

Y u k o n *WARBLER*



Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club - Fall 1995



Photo by Helmut Grünberg

Double-crested Cormorant at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge, May 25, 1995.

Fall Events ♦ The La Biche River! ♦ Word Puzzle
Cedar Waxwing Invasion ♦ Red Knot at Judas Creek

Fall Field Trips and Events

WEEKEND DAY-TRIPS: Dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear, bring binoculars and a lunch. For more information or to arrange a ride call Pam (667-4630).

Saturday 16 September. *Fall Migration at Swan Lake!* Don't miss this chance to experience one of southern Yukon's great birding treasures during the height of fall migration! A virtual parade of raptors was a highlight of last year's trip. **Wear rubber boots, bring a lunch and meet at the SS.Klondike at 9:30 am.** Leader: Helmut Grünberg.

Saturday 23 September. *Hiking up Stony Creek!* Join this full-day hike to the rugged uplands of Stony Creek, in search of ptarmigan, Golden Eagles, sheep, and other birds! **Wear sturdy walking shoes or boots, bring a lunch, and meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 9:00 am.** Leader: Lee Kubica.

Saturday 7 October. *The Second Annual Great Skagway Birding Adventure!* This special outing will explore the best birding habitats of Skagway, Alaska. The drive is somewhat lengthy (180 km Whitehorse to Skagway) but the rewards are great - unique and beautiful coastal sea and forest birds including Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Steller's Jay, Marbled Murrelet, and the regal Glaucous-winged Gull. **Dress warmly, bring a lunch and meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 8:00 am.** Leaders: Pam Sinclair and Cameron Eckert.

Saturday 21 October. *Yellow-billed Loons in October!* Is it possible to just go out and find a Yellow-billed Loon in southern Yukon in October? On this trip along the Yukon River from Whitehorse to the Yukon River bridge via Schwatka Lake, we'll find out! **Dress warmly and meet at the SS.Klondike at 10:30 am.** Leader: Cameron Eckert.

Saturday 25 November. *The Third Annual November Feeder-Hopping Extravaganza!* Join Wendy Nixon and friends for a tour of the best feeders in Whitehorse! This outing has become a Yukon Bird Club classic both for the great opportunity to view winter birds in grand comfort but also to enjoy a friendly and festive social atmosphere! We'll be on the lookout for Common and Hoary Redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks and perhaps a Mountain Chickadee! **Bring a coffee mug and meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 10:30 am.** Leader: Wendy Nixon.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Wednesday 27 September. *Don't miss the 1995 Annual General Meeting!* Yukon Bird Club's AGM provides its members with an opportunity to provide direction for the club and meet other members. Members who are interested in serving on the YBC's Board of Directors should call Cameron at 667-4630. **Bring a coffee mug and meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.**

Tuesday 14 November. *A Yukoner's Guide to Winter Birding!* Don't hang up the binoculars just because it's 30 below outside! This illustrated slide show presentation will take us on a birding adventure highlighting the hardy birds of winter. **Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.** Speaker: Pam Sinclair.

Yukon Bird Club's 1995 Annual General Meeting

An excellent opportunity to share recent sightings, provide direction to the club and enjoy a friendly social event!

Wednesday 27th September

7:00 pm.

The Whitehorse Public Library

Bring a coffee mug



Photo by Cameron Eckert



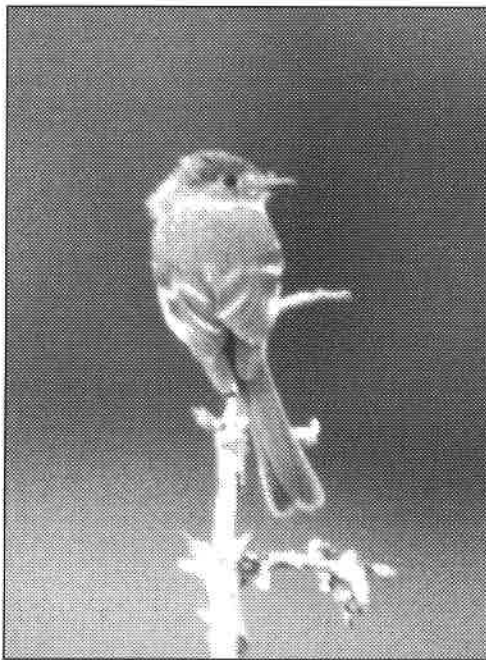
Summer Field Trip Report

by Pam Sinclair

Jeremy Baumbach's trips to Hidden Lakes on June 25th and July 30th proved this to be a very rich site for local breeding birds. On June 25th, breeding season was in full swing. The participants enjoyed views of family groups of Bufflehead, Barrow's Goldeneye, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Dark-eyed Juncos, and they were lucky enough to spy a Horned Grebe on its floating nest, a Three-toed Woodpecker with a nest full of young, and a Tree Swallow with a nest in a natural tree cavity. The icing on the cake was the discovery of a very rare Eastern Kingbird, which was cooperative enough to pose before Jeanette McCrie's camera! By July 30th, Mallards and American Wigeon were parading their young around as well, and the Horned Grebe had successfully produced offspring. A Harlan's (Red-tailed) Hawk and a Ruffed Grouse also made their appearances, and the finches - White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins - had moved in, making for an interesting day for the 12 participants.



Eastern Kingbird at Hidden Lakes.
June 25, 1995. Photo by Jeanette McCrie



Dusky Flycatcher on Montana Mountain.
July 22, 1995. Photo by Cameron Eckert

Cameron Eckert's July 22nd trip to Montana Mountain in search of some of the Yukon's most elusive birds, those of the high alpine, was a day of inspired birding! Participants shared great views of nearly all of southern Yukon's alpine specialties. The hike began at treeline on Montana Mountain where the ethereal song of the Hermit Thrush resonated through the valley. The mystery of an odd low trilling call was solved when a female Blue Grouse with three half-grown young walked slowly across the trail just in front of the group. Further on the group stopped at the sound of incessant begging calls of four tiny fledgling passerines. From just meters away an adult Brewer's "Timberline" Sparrow, its bill full of food, dropped into the bushes to feed its tail-less fluff-ball fledglings. This was one of very few confirmed breeding records for this species in the Yukon! Soon after stopping to listen to the melodious song of the Golden-crowned Sparrow emanating from somewhere on the hillside, the group was rewarded with a close view as an adult Golden-crowned popped out onto a bush alongside the trail. A pair of adult Say's Phoebes was busy foraging for their four newly fledged young which were perched on one of the old mining shacks. Further up the trail Horned Larks and American Pipits were seen as they foraged on the open tundra. An adult Golden

Eagle soared overhead. Finally, at the top of the trail a low call revealed the presence of one of the true specialties of the high alpine - a female White-tailed Ptarmigan watched over her brood of six half-grown young! After enjoying the view from the top the group chose to head back down the mountain in search of one last treeline specialty. As the group reached the taller shrubs of the treeline a small bird flitted from the bushes and perched on top of a snag - an adult Dusky Flycatcher with its bill stuffed with bugs!

More Summer Field Trips

On August 12th, eight birders, led by Pam Sinclair, enjoyed looking for early fall migrants at beautiful Fish Lake. In the usual style of fall songbirds, the woods were very quiet for much of our walk until we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of a "migrant wave" of warblers and sparrows. It was difficult to keep up with all of the White-crowned Sparrows, juncos, American Tree Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Wilson's Warblers flitting through the bushes. Once in a while a Ruby-crowned Kinglet or Orange-crowned Warbler was spotted, and a few lucky participants caught a glimpse of a beautiful Townsend's Warbler as it moved through with the flock. We watched a male Northern Harrier patrolling the ridge above our trail, and a few observers were treated to a lovely view of a Sharp-shinned Hawk as it, like us, searched for songbird flocks. At the lake itself were a pair of birds which were probably hoping the fall would be long and mild with a late freezeup - a pair of Common Loons with one downy young, still quite small and with a lot of growing to do before its first flight!

Thanks goes to all the trip leaders who helped make the summer season such a success!

YBC News and Notes

YBC Gains Charitable Status

Thanks to the efforts of our club secretary, Wendy Nixon, and treasurer, Jeremy Baumbach, the Yukon Bird Club is now a registered charitable organization with the Government of Canada. Consequently, all donations to the Yukon Bird Club are now tax deductible.

Whitehorse Checklist Flies

This spring YBC's first edition of "*A Checklist of the Birds of Whitehorse*" received a very positive public reaction. Nearly 3000 copies, the entire first printing, of the checklist have been eagerly picked up by both local and visiting birders. Work will begin this winter on the second edition. YBC's Checklist Committee welcomes input from all birders and if you have observations that will affect either the breeding status or seasonal abundance of any species listed (or not listed) on the checklist then please contact the committee coordinator, Lee Kubica at 633-2882. Already two species, Red Knot and Cedar Waxwing, have been added to the checklist and breeding has been confirmed for many others including Olive-sided Flycatcher, Wilson's Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow and White-winged Crossbill.

Thanks to all the Celebration of Swans volunteers!

Another Celebration of Swans has come and gone! Attendance at this year's events was very good. A tally of visitors that attended the centre during the day showed that over 500 people came to enjoy the birds and fresh air. I am taking this opportunity to thank you very much for organizing the Bird Club volunteers. I was pleasantly surprised to see the great response to the plea for help. Please extend our sincerest thanks to all the volunteers on behalf of Renewable Resources and Ducks Unlimited. I hope that the experience was a pleasant one for every one and that they will be interested in joining us again next year. If you or any of the participants have comments or concerns they feel should be addressed, please pass them on to me.

Yours truly,

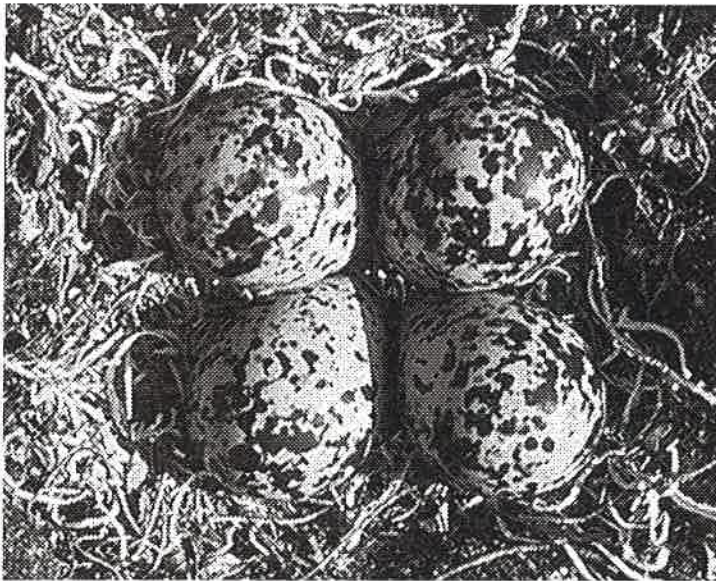
Julie Lefebvre
Wildlife Viewing Technician
Fish and Wildlife Branch
Yukon Renewable Resources
Box 2703, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6



YBC Awarded Environmental Grant

This spring YBC successfully applied for a grant from the City of Whitehorse's Environmental Fund. The \$1800 grant will fund a three part project designed to promote community environmental education.

Part I will produce a pamphlet highlighting Whitehorse's best birding locations. YBC members are often asked for information on birding in Whitehorse, by locals as well as visiting birders. Visitors are often interested in seeing particular '*local specialties*', while others are simply looking for an interesting and accessible place to take a walk with a pair of binoculars. The pamphlet will provide directions to birding locations around Whitehorse with a description of the area and expected species. The pamphlet will be an ideal companion for the Whitehorse Checklist.



An American Golden-Plover nest ready for documentation.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

Part II will produce breeding records cards to facilitate a Yukon-wide breeding bird database. YBC's Checklist Committee, which compiled the Whitehorse Checklist became aware of the need for a system for documenting the breeding status of bird species in the Whitehorse area and throughout the Yukon. While birding, YBC members and other birders often observe

evidence of breeding such as nests and flightless young birds, and this information is very valuable for determining the status of birds as described in the Checklist. However, the information is often lost when observers do not write down the pertinent details of their observations. An appropriate data card for observations of breeding evidence would facilitate the collection of such information, and would contribute to the completeness of such projects as the Whitehorse Checklist.

The Breeding Bird Database will increase the awareness and knowledge of the breeding status of birds in the Whitehorse area and throughout the territory. It is expected that both local and visiting birders will participate in this program by contributing their observations. The program will be similar to the Nest Record Schemes and

Breeding Bird Atlas projects active in most provinces. Visiting birders often ask YBC members whether such a program is in place in the Yukon, and have offered to fill out data cards if they were available. The breeding bird record card will help fill an important knowledge gap.

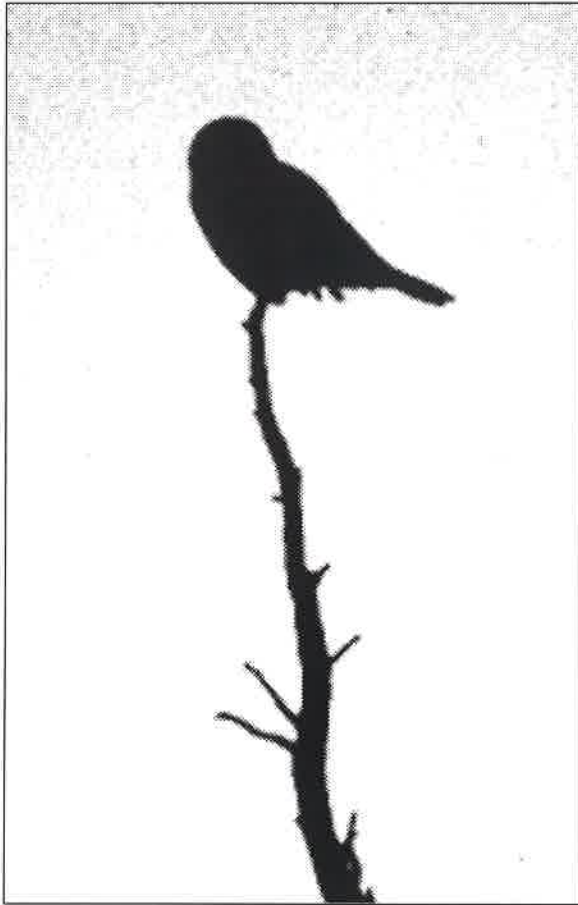
Part III will establish a collection of resource materials on birds. The Yukon Bird Club has received many requests from Whitehorse residents for information on accessing resource materials on birds. The current collection at the Whitehorse Public Library is very limited and out of date. The Yukon College Library offers some material but only students are allowed full access. With the grant YBC will purchase a variety of reference materials including books and journals which experienced Yukon birders have found to be excellent

for the enjoyment, study and identification of birds. The Whitehorse Public Library has offered to manage the collection so that Whitehorse residents and visitors will have full access to the books and journals. It is clear that this collection will significantly enhance community environmental education. Yukoners who are interested in birds are in for a real treat!

Jeremy's Birding Tips

Using Silhouette to Identify Birds

by **Jeremy Baumbach**



A Northern Hawk-Owl cuts a striking silhouette!
Photo-illustration by Cameron Eckert

Silhouette, a bird's relative size and overall shape, is generally the most important clue to its identification. This runs counter to our typical tendency as beginners to focus on the details of colouring and plumage. But that I had a loonie for every time I have turned to my field guide with my head full of subtle plumage characteristics, wingbars and eyerings, and still not been able to identify the bird! Instead, by attending first to relative size and overall shape you will (hopefully, and with practice) be able to determine what kind (family) of bird you are looking at. The great advantage of this for the beginner is that it makes the field guide less overwhelming - rather than thumbing through hundreds of pages, you have perhaps narrowed it down to ten!

First, relative size. For this you need to develop a mental frame of reference or scale. Choose as your anchor points three birds of varying sizes with which you are relatively familiar; for instance, you might choose a chickadee (small), a robin (medium-sized), and a raven (large). Then get used to looking at these birds through your binoculars, so that you will become able to "automatically" compensate for the apparent size change caused by your binoculars' magnification. With these steps accomplished, you will be able to "size" the unknown bird more closely (e.g. is it bigger than a robin?), which will rule out many contenders in the identification sweepstakes.

Second. Consider the overall shape of the bird. Is it short and fat, or tall and thin? Does it have long legs or a long neck? Many field guides show silhouettes of different birds as well as the standard drawings depicting plumage. Studying these silhouettes and developing a sense of the general shapes of the different families of birds is well worth your while. It will enhance your bird identification skills and, better yet, reduce field guide induced frustration.

Birdfeeding Workshop!

Whitehorse Parks and Recreation will be offering a birdfeeding workshop on Saturday October 14th, 1-5 pm.

**Learn how to attract and feed birds, and make your own suet log!
Call 668-8325 to register.**



Cedar Waxwings Invade Southern Yukon

by Cameron Eckert



Cedar Waxwing at Johnson's Crossing, YT.
June 29, 1995. Photo by Cameron Eckert

With only two previously documented observations, the Cedar Waxwing has been considered an accidental species in the Yukon. The Yukon's first documented record came on July 27th, 1989 when Rudolf Koes of Winnipeg, spotted one at Haines Junction. Then on June 14th, 1992 Helmut Grünberg observed a single Cedar Waxwing near Rancheria. However this summer has been very different - many observers have reported pairs of Cedar Waxwings from a variety of locations in what appears to be an unprecedented movement of this species into the southern Yukon.

The Cedar Waxwing is most similar to the Bohemian Waxwing, which is a common and widespread year-round resident of the Yukon. While the two species are quite similar in appearance and behaviour, the Cedar's yellow belly and whitish undertail distinguished it from the Bohemian. The Bohemian Waxwing has a grey belly and chestnut-red undertail coverts. While both species may have waxy red tips on the secondary flight feathers, the Bohemian has yellow and white trim on the primary flight feathers which the Cedar lacks.

On June 8th, 1995, Wendy Nixon and I observed a single Cedar Waxwing along the La Biche River in extreme southeastern Yukon. The bird perched directly overhead and clearly showed its yellow belly and whitish undertail. In fact, this species was relatively common along the La Biche. Later in June I found that Cedar Waxwings were also present along the Beaver River. I assumed that the

relatively common occurrence of Cedar Waxwings along the La Biche and Beaver Rivers was due to the extreme southeastern location in the Yukon. However, it seems that, at least in the summer of 1995, this was not the case.

On June 19th, Bob Murkett and Boris Doborowolsky observed a pair of Cedar Waxwings at Jackfish Bay on Lake Laberge. On June 26th, Pam Sinclair and I spotted a pair of Cedar Waxwings in downtown Whitehorse. Valorie and William Cunningham reported that waxwings with "*distinct yellow-white abdomens*" successfully raised three young in their Riverdale yard. On June 29th, Pam Sinclair and I observed a pair courtship feeding at Johnson's Crossing - this pair was confirmed breeding the following day when Bruce Bennett discovered a nest at the same location in a birch tree. That nest held five flightless young on July 16th. René Carlson and Helmut Grünberg spotted single Cedar Waxwings at Lewes Lake on July 8th, and along the Annie Lake Rd on July 9th.

It remains unclear whether the widespread occurrence of Cedar Waxwings across the southern Yukon this summer is an actual "invasion" or a function of an increase in the number of birders reporting their sightings. The Yukon Bird Club would greatly appreciate hearing from birders who have seen this species in the Yukon this past summer or in previous years.

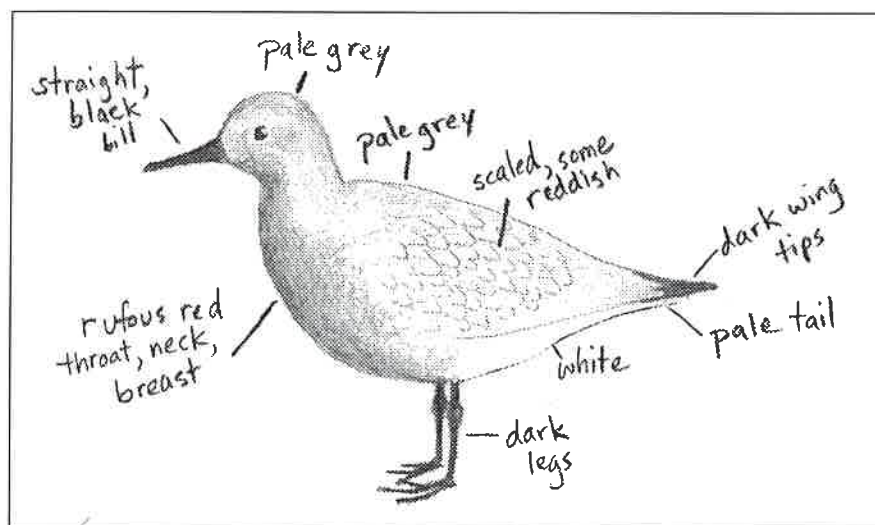
Judas Creek's Red Knot a First for Southern Yukon

by Helmut Grünberg

Judas Creek is always a good place for unusual bird sightings, whether it is a Brant or Hudsonian Godwit, and June 5th, 1995 was no different. Scanning the beach I noted the silver-grey Black-bellied Plover, present for nearly a week, but what was that rust-coloured shorebird? Just as I spotted it, the bird moved out of sight, and before I could get a better look both birds, joined by a second Black-bellied Plover, took flight. The bird was gone and I didn't get a good look at it. *Rats!*

I wandered slowly towards the creek to find the closest position to the distant bird. My mind wandered through possible rust coloured shorebirds. I had talked about Curlew Sandpipers recently with friends. That's the one that stuck in my mind and before long I was trying to "make" this bird into a Curlew Sandpiper - *bad move!* One must keep the options open; however, it is not easy to stay objective in the excitement of a new sighting. I got a bit closer, put up my spotting scope and looked for the *expected* curved bill of a Curlew Sandpiper. I really *wanted* the bill to be curved. First the bill seemed curved and then it did not seem curved at all. I had zeroed in on one characteristic only - *bad move!* After half an hour of straining my eyes in dwindling light I decided that the bird was *perhaps* a Curlew Sandpiper. I left the decision on its identification open - *good move!* I decided to return the next day, hoping for a better look.

I phoned Pam Sinclair that night and described the bird to her. She, of course, was not yet "emotionally involved" with the sighting and kept an open mind. We returned to Judas Creek the next day and brought the good spotting scope. All we needed was the cooperation of the bird.



Breeding Plumage Red Knot at Judas Creek, Yukon. June 5, 1995.
Field sketch by Pam Sinclair

The bird did cooperate. We found it in the same spot in somewhat better lighting. Very quickly we determined that the bird was a Red Knot! The bill was quite straight. One characteristic that I had neglected was its relative size. The bird was about twice the "bulk" of some nearby Semipalmated Plovers, and was almost the same length as the Black-bellied Plovers, although it was much less "bulky" and had shorter legs. A Curlew Sandpiper, which is the size of a Dunlin, would have looked much smaller than the

Black-bellied Plovers. The knot's bill was fairly short, only about the same length as its head, which eliminated other rusty-breasted shorebirds such as dowitchers, godwits and the Curlew Sandpiper. Although we were not close enough to see minute plumage details, other features we noticed were fairly short dark legs, a white belly and undertail, a plain pale rump and tail, grey upperparts with some reddish colour and scaling on the back, and dark wingtips. The Red Knot breeds in the Canadian High Arctic, and there are two June records from the 1970's on Yukon's north coast. This was the first record of Red Knot for southern Yukon!



The La Biche River a True Yukon Treasure

by Cameron Eckert

For years Yukon birders have pondered the potential avian riches of the southeast corner of the territory. In June, the Southeast Yukon Forest Bird Project, sponsored by the Canadian Wildlife Service and Yukon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Branch, explored the forests along the Beaver River and 50 km southeast on the La Biche River in the extreme southeast corner of the territory. The results were dramatic, with eight new species added to the territory's checklist.



The scenic splendor of the La Biche River, Yukon.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

Wendy Nixon and I conducted bird surveys, Jennifer Staniforth and Bruce Bennett conducted vegetation surveys, and Helmut Grünberg and Pam Sinclair volunteered to spend two weeks birding along the La Biche. On June 4th we flew to the La Biche River and were welcomed by the staff of the Anderson Gas plant. It did not take long for us to realize that the La Biche River is unique in the Yukon. I had just started to set up my tent when I was startled by the resonating song of an Ovenbird, a first for the Yukon, rising from the adjacent forest. High above the Ovenbird, a Red-eyed Vireo, only the second

Yukon record, sang from Balsam Poplars. Within 24 hours we were astounded to realize that these and other species, not seen before in the Yukon, were common in the rich La Biche forests!

The next day birds began singing long before the first light of dawn, and by sunrise the forests were a virtual wall of song. Breakfast was happily interrupted by the high song of the Yukon's first Black and White Warbler - a beautiful and bold warbler which proved to be relatively common along the La Biche but was absent at the Beaver River. We headed out to explore the forests and do some reconnaissance birding. At the La Biche River a flycatcher flew out from under the bridge - and perched on a drift log. Its plain greyish-brown back contrasting with a whitish throat and pale yellowish belly, and its tail pumping behaviour identified this bird as an Eastern Phoebe! Later we found two Eastern Phoebes at the bridge; these were the only ones we saw at the La Biche or Beaver Rivers.

Just past the bridge I heard a familiar song, but not one that I had heard before in the Yukon. The song, like a robin's but more mellow, was of a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The boldly beautiful male sang from tall shrubs - most striking was its gleaming red breast contrasting with a white belly. A sharp "kik" call note drew my attention to a nearby female Rose-breasted Grosbeak. This species, new to the Yukon, was quite common along the La Biche and less common but regular along the Beaver River. After the excitement of the grosbeak had subsided Wendy and I headed off through a mixed White Spruce-deciduous forest. Here we heard a very high song with three or four inflected notes. Searching through the high canopy I caught sight of the small songster. It was a warbler with a dark chestnut head with a black face, chestnut throat and sides, and pale buff spots on either side of the neck - the Yukon's first Bay-breasted Warbler! This was one of the most common warblers along the La Biche and Beaver Rivers.

The La Biche's unique forests

On June 8th, en route to our dawn surveys an unusual song caught my ear. Wendy and I spotted the colourful warbler which was singing a raspy "*chur chur chorie chorie*". Its dark grey hood and olive back contrasted with bright yellow undersides. I immediately recognized that the bird was either a McGillivray's or Mourning Warbler. Moment later it perched in the open - it was clearly lacking the white eye crescents of a McGillivray's. Here was the Yukon's first Mourning Warbler! This species was relatively common along the La Biche, and on June 20th I observed a Mourning Warbler on the Beaver River. After our June 8th surveys, we returned to camp. While preparing café lattes I spotted a pair of vireos which I expected to be Warbling Vireos. However, unlike the Warbling Vireo these birds had a dark line through the eye and bright yellow underparts. The two birds, Yukon's first Philadelphia Vireos, flew from the low shrubs into the tall Balsam Poplars. This species was uncommon but regular along the La Biche, and absent from the Beaver River.

June 10th found Wendy and I on an endurance trek - bushwacking through richly tangled forest. Our efforts were well rewarded with the Yukon's first Canada Warbler. This species was uncommon along the La Biche and absent from the Beaver. On June 15th, Helmut, Wendy and I were wading, well over our boots when the chattering song of the Yukon's first Marsh Wren burst from the tall cattails.

On June 13th Helmut went in search of "*rare sparrows*" at the La Biche River airstrip. Hours later Helmut returned and announced that he had found "*le sparrow de Monsieur LeConte*". Helmut had found one of North America's most sought after species - the LeConte's Sparrow, extremely rare in the Yukon! We found that there were at least 10 singing males along the airstrip.

Also striking was our discovery that a number of species, previously thought to be rare in the Yukon are in fact common along the La Biche and Beaver Rivers. Cedar Waxwings, Solitary Vireos, Western Tanagers and Evening Grosbeaks were common along both the La Biche and Beaver Rivers. Red-eyed Vireos were very common on the La Biche but absent at the Beaver River. While, I only observed a single Cape May Warbler at the La Biche, four singing males at a small lake near the Beaver River on June 23rd indicated that they may be more common in that area.

The forests of the La Biche River lowlands are unlike any found elsewhere in the Yukon. White Spruce is dominant but there is a very strong deciduous component including very large Balsam Poplar, Trembling Aspen and White Birch. These mixed forests are extensive adjacent to the La Biche River and throughout the lowland areas. A rich shrubby undergrowth permeates much of the forest. Other vegetation reflects the unique nature of these forests. Nowhere else in the Yukon have I encountered Devil's Club, and wading through two metre high Ostrich Fern was most impressive. The forests along the La Biche River are extremely important to a unique community of birds, animals and plant life. In just two weeks we had countless opportunities to watch bears, moose, wolves and Nahanni bison. The very special nature of the La Biche River was also reflected by our discovery of a new Yukon amphibian species, the Western Chorus Frog. These forests are among the Yukon's richest and most scenic. Though few Yukoners will ever visit this area, we are responsible for ensuring that these unique forests continue to help make the Yukon such a wonderful, wild land.



LeConte's Sparrow, La Biche River, YT.
June 13, 1995. Photo by Helmut Grünberg



A Virtual Birdathon

*Not every birder is able to set aside the last weekend in May for the Birdathon.
Lack of actual time in the field did not thwart this birder!*

Stuart Alexander writes:

I wish to submit the results of my participation in the Yukon Birdathon. As the Birdathon's official time-period conflicted with other activities, I have devised a simple mathematical approach to identifying the expected number of species I would have seen if I had been able to participate in person. In modern terminology, one might refer to this as a Virtual Birdathon, although it really had nothing to do with cyberspace.

The mathematical model has few assumptions, so I believe that, after sufficient study and intellectual lubrication (i.e., a few beers), you would find it to have highly accurate and powerful predictive capabilities. I assume I would have visited several good spots for birds, and spent one hour per site looking for birds. In each site, I would have identified a certain number of species (α), and after the first hour, some of the species would have been repeats. The number of species available as repeats would have increased with the number of sites visited, but I assumed the proportion (β) would have remained constant. Therefore, the number of sites at time t (i.e., after t hours of Birdathoning) can be modeled simply by the difference equation:

$$n_t = n_{t-1} + \alpha - \beta n_{t-1}$$

or

$$n_t = (1 - \beta)n_{t-1} + \alpha$$

The equation can then be solved for t to yield:

$$n_t = n_0(1 - \beta)^t + \alpha\beta^{-1}[1 - (1 - \beta)^t]$$

With this model, all that one need do is estimate the parameters α and β (n_0 is the number of species seen in the first hour). These could be estimated empirically either from previous years' Birdathon performance or by spending at least two hours visiting two sites in the current year. In the present case, however, I was forced to estimate α and β hypertheoretically based on the assumptions that I would choose pretty good birding spots ($\alpha = 25$) and that all spots would be quite unique ($\beta = 0.2$).

As the Birdathon lasts one whole day, t_{max} would be 24, but it would be quite unreasonable for me to claim that I would or could have spent all 24 hours in active birding (one needs time for snoozing, feeding, and of course rapid-transit between sites). In addition, there is a diminishing return as the number of sites visited increases. In the model presented, this occurs after 6 or 7 hours. Therefore, I assumed I would have spent somewhere between 7 and 14 hours in active birding, and since I would have been keen to maximize the number of species observed, I would probably have pushed it. So I have made the final reasonable assumption that I would have spent 14 hours in active birding.

The final step is to simply plug α , β and t into the equation and ... presto, I can say with considerable confidence that, as the Hatter is my witness, I would have recorded 121 species on this year's Yukon Birdathon. Needless to say, at that number of species, some would likely have been Yukon rarities, but since these were virtual birds, all I have is virtual written and photographic records of them. My purpose here, however, was not to impress you with rare sightings or to pad my list to win any prizes or recognition. No, indeed. My purpose was to provide a reasonable estimate of the number of species so that I could calculate the value owing on the pledges I acquired. I'm afraid my performance there was a little less impressive, and the only person, other than myself, willing to contribute real money to a virtual Birdathon was my sympathetic wife. So please find a cheque covering the total amount I was able to collect for this year's Yukon Birdathon.

Thanks to Stuart and Susan for a real donation of \$121! -Ed.

Little Brown Birds

The Phoebes - where East meets West

by Wendy Nixon



Say's Phoebe on Montana Mountain, YT.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

The two Yukon phoebes are Say's Phoebe and Eastern Phoebe. Phoebes are members of the flycatcher family but the adults lack the pale eye ring and wing bars that are characteristic of the small green (empidonax) flycatchers. Phoebes will frequently pump their tail when perched.

Say's Phoebes are not abundant, but they are found throughout the Yukon and usually nest in canyons or on cliffs, bridges, or buildings. They are often spotted on migration perched on fence posts or snags in relatively open areas. In bright sunlight the Say's Phoebe is a beautiful bird with a grey-brown head and pale grey throat that grades into a rust coloured belly and undertail coverts. The grey-brown back contrasts with a jet black tail. In dull light, you

should still notice the dark tail contrasting with a paler back and belly. Young birds are similar to adults, but in good light you should notice cinnamon coloured wing bars. The song is a minor, descending "pee yur" accented on the first part of the phrase.

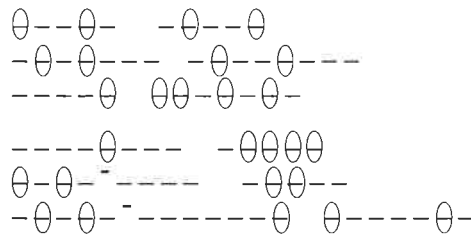
The Eastern Phoebe is found only in southeast Yukon and is rare even there. Like the Say's Phoebe it nests on rocky ledges or bridges where an overhang offers protection. A pair was suspected to be nesting under the La Biche River bridge this summer. The Eastern Phoebe is brownish grey above and mainly white below, but you may notice a pale greyish or pale olive tinge on the sides of the breast. The very nonmelodic "FEE-be" song will confirm that you are looking at an Eastern Phoebe and not a Kiskadee!

20th Century Birders' Puzzle

by Jeremy Baumbach

Unscramble the names of these recently seen Yukon rarities (#1-3) and common summer residents (#4-6). Then use the shaded letters to complete the saying below - espoused by avid birders of the last century. See page 20 for the solution.

- 1. CHUFESHQIN
- 2. BREASTEDGRIINNK
- 3. GRAWIXWANECB
- 4. CRANIBERAINOM
- 5. EDJYNECKOURAD
- 6. DERRITCROWHENWASPO



The 19th Century avid birder's approach :

_____ the _____ the _____.



The Art and Pleasure of Yard Birding

by Cameron Eckert

Having spent June and July camping and birding across the Yukon, Pam and I decided to spend August a little closer to home. In fact - at home. After a summer of neglect our Porter Creek yard had turned fairly wild with tall flowering weeds covering the vegetable garden and trillions of aphids dripping from the Balsam Poplars. To enhance the abundant natural forage I tossed about ten pounds of mixed bird seed around the yard. Despite its lack of horticultural esthetic our yard was primed for birds and it soon became obvious that our binoculars would not gather dust.

Table 1. All species observed over 20 days between August 2 - 31, 1995. Means for each species were calculated using the number of days (No. of days) each species was observed.

SPECIES	No. of days	Mean	Max
American Robin	4	1.8	2
American Tree Sparrow	6	1.7	2
Bald Eagle	2	1.5	2
Black-billed Magpie	11	1.4	2
Black-capped Chickadee	14	2.1	3
Belted Kingfisher	1	1.0	1
Barn Swallow	1	1.0	1
Boreal Chickadee	1	1.0	1
Bohemian Waxwing	1	10.0	10
Blackpoll Warbler	9	1.4	3
Chipping Sparrow	7	2.1	8
Common Raven	14	2.6	6
Dark-eyed Junco	19	13.1	20
Fox Sparrow	7	2.7	5
Great Blue Heron	1	1.0	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	1.0	1
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1	1.0	1
Gray Jay	8	1.3	3
Hammond's Flycatcher	1	1.0	1
Herring Gull	9	11.0	50
Hermit Thrush	1	1.0	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	2	1.0	1
Mew Gull	2	23.5	43
Mountain Bluebird	4	3.5	8
Northern Shrike	1	1.0	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	10	1.4	2
Pine Grosbeak	1	1.0	1
Pine Siskin	19	45.1	200
Purple Finch	11	1.5	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	7	2.0	3
Red Crossbill	4	2.8	4
Red-tailed Hawk	1	1.0	1
Savannah Sparrow	4	1.0	1
Swainson's Thrush	1	1.0	1
Tennessee Warbler	1	1.0	1
White-crowned Sparrow	13	13.8	20
Wilson's Warbler	14	2.4	8
White-winged Crossbill	14	9.1	20
Western Wood-Pewee	1	1.0	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	20	6.8	20
Yellow Warbler	6	1.7	3

We recorded all our observations in our "feeder book" on 20 days during August. Table 1 summarizes these results. We observed a total of 41 species with the most regular species being Yellow-rumped Warbler (seen every day), Dark-eyed Junco and Pine Siskin (each seen every day but one). The Pine Siskins were most abundant on August 21st when we tallied 200 of the tiny finches as they clung to the seed laden weeds. Our peak number of species occurred on August 24th when 18 species were observed in or from the yard. On average 13 species made it onto the daily list.

The scatter of mixed bird seed attracted many migrant sparrows. On August 15th the first immature White-crowned Sparrows appeared and a week later there was a flock of 20 present. Both Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrows paid a visit on August 23rd. One or two American Tree Sparrows were noted every day after August 21st. On August 30th five Fox Sparrows spent the day tilling the soil under the rose bushes.

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of yard birding was sorting through the warbler flocks which foraged constantly on the aphids. Among the half dozen or so Yellow-rumped Warblers there were almost always one or two Yellow, Wilson's, Orange-crowned and Blackpoll Warblers. More often than not the birds foraged so close to the windows that we did not even require binoculars to enjoy the subtle beauty of these fall warblers. On August 21st a small warbler, which at first appeared to be an Orange-crowned flitted through the rose bushes. However as it briefly hung upside-down it revealed pure white undertail coverts - a *Tennessee Warbler!* This was only the second fall record for this species in the Whitehorse area!

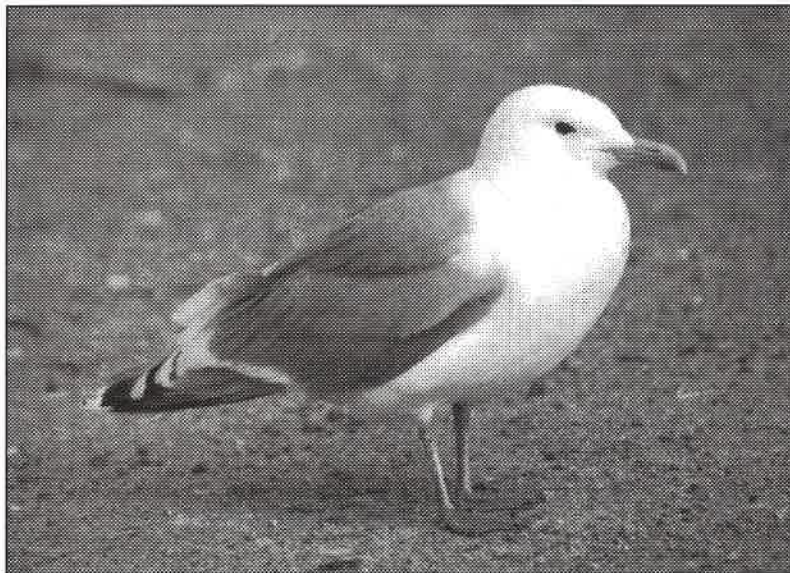
Pleasure yes, but yard birding as an art?

The “one-hit wonders” added to the excitement and certainly helped boost the species tally. On August 22nd a fall plumage Hammond’s Flycatcher perched briefly outside the kitchen window. On the Golden-crowned Sparrow joined the White-crowns for the day, and on the 26th the high call of a Golden-crowned Kinglet caught our attention as it moved quickly through the yard. On the 30th we spotted a thrush hopping across the grass which turned to reveal its rusty tail thus identifying itself as a Hermit Thrush. While dozens of swallows could be seen throughout July they had all but disappeared by August when the only one spotted was a Barn Swallow on the 12th.

We were not the only ones enjoying the parade of small songbirds. On August 9th, we watched as all the birds went into a panicked scatter when an immature Northern Shrike came blasting into the yard. After its unsuccessful attempt the shrike perched for a few minutes just a metre outside our window.

But is there such a thing as the “art” of yard birding? Perhaps. On August 22nd we got a call from Lee Kubica who reported seeing a Great Blue Heron at Hidden Lake that day. A fantastic rarity! Other commitments prevented us from rushing out to look for it. The next day Barb Studds called to say that she had seen a Great Blue Heron at the Whitehorse Fish Ladder. Again, we were unable to go out to look for it. On the following morning, August 24th, I arose and wandered in a sleepy shuffle to the window. I gazed in disbelief as a beautiful Great Blue Heron flew with slow steady wingbeats, low over the spruce trees right past our window. “Pam, I think you should come to the window and check this out”. Indeed, the art of yard birding.

Yukon Gallery presents



adult Thayer's Gull, August 31st, 1994, Whitehorse, Yukon.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

Thayer's Gull *Larus thayeri*

An arctic breeder, the Thayer's Gull makes its regular fall passage through southern Yukon to its wintering grounds on North America's Pacific Coast. Thayer's Gulls are fairly common in the Whitehorse area from late August through October. While similar in appearance to the more common Herring Gull, the Thayer's Gull is generally smaller, with a proportionally slither bill and slightly darker mantle. Adult Thayer's Gulls tend to have dark eyes while adult Herring Gulls tend to have pale yellow eyes. As well,

the Thayer's Gull's more rounded head shape gives it a gentle look which is unlike the chunky scowl of the Herring Gull.



FieldNotes: Observations from the Field



Please send your sightings to Helmut Grünberg, (807 Wheeler, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2P8). Whenever possible include details such as date, location, number of birds, sex and age, and observers' names. Highlight interesting observations and include descriptions of rare species. This report contains both documented and undocumented sightings. Please send your sightings according to the following seasonal schedule:

Winter (December 1 - February 28)

Spring (March 1 - May 31)

Summer (June 1 - July 31)

Fall (August 1 - November 30)

The Spring Season

Two **Red-throated Loons** were observed at km 102 of the Dempster Hwy on May 22 (HG, DN, LW). Two **Pacific Loons** were resting on "Coot Lake", 8 km south of Pelly Crossing on May 21 (HG). A single **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen at Rat Lake, Carcross Rd., its breeding location from last year, on May 2 (LS, MW) but was not seen after May 12 (HG). A rare **Double-crested Cormorant** was seen at its traditional location at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge on May 25 (BD, HG).

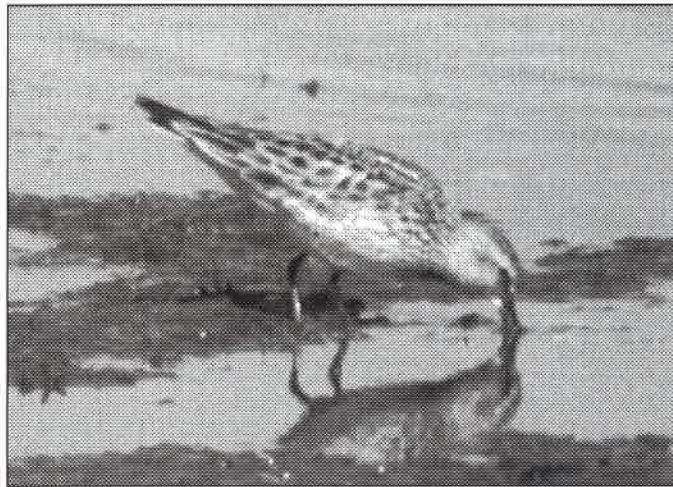
A male **Cinnamon Teal**, rare but regular in spring, was spotted in the Marwell area in Whitehorse on May 13 (BB, HG). A striking male **Cinnamon x Blue-winged Teal** hybrid was a strange sight at Lewes Marsh on May 9 (CE). **Gadwalls** made their best spring showing in recent memory. Four were observed at Shallow Bay on May 13 (DM, YBC), one at Judas Creek on May 16 (CE, HG, PSi), a pair at "Coot Lake" on May 23 (HG), and seven at Judas Creek on May 31 (JH, YBC). Most unusual were five male and one female **Gadwall** at Moose Lake at km 102 of the Dempster Hwy on May 20 (CE, PSi) which was perhaps a first record for this species along the Dempster. The first **Eurasian Wigeon** of the season, a male, was seen at Schwatka Lake on April 29 (HG, YBC); another male was observed at Judas Creek on May 16 (CE, HG, PSi). Four **Redheads** were detected in Whitehorse on April 27 (GK, LK); two males were seen at Schwatka Lake and three males and a female near Tagish on April 29 (HG, YBC), and one male at Lewes Marsh on May 17 (HG). **Harlequin Duck** sightings included a male and three females on Schwatka Lake on May 18 (HG), a high tally of four pairs on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on May 20 (JB, CR), and five males and two females at km 92 of the Dempster Hwy on May 19 (LC, CE, PSi). A male **Ruddy Duck** was hiding in the reeds of Rat Lake on May 12 (HG); one male and four females were seen on "Coot Lake" on May 23.

An **Osprey** showed up in Whitehorse on April 30 (GK, LK). An adult **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was in hot pursuit of redpolls on the Takhini River Rd on April 2 (CE, PSi). A **Northern Goshawk** was calling at Swan Lake on April 9 (HG). A pair of **Northern Goshawks** successfully hatched young at a nest in the Takhini Hotsprings area; three young successfully fledged later in the summer (dR). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was identified at the Takhini Ponds on April 9 (GK, LK). A **Swainson's Hawk** was seen soaring low near the Takhini Hotsprings on May 26 (CE, PSi). A **Merlin** was observed at Shallow Bay on April 27 (JMCC, GK, LK, PN, PSw), one was noted in Whitehorse on April 30 (GK, LK), and one was seen at Lewes Marsh on May 15 (PSi).

Rock Ptarmigan sightings included one on Caribou Mountain, Carcross Rd on May 15 (MW), a male at km 72 of the Dempster Hwy on May 22 (LC, HG), and a pair on Mount McIntyre on May 24 (HG). Two **Willow Ptarmigan** were on Mount McIntyre on May 14 (BB, HG), one was on Caribou Mountain on May 15 (MW), and many were seen by observers along the Dempster Hwy over the May long weekend. **American Coot** sightings included a single bird at Rat Lake on May 2 (LS, MW); at least three pairs at the Faro sewage lagoon on May 8-9 (GW); and six on "Coot Lake" on May 23 (HG). Thousands of **Sandhill Cranes** in very large flocks were enjoyed in Faro on May 8-9; one was feeding at M'Clintock Bay on May 17 (HG), and one was at Lake Laberge on May 20 (GK, LK).

Twenty **American Golden-Plovers** were tallied at Moose Lake, km 102 along the Dempster Hwy on May 20 (LC, CE, PSi). A pair of **Greater Yellowlegs** were mating at Tagish Lake on April 29 (HG, YBC). A **Wandering Tattler** was wandering along a creek by the Dempster Hwy on May 22 (LC, HG), and up to three were frequenting the rocky shores of Lake Laberge on May 25 (BD, HG).

More Spring Observations



White-rumped Sandpiper at Lewes Marsh, YT. May 15, 1995.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

Whitehorse on April 23 (JB,CE,PSi); a second summer bird was in Whitehorse on May 7 (CE,PSi).

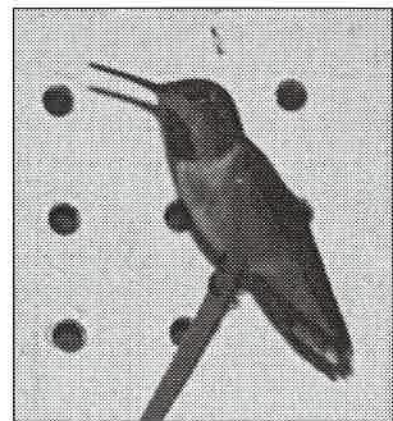
A **Northern Hawk-Owl** was seen at Swan Lake on March 26, April 1 and 14 (HG). A **Great Gray Owl** was observed at Watson Lake on April 2 (RF,MGb). Very rare was a **Short-eared Owl** seen at Upper Liard on April 4 (RF,MGb), and one seen at Shallow Bay on April 13 (CE,PSi). **Short-eared Owls** were seen by many observers in their traditional locations along the Dempster Hwy over the May long weekend. A **Boreal Owl** was calling at Swan Lake on March 18 and April 1 and 14 (HG). Another was calling during the day at km 1503 of the Alaska Hwy on April 12 (LK,YBC), and one was observed near Slims River on May 6 (MW). A female **Rufous Hummingbird** which temporarily resided in a garage along the Old Alaska Hwy on May 3 was lured out the door with a piece of red flagging tape (RA,CE,HG,PSi). A female **Black-backed Woodpecker** was seen at Fish Lake on March 3 (CE).

The first **Hammond's Flycatcher** of spring was noted at McIntyre Creek on April 26 (CE), and a **Dusky Flycatcher** was singing at treeline on May 24 (HG). A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** could be found at its traditional location, the Icy Waters Fish Farm as early as May 10 (GK,LK). One adult and three short-tailed downy young **Gray Jays** provided a confirmed breeding record for Porter Creek on May 21 (HT). A **crow** was detected on the gravel bars of the Yukon River in Whitehorse on April 26-27 (BB,CE,HG). Two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were at Schwatka Lake on May 5 (GK,LK). On May 21 a single **Northern Wheatear** was at km 64 of the Dempster Hwy (HG), and six were seen at km 74 (GJ).

Northern Shrikes put on a strong showing in southern Yukon in late April with high tallies of seven along the Alaska Hwy near the Takhini River on April 12 (LK,YBC), and five at Swan Lake on April 14 (HG).

Golden-crowned Sparrow sightings included six in Whitehorse on April 27 (GK,LK), a single bird among **White-crowned Sparrows** at a Hillcrest feeder on May 9 (LC), and two on Caribou Mountain on May 15 (MW). A male **Lapland Longspur** was with 19 **Snow Buntings** on the Takhini River Rd on March 28 (CE,BS,PSi), and a flock of 46 **Snow Buntings** was encountered at Shallow Bay on April 13 (CE,PSi). Four **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** were spotted at km 92 of the Dempster Hwy on May 20 (LC,CE,PSi), and ten were foraging near km 80 of the Dempster on May 21 (HG).

Three **Whimbrel** were at M'Clintock Bay on May 7 (CE,PSi); a single bird flew along the shore of Marsh Lake at Judas Creek on May 16 (CE,HG,PSi), and up to three were observed at km 92 to 104 of the Dempster Hwy on May 19-22 (LC,CE,HG,PSi). **Hudsonian Godwit** sightings included three at M'Clintock Bay on May 7 (CE,PSi), one at Lewes Marsh on May 10 (CE) and one at M'Clintock Bay on May 17 (HG). It was a Yukon "peep sweep" at Lewes Marsh on May 15 with 50 **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, 20 **Least Sandpipers**, five **Western Sandpipers**, three **Baird's Sandpipers** and a single **White-rumped Sandpiper** (CE,PSi). A rare **Western Sandpiper** was at Swan Lake on May 20 (HG). Several **Long-tailed Jaegers** were observed by numerous observers along the Dempster Hwy over the May long weekend. A first summer **Glaucous-winged Gull** was a rare find on the Yukon River in



female Rufous Hummingbird
May 3, 1995.
Photo by Helmut Grünberg



FieldNotes: Summer Observations

The Southeast Yukon Forest Bird Project: Dramatic results were produced by surveys of the La Biche and Beaver Rivers in the extreme southeastern Yukon sponsored by the Canadian Wildlife Service and Yukon Parks and Outdoor Recreation Branch. Eight new species were added to the Yukon Checklist: Marsh Wren, Philadelphia Vireo, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Ovenbird, Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Cameron Eckert's article on page 11 provides details of these sightings.

A **Red-throated Loon** was observed at the Klondike-Yukon River confluence on June 5 and one was on the Ogilvie River on July 26 (GK,LK). A single **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen on June 15 in a small lake near the La Biche River (CE,HG,WN), and three were heard on a small lake near the Beaver River on June 23 (CE). Another **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen at km 323 along the Klondike Hwy on July 3 (BM). The pair of **Double-crested Cormorants** frequenting Jackfish Bay though the spring was seen with an immature bird on July 19 (BD,BM).

Unusual for summer was a pair of **Trumpeter Swans** seen at Swan Lake on June 3 (HG,GM,LM). A **Brant** at Judas Creek on June 4 provided a first summer record for the Whitehorse area (HG,LK). A male and female **Redhead** were at Judas Creek on June 4-6 (HG,LK,PSi). A **Ruddy Duck** was spotted at km 332 of the Klondike Hwy on June 11 (MW), and three males were there on July 3 (RM). As well a female **Ruddy Duck** was at Faro on July 5 (BB). An immature **Bald Eagle** made regular evening patrols along Teslin Lake through June (MGI). Two **Gyrfalcons** were sighted along the Dempster Hwy on July 28 (GK,LK).

A family of **Sharp-tailed Grouse**, one adult and ten young, was feeding along the Klondike Hwy at km 647 on July 12 (CE,PSi). Two **American Coots** were at the Tagish Ponds on June 11 (GK,LK), and an adult with four young were in Faro on July 5 (BB). Two **Black-bellied Plovers** at Judas Creek on June 4-6 (HG,LK,PSi) provided the first summer record for the Whitehorse area. A **Wandering Tattler** was at the headwaters of Congdon Creek on June 6 (MW). A **Greater Yellowlegs** was spotted near the Kathleen River bridge on July 14 (MJ,WN). Two **Whimbrel** at M'Clintock Bay on June 11 provided the first summer record for this species in the Whitehorse area (GK,LK). Two **Whimbrel** pairs were on territory in the Burwash Uplands on June 23 (HG,MW). A breeding plumage **Red Knot** discovered at M'Clintock Bay on June 6 and seen again on June 7 was the first record for the southern Yukon (HG, GK,LK,PSi). A male **Wilson's Phalarope** with one young was at Swan Lake on July 13 (HG,JLL). Three **Long-tailed Jaegers** were observed in the Blackstone Uplands on July 24-25 (GK,LK).



An Eastern Kingbird flutters above the La Biche River, YT, June 6, 1995. Photo by Cameron Eckert

A rare **Mourning Dove** appeared at Wolf Creek on July 14 (RM). A **Common Nighthawk** nest with two eggs discovered on June 26 provided a breeding record for Teslin (MGI), and another with three eggs near Goldenhorn on June 27 was a confirmed record for the Whitehorse (JH). Four **Rufous Hummingbirds** were feeding on Jacob's Ladder flowers at Teslin Lake on June 20 (MGI). A female **Rufous Hummingbird** was frequenting flowers at Waddington's near Lewes Lake on July 8 (RC,HG,NW). A pair of **Hairy Woodpeckers** successfully fledged one young at Teslin Lake in June (MGI).

Two **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were singing at Finlayson Lake on June 19 (HG), and three were there on July 1 (CE,PSi). Three **Dusky Flycatchers** were observed on Mount McIntyre on June 22 (HG,JSn), and one was at treeline in the Wheaton Valley on July 3 (HG). A pair of **Eastern**

Phoebes frequenting the La Biche River bridge through June provided one of very few documented Yukon records for this species (SYFBP). Three **Eastern Kingbirds** were seen at the La Biche River on June 6 (CE,WN), and several times thereafter (HG,PSi). A single **Eastern Kingbird** was at Hidden Lake in Whitehorse on June 25 (JB,YBC).

More Summer Observations

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was observed at a Teslin feeder through June (MGI), and one visited a Pilot Mountain feeder on July 12 (RM). Others were heard at Million Dollar Falls and Dalton Post on July 13, and at Kathleen River on July 14 (MJ,WN). **Winter Wrens** appear to be fairly sparse in the Yukon. Single birds were heard singing along the La Biche River on June 12 and 14 (CE,HG,WN), and along the Beaver River on June 22 (CE). A fluffy young **American Dipper** was being fed by an adult at Million Dollar Falls on July 13 (MJ,WN). A family of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** was observed in a lush spruce forest in the upper Wheaton Valley on July 4 (HG). A **Townsend's Solitaire** enjoyed a Pilot Mountain birdbath on July 29 (RM). A **Gray-checked Thrush** was seen at Sheep Creek on June 7 (MW). With only two previous sightings **Cedar Waxwings** have staged a small invasion in the southern Yukon complete with breeding records - the details are highlighted on page 8. Two **Bohemian Waxwings** were seen on Teslin Lake through June (MGI). A young **Northern Shrike** was seen at Dalton Post on July 13 (MJ,WN). Unusual was a pair of **European Starlings** feeding fledglings at Swift River on July 16 (BB).

Red-eyed Vireos, with only one previously documented Yukon record, were commonly found along the La Biche River through June but were absent on the Beaver River (SYFBP). **Solitary Vireos**, with just two previously documented records, were found to be relatively common along both the La Biche and Beaver Rivers (SYFBP). **Tennessee Warblers** were the most common warbler species along the La Biche River in June (SYFBP). A **Tennessee Warbler** was heard singing at Rancheria on June 8 (PSi,NS-E), and another heard singing at Haunka Creek just north of Atlin on June 29 was one of the few records for this species in the Whitehorse Checklist area (CE). Unusual was the observation of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** feeding at a suet feeder near Teslin in June (MGI). **Magnolia Warblers**, absent west of Watson Lake in the Yukon, were the second most common warbler along the La Biche River in June (SYFBP). A single **Cape May Warbler** was heard singing along the La Biche River on June 7 (CE); four were singing by a small lake near the Beaver River on June 20 (CE). A female **American Redstart** feeding dependent young on Dezadeash Lake provided the second confirmed breeding record for this species in southwestern Yukon (MJ,WN). Four **American Redstarts** singing at Haunka Creek on June 29 indicated that this species may be more widespread across the southern Yukon than it was previously thought to be (CE,PSi). A rare **McGillivray's Warbler** was heard near Rancheria on June 9 and 19 (HG).

Western Tanagers, previously considered rare in the Yukon, were found to be one of the most common forest birds along the La Biche River and uncommon along the Beaver River through June (SYFBP). With only one previous Yukon record the occurrence of up to 10 **LeConte's Sparrows** along the La Biche River airstrip in June was very exciting (HG,CE,PSi). A **Song Sparrow**, considered rare anywhere in the Yukon, was found singing at the La Biche River on June 10 (CE,WN). **Swamp Sparrows** were regularly observed along the La Biche and Beaver Rivers through June (SYFBP). A **Swamp Sparrow** seen 16 km east of Finlayson Lake along the Robert Campbell Hwy on July 1 was perhaps Yukon's western most observation (CE,PSi). Two **Smith's Longspur** were seen in the Burwash Uplands on June 23 (HG,MW), and a flock of 20 was on the Dickson-Congdon Creek Pass on July 14 (MW). A **Red-winged Blackbird** was at Tombstone Campground on the Dempster Hwy on July 26 (GK,LK). A pair of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** was seen at Teslin Lake through June (MGI). In a more traditional setting **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were observed feeding on the backs of bison along the La Biche River (SYFBP). Two **Western Meadowlarks** which spent the summer at Partridge Creek farm was the first documented Yukon occurrence of this species (VB,DB). A pair of **House Finches** frequenting a Whitehorse feeder through June was the first documented summer record for this species in Whitehorse (JB). After a winter virtually without crossbills this summer has seen a spectacular rebound in the numbers of **White-winged Crossbills** in the Whitehorse area (m.ob.). **Evening Grosbeaks**, known regularly in the Yukon only from Watson Lake feeders during winter, were commonly observed along the La Biche and Beaver Rivers through June (SYFBP).

Observers: Robert Atkinson, Jeremy Baumbach, Del Buerge, Virginia Buerge, Bruce Bennett, Linda Cameron, René Carlson, Margaret Commodore, Boris Dobrowolsky, Cameron Eckert, Robert Florkiewicz, Mary Gamberg (MGB), Margaret Garolitz (MGI), Helmut Grünberg, Jim Hawkings, Gavin Johnston, Marylene Jules, Greg Kubica, Lee Kubica, Jillian Lynne-Lawson, Gerald Maisel, Laurette Maisel, Jeanette McCrie, Dave Mossop, Robert Murkett, David Narins, Patty Nash, duChane Richard, Caroline Rodriguez, Wendy Nixon, Barbara Sinclair, Pam Sinclair (PSi), Nigel Sinclair-Eckert, Joy Snyder (JSn) Jennifer Staniforth (JSt), Linda Stratis, Pat Swainson (PSw), Heather Thompson, Norma Waddington, Gerry Whitley, Mary Whitley, Laura Woods. **Abbreviations:** Many observers (m.ob.), Southeast Yukon Forest Bird Project (SYFBP), Yukon Bird Club (YBC).



THE YUKON BIRD CLUB

Promoting awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Yukon birds and their habitats.

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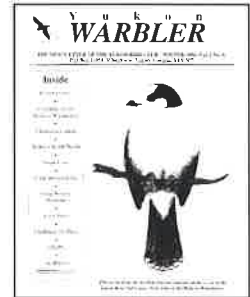
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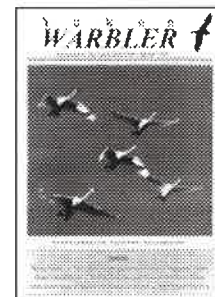
Fall 1994



Winter 1994



Spring 1995



Solution to Birder's Word Puzzle

1. House Finch
2. Eastern Kingbird
3. Cedar Waxing
4. American Robin
5. Dark-eyed Junco
6. White-crowned Sparrow

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

One question remains: What exactly is a Breasted Grinnk??

Birders are invited to submit articles, stories, or drawings to the Yukon Warbler.

Please send your submissions to:

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