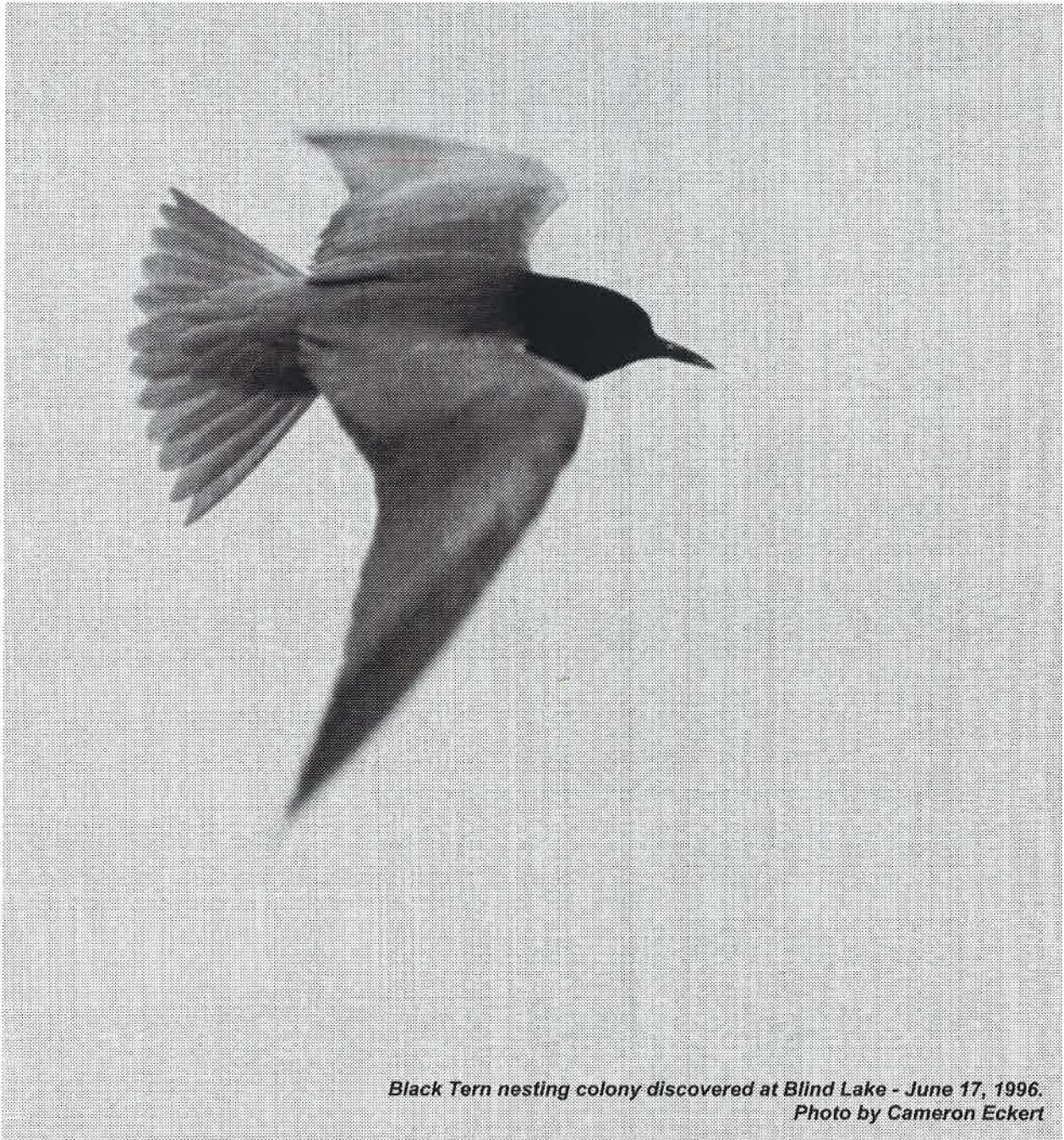


Y u k o n *WARBLER*



Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club - Spring 1996



*Black Tern nesting colony discovered at Blind Lake - June 17, 1996.
Photo by Cameron Eckert*

Fall Events ♦ Blind Lake's Black Terns ♦ Western Kingbird! ♦ Yukon Gullery

Fall Field Trips

WEEKDAY AND WEEKEND OUTINGS Dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear, and bring binoculars. For more information or to arrange a ride call Stuart Alexander at 633-5193.

Sunday 15 September. *Fall migration at Swan Lake.* You've read the book, now is your chance to experience the real thing, one of southern Yukon's great birding treasures. Rubber boots and a lunch are recommended. **Meet at the SS Klondike at 9:30 am.** Leader: Helmut Grünberg.

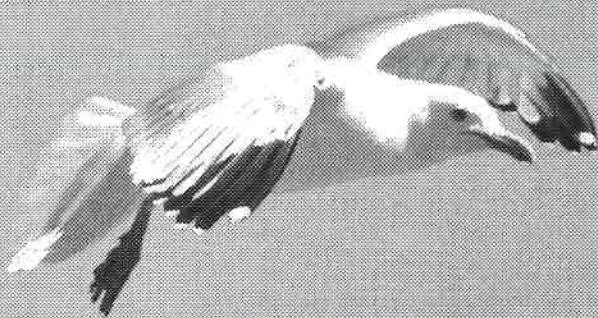
Saturday 5 October. *Haines Junction woodpecker rendezvous!* Explore some of the Yukon's richest woodpecker habitat in search of Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpecker. Bring a lunch. **Meet at Mountainview Restaurant in Haines Junction at 11:00 am.** Leader: Todd Heakes.

Sunday 13 October. *Fall birding in Haines, Alaska!* This trip will explore the rich habitats of Haines, Alaska in search of coastal specialties such as Common Murre, Marbled Murrelet, Pigeon Guillemot and Pelagic Cormorant. **Meet in front of the Haines Visitor Center at 10:30 am.** Leader: Pam Sinclair.

Sunday 20 October. *Yellow-billed and other loons in October!* There's a good chance you'll see several species of loons on this trip along the Yukon River, which provides a great opportunity to learn the distinguishing features of their otherwise confusing winter plumage. **Dress warmly** and bring a lunch. **Meet at the SS Klondike at 10:30 am.** Leader: Cameron Eckert.

Saturday 23 November. *The Fourth Annual November Feeder-Hopping Extravaganza!* View winter birds in grand comfort on this popular tour of some of Whitehorse's best feeders. Among last year's highlights were White-winged and Red crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, and a brave Dark-eyed Junco. **Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 10:30 am.** Leader: Linda Cameron.

1996 Annual General Meeting



Wednesday 16th October

Whitehorse Public Library

at 7:00 pm.

Take this opportunity to meet some of the
Yukon's friendliest birders and provide direction
to the Yukon Bird Club.

Birdathon 1996

by René Carlson

The 1996 Birdathon was an exceptional success! Over 30 participants, ranging in age from 1 year old to 70 years young, took to the field to tally 131 species. Birders covered their favourite birding areas by foot, bicycle, canoe and more traditional fossil fuel burning transportation. This year more than ever birders opted for an environmental Birdathon and left the car at home. A wide range of habitats were explored from mountain tops to river valleys, forests, lakes, wetlands and backyards.

Most exciting was the Yukon's first Western Kingbird found by the O.B.B.C. at McIntyre Wetlands. Other Birdathon firsts were fledgling Common Redpolls in Hillcrest and a male House Finch in Whitehorse. The Birdathon Bar-b-Que captivated the excitement and participants shared their many interesting sightings including Stilt Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, Whimbrel, Brant, Sandhill Crane, Double-crested Cormorant, Three-toed Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Common Yellowthroat.

Thanks goes to all the participants in the 1996 Birdathon and their sponsors. A very special thanks goes to Lauren Bradley who did a superb job as the 1996 Feature Birder. *Thanks Lauren!*

Feature Birder's Birdathon Report

by Lauren Bradley

I spent Friday night birding around my home. Just as the Birdathon started, there was a thunder storm, but that didn't scare the birds away! Lots of birds come to our bird bath and feeder every day. Some of the birds I saw at home were a Hairy Woodpecker, Violet-green Swallow, Red Crossbills and their young, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, and a Purple Finch.

On Saturday morning my Dad and I visited some of our favourite birding spots. Even though the morning was wet and chilly, the birds were busy singing and eating in the bushes. At Schwatka Lake I saw Surf Scoters, a Redhead, a Common Loon, and had a close view of a Bohemian Waxwing. At Shallow Bay I saw a Hermit Thrush, a Trumpeter Swan, a Northern Flicker, and a Northern Harrier eating something on the shore. At the Crestview Lagoons I saw a Blue-winged Teal and a Green-winged Teal. At McIntyre Creek I saw Bank Swallows, Bonaparte's Gulls, a Red-winged Blackbird, a Rusty Blackbird, and a Northern Waterthrush. At Hidden Lakes I saw a pair of Barrow's Goldeneye.

On this Birdathon I saw a total of 49 species. I saw many birds that I had not identified before. Two of my favourites were the Blue-winged Teal and the Redhead.

Thank-you to everyone who sponsored me. I raised more than \$600 for the Yukon Bird Club and Yukon Conservation Society.

Species observed by Lauren Bradley during the 1996 Birdathon

Common Loon	Tree Swallow
Trumpeter Swan	Violet-green Swallow
Green-winged Teal	Bank Swallow
Mallard	Cliff Swallow
Northern Pintail	Common Raven
Blue-winged Teal	Black-capped Chickadee
Northern Shoveler	Mountain Bluebird
American Wigeon	Townsend's Solitaire
Redhead	Swainson's Thrush
Ring-necked Duck	Hermit Thrush
Scaup sp.	American Robin
Surf Scoter	Varied Thrush
Barrow's Goldeneye	Bohemian Waxwing
Bufflehead	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Bald Eagle	Blackpoll Warbler
Northern Harrier	Northern Waterthrush
Killdeer	Wilson's Warbler
Lesser Yellowlegs	White-crowned Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Dark-eyed Junco
Bonaparte's Gull	Red-winged Blackbird
Mew Gull	Rusty Blackbird
Herring Gull	Pine Grosbeak
Rock Dove	Purple Finch
Hairy Woodpecker	Red Crossbill
Northern Flicker	



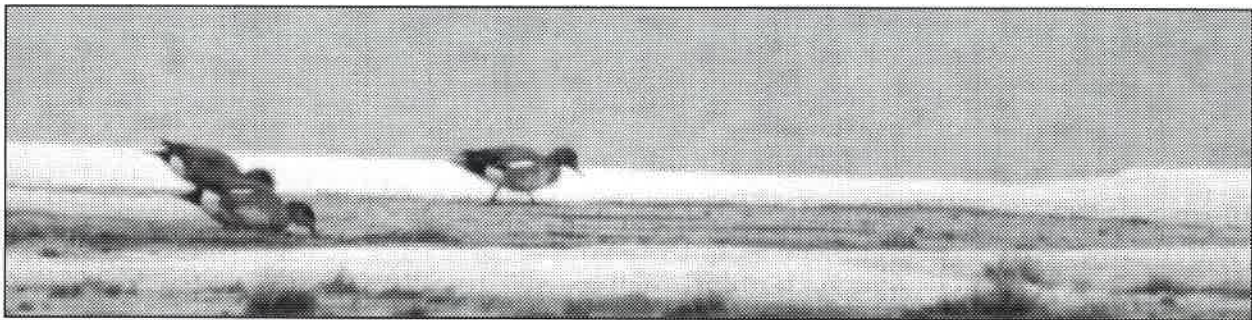
Spring and summer field trip highlights

by Stuart Alexander

Spring had a tough job breaking through one of the century's coldest winters, both in the Yukon and at more southern latitudes. Snow and ice were late melting from mountains and lakes, plants were slow to sprout, and insect hatches were kept at bay. In general, spring and summer were one to two weeks late and bird migration was affected accordingly. In late April and early May at Shallow Bay, M'Clintock Bay, and on the Tagish Tour, the diversity of waterfowl compared well with other years but numbers were considerably lower. In early May, the trip to Lewes Marsh in search of shorebirds was thwarted by ice covering most of the mud flats, while in mid to late May, trips to Paddy's Pond and Mary Lake that normally featured a variety of warblers produced fewer species and numbers, and often only Yellow-rumped Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen or heard. By the last days of May, however, songbirds were abundant and trips to Haunka Creek on the Atlin Road and the 1996 Birdathon were highly successful. By the second week of June, birders were lamenting the ending of spring migration.

The first trip of the spring was along the Alaska highway west of Whitehorse on 17 April. At that time of the year, the tally of 11 species made for a great outing, especially since most were spring migrants rather than winter residents. It was particularly refreshing to see the bright colour of Mountain Bluebirds filling the scope. Other highlights were at least 8 Northern Shrikes, a Northern Harrier, 2 Red-tailed Hawks, 3 Golden Eagles, and a Killdeer.

The next 4 field trips, held from 25 April to 4 May, focused on waterfowl migration by visiting some of southern Yukon's most important spring staging habitat: Shallow Bay, Lewes Marsh, M'Clintock Bay, Tagish Narrows, and Nares River (see table on page 6). These locations usually become ice-free sooner than other parts of the Yukon's large southern lakes. Some noteworthy observations from this year's spring waterfowl field trips include: the change in numbers of swans and ducks at Shallow Bay from 25 April to 4 May, indicating the earlier migration of swans compared to ducks; the large number of waterfowl at Tagish Narrows compared to other locations (but fewer than last year); the 2 Eurasian Wigeon in Carcross; and the pair of Gadwall at Shallow Bay. Participants in the second Shallow Bay trip were also treated to excellent views of a Short-eared Owl, which flew by and landed in the open just a couple of hundred metres from the group, well within scope range.

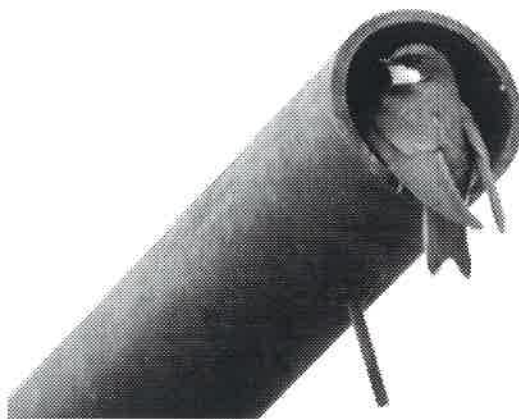


A male Eurasian Wigeon (right), a rare spring migrant, graces the mudflats at Nares Lake - April 28, 1996.

Photo by Jeanette McCrie

The exploratory trip to Haunka Creek on the Atlin Road on 26 May proved well worth the distance as 17 people tallied 49 species, a pleasant surprise in light of the late spring. Highlights included excellent views of a Say's Phoebe, a Hammond's Flycatcher hawking insects from a tall aspen, and Warbling Vireos dueling in full song. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers could be heard drumming and at least two were seen well. A hooting Great Horned Owl confirmed its breeding status at Huanka Creek when it revealed a

huge construct of sticks high in a spruce tree, with at least one nestling peering out from the brim. The only Gray Jay was a juvenile from this year, distinguished from adult birds by its dark, slate-gray plumage. An Osprey soared briefly over Huanka Creek and 2 co-operative Western Wood-Pewees foraged along Daly Creek. Perhaps the best find was a pair of Mountain Chickadees at Huanka Creek. Mammalian highlights were 2 melanistic (black) Arctic Ground Squirrels and 7 Mountain Goats at No-point Goat Point (so named by the Yukon Bird Club) on the Atlin Road. We'll definitely be there again next year to tease out more avian secrets along the Atlin Road.



A male Tree Swallow checks the nesting potential at Jake's Corner - May 26, 1996. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

By the June 9th Mount McIntyre trip, the weather was warming up, summer was making timid feints, and migration was winding down at lower elevations. In the alpine, snow banks were still deep and expansive and many shrubs had yet to sprout leaves. A group of 12 birders, including visitors from Ontario, Canada's east coast, and California (our southern-most members), braved the cold winds and short mountain hike to catch spectacular views of Fish Lake and the Yukon River Valley. At one point, one could see Shallow Bay, Swan Lake, and Marsh Lake, all birding hot-spots in the Whitehorse area. On the mountain, species diversity and numbers were low due partly to strong winds which muffled songs and watered eyes, but the group was rewarded with fine views of Golden-crowned Sparrows and a pair of Willow Ptarmigan, species that would not have been seen on any other spring trip to date. American Tree Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, Wilson's Warblers, a Barn Swallow, the ubiquitous American Robin, a Say's Phoebe, and a pair of American Kestrels were also seen or heard. As a bonus, the group was honoured with the presence of 2 Picas perched like mountain mystics on a south-facing rocky bluff.

The hike into the blooming alpine of Montana Mountain on 21 July produced a similar species list: American Kestrel, Willow Ptarmigan, Say's Phoebe, Townsend's Solitaire, American Tree Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, American Robin, and Water Pipit. The difference was the presence of young birds. One young Townsend's Solitaire, while waiting for its parents to return with the grub, demonstrated its youthful naiveté by flying straight towards the gaggle of birders as if planning to perch on Cameron Eckert's head, it being the tallest object around. The bird changed its mind at the last second before contact, but in the meantime had provided the group with an excellent head-on view of a bird in flight. The other young of the year, a family of Willow Ptarmigan, showed more sense when we approach and took flight in the opposite direction.

Two trips to Hidden Lakes on 23 June and 28 July sighted several young birds, including families of Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Bufflehead, and American Wigeon. The American Wigeon were seen only on the second trip, at which time the ducklings were no more than balls of downy fluff. In contrast, one family of Green-winged Teal was nearly fully-grown by the late July trip. Another chick of suspiciously large proportions was a possible young Brown-headed Cowbird, which was apparently attended to by two comparatively smaller adult Dark-eyed Juncos. This was a very unusual sighting for the Whitehorse area, although similar sightings have been confirmed in the past. Other bird highlights included a nesting Red-necked Grebe, a Pacific Loon, a Least Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewees, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Bohemian Waxwings, Rusty Blackbirds, Swainson's Thrushes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Spotted Sandpipers, Mew Gulls, and a Belted Kingfisher. Most of these species were seen on both trips. Altogether, a pretty good finalé to a full roster of spring and summer Yukon Bird Club field trips.



Birds seen during Yukon Bird Club field trips to spring waterfowl staging habitats in southern Yukon in 1996

Species	25 - April	28 - April	28 - April	28 - April	4 - May	Total
	Shallow Bay	Lewes Marsh	Nares River	Tagish Narrows	Shallow Bay	
Common Loon	0	0	0	1	0	1
Horned Grebe	0	0	0	0	1	1
Tundra Swan	215	0	2	2	0	219
Trumpeter Swan	0	60	0	60	0	120
Swans	0	0	20	238	4	262
Greater White-fronted Goose	0	0	0	0	3	3
Canada Goose	6	3	15	50	0	74
Green-winged Teal	8	20	0	100	16	144
Mallard	5	50	20	200	4	279
Northern Pintail	40	2	15	200	50	307
Northern Shoveler	8	0	0	0	10	18
Gadwall	0	0	0	0	2	2
Eurasian Wigeon	0	0	2	0	0	2
American Wigeon	16	20	160	200	110	506
Canvasback	0	2	0	8	0	10
Redhead	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ring-necked Duck	0	0	0	20	1	21
Lesser Scaup	0	0	0	6	0	6
Common Goldeneye	0	2	0	30	0	32
Barrow's Goldeneye	2	6	0	0	2	10
Bufflehead	0	6	0	40	1	47
Common Merganser	0	0	0	2	0	2
Red-breasted Merganser	0	0	0	2	0	2
Bald Eagle	0	1	0	2	0	3
Northern Harrier	2	0	0	0	1	3
Red-tailed Hawk	0	0	0	0	1	1
Ruffed Grouse	0	1	0	0	0	1
American Coot	0	0	0	1	0	1
Killdeer	2	2	1	0	1	6
Greater Yellowlegs	0	0	3	2	0	5
Lesser Yellowlegs	0	0	1	0	8	9
Common Snipe	0	0	0	0	2	2
Bonaparte's Gull	0	0	0	0	20	20
Mew Gull	0	1	0	6	3	10
Herring Gull	0	2	0	2	0	4
Short-eared Owl	0	0	0	0	1	1
Tree Swallow	0	0	0	0	4	4
Gray Jay	0	0	0	1	0	1
Black-billed Magpie	0	2	0	0	0	2
Black-capped Chickadee	2	0	0	1	0	3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	0	0	2	0	4
Mountain Bluebird	0	0	0	0	3	3
American Pipit	0	0	70	0	0	70
Bohemian Waxwing	0	0	0	2	0	2
American Tree Sparrow	6	0	0	0	0	6
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	0	1	0	2
Dark-eyed Junco	0	1	6	2	0	9
Lapland Longspur	0	0	1	0	60	61
Total	315	181	316	1182	308	2302

Introducing YBC's Breeding Bird Cards

by Pam Sinclair

One of the exciting things about birdwatching is that amateurs make major contributions to the scientific knowledge of birds. And the more this knowledge is collected and shared, the more successful our conservation efforts can be.

YBC is initiating a new project to help collect valuable information about the breeding biology of birds in the Yukon. Our new Breeding Bird Database cards provide a simple way to record information about nests and young birds which birders happen to observe while out

birding. In this way, we can increase our knowledge of such things as when and where birds nest, what habitats they use, and how many young they have - all specific to the Yukon. This sort of information is of vital importance in assessing the status and health of bird populations. Many species are experiencing population declines elsewhere in North America, but for most species we have very little information that is specific to the Yukon.



Prime candidates for a YBC Breeding Bird Card: Short-tailed fledgling Dark-eyed Juncos at Strawberry Lane near the Yukon River on June 16, 1996. Photo by Jeanette McCrie.



Another confirmed breeder: A Mew Gull sitting on a nest in Whitehorse on June 23, 1996. Photo by Jeanette McCrie.

Observers should keep in mind that the aim of this project is NOT to have birders seek out nests. Under the Migratory Birds Act and the Canada Wildlife Act, it is illegal to disturb birds and their nests. However, while out in the field birders often come across nests or other evidence of nesting such as newly fledged birds or downy young. The Breeding Bird Cards simply make it easy for observers to record their observations fully, and for this information to be compiled and made available.

When you do come across a nest or young birds, you should make a mental note of all that you see (e.g. number and size of young,

number of eggs, description of nest) and then move quickly away. Never touch nests or young birds. Write down your observations once you are far enough away that you are no longer disturbing the birds.

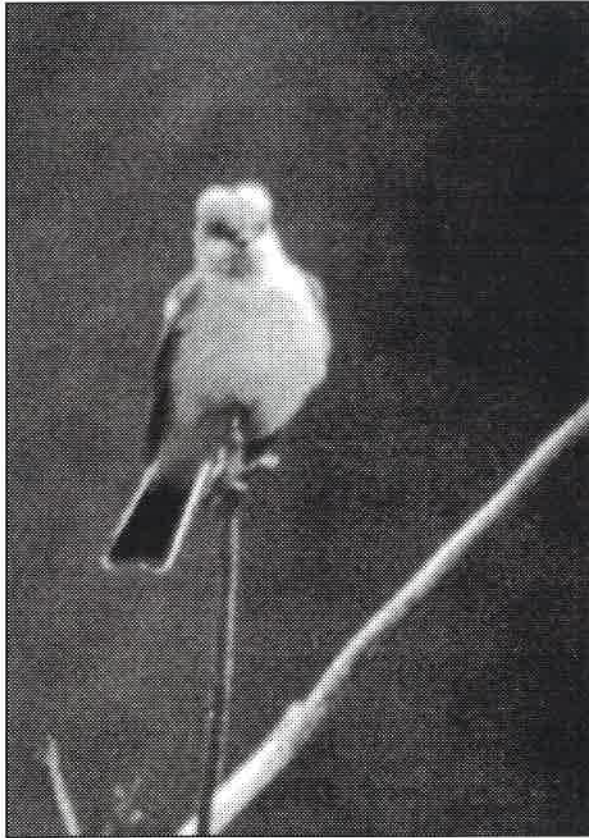
I have included a Breeding Bird card with this newsletter; if you have observations from this past summer then please fill out the card and return it to YBC. You may use the cards to record swallows nesting in a nest box in your yard, a family of ducks you see in a neighbourhood pond, or any other nests or young you happen to observe. Each year, the Breeding Bird Cards will be collected from observers and a summary of the data will be presented in the *Yukon Warbler*. For more information or to obtain cards, please contact the project coordinator: Pam Sinclair, phone - 667-4630.



Western Kingbird

A Yukon first makes a cameo appearance on the 1996 Birdathon!

by Jeanette McCrie, Heather Thompson and Patti Nash (O.B.B.C.)



Western Kingbird a Yukon first at McIntyre Wetlands - June 1, 1996. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

The 1996 Birdathon, though eagerly awaited, had gotten off to a slow start for members of the O.B.B.C. (The initials represent a foursome of "social birders" who translate them to mean "*Old Broads Bird Club*" or anything else that fits on a given day). Friday evening had seen only one of our Birdathon team able to get out so when Heather, Patti and I met early Saturday morning we had lots of catching up to do, Elaine Monaghan having succumbed to a large pile of student reports.

After a cool and rain showered morning at the old dump and the pond behind the College, we decided to move on to the Fish Farm in hopes of seeing a Northern Rough-winged Swallow as well as several warblers. The sun had come out by the time we arrived around 12:30. Within the next half an hour we spotted a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a Belted Kingfisher, a Hammond's Flycatcher, a Western Wood-Pewee, an American Tree Sparrow and the Northern Rough-winged Swallow. The warm sunlight also seemed to send the warblers into a frenzy of feeding and singing and we were enjoying seeing a lot of Yellow and Wilson's Warblers and Common Yellowthroats hawking for insects around the small pond by the entrance to the Fish Farm.

The warblers were joined by an Olive-sided Flycatcher and then suddenly, a large robin-sized bird flew in from the direction of the tanks, perched on a dead tree limb and began aggressively hawking over the end of the pond. I had been trying to get some close-up photos of warblers when Patti and Heather called excitedly that there was a new bird and it looked like a Western Kingbird! We rushed to get it in the scope though it was quite close and could also be seen easily with binoculars. Having grown up in southern Saskatchewan and Alberta where Western Kingbirds are as common as robins, we quickly recognized the distinctive sulphur-yellow belly, light grey throat, grey head, dark wings and the black square tail with white edges.

The size of the bird was also quite apparent as it and the Olive-sided Flycatcher shared the same branches. It continued to hawk insects for the next twenty minutes. I attempted some photos hoping that they would capture the size and colour but was worried that too close an approach would chase it away. At about 1:30 pm, it flew across the road and continued to hunt and perch in the larger wetland area. At no time did we ever hear the sharp "whit" call though it sat for several minutes at a time between forays for insects and even did a bit of preening on one occasion. It was not aggressive with other birds though at my parent's home in Saskatchewan, I have often watched them war with the American Robins, House Sparrows and Eastern Kingbirds as they took over the apple tree to nest and rear their young.

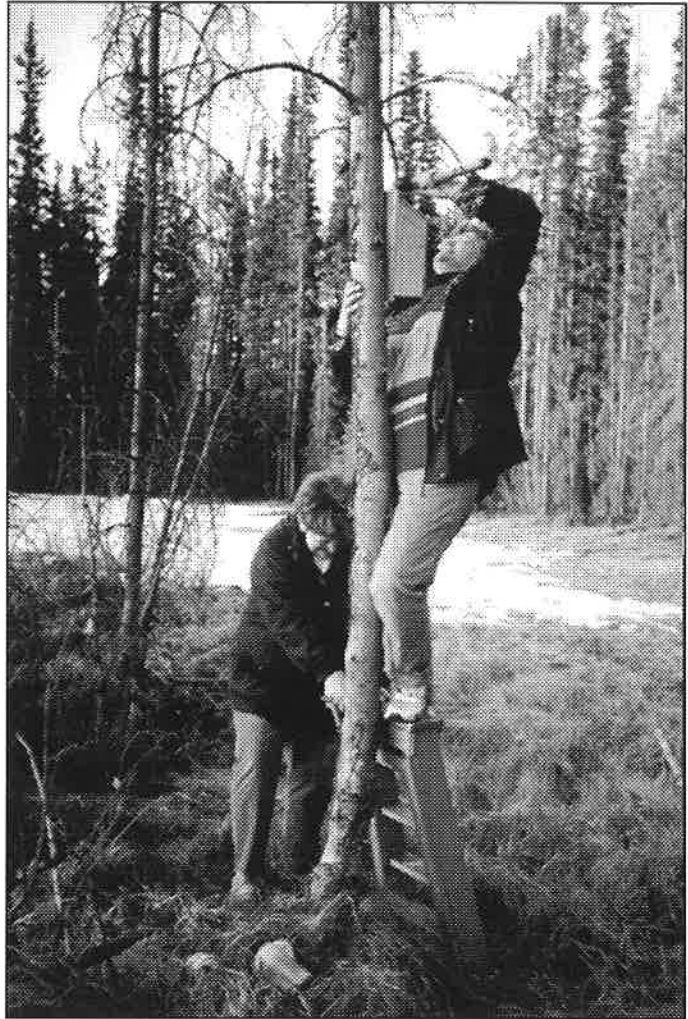
Continued on page 9.

Lucky number 50 for the O.B.B.C.

Before moving on to our next spot we sat down to record our sighting - it became our 50th bird - and checked several of our field guides more closely. It was only then that we realized how far from its home range the Western Kingbird really was. We had supposed that this one had come in from northern Alberta but we were now amazed to find that Western Kingbirds are not even common around Edmonton. Their range is actually only the very southern areas of the prairie provinces though the Peterson guide map notes it is casual north to Alaska.

The rest of the afternoon continued to be punctuated with remembrances and excited discussion of our sighting. In the meantime, we even managed to record seven more species than we had on the previous year's Birdathon. The photos turned out and clearly showed our prize find - a Western Kingbird - lucky number 50 for the O.B.B.C. and a first Yukon record for this spectacular species! We can hardly wait for next year.

When not hot on the Birdathon trail, members of the O.B.B.C. were hard at work this spring putting up bluebird boxes. Pictured here are Patti Nash holding the ladder and Heather Thompson wielding the hammer. Photo by Jeanette McCrie.



Birding out of context

by **Jeremy Baumbach**

Thanks to Jeanette McCrie for the idea for this puzzle and for the following example.

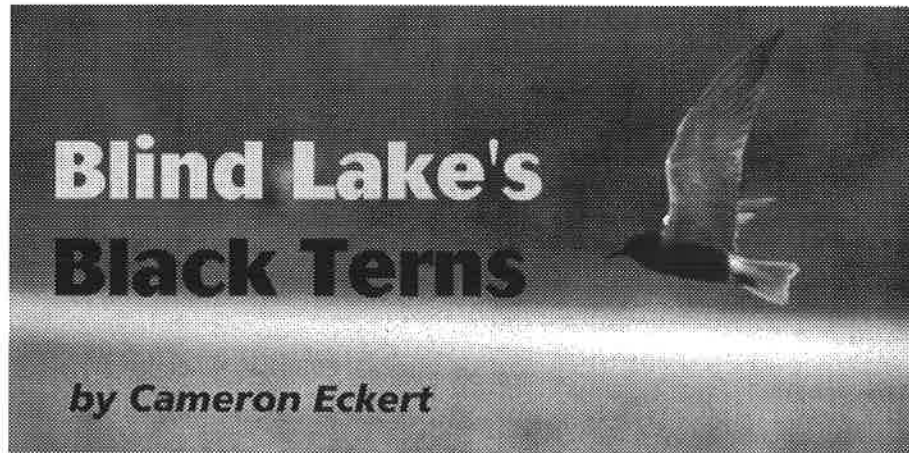
Example: Three Shrikes and you're out!

1. Snap, _____, pop.
2. It's _____ one or the other.
3. Twelve cinnamon buns for the price of six - what a _____!
4. Hillary is one thing, but _____ and you'll be sorry.
5. Staying up late, and generally showing signs of becoming a _____.
6. The roast is done to a _____.
7. _____ Peter to pay Paul.
8. "_____ and it will be so", said _____ to King Arthur.

9. She sat playing endless games of _____.
10. Don't be a _____ or a telltale.
11. Increasingly church pews are filled with _____.
12. The Blue Jays picked him up in a trade because he's such a great _____.
13. "_____ down and a cup o'tea m'dear."
14. Up and coming Nashville music star, nicknamed the _____.
15. "I'll huff and I'll _____ I'll blow your house down."
16. "Johnny, you have just _____ too far. Now go to your room."
17. If you _____ over your successes, others will _____ over your failures.
18. Some Yukon residents _____ at the thought of another long winter.
19. Poor morale is evident when employees _____ and _____.
20. There was definitely a _____ of interest when the ill birder was offered a copy of the *Yukon Warbler*.

Solution page 20.





Just 25 km east of Watson Lake lies Blind Lake, accessible only by air or an overland hike from the Hyland River. In June, Pam Sinclair, Helmut Grünberg and I explored a variety of locations across southeast Yukon in order to better define ranges of forest bird species in the region. We chose Blind Lake as one of our survey

locations simply because it was east of Watson Lake, west of Toobally Lakes and happened to catch our eye on the topographical map. Blind Lake is a shallow land-locked lake and prior to our visit there were no previous reports on the bird life there.

We had arranged to use a boat which belonged to a small fish farm on the lake and had been advised to camp close to an interesting marsh at the south end of the lake. On June 16, Helmut and I flew from Toobally Lakes to Blind Lake and were welcomed at the fish farm by Geoff Morrison. While unloading the plane and getting the boat ready Geoff told us about the bird species he typically observes around the lake; Belted Kingfisher, Pacific Loons, Dark-eyed Juncos, scoters, and Black Terns. There are times when the mere mention of a particular bird species can stop a conversation in mid-stream and this was one of those times. Black Terns?

In the Yukon, Black Terns are known only as an extremely rare vagrant. The first documented sighting was of two birds seen on June 3, 1978 at Swan Lake, 20 km northeast of Whitehorse. Since then there have been only two other documented Black Tern sightings in the Yukon.

In response to our sudden excitement over his mention of Black Terns, Geoff explained that up to six Black Terns could be seen over the marsh at the south end of the lake. Perhaps anticipating our thought process he added that Common Nighthawks could also be seen foraging with the terns over the marsh. Within half an hour we were boating to our camp at the south end of the lake. Soon we could make out a



This Black Tern nest with 3 eggs confirmed this species' breeding status at Blind Lake. June 17, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert

beige mass of marsh vegetation at the far end of the lake, and then, becoming clearer as we approached more closely, we could make out small dark shapes dancing over the marsh. Black Terns.

The Black Terns were striking in appearance with a jet black head and body contrasting sharply with a pure white undertail; the tail and back were ashy grey, and the similarly grey wings were neatly trimmed with a thin white line along the leading edge of the inner wing. The legs and bill were reddish-black and the black eye seemed lost in the jet black face until it caught a glint of sunlight.

Black Terns breeding

We were immediately filled with questions about these birds; How many? Are they breeding? What habitats are they using? Over the next three days we carefully explored the marsh and tried to answer these questions. The marsh itself was highly aquatic and consisted of an expansive bed of relatively sparse bulrushes in 1 to 2 meters of water. The marsh had not yet greened up and all the vegetation above the water's surface was dead. Peering into water we could see this year's green plants growing up from the bottom of the lake towards the surface. While I have explored many marshes and wetlands throughout the Yukon, I had never before encountered one like this.

On June 17 we paddled our boat into a small opening in the middle of the marsh and sat quietly to observe the terns. We were stunned to find that the number of terns was much higher than was previously known. Our high count was of 44 terns over the marsh. Very quickly we spotted terns sitting on nests throughout the marsh. Carefully scanning the marsh we counted 25 nests. This was not just a case of a few vagrant birds at the edge of their range, this was a major breeding colony.

The marsh offered nothing in the way of solid ground and the terns had built their nests on loose floating mats of dead bulrushes. These floating nests seemed to have the advantage of being able to rise and fall with waves rather than being swamped by them. The nests consisted of a shallow cup made of dead bulrushes and contained from 3 to 4 olive coloured eggs mottled with brown. On June 18 we found five more Black Terns and a nest at another smaller but similar marsh at the northeast side of the lake. We only remained at the colony long enough to document the nesting activity and try and determine the size of colony. Like Arctic Terns, the Black Terns seemed quite sensitive to disturbance around their nests.

We also observed a few Arctic Terns on Blind Lake but they did not appear to be breeding on the lake and may have been flying over from the nearby Hyland River. The Black Terns did not feed like Arctic Terns which typically plunge head first into the water in pursuit of small fish. Rather, the Black Terns hawked for insects over the marsh and would occasionally drop in a low hover over the lake and pick insects off the water's surface. We never tired of watching the lively activities of this graceful tern species.

The breeding colony of Black Terns at Blind Lake establishes a significant northwest extension of this species' known breeding range in North America. The nearest known Black Tern colonies are in the vicinity of Fort Nelson, BC, about 300 km to the southeast. The Black Tern is particularly sensitive to environmental degradation, and populations have declined in many areas in North America. The marshes at Blind Lake provide critical breeding habitat for the Yukon's only known Black Terns and this precious habitat should be protected.

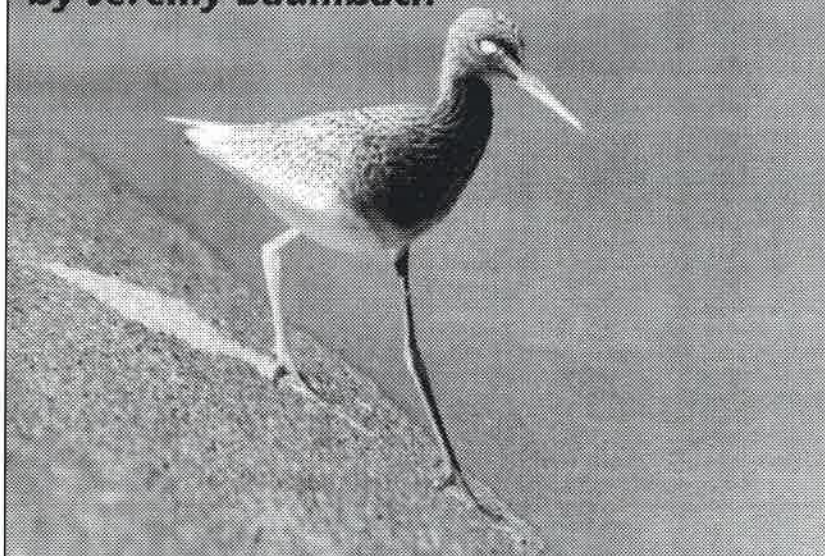


A Black Tern hawking insects over Blind Lake. June 17, 1996.
Photo by Cameron Eckert



Beyond breeding plumage

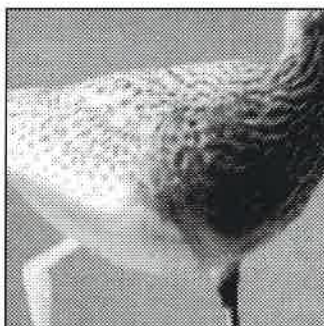
by Jeremy Baumbach



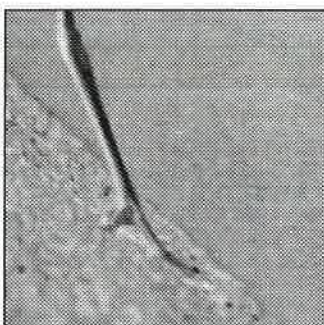
In the Spring '96 issue of *Yukon Warbler*, in the column "Using plumage to identify birds", I wrote confidently "The complexities of juvenile, immature and winter plumages found later in the year will be (appropriately) the subject of the fall newsletter's column". As the season has progressed, and increasingly I have found myself staring at nondescript birds thinking "Well ... it's a young something", I have had cause to rue this statement. What can possibly be said to beginner birders on the topic of using plumage to identify birds in their immature or winter plumages?



First, it is perfectly de rigeur to *opt out of or delay this facet of birding*. Many birdwatchers do restrict their identification attempts to adult birds. As a beginner it can be unnerving, after a spring and early summer of increasing identification skill, to move into a late summer and fall of identification failure. Feel free to berry pick instead.



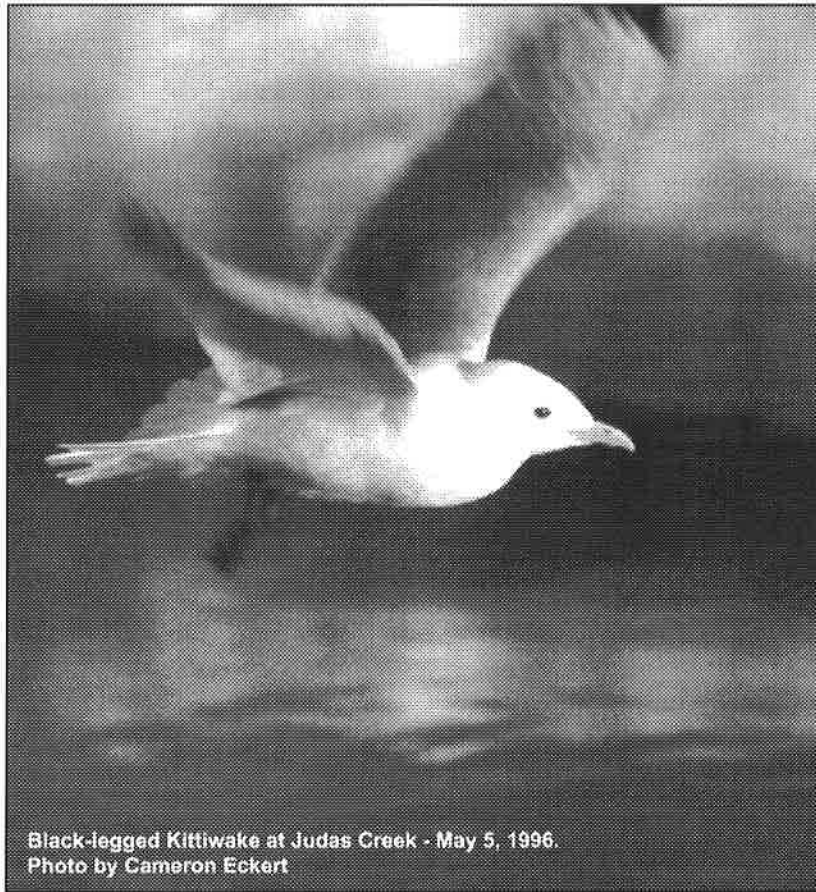
When you do venture into "fall" birding, *expect yourself to exhibit a very gradual learning curve*. Not only is there a lot to learn, but the subtlety and complexity involved mean that even the experts will sometimes have difficulty making a definitive identification. Fall birding is a good opportunity to hone your observation skills and can be hugely enjoyable and rewarding, so long as you do not expect too much of yourself too soon.



Give yourself a headstart! Much frustration can be avoided by joining knowledgeable birders. YBC's fall field trips are made-to-measure for this purpose. It can also be worthwhile to seek out specialized information prior to your ventures into the field. There are a number of excellent books which provide depth and detail far beyond the standard field guide. The Whitehorse Public Library now has a substantial collection of such reference books, courtesy of YBC and a grant from the City of Whitehorse's Environmental Fund.

Remember to make full use of all the other clues to a bird's identity. Silhouette should be emphasized in identification attempts as it tends to be less variable than plumage. Similarly, features of behaviour, voice and habitat are valuable clues and will be the topic of future columns.

Yukon Gallery



Black-legged Kittiwake at Judas Creek - May 5, 1996.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

On May 5, 1996, Pam and I returned home in the early evening after a day of birding at Lewes Marsh. Responding to the blinking light on our answering machine I hit the play button. The messages crackled away until one word sailed above the chatter and captivated my complete attention - "kittiwake". I immediately pushed rewind. Jim Hawkings had called at 5:00 pm to report that he had discovered a Black-legged Kittiwake at Judas Creek on Marsh Lake.

In the Yukon, Black-legged Kittiwakes are known only from the North Coast where they are a very rare fall vagrant. This species had never been recorded elsewhere in the Yukon. One of the joys of spring birding is that daylight is rarely a limiting factor. By 7:30 pm we were on our way to Judas Creek.

Black-legged Kittiwake: a southern Yukon first at Judas Creek

by Cameron Eckert

Judas Creek is one of southern Yukon's most exciting birding areas. In spring, it is a great place for shorebirds such as

Hudsonian Godwit, Black-bellied Plover and Whimbrel. Judas Creek has hosted numerous rarities including Parasitic Jaeger, Western Grebe, Red Knot and Red-breasted Sapsucker.

We reached Judas Creek by 8:30 pm but 30 minutes later there was no sign of the kittiwake. Then Pam spotted the small gull flying over the frozen lake. Even from a considerable distance, its buoyant flight and neatly defined black wingtips signaled that we had relocated the kittiwake. Like a gift, it flew directly towards us and as it passed just a few meters overhead I carefully noted its black legs. It leisurely foraged along the mouth of Judas Creek. It was similar in size to a Mew Gull but much stockier. Its head, undersides and tail were white. Its mantle was grey and the inner primaries were paler grey than the rest of the wing and back. Its small unmarked bill was pale yellow and its eyes and legs were black.

The Black-legged Kittiwake had departed by the next day and was not seen again. However, a trip to Judas Creek always makes for an interesting outing - on May 25th Jim Hawkings guided a Yukon Bird Club field trip to Judas Creek and the group was thrilled with spectacular views of three Parasitic Jaegers.



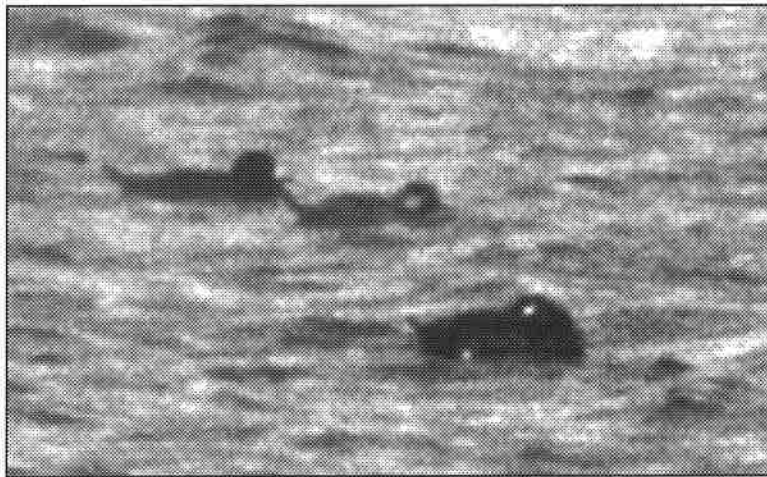
FieldNotes: *Observations from the field*



Please send sightings to Helmut Grünberg, (807 Wheeler, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2P8). Please 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 documented and undocumented sightings. Please send sightings according to the following seasonal schedule: Spring (March 1 - May 31), Summer (June 1 - July 31), Fall (August 1 - November 30), Winter (December 1 - February 29).

The Spring Season

A **Red-throated Loon** was on Schwatka Lake on May 15 (JM,EM,HT), and 1 was at Jackfish Bay on May 30 (LC,CE). Nine **Pacific Loons** gathered at Schwatka Lake on May 14 (GK,LKu); 24 **Pacific** and 11 **Common Loons** were on Gravel Lake on May 17, perhaps waiting for lakes further north to thaw (PS,CE,HG). A rare **Pied-billed Grebe** was discovered at Nares Lake on May 26 (LC,CE,HG,PS) and one was heard later at Rat Lake (HG). Jackfish Bay's famous **Double-crested Cormorant** was first noted this spring on May 30 (LC,CE). Very rare was a **Great Blue Heron** first discovered on May 1 flying up the Yukon River in Whitehorse (DO).



As if photographed by an orbiting satellite was this pair of Black Scoters and a single White-winged Scoter at Gravel Lake along the Klondike Highway on May 20, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert



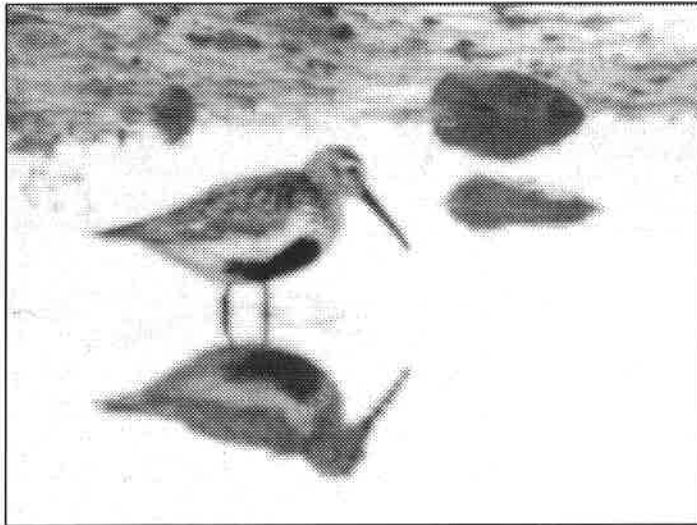
The Yukon's first documented Turkey Vulture feeding on the contents of a defunct freezer in Dawson City on April 25, 1996. Photo by Dorothy Cooley.

Two **Trumpeter Swans**, an adult with a banded immature, were seen near Partridge Creek Farm, km 570 of the Klondike Hwy. on May 20 (CE,PS). "Like clockwork" a flock of 40-50 **Brant** passed over Pineridge on May 27 (JH). A flock of about 60 **Brant** were seen over Cowley Lake on May 30 (CD). A male **Redhead** was on Sulphur Lake in southwest Yukon on May 28 (FD,TD). A pair of **Gadwall** was on a large lake near the Donjek River on May 8 (BB); 2 pairs were noted at "Coot Lake" near Pelly Crossing on May 17 (LC,CE,PS). One of the few documented records of **Black Scoter** was a pair, male and female, on Gravel Lake on May 20 (PS,LC,CE,HG). Very rare and extraordinary in its beauty was a male **Hooded Merganser** discovered on the Fish Lake Road's Pumphouse Pond on May 1 (RC).

A **Turkey Vulture** seen near Dawson City on April 25 was both a highlight of spring for local birders and a first Yukon record. (DD,DC,SS,JR,THu). A **Bald Eagle** was sighted in Dawson City on April 14 (ML). **Rough-legged Hawk** sightings included one at the Takhini burn on April 8 (GK,LKu) and 14 (JM,PN); one at Swan Lake on April 14 (HG); one at Drury's farm on April 14 (PS,CE); one at the Salt Ponds on April 18 (CE,PS), and one in Whitehorse on April 27 (BB,RM). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was 10 km east of Tagish on April 21 (JH). An adult male **Merlin** hunting

The Spring Season

redpolls in Hillcrest provided an early record on March 11 (CE). Teslin's first **American Kestrel** of spring was seen on April 12 (MG). A pair of **American Kestrels** was at Burma Road on April 14 (BC). All 4 species of Yukon falcon; an **American Kestrel** (LC,CE), a **Merlin** (PS,CE), a *tundrius* race **Peregrine Falcon** (PS,GW,MW), and grey phase **Gyr Falcon** (CE,LC) were observed along the Dempster Highway on May 19. A flock of 54 **Sandhill Cranes** was flying low over the Yukon River in Whitehorse on May 9 (JM,PN, HT). An amazing congregation of 120 **Willow Ptarmigan** was encountered in the Haines Pass, BC on April 8 (PS,CE,HG). Seventeen **Sharp-tailed Grouse** were tallied between km 1811-1819 along the Alaska Hwy., on April 11; many were on the Snag Road on May 8 (BB). A **Sora** was heard calling at a lake about half way between Kluane Lake and Haines Junction on May 28 (FD,TD). Single **American Coots** were as at Tagish on April 22 (JH), and Rat Lake on May 8 (NH).



A breeding plumage Dunlin forages along the Yukon River at Quartz Road in Whitehorse on May 15, 1996. Photo by Jeanette McCrie.

Parasitic Jaeger encountered along the Dempster on May 19 (PS,HG) provided a rare inland record. Four light phase **Parasitic Jaegers** surprised and delighted birders at Marsh Lake on May 28 (JH,YBC). The Whitehorse Landfill hosted a rare 1st winter **Glaucous-winged Gull** on May 14 (CE,PS). Whitehorse area **Glaucous Gull** sightings included an adult May 4-7 (CE,PS); a 2nd summer bird on May 25 (HG); an adult at Marsh Lake on May 5 (CE,PS), and a 2nd summer was at the Yukon River in Whitehorse on May 25 (BB,RM). Three adult **Glaucous Gulls** at Two Moose Lake on May 19 provided only the second Dempster Hwy. record for this species (LC,CE). An



An adult Black-legged Kittiwake flashes its "dipped-in-ink" wingtips at Judas Creek on May 5, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert

Wandering Tattler sightings included one at Lewes Marsh on May 14 (CE); 4 along the Dempster Hwy. from May 18-20 (LC,CE,HG,PS), and 1 at Nares Lake on May 26 (LC,CE,HG,PS). Five **Upland Sandpipers** were at the Takhini Ponds on May 19 (GK,LKu). A single **Hudsonian Godwit** was at Nares Lake on May 11 (CE). A **Ruddy Turnstone** at Wye Lake on May 23 provided a rare southeastern Yukon record (BB,WN). A single **Baird's Sandpiper** was in Whitehorse on May 13 (GK,LKu). Rare were 2 breeding plumage **Dunlin** in Whitehorse on May 15 (GK,LKu,JM). Single **Wilson's Phalaropes** were seen at Drury's pond on May 28, and on a Tagish Road pond on the same day (TD).

The Dempster Highway is well known for **Long-tailed Jaegers**, but a dark phase

adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** (see cover) was a stunning find at Judas Creek on Marsh Lake on May 5 (JH,PS,CE). While this species has been reported from the Yukon's North Coast, this observation provided the first documented Yukon record.

A **Mourning Dove**, rare but regular in the Yukon, was observed at Upper Liard on May 22 (BB,WN).

Great Gray Owl sightings included one near Faro on April 23 (SM,BW); one calling near Beaver Creek on May 9 (BB); one at Snag Creek bog on May 19 (NH, IB). Single **Short-eared Owls** were observed at Shallow Bay on May 4 (DM,YBC), at Lewes Marsh on



The Spring Season

May 5 (CE,PS), at a pond just south of the Dezadeash River bridge on May 5 (TH), at Gravel Lake on May 17 (HG), and at Partridge Creek Farm on May 20 (PS,LC,CE,HG). The fate of a male **Rufous Hummingbird** observed during a late spring snow squall at Congdon Creek at Kluane Lake on 19 May was uncertain (JH). Since **Red-breasted Sapsucker** has only been recorded once before in the Yukon it was therefore a surprise when one flew up to a cabin window at Silver City on Kluane Lake on March 28 (JS,EH). A male **Black-backed Woodpecker** was courtship feeding a female at Ruby River Trail Rides, southwestern Yukon on May 8 (BB). A **Pileated Woodpecker** caused a sensation when it flew across the highway in the centre of Watson Lake on May 22 (WN,PS,BB). A pair of **Hairy Woodpeckers** were noted at a nest with loud young calling 18 feet up in an Aspen along the Hotsprings Road on May 29 (dCR).

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** arrived in Whitehorse at the early date of April 23 (CE,PS). Two **Dusky Flycatchers** were singing above treeline on McIntyre Mountain on May 29 (CE). A **Horned Lark** that had been present in Whitehorse since February 26 (LKI) was still observed from March 9-11 (PS,CE,HG). A "Nature Appreciation" trip to McIntyre Creek on May 22 had much to appreciate with the discovery of a very rare male **Purple Martin** (LKu,YCS). Two **Cliff Swallows** were first spring arrivals at Tagish on April 21 (JH). The first **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** of spring was seen on April 24 at its traditional location at the Icy Waters Fish Farm in Whitehorse (LC,CE,PS). Dawson City's first swallow of spring was seen on April 25 (ML). Rare was a **Winter Wren** at Tom Creek near Watson Lake on May 23 (BB,WN). Rarely seen during migration in the Whitehorse area were four **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** on May 29; two spent the day foraging in a Porter Creek yard, and 2 were seen just below treeline on McIntyre Mountain (CE,PS). Another **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was heard singing along the Dezadeash River, also on May 29 (RA,TH). A **Hermit Thrush** was in Dawson City on May 18 and an **American Robin** was first seen there on May 5 (ML).



A partial albino White-crowned Sparrow was a wary subject at a Hillcrest feeder on April 24, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert

The first **Snow Buntings** of spring were noted in Dawson City on April 10 and the first **White-crowned** and **American Tree Sparrows** of spring were seen there on April 25 (ML). A **White-crowned Sparrow** in Goldenhorn on April 22 satisfied its migration appetite with a feed of niger seed (MA). Most bizarre was a "white headed" **White-crowned Sparrow** at a Hillcrest feeder on April 24 (LC). A well described and photographed pair of **Brewer's Blackbirds**, seen along the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard on May 29, may be the first documented Yukon record for this species (TD). A male **House Finch** returned for the second year to a Whitehorse

yard on May 31 (JB). Is this species going to establish itself in the southern Yukon? A flock of 18 **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** at White Mountain on April 3 included 16 individuals of the "grey-crowned" race and 2 of the "grey-headed" race (CE); four **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** were noted on the Haines Road on April 6 (PS,CE); a flock of approximately 200 was a highlight at Marsh Lake on April 6 (SM,BW). A single male **Red Crossbill** was at a Burma Road yard on March 28 (BC). A flock of 8 **Red Crossbills** including 3 pairs and 2 juveniles were at a Hillcrest feeder on May 25 (LC). Very unusual were three juvenile **Common Redpolls** with 1 adult which appeared at a Hillcrest feeder on May 23 indicating that this species probably bred locally (LC). Up to four **Hoary Redpolls** were recorded at Whitehorse feeders March 2 - April 19 (PS,CE,HG), 2 in Teslin on April 13 (CE,PS), and one at Bennett Lake on March 17 (BB). Ten **Evening Grosbeaks** were visiting a feeder in Watson Lake March 1 - May 5 (LE).

The Summer Season

Four **Common Loons** were on Teslin Lake through July (MG). A **Pied-billed Grebe** was at Rat Lake on June 22; it has nested there in 1994 (HG). A lone "black" **Brant** was at the Klondike River on July 26 (ML). Two male **Blue-winged Teal** were seen near the Sims River on June 7 (TD). Three **Gadwall** were at Kusawa Lake on July 9 (HG).

This summer, the **Ospreys** at Squanga Lake had 2 young in their nest (MG). Two **Bald Eagles**, an adult and an immature, were patrolling Teslin Lake regularly in June and July, the latter getting into a scuffle with gulls and ravens one day (MG). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was seen along the Dempster Highway at km 410 on June 15 (PJ). Two different **Swainson's Hawks** were seen along the Dempster Highway at km 434 and 444 on June 15 (PJ). A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen at "Coot Lake", 8 km south of Pelly Crossing on June 8 (PJ). A pair of **Spruce Grouse** was observed during courtship behaviour at Teslin in June (MG). **White-tailed Ptarmigan** were observed by a group of visiting birders on Montana Mountain in early June (RDM). A female **Ruffed Grouse** with several small chicks were in Dawson on June 10 (ML). A lone **Sandhill Crane** was foraging on the grassy flats at Nares Lake near Carcross on June 22 (HG). A pair of **Sandhill Cranes** spent the summer at Drury's Farm although there was no evidence of breeding activity (BD).



Two breeding plumage Franklin's Gulls present a striking image at Toobally Lakes on June 13, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert.



The distinctive wing pattern of a Franklin's Gull in flight at Toobally Lakes on June 13, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert

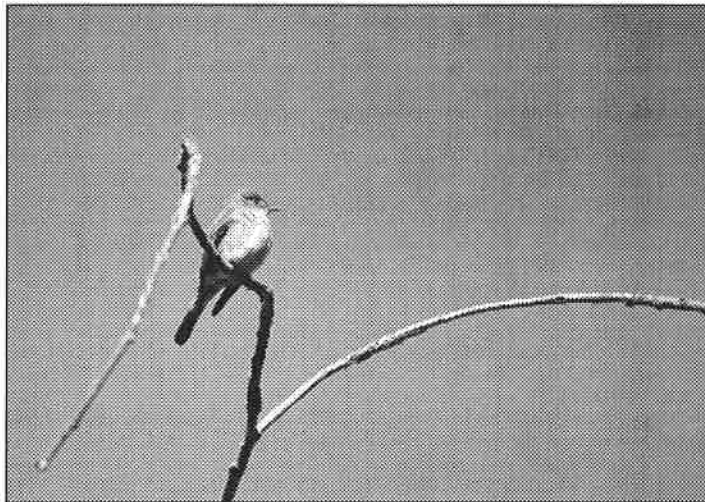
A **Killdeer** was seen at Teslin airport (MG). Two **Upland Sandpipers** were encountered on a meadow by Kusawa Lake from July 9-10, and one at a different location at Kusawa Lake on July 14 (SB,HG). The characteristic trill of a **Wandering Tattler** was heard by the Dempster Highway, km 94 on July 22 (HG). A **Whimbrel** presented itself for close observation right on the Dempster Highway near km 90 on July 21 (SB,HG). A **Greater Yellowlegs** was heard calling and displaying near Upper Liard on June 6 (TD).

An evening ride along Teslin Lake on July 27 became very exciting when a pair of **Long-tailed Jaegers** appeared and followed the boat for 15 minutes (MG). With only one previous Yukon record, a pair of breeding plumage **Franklin's Gulls** was a highlight of a trip to Toobally Lakes on June 13 (CE,PS,HG). An adult **Glaucous-winged Gull** and a third summer **Glaucous Gull**, both discovered on July 15 at the Whitehorse landfill, provided first summer records for each of these species for the Whitehorse area (CE). The Yukon's first documented **Caspian Tern**, on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on June 9, was a lucky find for a visiting birder from Mississauga (AG). With only three previous Yukon records - 1 or 2 birds each - the discovery of a breeding colony of approximately 50 **Black Terns** on June 16 at Blind Lake just 25 km east of Watson Lake was truly astonishing (CE,HG,GM).



The Summer Season

A **Northern Hawk-Owl** at Shadow Lake on July 22 provided one of few summer records for this species in the Whitehorse area (DR,KR). A **Great Gray Owl** was sighted 16 km north of Watson Lake on June 18 (PS,WN). Also rare was a **Short-eared Owl**, observed over the marshes at Swan Lake on June 23 and again on July 1 (HG). Two **Common Nighthawks** were calling and displaying along the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard on June 5 (TD). Four **Common Nighthawks** were observed during the afternoon at Drury's Farm on June 6 (TD). Two **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were observed in June and early July in Teslin, sometimes at a feeder, which is quite unusual for this species (MG). A pair of **Hairy Woodpeckers** had one young and brought it to the suet feeder at a Teslin residence (MG). Three pairs of **Northern Flickers** nested in two adjacent gardens at Teslin. One pair had five young. One hole was made by enlarging a **Hairy Woodpecker** hole from last year (MG).



Western Wood-Pewee flycatching at Hidden Lakes on June 14, 1996.
Photo by Jeanette McCrie.

A **Western Wood-Pewee** was at Hidden Lakes on June 14 (JM). Several **Least Flycatchers** were heard singing along the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard on June 6, but not on May 29 (TD). A **Least Flycatcher** was singing as far north as Partridge Creek east of Dawson on July 12 (CE,PS). **Dusky Flycatcher** sightings included one on Mt. McIntyre on June 6 (TD), and one on Montana Mountain in early June (RDM). Rare was a pair of **Eastern Kingbirds** at Toobally Lakes on June 14 (CE). A single **Eastern Kingbird** was in Watson Lake on June 23 (PS).

Twelve **Tree Swallow** boxes were occupied at a Teslin residence (MG). A pair of **Tree Swallows** initiated nesting in a Dawson yard on June 5, the young fledged on July 25 and the birds left the area by July 31 (ML). A pair of

Red-breasted Nuthatches nested in Teslin and arrived at the suet feeder with three young (MG). A group of visiting birders observed a **Northern Wheatear** at the Yukon/NWT border along the Dempster Highway in mid June (RDM). A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was at treeline near Clear Creek east of Dawson on July 13 (PS,CE). **Yellow Wagtails** were seen at Shingle Point at Yukon's North Slope in mid June (RDM). A **Bohemian Waxwing** nest with 5 eggs confirmed this species' breeding status at Kusawa Lake on July 13 (HG). A single **Cedar Waxwing** was at Toobally Lakes on June 15 (CE,HG,PS). A flock of eleven **Cedar Waxwings** at the La Biche River on June 26 was a record high count for this species which appears to have a significant foothold in the extreme southeastern Yukon (CE,PS). A **Northern Shrike** was seen at Clear Creek east of Dawson on July 13 (PS,CE). Unusual were three **European Starlings**, 2 adults and 1 juvenile, at Drury's Farm on July 20 (LC,CE,PS).

Two **Solitary Vireos** were singing near Rancheria, and 19 **Warbling Vireos** were counted here during the Breeding Bird Survey on June 10 (HG). A **Red-eyed Vireo**, singing in Watson Lake on June 17, was approximately 250 km west of this species' known stronghold in the Yukon - the La Biche River (WN,PS). Another **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Blind Lake just 25 km east of Watson Lake on June 17-19 (CE,HG). Apparently among the last warblers to arrive in the Yukon were **Magnolia Warbler** and **American Redstart** which were heard along the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard on June 6 but not on May 29 (TD). Three **Cape May Warblers** were on territory along Siwash Creek near Toobally Lakes on June 12 (PS,CE,HG). **Bay-breasted Warblers** were also found to be relatively common along Siwash Creek in mid-June. This finding extends the known range of this species in the Yukon approximately 100 km west. The discovery of a **Bay-breasted Warbler** nest at the La Biche River on July 2 provided a first confirmed Yukon breeding record for this species (PS). Five **American Redstarts** (4 males, 1 female) were at Haunka Creek, and 2 subadult males were singing at Snafu Creek, Atlin Road on June 22 (HG). The uniqueness of the La Biche River in the extreme southeastern Yukon was again experienced this summer; **Tennessee, Yellow, Magnolia, Cape May, Yellow-rumped, Bay-breasted, Mourning, and Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat and Rose-breasted Grosbeak** were all observed from June 26 to July 6 (CE,PS).

The Summer Season

A female **Western Tanager** tending to its tiny fledgling near the La Biche River on July 5 provided a first confirmed breeding record for this species. A **Chipping Sparrow** nest was discovered in a rose bush in a Dawson yard on June 14 and the young departed on June 25 (ML). A **Timberline Brewer's Sparrow** was heard singing at treeline on Mount McIntyre on June 6 (TD). In anticipation of a future taxonomic split, birders are already traveling to the Yukon in search of the **Timberline Brewer's Sparrow**. A group of visiting birders made the long trek up Montana Mountain in early June and actually found this species or subspecies (RDM). A **Le Conte's Sparrow** was carrying food near the La Biche River on July 2 (CE,PS). A **Swamp Sparrow** was heard singing along the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard on May 29 and June 6 (TD). A singing **White-throated Sparrow**, first discovered on June 24, provided a first Whitehorse area record for this species (MJ); its beautiful song was recorded on June 27 (HG). In two different downtown Whitehorse locations, another bird (or the same?) was heard and seen on June 28-29 (JB) and heard in early July (HG). At km 90 of the Dempster Highway, a group of visiting birders was delighted by a **Smith's Longspur** at Jensen's Coral in mid June (RDM). The pair of **Brewer's Blackbirds**, first discovered on May 29 on the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard (TD), was seen with a second pair on June 9 (CE), and a single male was noted there in mid-June (WN,PS). **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were common around Watson Lake through June and at the La Biche River in late June (CE,PS). Two pairs of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were at Teslin Lake near Teslin all summer; 1 young bird was being fed by a **Dark-eyed Junco** on July 31 (MG).



La Biche River specialty - a rare and beautiful Le Conte's Sparrow on July 2, 1996. Photo by Cameron Eckert



A male Brewer's Blackbird on the Rancheria Loop Road at Upper Liard on May 29, 1996. The original colour slide clearly shows this bird's iridescent purple head contrasting with its iridescent green body which is unlike the Rusty Blackbird's more uniform black plumage. Photo by Terry Doyle.

Observers: Richard Anderson, Mary Armstrong, Jeremy Baumbach, Bruce Bennett, Susanne Bockelmann, Ian Boyce, Linda Cameron, René Carlson, Bev Combs, Dorothy Cooley, Dawn Dickson, Carol Domes, Frank Doyle, Terry J. Doyle, Bill Drury, Cameron Eckert, Lois Everett, Margaret Garolitz, Alex Gray, Helmut Grünberg, Jim Hawkings, Todd Heakes, Elizabeth Hofer, Nancy Hughes, Torrie Hunter (THu), Paul Jones, Marylene Jules, Laura Klager (LKI), Greg Kubica, Lee Kubica (LKu), Maria Ledergerber, Sarah MacPhee, Jeanette McCrie, R. Doug McRae, Geoff Morrison, Elaine Monaghan, Randi Mulder, Patti Nash, Wendy Nixon, Dave Odium, duChane Richard, Don Russell, Kelsey Russell, John Russell, Josie Sias, Pam Sinclair, Sandy Sippola, Heather Thompson, Gerry Whitley, Mary Whitley, Bjørn Wissing, Yukon Conservation Society.



THE YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

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| 5. nighthawk | 15. puffin |
| 6. tern | 16. Bushtit |
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Yukon Bird Club's reference collection is now available at the Whitehorse Public Library. The collection includes a wide variety of books on conservation, biology and identification of birds.

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

Please send your submissions to:

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