4 May. *Takhini River Ponds.* Watch for a variety of pond and marsh birds - shorebirds, grebes, ducks, and early songbirds! **Meet at 6:30 pm at the Porter Creek Super A.** Leader: Lee Kubica.

Thursday 12 May. *Shorebirds at Shallow Bay.* It's the peak of shorebird migration, and you'll also see a great variety of waterfowl and songbirds! **Meet at 7:00 pm at the Porter Creek Super A.** Bring rubber boots. Leader: Wendy Nixon.

Tuesday 17 May. *The Songbirds of Paddy's Pond.* Discover the diversity of songbirds at this rich site, right in Hillcrest! **Meet at 7:00 pm at the SS Klondike.** Leader: Mary Whitley.

Thursday 26 May. *Birds Along the Yukon River Trail.* This trip will be in French and English! **Meet at 7:00 pm at the SS Klondike.** Leader: Julie Lefebvre.

Thursday 2 June. *Spring Migration Finalé at Judas Creek.* This popular outing will explore one of southern Yukon's best birding locations. **Meet at 5:30 pm at the SS Klondike.** Leader: Jim Hawkings.

Tuesday 14 June. *Breeding Birds at Mary Lake.* An excellent place to observe a wide variety of southern Yukon's breeding birds. **Meet at 7:00 pm at the SS Klondike.** Leader: Wendy Nixon.

WEEKEND DAY TRIPS: Dress for the weather, bring a lunch and binoculars. For more information or to arrange a ride call Pam Sinclair (667-4630) or Wendy Nixon (668-7572).

Sunday 15 May. *Birds and Mammals at Sheep Mountain.* An outstanding opportunity to view Dall's Sheep and Kluane's fascinating bird life. **Meet at 8:30 am at the Porter Creek Super A.** Leader: Lee Kubica.

Saturday 21 May. *Duck Banding at Shallow Bay.* See ducks in the hand while learning about their biology and behaviour. Bring rubber boots. **Meet at 10:00 am at the Porter Creek Super A.** Leader: Dave Mossop.

Sunday 5 June. *The Birding Treasures of MacIntyre Creek.* Breeding songbirds and their diverse vocal repertoires. **Meet at 9:30 am at the Porter Creek Super A.** Leader: René Carlson.

EVENING and SPECIAL EVENTS SCHEDULE

EVENING and SPECIAL EVENTS: Seminars, slide shows, and the Bird-a-Thon! For more information call Pam Sinclair (667-4630) or Wendy Nixon (668-7572).

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 F.H. Collins High School Library Speaker: Lee Kubica.

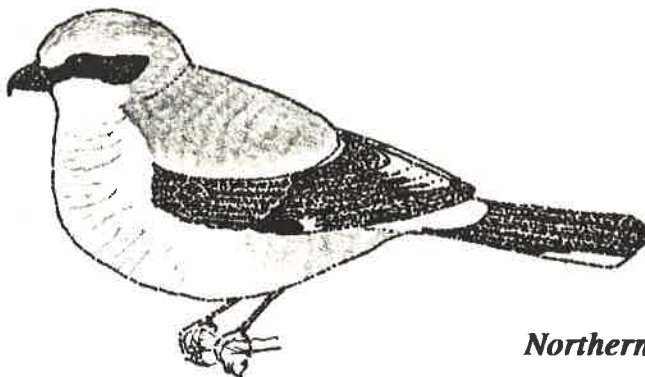
Sunday 17 April. *Come Celebrate the Swans!* Don't miss the grand opening of Swan Haven. Drop in at Swan Haven in the North M'Clintock Subdivision any time between 10:00 am. and 4:00 pm. For more information call Julie Lefebvre @ 667-8291.

Friday 27 May. *1994 Bird-a-Thon.* This year's Bird-a-Thon starts at 5:00 pm. on Friday May 27th and finishes at 5:00 pm. on Saturday May 28th with a post-Bird-a-Thon pot-luck Bar-B-Que at Wolf Creek Campground. Lots of prizes!!

WINTER FIELD TRIP REPORT

Helmut Grünberg's *Tagish Bird Tour: winter edition* proved to be a glorious spectacle of winter birding. Nine participants joined the frosty convoy to find 15 species. A female Common Merganser just upstream from the SS Klondike was the first duck of the day. Common Redpolls were observed at a Schwatka Lake feeder. A Common Goldeneye at the Lewes Dam tried hard, without success, to be a Barrow's. Nine more Common Goldeneye and 3 Common Mergansers at Tagish rounded out the duck sightings. A small flock of White-winged Crossbills was spotted just past Jake's Corner along the Tagish Road. More White-winged Crossbills flitted in the spruce trees at Tagish Campground. Swan Haven's bird feeder at M'Clintock Bay was very active with 11 Pine Grosbeaks, one Red-breasted Nuthatch, 6 Black-capped Chickadees, and up to 15 Boreal Chickadees! The star of the tour was a Northern Hawk-Owl at Judas Creek!

Pam Sinclair led a small but very hardy group of birders on a quest for the elusive *Hoary Redpoll*. The day started with 5 Common Goldeneye observed preening ice from their feathers at the Lewes Dam. The woods of Wolf Creek were relatively quiet until the silence was broken by a foraging flock of 5 Boreal Chickadees. On a long shot whim the outing detoured to Porter Creek for some feeder watching. The group quickly located a small flock of Pine Grosbeaks and 40 Common Redpolls tucking into a motherload of birdseed. Suddenly, to the astonishment of all participants, 2 Hoary Redpolls materialized from the black hole of Arctic birding to provide a dazzling finale to the outing!



Northern Shrike by Pam Sinclair

YUKON'S FIRST ANNUAL SWAN CELEBRATION!!

Come celebrate the swans ...

Birdwatchers take heart, spring is just around the corner. The days are getting longer and a little warmer. We will soon see those familiar white swan wings stretch across the sky.

This year, memorable birding experiences in a brand new facility await you at M'Clintock Bay. The facility is located only 30 kilometres from downtown Whitehorse, in the North M'Clintock Bay Subdivision. It is the result of a cooperative agreement between Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Yukon Council of Girl Guides of Canada and the Yukon Government's Renewable Resources.

Circle Sunday April 17th, 1994 on your birding calendar! You will not want to miss the grand opening celebrations of "Swan Haven". The fare for the day-long celebrations will include: unveiling of a commemorative plaque, lectures by local experts, friendly interpreters ready to answer your questions, activities for children of all ages and of course, thousands of swans, geese and ducks resting and feeding on the bay's open water. The festivities will begin at 10:00 am and continue until 4:00 pm.

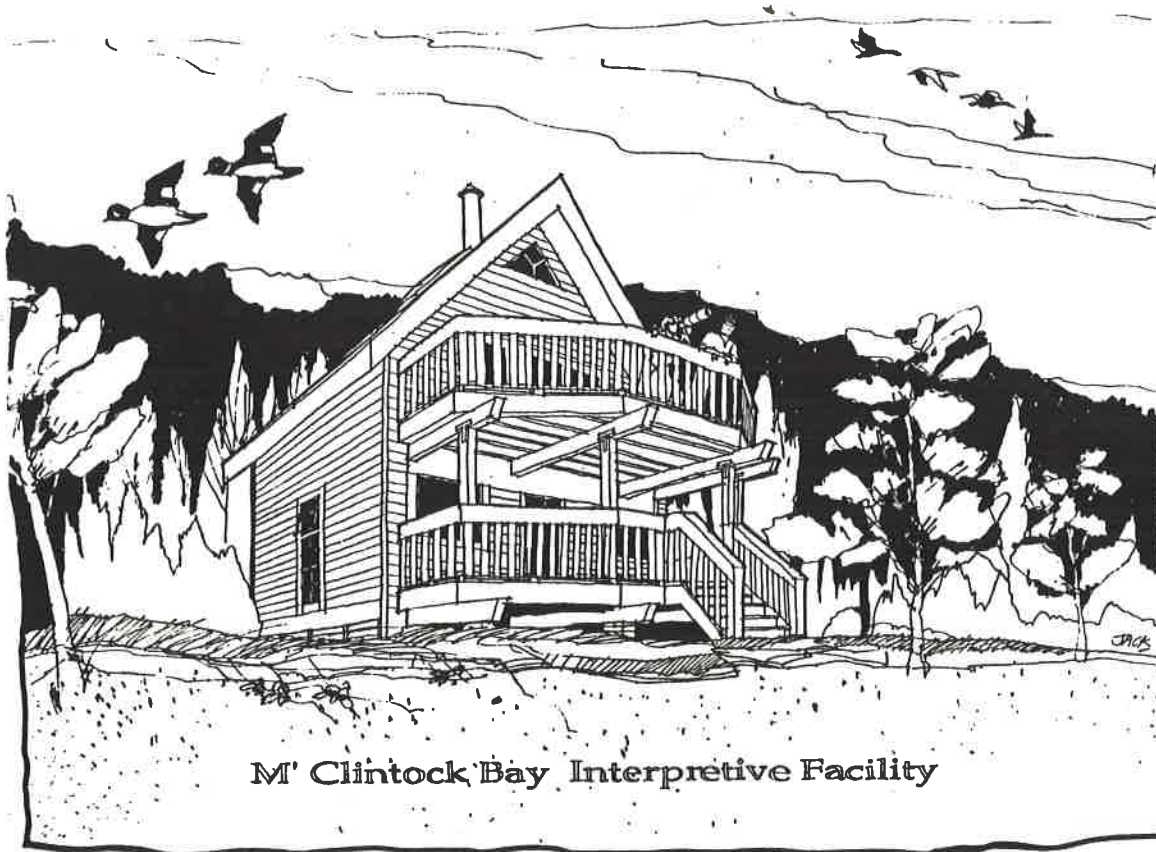
From a vantage point high above the bay, "Swan Haven" offers a panoramic view of the avian activity on the water. M'Clintock Bay provides critical habitat on the Pacific flyway for thousands of migrating swans, ducks and geese. At the peak of migration, almost 2000 swans and nearly 1000 ducks can be seen at once resting and feeding in the bay. As these birds move on, flocks of shorebirds arrive to take their place.

Don't miss the grand opening! Take part in the first, of what is hoped to become an annual celebration of swans!

For more information, contact the Wildlife Viewing Program at 667-8291 or write:

Wildlife Viewing Program
Wildlife Branch
Renewable Resources
Box 2703, Whitehorse
Yukon, Canada, Y1A 2C6.

Julie Lefebvre



M'Clintock Bay Interpretive Facility

BIRD-A-THON

Spring marks the return of shorebirds, swallows, and songbirds and the Yukon Bird-a-Thon is a special way to celebrate!

WHAT IS A BIRD-A-THON??

The Bird-a-Thon is an exciting 24 hour birdwatching festival and conservation fundraiser! Participants collect sponsors on a dollars-per-species basis in their quest to observe as many species as possible anywhere in the Yukon within the specified 24 hour period. Birders can participate as individuals or in teams. Team members bird together. Your level of birding experience is not important and *beginners are most welcome!* Whether you spend all day prowling mountains for pipits and all night searching marshes for Soras, or just spend an hour or two at your favorite birding location, your participation is important!

Is the Bird-a-Thon an effective fundraiser?

The Bird-a-Thon has proved to be a very effective fundraiser with yearly totals often exceeding 1000 dollars. Last year participants raised 1700 dollars!! The Yukon Bird Club and the Yukon Conservation Society share the proceeds which are used for conservation education projects. Bird-a-Thon pledges are tax-deductable and sponsors receive tax receipts.

What is the "scientific" value of the Bird-a-Thon?

The Bird-a-Thon is an intensive one-day survey of southern Yukon's bird life. Year after year, the Bird-a-Thon provides a snap shot of diversity and abundance during the peak of bird activity in the Yukon. Last year the cumulative total for all participants was 135 species! The Bird-a-Thon has significantly added to our knowledge of Yukon's birds. A few of the spectacular finds during last year's Bird-a-Thon were Western Grebe, Smith's Longspur, Brant, California Gull, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sandhill Crane, Tennessee Warbler, Dusky Flycatcher, and Wilson's Phalarope!

I'd rather participate with other birders ... how can I join a team?

Not only is birding with others socially enjoyable, but fewer birds go unnoticed with a greater collection of eyes! If you would like to join a team then call René Carlson at 668-5293. Whether you are keen to bird all day or just a few hours, René can match you with appropriate team members.

One thing is certain ... the big winner in the Bird-a-Thon, every year, is the Yukon Bird Club!! The Bird-a-Thon is a very fun and casual event. A wide variety of prizes ensures that all the participants have a good time. Birders with small children can look forward to the *Toddlers in Tow Award!* Birdwatch by foot or bike in a quest for the *Enviro-birder Award!*

WHEN AND WHERE?

This year's Bird-a-Thon will start at 5:00 p.m. on **FRIDAY MAY 27th** and finish at 5:00 p.m. on **SATURDAY MAY 28th** with a post-Bird-a-Thon potluck Bar-B-Que at Wolf Creek Campground (just south of Whitehorse on the Alaska Highway). Lots of prizes, good food, and fun!

For more information, sponsor sheets, or to join a team, call René (668-5293) or Cameron (667-4630). Please support the Yukon Bird Club by participating in the 1994 Bird-a-Thon! Happy Birding!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR YUKON BIRDERS

1) North American Breeding Bird Survey

The BBS is a continent-wide survey run almost entirely by volunteers. Each volunteer birder adopts a BBS route (a 40 kilometre section of road) somewhere in the Yukon and surveys it once a year during the breeding season, following detailed instructions. You start at dawn (which is early, in June!) and stop every 800m to count birds for 3 minutes at each stop.

Time Required: one morning per year, for at least 3 years.

Timing: any day in June

Location: Yukon-wide

Skills Required: identification of most local songbirds by sight and song.

Contact: Wendy Nixon, Canadian Wildlife Service, ph. 668-2285

2) Swan Haven Interpretive Centre

A beautiful interpretive centre has been built at M'Clintock Bay. At the grand opening, volunteers will assist YTG biologists in operating spotting scopes and pointing out waterfowl to visitors. This should be a very enjoyable event!

Time Required: one to several hours

Timing: Sunday April 17th, 10 am - 4 pm

Location: North M'Clintock Subdivision, 30 km south of Whitehorse

Skills Required: identification of waterfowl

Contact: Julie Lefebvre, YTG Renewable Resources, ph. 667-8291

3) Duck Banding

Banding ducks helps biologists determine the migration pathways and wintering areas of Yukon duck populations; this information is crucial for conservation efforts. Volunteers will see ducks up close and learn about waterfowl biology and identification.

Time Required: a few hours on one or more days

Timing: 1 May to 31 May

Location: Shallow Bay (30 km N of Whitehorse)

Skills Required: none

Contact: Dave Mossop, YTG Renewable Resources, ph. 667-5721

4) Spring Bird Counts

Just go out birding, and record what you see! Four of the best birding spots around Whitehorse will be covered, and evaluated as potential sites for long-term monitoring of songbird populations. This is a chance to brush up on songs before the BBS, and contribute your bird sightings to a conservation project.

Time Required: a few hours on one or more days

Timing: 20 April - 5 June

Location: Whitehorse Area

Skills Required: identification of songbirds by sight and sound

Contact: Wendy Nixon, Canadian Wildlife Service, ph. 668-2285

5) Migration Watches

Watch migration of waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds, in action! This survey takes place on a hilltop near Whitehorse. Volunteers will assist YTG biologists in identifying, counting, and recording flying birds.

Time Required: a few hours on one or more days

Timing: 15 April to 31 May

Location: Whitehorse Area

Skills Required: *Observers:* identification of birds in flight. *Recorders:* none.

Contact: Dave Mossop, YTG Renewable Resources, 667-5721

6) Canadian Loon Lakes Survey (CLLS)

The CLLS needs your help to determine effects of acid rain and human disturbance on loons. Volunteers adopt one or more lakes and visits it three times a year: in June to look for adults, in July to look for newly hatched chicks, and in August to look for surviving chicks. Volunteers will receive the CLLS newsletter.

Time Required: Three visits per year

Timing: June, July, August

Location: any lake anywhere in Canada

Skills Required: identification of loons

Contact: Long Point Bird Observatory, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, NOE 1M0. ph. 519-586-3532

FOCUS ON: *The Arctic Tern*

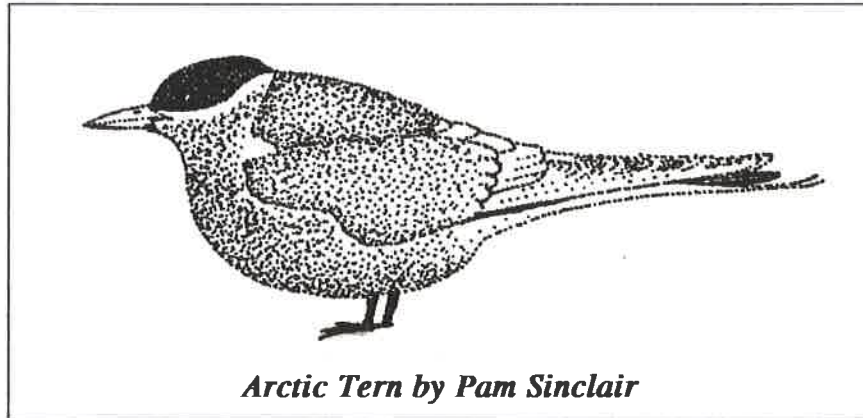
The Arctic Tern, a graceful and strong flyer, is one of the true champions of long-distance migration. While the Arctic Tern visits the Yukon in summer to breed, it spends the winter near the southern tip of South America and as far south as Antarctica. Tracking the sun from Arctic to Antarctic across the seasons, the Arctic Tern probably enjoys more daylight than any other species on the planet. Each spring and fall the 17,000 kilometre migration, well offshore, is a marathon epic for this spectacular bird.

The Arctic Tern, the Yukon's only breeding tern, is much smaller than most gulls and is very distinctive in flight with its pointed wings and long forked tail. The Arctic Tern's flight is acrobatic and buoyant as it wheels and dives for fish. Its breast, belly and upperparts are medium grey. The spread wings appear to have a very thin black line along the trailing edge of the underside of the primary flight feathers. A black cap and nape, deep red bill and very short red legs are distinctive. Listen for its characteristic call, a raspy *tr-tee-ar*.

The Arctic Tern returns to the Yukon in May to breed in wetlands and along gravel bars and sandy edges of rivers. True to its name, the Arctic Tern is a common breeder north of the Arctic circle. However, it can also be found breeding throughout southern Yukon, and on the Atlantic Coast as far south as southern New Brunswick. Males and females return to the same nesting grounds year after year and pairs typically mate for many years. Pair bonds are formed through elaborate aerial displays, extended wing displays, and courtship feeding. The Arctic Tern nests in colonies and its simple nest is merely a shallow depression on the ground. The female typically lays 2 eggs and both parents share incubation and feeding duties. Young hatch after 20 days and fledge approximately 25 days after hatching.

Arctic Terns are vigorous nest defenders and most birders will remember their first encounter with nesting terns! Arctic Terns do not linger long after breeding and become very scarce in the Yukon after July. Mated pairs and their young often migrate together in fall.

Arctic Terns feed on small fish and crustaceans; watching this species as it forages provides unique moments in birding entertainment. Hovering and wheeling high over the water's surface, a tern will suddenly fold its wings and plunge straight into the water. As the tern emerges from the cold water, the fish in its bill is quickly swallowed and the tern resumes its aerial dance over the river.



Arctic Tern by Pam Sinclair

At the turn of the century, the feather trade was a major threat to Arctic Tern populations. While this threat has ceased, biologists are now concerned that Arctic Terns may be at risk from

environmental toxins. Toxins dumped into oceans, lakes, and rivers by humans are transferred to terns via the food chain. Nesting terns are also at risk from artificially raised river levels which flood their breeding colonies.

In the early 1700's, Eric Pobtoppidan, the Bishop of Bergen, gave the Arctic Tern its Latin name, *Sterna paradisaea*. This name conveys his feeling that so beautiful a creature belonged in paradise.

One of the best places to view Arctic Terns in the Whitehorse area is along the Yukon River at the SS Klondike. Fish Lake is also an excellent location. So take an hour out of your regular routine, find a comfortable spot at the edge of one of our beautiful rivers and catch a ride with an Arctic Tern.

Cameron Eckert

FIELD NOTES: *Observations from the field*

The winter report gives us an opportunity to highlight every species reported, due to the relatively low number of species which winter in the Yukon. An amazing 34 species were reported this winter. Nearly as impressive was the total of 15 species sighted on the January 30th Yukon Bird Club field trip. We encourage all bird club members to send in their observations. I am sure we missed a few of the interesting ones! As spring approaches we request that, whenever possible, observers record the spring arrival dates for any migrants they observe.

One male and 3 female **Common Goldeneye** were on Kluane Lake in November (TD). This species was also recorded at a variety of other locations through the winter including the Yukon River in Whitehorse (CBC, Dec 26), Marsh Lake (CBC, Dec 19; YBC field trip, Jan 30) and Tagish (YBC field trip, Jan 30). A female **Common Merganser** was on the Takhini River near Kusawa Lake on Dec 29 (GK,LK). A male **Common Merganser** was at the Lewes Marsh bridge on Jan 1 (CE,PS).

An adult **Bald Eagle** has survived the long cold winter on fish handouts at the Icy Waters Fish Farm (GJ). An immature **Golden Eagle** was being harassed by **Common Ravens** over McIntyre Creek on Dec 6 (CE,PS). A **Northern Goshawk** first sighted in Porter Creek on Dec 25, was seen again on Dec 26 and Jan 12 (GK,LK).

A pair of **Spruce Grouse** was at Kusawa Lake on Jan 3, and another was on the Fish Lake Road on Jan 23 (CE,PS). Two **Willow Ptarmigan** seen feeding in willow bushes on 12th Avenue in Porter Creek on Feb 17,18 were a surprise to the observers (GK,LK).

Did you ever wonder how many **Rock Doves** make Whitehorse their home? The answer came with a record high count of 305 **Rock Doves** in Whitehorse on Dec 1 (HG).

The only **Great Horned Owl** reported was seen in Whitehorse behind Beaver Lumber on Dec 10 (GK,LK). A lone **Northern Hawk-Owl** was at Drury's Farm along the Alaska Highway near the Takhini River on Dec 29 (GK,LK). Another was sighted along the Alaska Highway near Judas Creek on the Jan 30 YBC field trip (HG,YBC). Eyewitnesses claim that this charismatic owl nearly caused a major traffic accident! Nonetheless, it was wonderful for the whole group to be able to observe such a beautiful bird at such close range. A **Boreal Owl** was sighted on the Watson Lake Christmas Count on Dec 25 (RF,CBC). **Boreal Owls** were heard calling at a number of locations including Kluane Lake on Dec 21 (TH), Caribou Lakes on Jan 1 (SW), and Squatters' Row on Jan 26 (CO,SO), and at Kookatsoon Lake since the second week of January (CB).

A male **Downy Woodpecker** continued to visit a Porter Creek feeder through the winter (CE,PS). A female **Hairy Woodpecker** was seen at a Wolf Creek feeder on Dec 18 and Jan 7 (WN). A male and female **Three-toed Woodpecker** were at Swan Lake, 20 km north of Whitehorse on Dec 31 (HG). Single male **Three-toed Woodpeckers** were observed at Wolf Creek Campground on Jan 1 and Kusawa Lake Campground on Jan 3 (CE,PS).

Gray Jays, **Black-billed Magpies** and **Common Ravens** were commonly observed through the winter. **Gray Jays** were particularly active during the Marsh Lake CBC, perhaps because of the mild weather. **Gray Jays** are extremely early breeders and observers should watch for signs of nesting anytime after mid-February.

Black-capped and **Boreal Chickadees** were most commonly observed at feeders, and both species were also observed away from feeders. A **Mountain Chickadee** continued to visit a Porter Creek feeder through the winter (CE,PS). Other **Mountain Chickadee** sightings included a pair visiting a Marsh Lake feeder since early February (RM), and one at a Judas Creek feeder also since early February (MC,AM,PSp). Single **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were recorded at 3 different feeders through the winter; one in Wolf Creek (WN), one at Schwatka Lake (CG), and one at M'Clintock Bay (Swan Haven).

FIELD NOTES: More Observations From the Field ...

American Dippers were present at most open water areas. Two dippers were on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on Dec 26 (JB,HG,CBC), 5 dippers were along the Takhini River on Dec 29 (GK,LK) and Jan 3 (CE,PS), and one was in Wolf Creek on Jan 1 (CE,PS).

Wintering **American Robins** included one bird along the Yukon River in Whitehorse on Dec 4 (CE,PS), and a second bird in Valleyview on Jan 8 (MW).

Flocks of **Bohemian Waxwings** were seen at Yukon College and in downtown Whitehorse through early winter (m.ob.). A flock of 75 **Bohemian Waxwings** was feeding on Saskatoon and Goose berries in Whitehorse on Jan 3 (HG), and another flock of 18 **Bohemian Waxwings** was at Kusawa Lake on the same day (CE,PS).

An adult **Northern Shrike** was seen in Whitehorse on Dec 2 (CE), and a second **Northern Shrike** was seen at the Icy Waters Fish Farm on the same day (GJ). The Northern Shrike is one of our earliest spring migrants and observers should be on the lookout for this species anytime in March.

An unusual winter record of **European Starling** was a bird found on the Dec 26 Whitehorse Christmas Count (GK,LK) and still present on Jan 26 (CE).

Dark-eyed Juncos invariably rely on feeders for winter survival in the Yukon. A **Dark-eyed Junco** observed near a feeder in Porter Creek on Dec 5 did not linger (CE,PS), while 3 **Dark-eyed Juncos** continued to visit a Whitehorse feeder through February (HG). A small flock of 10 **Snow Buntings**, a rare winter resident, was observed at Haines Junction on Jan 26 (FN). In a sneak preview of spring, small flocks of **Snow Buntings** were observed at M'Clintock Bay on Mar 11, and along Burns Road in Whitehorse on Mar 14 (GB,JC,JL).

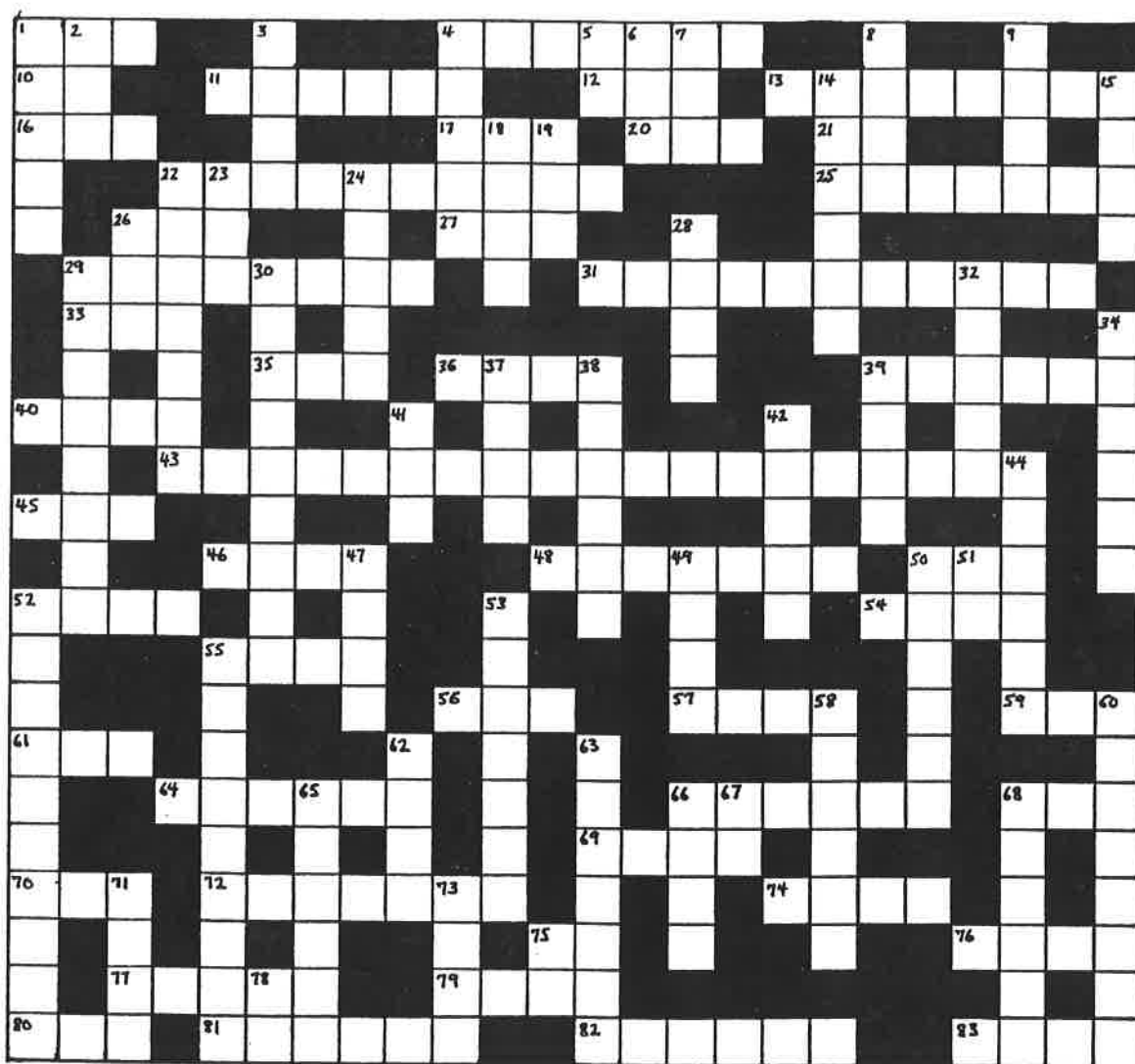
Pine Grosbeaks were commonly observed through the winter, especially at feeders (m.ob.). A very unusual **Pine Grosbeak** sporting a vivid bright orange tail was photographed in Tagish in mid-January (CBo). Very rare in winter was a pair of **Red Crossbills**, male and female, observed at a Riverdale feeder since Feb 17 (AS). Perhaps these birds were very early spring arrivals? **Red Crossbills**, possibly the same birds, were reported visiting another Riverdale feeder in late February (SH). **White-winged Crossbills** were more common with small flocks observed at a variety of locations through the winter (m.ob.).

The numbers of **Common Redpolls** observed at feeders, low in early winter, increased rather dramatically through January and February (m.ob.). Much rarer was a **Hoary Redpoll** visiting a Whitehorse feeder on Jan 23 and 4 **Hoaries** at the same feeder on Feb 20 (HG). Another **Hoary Redpoll** sporadically visited a Porter Creek feeder through February (GK,LK). Two frosty **Hoary Redpolls** were star attractions on the Feb 27 YBC field trip (PS,YBC). Three pairs of **Evening Grosbeaks** have continued to winter at a Watson Lake feeder through February (RF,MG).

Observers: Graham Baird, Jeremy Baumbach, Cameron Black (CB), Cathy Boyd (CBo), Jean Carey, CBC= Christmas Bird Count, Mark Connor, Terry Doyle, Cameron Eckert, Rob Florkiewicz, Mary Gamberg, Cora Grant, Helmut Grünberg, Todd Heakes, Sandy Hobus, Gavin Johnston, Greg Kubica, Lee Kubica, Julie Lefebvre, m.ob. = many observers, Angela Milani, Richard Mueller, Frances Naylen, Wendy Nixon, Craig Olsen, Sue Olsen, Aron Senkpiel, Pam Sinclair (PS), Paul Sparling (PSp), Mary Whitley, YBC= 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.

A YUKON BIRDER'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE WITH HOMONYMS: By Jeremy Baumbach



**** denotes homonym clues. In each case, one meaning of the homonym is a bird.
 Example: clue = repeat without understanding. Solution = parrot. (answers on Pg.16)**

ACROSS

- 1. Species of 46 Across: ___ 83 Across (3).
- 4. Species of 46 Across (7).
- 10. GST equivalent in Britain: ___ Tax (2,abbrev.).
- 11. * Throat infection, often in children (6).
- 12. Twitch (from excessive spotting scope use?) (3).
- 13. Species of 46 Across (8).
- 16. "The ___ and the pussycat went to sea ..." (3).

- 17. In abundance in the Yukon: Fresh ___ (3).
- 20. Author of short story (later a movie) about hostile birds (3).
- 21. Present tense of verb to be (2).
- 22. Species of 46 Across (10).
- 25. Species of 46 Across (7).
- 26. Dowitcher's larder (3).
- 27. Sketch birding observations on this (3).
- 29. Species of 42 Down (8).
- 31. Species of 37 Down (5-6).
- 33. ammon 's Flyca cher (3).
- 35. Fishing, hot or lightning ___ (3).

ACROSS con't

- 36. Take one with a camera, not a gun (4).
- 39. * Grumble (6).
- 40. Conventional, reflector or convection __ (4).
- 43. Species of 32 Down (7,5-7).
- 45. Bird's vocalization: c ____ (3).
- 46. * Deceive (4). See hint (below) if necessary!
- 48. Species of 46 Across (7).
- 50. Designation given to the Queen, Prime Minister or eminent birder (3, abbrev.).
- 52. * Boast (4).
- 54. Flying insect (4).
- 55. Species of 32 Down (4).
- 56. Name for female of some birds (3).
- 57. Species of 11 Across: ____ - 53 Down (4).
- 59. A characteristic of many Yukon roads (3).
- 61. It's an ____ wind that brings no birds (3).
- 64. Species of 46 Across: 13 Across- ____ (6).
- 66. Species of 46 Across: 49 Down- ____ or Species of 74 Across: 58 Down- ____ (6).
- 68. Typical field trip vehicle (3).
- 69. Some might describe birding as a bit of a ____ (4).
- 70. Species of 74 Across: ____ - 60 Down (3).
- 72. Species of 37 Down: 4 Down- ____ (7).
- 74. * Crazy or stupid person (4).
- 75. " ____ I were a rich man ..." (2).
- 76. "... for ____ of a nail, the shoe was lost ..." (4)
- 77. This summer I hope to arrange some birding field trips by ____ (5).
- 79. Eastern mystical religious sect (4).
- 80. If not for this boat, there would be no birds (3).
- 81. Species of 39 Across (6).
- 82. Species of 74 Across (6).
- 83. Local habitat of 46 Across: ____ fill (4).

Hint for 46 Across: The adjective, meaning someone "easily deceived", is more common.

DOWN

- 1. Species of 46 Across (5).
- 2. Call of 52 Across (3).
- 3. Bird-a- ____ (4).
- 4. Species of 37 Down: ____ - 72 Across or Species of 39 Across: ____ - 38 Down (5).
- 5. Pip ____ (2).
- 6. A small amount, usually of booze (3).
- 7. Growth industry: ____ tourism (3).
- 8. Birder's behaviour in direction of rare species (4).
- 9. Opposite of 37 Down (4).
- 14. Species of 46 Across (6).
- 15. Mediocre (2-2).

- 18. Emphasis, in print (4,abbrev.).
- 19. Species of 37 Down: ____ - 38 Down (3).
- 22. * Decorative cloth (7).
- 23 The fellow's behaviour seemed rather ____ until they realized he was a birder (3).
- 24. They ____ to think of the consequences had they called the police (5).
- 26. On second thought, maybe even the police know birders are a little ____ (3).
- 28. Species of 39 Across: ____ ed (4).
- 29. * Digger (8).
- 30. Species of 71 Down (9).
- 32. * Pinch someone's derriere (5,slang).
- 34. Species of 11 Across (6).
- 37. * Sell goods on the street, often yelling to advertize them (4).
- 38. Species of 37 Down: 70 Across- ____ or Species of 39 Across: 4 Down- ____ (6).
- 39. by the time they got there, it was ____ (4).
- 41. Species of 46 Across (3).
- 42. * Stretch one's neck in order to see better (5).
- 44. * Ladle (6).
- 47. There are ____ that protect some birds (4).
- 49. Species of 46 Across: ____ - 66 Across (4).
- 50. Species of 11 Across (6).
- 51. Pine S ____ kin (2).
- 52. Species of 46 Across (10).
- 53. Species of 11 Across: 57 Across- ____ (7).
- 55. Species of 11 Across or 37 Down (9).
- 58. Species of 74 Across: ____ - 66 Across (6).
- 60. Species of 74 Across: 70 Across- ____ (8).
- 62. Where rare birds abound (4).
- 63. Species of 74 Across (7).
- 65. A way for humans to ride the thermals (6).
- 66. Species of 39 Across (4).
- 67. P ____ n ____ ail (2).
- 68. Species of 32 Down (6).
- 71. * Bob head out of sight (4).
- 73. Location of rare bird: Somewhere ____ (4).
- 75. " ____ wishes were horses, beggars would ride" (2).
- 78. Military endeavour (2,abbrev.).



YUKON'S 1993/94 CHRISTMAS COUNT REPORT

Twenty-six people participated in four different Christmas Bird Counts in southern Yukon. A total of 25 species and over 1100 individual birds were observed in the four count areas: Kluane Lake South, Watson Lake, Marsh Lake and Whitehorse.

The Kluane count turned up a Boreal Owl, a Spruce Grouse, 14 Gray Jays, 3 Black-billed Magpies, 4 Common Ravens and an amazing number of woodpeckers. The six participants tallied 2 Black-backed Woodpeckers and 8 Three-toed Woodpeckers. The most numerous species were Boreal Chickadees (38), and White-winged Crossbills (60).

Watson Lake recorded a species relatively new to the Yukon. This is the second year that a small flock of Evening Grosbeaks (6) have wintered at Watson Lake. The other notable sighting was a Ruffed Grouse.

The Marsh Lake count included open water at the Lewes dam where 2 Common Mergansers and 1 Common Goldeneye were observed.

A Three-toed Woodpecker was seen at Gunnar's sawmill and a Red-breasted Nuthatch was the Swan Haven feeder. High numbers of Gray Jays (21), White-winged Crossbills (72), and Black-capped Chickadees (29) were observed.

Thirteen pairs of eyes turned up 26 species in the Whitehorse area. Unusual sightings included a Bald Eagle, a Mountain Chickadee, a European Starling, and 3 Dark-eyed Juncos. The numbers of Bohemian Waxwings (65), Pine Grosbeaks (23), and redpolls (56) were noticeably lower than last year. This difference probably reflects the "roving" nature of winter flocks of these species. The number of Rock Doves was nearly double that of last year; 120 in 1992 compared to 233 in 1993.

Thanks to Todd Heakes (Kluane Lake South), Rob Florkiewicz (Watson Lake) and Helmut Grünberg (Marsh Lake) for organizing the counts, and thanks to all participants for braving the cold. See you again next year!

Wendy Nixon

Cloudberry Adventures' spring birding trip to the Stikine!

Cloudberry Adventures is leading a spring sea-kayaking and birding tour to the Stikine River Estuary.

To the seafaring Tlingit, the Stikine was simply called "Great River". It is a wonderland of islands, dunes and tidal flats, with a backdrop of majestic peaks and glaciers. The biological richness of the delta makes it prime habitat for birds ... *and birders*. Year round residents include Bald Eagles and a variety of owls and other raptors. During the spring months of April and May, more than 1.5 million migrating birds including Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese, swans and a myriad of sea and shore birds, arrive at the mouth of the Stikine. Many rare and unique species such as the American Golden-Plover, Kittlitz's Murrelet, and Hudsonian Godwit rest here before migrating as far as the Arctic and Siberia. From our access point in Wrangell, Alaska, we will explore the Stikine delta and continue to LeConte Bay, site of the most southerly tidewater glacier on the continent and one of the major calving grounds for the Stellar's Sea Lion.

Dates: May 4-15, 1994 (12 days)

Participants: 10 Maximum, 6 Minimum

Trip Cost: \$1750.00 Cdn. includes sea kayaks and specialized gear, transportation (ferry and charter), all food on tour and cabin use.



For more information contact: Derek Endress, Cloudberry Adventures Ltd., Box 6113, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 5L7, Phone & Fax: 403-668-7711

LITTLE BROWN BIRD No.3: *Song Sparrow*

What is brown above and streaked below with striping on the head and throat, and a longish rounded tail? It is a bird that is rare in the Yukon - *the Song Sparrow*. It is one of 4 streaked sparrows which often appear to have a spot in the middle of the breast. The other spot-breasted contenders are: 1) Fox Sparrow, 2) Savannah Sparrow, and 3) Lincoln's Sparrow. While the American Tree Sparrow also has a dark spot in the middle of the breast, its breast lacks the streaking characteristic of the other species.

If you get a close-up look at a Song Sparrow you'll see a white throat bordered by dark lines, a white mustache stripe, and a gray eyebrow. A distinctive behavioural characteristic of the Song Sparrow in flight is the pumping action of its tail. There are a couple of other adult sparrows to watch out for if you want to avoid "Little Brown Bird Confusion Syndrome" (we've all had it at one time, some bird watchers report recurring cases of it). Fox, Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrows all have striped heads and streaking on the breast. However, the Fox Sparrow has very heavy blotchy streaking which merge into a large central breast spot. It often looks more like a breast blob than a spot.

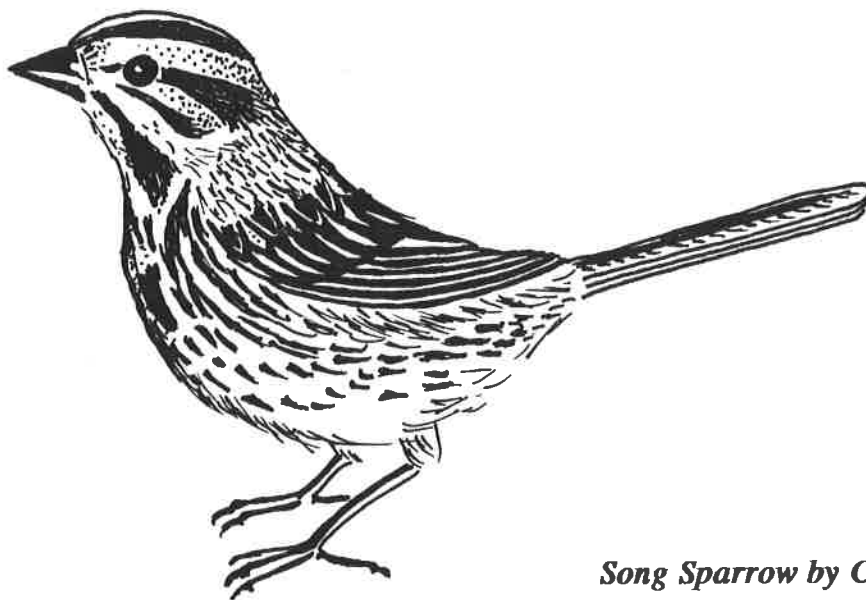
The Savannah Sparrow usually has yellow lores (line from the base of its bill to the eye) and often has yellowish eyebrows. Its short notched tail is quite different from the long rounded tail of the Song Sparrow.

The Lincoln's Sparrow has a buffy breast with very delicate streaks rather than a white breast with heavy streaking. The Lincoln's Sparrow also has a distinctive buffy mustache stripe which contrasts with its grey face. The Song Sparrow has a white moustache stripe.

A juvenile Song Sparrow may be confused with a juvenile American Tree Sparrow or a juvenile Lincoln's Sparrow. Look for pink legs on the Song Sparrow compared with dark legs on the American Tree Sparrow. The breast of the juvenile Lincoln's Sparrow is buffier than that of the Song Sparrow.

Many sparrows have distinctive, melodic songs so I find the name "Song Sparrow" a bit misleading. The Song Sparrow's song starts with 2 or 3 notes followed by a variable trill or a buzzing then a trill. Song Sparrows are usually found in shrubs bordering wetlands, streams or open areas. Incidentally, there are 8 subspecies in Canada - so if you think you know this bird - look again when you travel to points south.

Wendy Nixon



Song Sparrow by Cameron Eckert

A YUKON BIRDER'S ADVENTURES ON THE BBS TRAIL: By Lee Kubica

The alarm wakes us up on an early June morning. Our eyes are shocked to see that it is still dark. A quick glance at the alarm indicates 2:30 am - the optimum hour to prepare for our first Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) of the year. After quickly gathering coffee and hot chocolate we begin the drive to the starting point. Over the last 8 years many friends have volunteered to help with the driving.

Since 1965 in the U.S. and 1966 in Canada, a dedicated and ever enlarging group of birding enthusiasts have been running BBS routes across the continent. In 1993 the first attempt at expanding the program into Mexico established up to 40 routes in that country. This is the most comprehensive and longest-running breeding bird research program in the continent, and the results have confirmed a long suspected precipitous drop in neotropical migrants.

A variety of routes have been run in the Yukon for the last decade. The route from the Lake Laberge turnoff to Little Fox Lake has been done annually since 1986, the Quiet Lake Route has been surveyed since 1991, and Haines Summit, BC, the newest route in our area, was run for the first time in 1993.

A standard method is used for all BBS routes. A driver/recorder is indispensable, however only the observer is allowed to identify the species and number of birds on the route. Start time is half an hour before sunrise and the observer stops, listens and looks for 3 minutes at 50 locations along a 35 mile stretch of road. All birds seen or heard in 3 minutes within 1/4 mile of each stop are recorded. Weather conditions must be reasonable for the route to be done effectively.

While we sip the last dregs of coffee minutes before the official start time, the woods erupt with bird songs and calls. The recorder shouts, "Now".

"Two American Robins, one on each side of the road, Swainson's Thrush, 3 Dark-eyed Juncos, Herring Gull,..."

"Time".

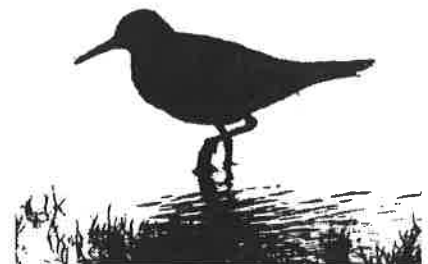
Into the truck, off down the road for 800 meters (the BBS information is all in miles, degrees Fahrenheit, etc. and my truck and thermometer are in kilometres and degrees Celsius so the first confusion has already been encountered). The second stop on the Laberge Route results in more of the same but the third stop has a pond and more variety.

"Go"

"American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco, Mallard, Lesser Yellowlegs".

As I am freezing to death (someone in Maryland thinks that the sun rises on this route at 4:24 but in reality the sun doesn't get into this valley until much later), the recorder is sipping yet another coffee in the warm and comfortable vehicle. During the past 8 years, 73 species have been recorded on this route. The habitats range from aspen groves, to ponds, to Fox Lake, to spruce/pine forest and finally to Little Fox Lake. The diversity of habitats reflects the large number of species. Over the years, some of the birds have become old friends. In 1992 when the Red-winged Blackbird didn't nest at the marsh on Fox Lake it was missed. The Bald Eagle has always been on the same tree for 8 years - a nest is nearby.

"Time".



En route with the BBS ...

This recorder is beginning to tick me off. I'm cold. I just get into the mood and off we go to the next stop. The most common species on the Laberge route over the years has been the Dark-eyed Junco. Most stops and every year have included this small but loud sparrow. American Robins are the second most common species on this route but are the most commonly seen species across North America.

"There should be a Red-tailed Hawk on the power pole at one of the next two stops." "3 Yellow-rumped Warblers, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-tail, flock of 52 Pine Siskins, American Kestrel."

"Stop, breakfast at Braeburn is sure going to taste good."

The last stop on the Laberge route is at Little Fox Lake and is one of the two stops where we can see or hear a Common Loon. The morning is crisp and clear and the haunting call of the loon will make it perfect. For 7 out of 8 years, the final stop has produced that unforgettable call.

The Quiet Lake route is different. It is farther away so we leave the night before. This is terrific - we get to sleep in because we camp at the first stop. The alarm rings at 3:15. This is great. I am the recorder and I get to drink the coffee.

3:56 "Go"

"Yellowlegs, Dark-eyed Junco, Gray Jay - boy it's hard to hear over the water."

"Stop, let's go."

"Look a Great Horned Owl at the top of that tree - can we count it?"

"Only if you can see or hear it from the next stop."

"Well, stop."

"Not yet, we've only gone half a kilometre and the rules state: record only the birds you hear and see within the 3 minute listening and looking time every 800 metres."

The Quiet Lake route follows the Rose River north towards Rose Lake. The noise of the river makes hearing birds difficult, but it provides a very different habitat from the Lake Laberge route. This results in different species: Canada Geese (every year), Harlequin Ducks, Varied Thrush, American Dipper. The most unique aspect of this route is that it was the only North American route to have no American Robins. We have recorded only 1 robin in 3 years and it was on the last stop in 1993. Over 3 years of observations, 42 species have been recorded. One of the main limitations of the BBS is that it under-represents those birds which do not sing or do not like to rise early in the morning. The Quiet Lake area is an outstanding area for grouse, and we have seen large numbers here many times but never during the BBS survey.

The newest route is on the Haines Summit. It extends from the Maintenance Camp at Mule Creek down towards Rainy Hollow and Haines, Alaska. In 1993 we started the route with blue sky and not a breath of wind; the summit was at its absolute best. The majority of the route is alpine, with the last few stops dropping into coastal forest. The bird species ranged from Willow Ptarmigan to a Rufous Hummingbird. The most common bird on the Summit was the White-crowned Sparrow, with Savannah Sparrows a close second. The greatest excitement of the day occurred at Stop 27, when a Northern Hawk-Owl hunting over the tundra was interrupted by a Mountain Goat running across the road!

These early mornings have brought an astounding amount of enjoyment. Birds singing, good company and many mammal observations make participation in the BBS an incredible experience. Anyone with a knowledge of local birds and their songs should contact the CWS and become involved in perhaps the most important bird research project in North America.

THE YUKON BIRD CLUB

1994 Board of Directors

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"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!

Membership fees are as follows:

Individual	\$10.00
Family	\$15.00
Senior/Student	\$5.00
Contributing	\$25.00
Supporting	\$50.00
Institutional	\$20.00

Note: Family memberships cover 2 or more members living at one address. Foreign or American members should pay with a Canadian dollar money order.

YBC will publish ads or notices of interest to its members. *Members and non-profit groups may submit non-commercial ads at no charge.* There is a reasonable fee for commercial ads.

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

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

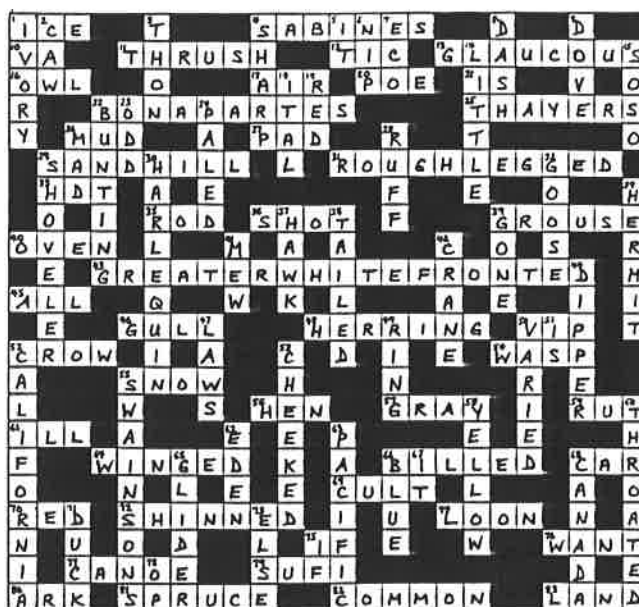
The snow is melting on south facing slopes, the first spring migrants are on their way and it's time to renew your Yukon Bird Club membership! Please ensure the continued success of the Yukon Bird Club by sending in renewals as soon as possible.

BIRDER'S CLASSIFIEDS

Interested In a Birdwatching Course?

Whitehorse City Dept. of Parks and Recreation is offering a spring birdwatching course in early May. Call Parks and Rec. for more information or to register (668-8327)

Solution to the Yukon Birder's Crossword ...



Birders are invited to submit articles and drawings for this newsletter!! Contact Cameron (Ph.667-4630) or Tracie (Mobile Phone: Laberge 2M-4554) with your ideas.

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