

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club - Fall 1998



Snowy Plover at Judas Creek, Yukon. May 27, 1998
Photo by Cameron Eckert

Winter Field Trips and Events

FIELD TRIPS - Dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear, bring a lunch or snack and binoculars. For more information or to arrange a ride call Wendy Nixon at 668-7572.

Sunday 14 February. Tagish Birding Tour - Winter Edition! Helmut Grünberg leads you through a winter wonderland in search of Yukon's finest wintering waterfowl and with luck a triumvirate of chickadees. Meet at the Yukon Visitor Centre (2nd Avenue) at 10:00 am.

Saturday 6 March. Winter Ptarmigan Quest! This easy-paced jaunt explores the scenic Fish Lake area in search of winter ptarmigan. Bring snowshoes, skis, or high winter boots, a lunch and dress for the weather. Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 10:30 am. Leader: Cameron Eckert.

Wednesday 14 April. Shrike Migration! This trip west along the Alaska Highway will go in search of Northern Shrikes and Mountain Bluebirds during their peak migration through southern Yukon. Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 6:00 pm. Leader: Lee Kubica.

Saturday 17 April. Waterbird Identification Workshop! YBC and Renewable Resources Wildlife Viewing Program are hosting this field workshop exploring the finer points of waterbird identification during the height of their migration at M'Clintock Bay. Meet at Swan Haven on M'Clintock Bay at 1:00 pm.

WINTER EVENING EVENTS - All are welcome & bring a friend!

Tuesday 2 March. Travels through Africa! Join photographer and world traveler Marten Berkman for a very special evening of images and stories from one of the world's most diverse natural areas - southern Africa. Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.

Thursday 11 March. What are bugs doing in Yukon forests! From the Spruce Bark Beetle that woodpeckers know and love, and beyond: Join forest entomologist Anne Savoie and learn about the quirky lives of bugs and how they shape our forests. Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.

Thursday 25 March. Australia's East Coast! This slide-illustrated presentation by Jim Hawkings will explore the unique and exceptional beauty of Australia's East Coast from Cairns to Melbourne. Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.

SPRING BIRD IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOPS

Wednesday 7 April. A Bird in the Hand Identification Workshop! Pam Sinclair will present this very popular identification workshop which uses Yukon College's teaching collection of bird specimens. Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.

Wednesday 21 April. Spring Tune-Up! Wendy Nixon will present this workshop on bird song identification using a variety of audio tools. This "tuning" session will be geared for those who are just starting to learn songs, as well as the more experienced birders who want to brushing up for the return of songbirds. Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.

Thursday 29 April. Shorebird Identification Workshop! From the familiar Killdeer to the elusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper, there are few groups of birds as fascinating as shorebirds. This visually exquisite presentation by Cameron Eckert will help you make sense of their complicated plumages, unusual forms and extraordinary lifestyles. Meet at the Whitehorse Public Library at 7:00 pm.



News & Notes

YBC Birds ~ email updates

YBC Birds is an email-based service which provides updates of sightings, events, and issues. To subscribe to YBC Birds simply email the Yukon Bird Club (ybc@yknet.yk.ca) with the message "subscribe to YBC Birds". To cancel a subscription simply send an email with the message "cancel YBC Birds". The service is free and is available to anyone with email access.

Yukon Christmas Bird Count Report 1997/98 Update:

The spring 1998 *Yukon Warbler* published the results for three Yukon Christmas counts. Below are the observer statistics that were missed for the Whitehorse count as well as the results for a fourth count, the Kluane N.P. count. No doubt, Elizabeth Hofer, the lone participant on the 1997 count could use some help on this year's count!

Whitehorse Count observer stats: Observers: 17 in field in 15 parties (non-owling) plus 4 at feeders (9.5 hrs). Total party-hours 48; party-miles 57; 32.75 hours and 14.8 miles by foot, 7 hours and 31.6 miles by car, 5 hours and 7.8 miles by skis, 3.25 hours and 2.7 miles by bike. N.Hawk Owl and Am. Tree Sparrow seen in count week.

Kluane N.P. Count results: 61°01'N/138°14'W as described 1994, centre where Christmas Creek crosses the Alaska Hwy. Dec. 23 1997, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Temp -20° to -15°F. Wind calm. Snow cover 25-30 in. Water frozen. Clear. Observers: 1 in field in 1 party (non-owling). Total party-hours 7.5; party-miles 52; 4.5 hours and 5 miles on foot, 0.5 hours and 12 miles by car, 2.5 hours and 35 miles by snow machine. Species totals: N. Goshawk 2; Golden Eagle 1 (adult); Spruce Grouse 4; Willow Ptarmigan 8; Great Horned Owl 1; Three-toed Woodpecker 6; Black-backed Woodpecker 1; Gray Jay 8; Black-billed Magpie 2; Common Raven 9; Black-capped Chickadee 10; Boreal Chickadee 4. Total: 12 species, 56 individuals. Lone participant and compiler: *Elizabeth Hofer, Mile 1055 Alaska Highway, Kluane Lake, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 3V4.*

YBC By-law amendments

These proposed By-law amendments were tabled for a vote by the membership at YBC's October 20, 1998 AGM. Each proposed change was passed with a 2/3 majority.

1) Proposed change to By-law 2.9:

Current text: Should not enough people be nominated to fill the seven (7) positions, the membership must elect a minimum of 5 people to the Board.

Proposed text: Should not enough people be nominated to fill the thirteen (13) positions, the membership must elect a minimum of five (5) people to the Board.

Rationale: This change brings By-law 2.9 up to date with the number of Board members listed in the Club's By-laws.

2) Proposed change to By-law 2.3:

Current text: Thirty (30) days notice shall be required for any General Meeting of the Club (Section 29 of the Societies Act).

Proposed text: Thirty (30) days notice shall be required for any General Meeting of the Club.

Rationale: Section 29 of the Societies Act no longer exists and By-law 2.3 is self-explanatory without the bracketed text.

3) Proposed change to By-law 2.5(b):

Current text: vi) Junior Coordinators(s) - 1 or 2 junior (16 years or younger) members who will be elected to this position. Junior Coordinators will be responsible for promoting the needs and interests of the junior membership.

Proposed text: vi) Youth Coordinator(s) - 1 or 2 members will be elected to this position. Youth Coordinator(s) will be responsible for promoting the needs, interests and involvement of youth.

Rationale: To date the Club has had one Junior Coordinator who had to resign from the position when he turned 17. This change allows any member with an interest in youth to bring that energy to our Board, and better encompasses the needs of youth in general, rather than just the junior members of our Club.



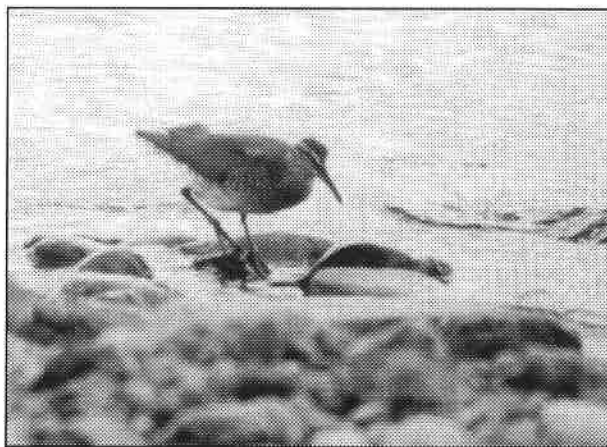
Yukon Birdathon 1998



Lesser Yellowlegs a welcome sight for Birdathon birders. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

Highlights of the Yukon Bird Club's annual Birdathon on the May 29-30 weekend included Yellow-billed Loon, Townsend's Solitaire, American Coot, American Crow, Wandering Tattler, Brant, Snowy Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Eared Grebe, and Ruddy Duck.

About 27 people took in the 24-hour event which raises funds for conservation projects and contributes to a growing scientific database on Yukon birds. This year we raised over three thousand dollars! This year the Birdathon funded YBC's new Yukon Checklist, and YBC's internet



Wandering Tattler a prize Birdathon find at Lake Laberge. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

website (www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc). I would especially like to thank Helmut Grünberg who for many years has made a remarkable contribution to the Birdathon's fundraising success. Helmut is especially tenacious when it comes to chasing down elusive Birdathon pledges! Great work Helmut!

A total of 132 species were observed: Top pair Lee and Greg Kubica spotted 101 species; Enviro-birder award went to Helmut Grünberg who birded Swan Lake without fossil fuels; Novice birder was Mike Beauregard with 51 species; and the top youth birder was eight year-old Lee Hawkings.

The Yukon Bird Club wishes to thank everyone who participated, and all those who made pledges. Our sincere thanks goes to Heather Thompson for being our Feature Birder this year. The Takhini Elementary School principal started a bird club three years ago, and now its the most popular club at the school. Heather shares a great enthusiasm and excitement for birding, and her contribution as Feature Birder was very much appreciated.

Sheila Serup
Birdathon Coordinator
Yukon Bird Club



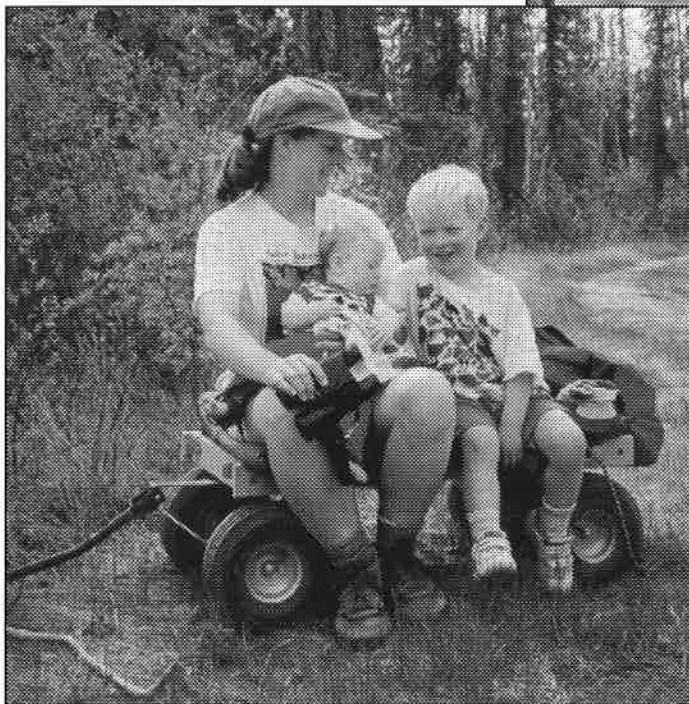
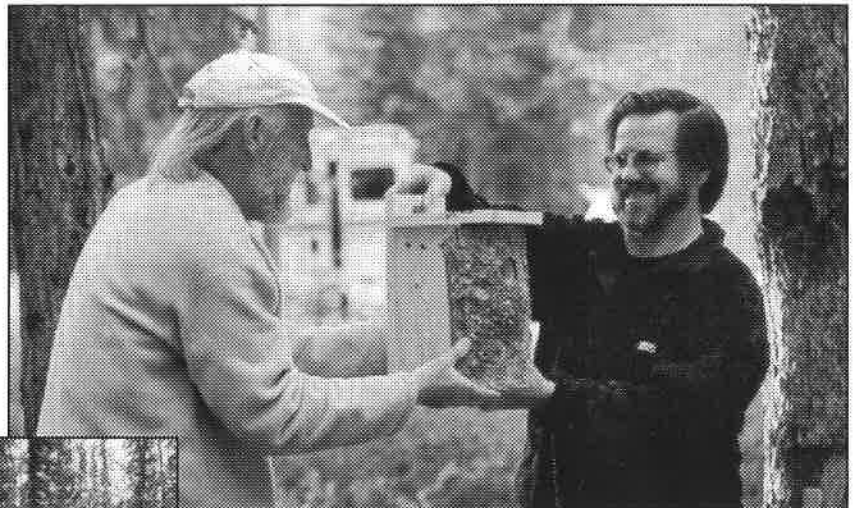
Feature Birders pass the torch

Though torch-like in its significance, the Feature Birder Trophy is actually a lovely soapstone carving of a bird. It may be a loon or perhaps a cormorant. We are not sure.

Here, Birdathon founder and 1997 Feature Birder, Jim Hawkings passes the carving to 1998 Feature Birder, Heather Thompson. Congratulations and thanks to Heather! Photo by Jeanette McCrie.

Enviro-birder Extraordinaire!

Lee Kubica (right) awards Helmut Grünberg (left) with the prize for top Enviro-birder. Helmut travelled by foot, bike and canoe to tally over 70 species at Swan Lake. The prize, a rustic Yukon nestbox was kindly created and donated by Cameron Eckert. Photo by Jeanette McCrie.



An Enviro-Birdathon at Swan Lake!

Pam Sinclair, Nigel and Maren enjoy a basic form of transportation on their Enviro-Birdathon at Swan Lake - the venerable *Berlin Express* wagon! Nigel is clearly heeding Jim Hawking's advice to "keep it fun!". Moving from wagon to canoe, this happy crew rounded out the day with a flock of Brant - a Swan Lake first! Photo by Cameron Eckert.



Spring & Summer Field Trip Report



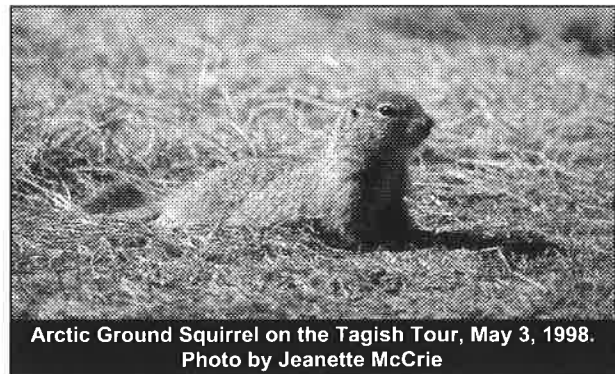
Two pairs of Harlequin Ducks a highlight at Lewes Marsh on May 27, 1998. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

This past spring and summer Yukon birders enthusiastically enjoyed thirteen YBC trips to various birding hotspots around Whitehorse and further afield. Many thanks to our dedicated trip leaders!

Tagish Birding Tour - May 3, 1998

Trip leader Helmut Grünberg reports:

Eight birders took in this trip from Whitehorse to Carcross stopping at various wetlands en route. Highlights were 23 Canvasbacks, 11 Horned, and 4 Red-necked Grebes at Schwatka Lake; eight Redheads and 100 Ring-necked Ducks at Lewes Marsh; a Solitary Sandpiper and four Common Snipe at Army Beach; 150 Lapland Longspurs at the Tagish Road pond; two Mountain Chickadees and several American Tree Sparrows at Tagish; Four Common Loons, 11 Greater White-fronted Geese and two Eurasian Wigeon, among thousands of ducks at Tagish Narrows; Two Semipalmated Plovers, 300 Lesser Yellowlegs, four rare Hudsonian Godwits, four Least, two Baird's and two Pectoral Sandpipers, a Short-billed Dowitcher, 200 American Pipits, and 10 Bonaparte's Gull on the mudflats at Tagish. Finally at Nares Lake we added a male Blue-winged Teal, and a Merlin. About 61 species, give or take the odd Eskimo Curlew and Whooping Crane were seen on our Tagish Tour - "not too shabby" as I sometimes say!



Arctic Ground Squirrel on the Tagish Tour, May 3, 1998. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

Lewes Marsh - May 5, 1998

Carl Burgess led seven birders on this tour of one of the Whitehorse area's premier shorebird migration hotspots. The group enjoyed excellent views of ten shorebird species and had ample opportunity to study the differences between Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers. A partial-albino Lesser Yellowlegs was a very curious sight! The wetlands and open water areas were also packed with waterfowl and a flock of eight Snow Geese was a real treat.

Jackfish Bay - May 13, 1998

Linda Cameron led this trip to one of the best birding areas on Lake Laberge and tallied an impressive 42 species. Highlights were Red-throated Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Eurasian Wigeon, a pair of Redheads, a foraging flock of 17 Arctic Terns, two Townsend's Solitaires, five Gadwall, and various shorebirds including 25 Semipalmated Plovers, 20 Semipalmated Sandpipers, and four American Golden-Plovers. One of the Semipalmated Sandpipers was banded with yellow over red plastic bands on the left leg and an aluminum band on the right leg.

Paddy's Pond - May 21, 1998

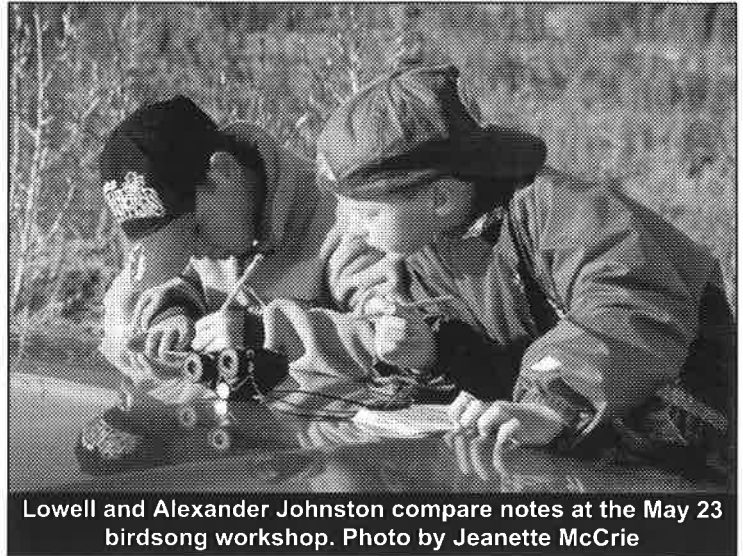
Mary Whitley only had to walk out her front door to lead this trip to Paddy's Pond in Hillcrest. Dry conditions in the pond resulted in a lack of the expected Wood Frogs, however, various songbirds made up for the missing amphibians. The group had especially fine views of Orange-crowned Warblers foraging in a small grove of Trembling Aspen.

Birdsong Workshop - May 23, 1998

Pam Sinclair conducted the annual birdsong workshop at McIntyre Creek for the large group of birders who managed to swing the 7:30 a.m. rendezvous! With careful attention to melody, rhythm and myriad sonic details participants quickly learned to differentiate Common Yellowthroats, Hammond's Flycatchers, Lincoln's Sparrows, Solitary Sandpipers and numerous other early morning songsters. Of course, the road to birdsong nirvana is one which lasts a lifetime.

Cowley Station - May 24, 1998

Norm Barichello guided the group to Cowley Lake, a new location for the Yukon Bird Club, and tallied about 40 species. One birder came from as far away as California! The diversity of Cowley Lake was reflected in the variety of birds including numerous waterfowl, gulls, shorebirds and songbirds. Highlights were two Pacific Loons, two Blue-winged Teal, four Solitary Sandpipers, 12 Lincoln's Sparrows, 12 Blackpoll Warblers, and two Fox Sparrows.



Lowell and Alexander Johnston compare notes at the May 23 birdsong workshop. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

Judas Creek - May 27, 1998

Over the years an undeniable truth has emerged about Jim Hawkings annual "Migration Finale" at Judas Creek: There is no reason good enough to miss this trip! Despite the excellent track record of Judas Creek in past years, this year's trip was completely over the top! Even before reaching Judas Creek, the group spotted Wilson's Phalarope, American Crow and Harlequin Duck -- all rare spring migrants!

At Judas Creek another 40 odd species were tallied. However, it was one species which will carve this trip's place forever in our history books -- it was the Yukon's first Snowy Plover (see cover photo). It seemed an unreal sight as each participant laid their eyes on a bird which is unlikely to be seen again in the Yukon within our lifetimes. Thanks Jim!



American Crow at rarity at Judas Creek on May 27, 1998. Photo by Jeanette McCrie



McLean Lake - June 4, 1998

Wendy Nixon led a very keen yet relaxed group of birders on a tour of this very productive wetland right within Whitehorse City limits. Highlights included a pair of Red-necked Grebe on a nest with 3 eggs. The pair were adding some nest material to the nest, but the nest looked like it was complete. The group also thrilled at the sight of a Northern Flicker poking out of a nest hole in a large spruce tree. This trip reminds us that we are so very fortunate to be able to enjoy rich and productive wetlands right within Whitehorse City limits. Too often southern communities have realized the value of wetlands and other natural areas only when they have virtually disappeared.



Red-necked Grebe on its floating nest at McLean Lake on June 4, 1998. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

Montana Mountain - July 12, 1998

Trip leader Mike Gill reports: I awaited the arrival of my nine participants with sunny skies overhead ensuring that we would see scads of birds. After a couple of small mishaps (one car missed the turn at the Carcross cutoff!), we arrived at the foot of Montana Mountain. The weather was looking more ominous here, but we braved on. At this point, the trip changed to a "Yukon Mammal Club" trip; some of us were lucky to spot an adult Black Bear rumbling across the road. We pressed on to the Monastery where a nesting pair of Say's Phoebes greeted us. Willow Ptarmigan, Hermit Thrush and Golden-crowned Sparrows were seen and three Dusky Flycatchers were spotted in the willow scrub. We then spotted a bull Caribou moving through the alpine! As we climbed higher, the clouds lowered and by the time we reached the saddle, the hail began! We pressed on hoping that the weather would break. It didn't. After reaching an old mine and not spotting a single bird, the group turned back. Despite the weather, we had a good time! Many participants were first timers and we hope to see them out again!

Hidden Lakes - July 25, 1998

Five birders joined Jeremy Baumbach for a leisurely and enjoyable outing to Hidden Lakes in Riverdale. The group tallied 21 species including nesting American Wigeon, Bufflehead and Mallards. A lack of Barrow's Goldeneye was a surprise. Songbirds of note were Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Rusty Blackbird and Purple Finch.

Oregon Junco winters in Whitehorse

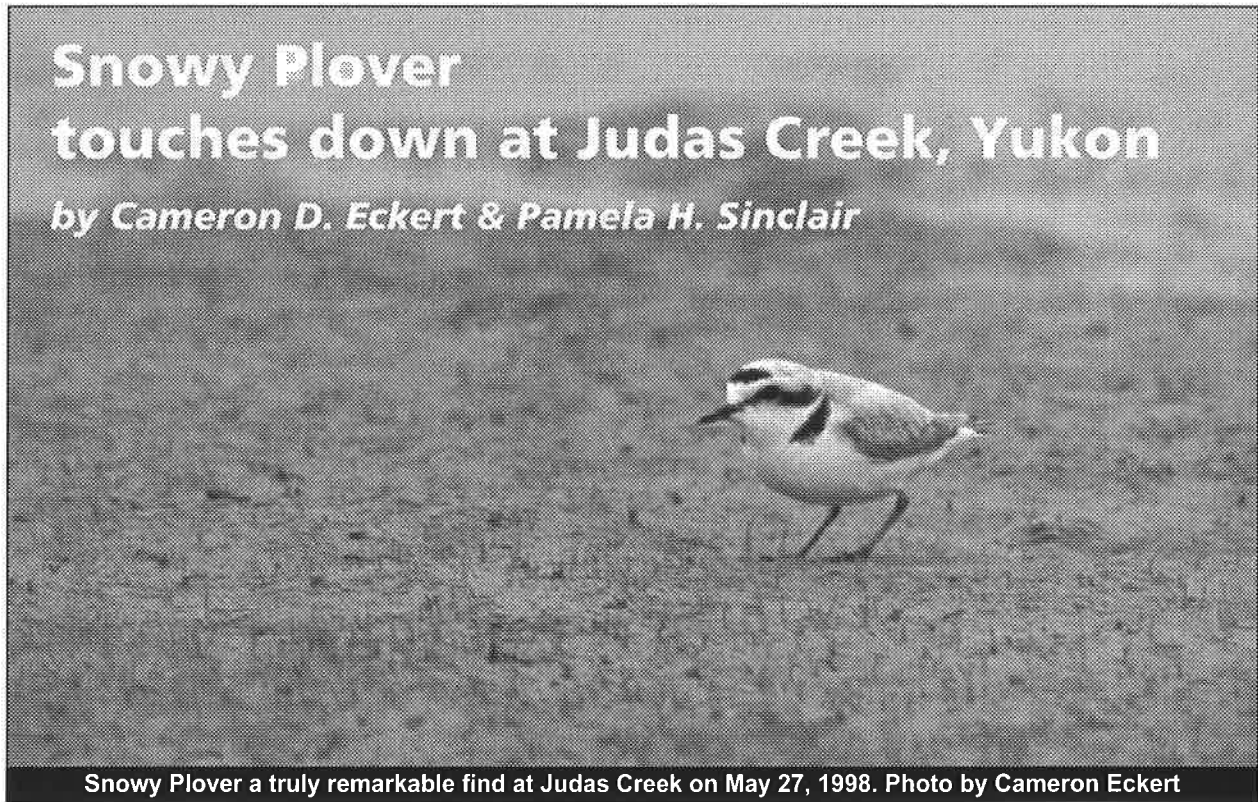
Photo by Helmut Grünberg

This Oregon-race Dark-eyed Junco frequented Helmut Grünberg's yard in Whitehorse from December 6, 1997 to April 5, 1998. The colour original shows the black hood, chestnut back, and buffy sides, and even this black and white reproduction shows the clear demarcation between the hood, back and sides.



Snowy Plover touches down at Judas Creek, Yukon

by Cameron D. Eckert & Pamela H. Sinclair



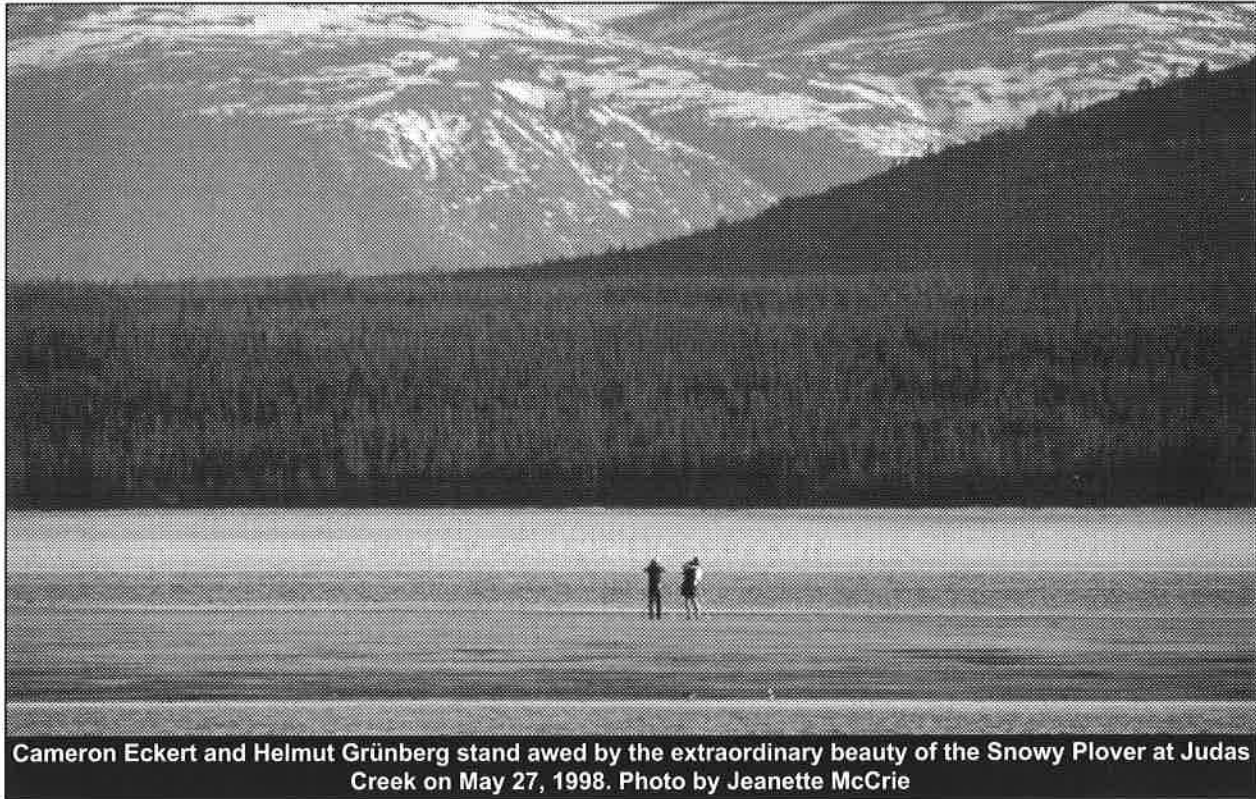
Snowy Plover a truly remarkable find at Judas Creek on May 27, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert

On Wednesday May 27, 1998 we were making our usual frantic dash to the S.S. Klondike to rendezvous with the Yukon Bird Club for its annual "Migration Finalé at Judas Creek". The Judas Creek outing, led each year by Jim Hawkings has become famous for the diversity of birds and its uncanny knack for turning up the unexpected. However, as we raced to gather optics, field guides and our two small children it soon became clear that we would be late for the scheduled meeting. We decided to head straight to Judas Creek outflow on Marsh Lake, approximately 60 km south of Whitehorse. As it turned out, we arrived well ahead of the group which had opted for a few stops along the way. We were soon joined by Linda Cameron and after waiting awhile we decided to quell our restless feet and wander slowly down the beach towards Judas Creek.

As the mass of birds at the Judas Creek outflow began to take shape we settled ourselves on the beach to scan the flocks and wait for the rest of the group to arrive. Directing the spotting scope to a small and very active group of shorebirds and gulls on the opposite side the creek, Eckert spotted a small pale shorebird standing at the edge of the beach. Immediate interest in the bird turned to shocked amazement when it turned to reveal a partial breast band which combined with its very pale greyish colour, short bill and legs and rather squat posture made it clear that this bird was a long way from home.

We recognized the small shorebird as either a Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, or Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*, and as our adrenaline surged we checked the field guide and carefully scrutinized the bird's all-dark legs and bill, partial breast band and black patch behind the eye to confirm its identity as a Snowy Plover. Before long, a dozen or so birders appeared at the far end of the beach and as they meandered slowly towards us, it became increasingly certain that this exceptional rarity would not be "the one that got away". Moments later the group arrived and each birder took a turn at the scope to enjoy a view of a shorebird that is not likely to occur again in the Yukon in our lifetime. This was the Yukon's first Snowy Plover (Eckert et. al. 1998).





Cameron Eckert and Helmut Grünberg stand awed by the extraordinary beauty of the Snowy Plover at Judas Creek on May 27, 1998. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

Description

Size and shape: While appearing slightly larger than a Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, the Snowy Plover was obviously smaller than nearby Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* and Sanderlings *Calidris alba*. Its posture was very horizontal and it often crouched and held its body very close to the ground.

Bill and legs: The entirely black bill was thin with just a slight bulb towards the tip; its length was approximately equal to the distance between the base of the bill and the back of the eye. The legs were short and, and as the bird often crouched they appeared even shorter; they looked dark at a distance and upon very close inspection appeared dull grey.

Plumage: The overall impression was of a very pale shorebird. Its undersides including throat, breast, belly and undertail were white. Its face was white with a distinctive black patch behind the eye (postocular patch), and dark grey loreal stripe. Its forecrown was white followed by a black patch from just in front to just behind the eye with slight extensions along the sides of the patch. The rest of

its crown and nape were greyish with some tan tones. A thick black patch on each side of the upper breast formed a partial breast band. There appeared to be a thin white band extending back from the lower face across the hindneck which was bordered above and below by thin dark grey lines extending back from the postocular patch and the upper breast patch. Its back was pale grey with scattered tan coloured feathers. Its scapulars were greyish with more extensive tan feathering than the back, and its coverts and tertials appeared brownish. In flight, its flight feathers appeared dark brown to black with a distinct white wing stripe. Its rump was white along the sides with a dark greyish line through the centre. Its tail was dark greyish/black in the centre with whitish sides.

Voice: The only vocalization heard, usually when the bird appeared anxious was a soft, low rolling trill.

Behaviour and habitat: While foraging, the bird would run short distances then stop and peck, usually near the water's edge. It often foraged or rested very close to a nesting pair of Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* which provided the small shorebird with a very effective early warning

system. The bird rarely flushed and instead would run away when approached. The small plover was extremely quick on its feet and reasonable photos could only be obtained by walking parallel to the bird, rather than directly towards it.

Discussion

The identification of the Snowy Plover at Judas Creek was relatively straightforward. Leg and bill colour, combined with its partial breast band, black patch behind the eye and dark stripe running up the centre of its rump readily excluded Piping Plover. The bold black bar across the forecrown, black postocular patch and black patch on the side of the upper breast suggested that the bird was a breeding plumage male; none of these areas showed the brownish tones typical of females (Hayman et.al. 1986; Paulson 1993). Further, the dark loreal stripe noted on the Judas Creek bird is apparently an uncommon plumage characteristic which occurs in some males (Paulson 1993). The tan feathers nestled among the otherwise grey mantle and more extensively brown scapulars and coverts of the Judas Creek Snowy Plover indicated that it likely belonged to the subspecies *C. a. nivosus*, which is the only one found on the west coast of North America (Paulson 1993).

Judas Creek is a well-known southern Yukon "rarity trap" which has hosted such outstanding birds as Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*, and Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. Despite this impressive list of rarities, the occurrence of Snowy Plover at Judas Creek or anywhere in the Yukon was totally unexpected. Southern Yukon is approximately 1700 kilometres north of its nearest breeding grounds in southern Washington (Paulson 1993), and this species is even considered very rare along the south coast of British Columbia (Campbell et. al. 1990), 1500 kilometres south of Judas Creek. Other extralimital West Coast records include one on 12 July 1980 at Sandspit, Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C. (Campbell et. al. 1990), and one on 23-24 May 1991 at the mouth of the Nome River, Alaska which was identified to subspecies *C. a. nivosus* (Gibson and Kessel 1992; Gibson and Kessel 1997). However, being an inland location approximately 300

kilometres from the outer Pacific Coast, Judas Creek stands out as an even less likely destination for a Snowy Plover.

The Snowy Plover remained at Judas Creek until May 29 when it was seen by just one lucky birder on the annual Yukon Birdathon. However, as is typical for late spring on Marsh Lake, water levels rose rapidly during the last few days of May and by the end of the first week in June, the mudflats of Judas Creek had disappeared, the Arctic Tern nest had been washed away and migration was over. The Snowy Plover was never seen again.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Jim Hawkings for introducing Yukon birders to the rich bird life of Judas Creek. Gus van Vliet kindly provided information on the Alaskan record. This article first appeared in *Birders Journal* 7(5):250-253.

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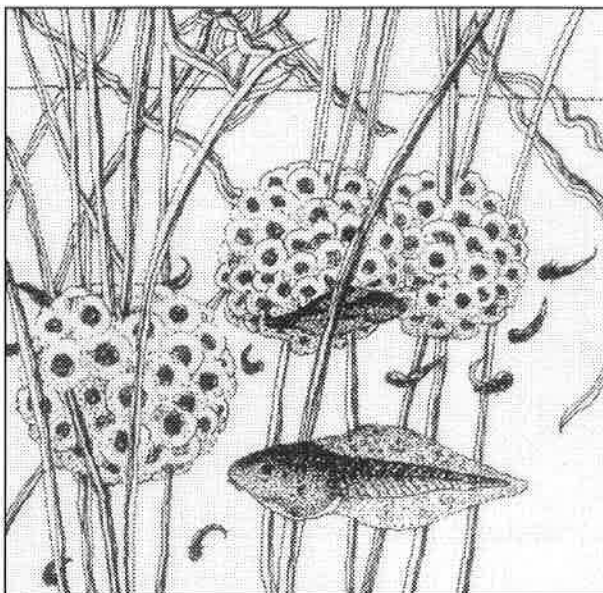
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- Hayman, P., Marchant, J., and T. Prater. 1986. *Shorebirds: An identification guide to the waders of the world*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts.
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1998 Yukon Amphibian Report

Amphibians are sentinels of environmental changes that may some day affect our own lives. They are especially vulnerable because their eggs lack protective shells and are usually laid in water, and their skin is permeable to gases and water. At various stages of their life they may be sensitive to UVB radiation, and air or water borne chemicals and other toxins. A local example of their vulnerability occurred last summer when several hundred thousand Boreal Toad metamorphs died near Cassiar when exposed to a road sealant. These assaults may also act to lower natural immunities to diseases and parasites. In the past four years deformed frogs have become prevalent in many areas of North America. The deformities usually involve missing or extra limbs. Additional factors leading to population declines are wetland and upland habitat loss and the introduction of predators, most notably fish and exotic species of frogs and turtles (such as bullfrogs and red-eared sliders in the west).

We are continuing to collect whatever information we can on northern amphibians. This year, with support from the Northern Research Institute of Yukon College, Lee Mennell continued his research on Columbia Spotted Frogs in the Log Cabin area of northwestern B.C. Breeding pond monitoring was expanded from 4 to 20 ponds with the help of high school experiential science and outdoor education classes and will be continued annually. Breeding sites have shown shifts in usage, with some sites being used by more or fewer breeding pairs. Some sites were completely abandoned while new sites were established. Pond frog populations have fluctuated since 1994 with no overall trend detected for the meta-population. Despite breeding at typical dates, both Wood Frogs and Columbia Spotted Frogs metamorphosed 2 to 3 weeks early in 1998, in response to the warm summer. The summer was also dry, contributing to less inter-pond movement. The focus of the 1998 research was an investigation of frog movement patterns in relation to insect availability.



Early life stages of the Wood Frog by Lee Mennell.

Warm dry weather in the Yukon caused some Wood Frog breeding ponds to dry up before metamorphosis was complete, providing a feast for birds. I conducted amphibian surveys in the Wolf Lake area, 200 km east of Whitehorse, a candidate area for a National Park. Wood frogs were abundant and no other amphibian species were detected. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society supported the surveys. I hope to monitor the rare winter breeding phenomenon of Boreal Toads at the Atlin warm springs more closely in February to April 1999. Any information on this population would be appreciated.

I welcome amphibian sightings from any location as this kind of reporting will help improve our scant database. Please make note of species, date, location, habitat, numbers seen or heard and what life stages were observed. Provide any comments you feel are important. Remember that amphibians are very sensitive. Do not keep them as pets and release them where they were captured when they have been identified and studied - do not move them to foreign ponds. Handle them as little as possible and remember that insect repellent on your hands can harm amphibians which breath through their skin.

*Brian Slough, Yukon Coordinator
Canadian Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Network
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Phone: 867-668-3295*



Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*) at Lee Lake, southeast Yukon on June 14, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert

Recent reports and publications on northern amphibians:

Mennell, R.L. 1997. Amphibians in southwestern Yukon and northwestern British Columbia. *In* D.M. Green, ed. Amphibians in decline: Canadian studies of a global problem. *Herpetological Conservation* 1: 107-109.

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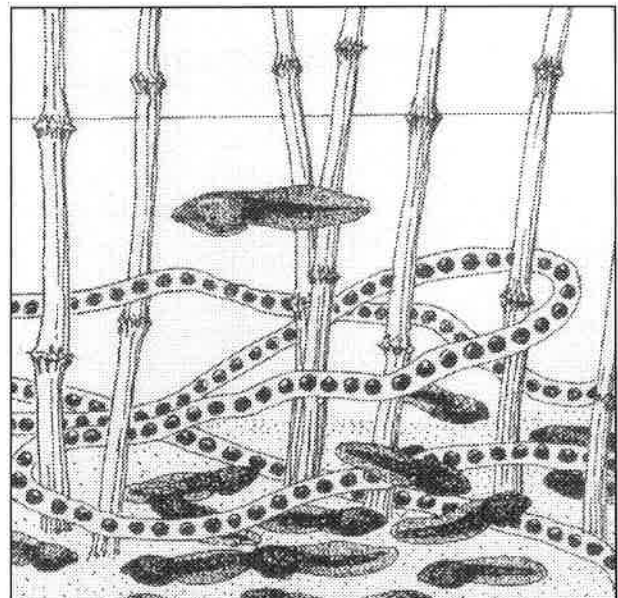
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Early life stages of the Boreal Toad by Lee Mennell.



Known range of Dusky Flycatcher extended northeast to the Kotaneelee Range, Yukon

by Cameron D. Eckert



The spectacular and rugged beauty of the Kotaneelee Range, Yukon on June 20, 1998. Photo by C. Eckert

Since 1995, Yukon biologists have worked to document and understand the rich and varied ecosystems of the La Biche and Beaver River Valleys in the extreme southeast Yukon. In June 1998, we surveyed previously unexplored forests along the upper La Biche River and subalpine to alpine habitats of the adjacent Kotaneelee Range. A section of the Yukon-Northwest Territories border follows the height of land along the southern extent of the Kotaneelee Range. On June 19, we established a study site (60°14'45"N/ 124°08'07"W) at treeline (elevation 1200 metres) on the west (Yukon) side of the Kotaneelee Range just a few hundred metres from the border. The habitat was transitional from relatively closed coniferous forests dominated by Subalpine Fir *Abies lasiocarpa*, with some White Spruce *Picea glauca*, Lodgepole Pine *Pinus contorta*, and Trembling Aspen *Populus tremuloides*, through open coniferous forest with patches of dense tall shrubs, primarily alder *Alnus crispa*, and willows (*Salix glauca* and *S. barclayii*) and low shrubs, primarily birch (*Betula glandulosa* and *B. occidentalis*) in drier areas, to higher elevation

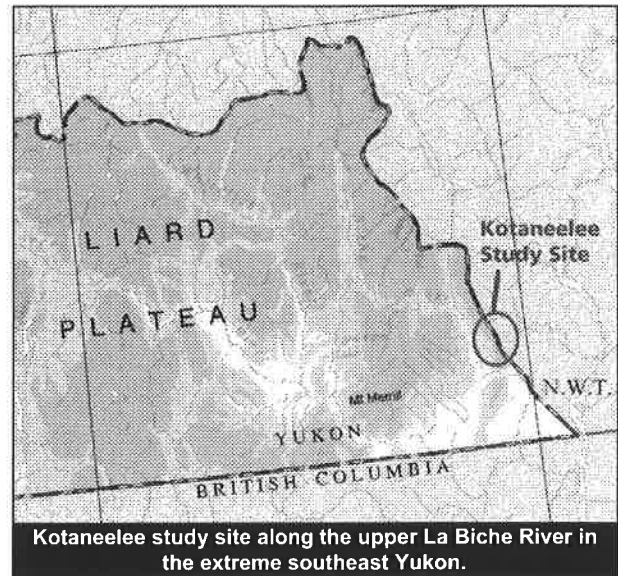
alpine tundra with scattered patches of low shrubs. The wet drainages supported dense tall shrubs and some relatively small patches of Balsam Poplar *Populus balsamifera*, and Mountain Ash *Sorbus scopulina*. The transitional nature of this location was reflected by the fact that from our camp three *Zonotrichia* species, White-throated Sparrow *Z. albicollis*, White-crowned Sparrow *Z. leucophrys*, and Golden-crowned Sparrow *Z. atricapilla*, could be heard singing on territories.

On the evening of June 19, I heard a part of an *Empidonax* song that I suspected was a Dusky Flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri*. However, the bird did not sing again and it became apparent that we would have to wait until the following morning to confirm the discovery. At dawn on June 20, Mike Gill and I returned to the location and immediately found a Dusky Flycatcher in full song. During our subsequent surveys that morning we determined that there were at least four Duskiies singing within a few hundred metres of our camp. Recordings of the songs are on file with the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Since Swarth's (1926) early work, it has been known that in the north, Dusky Flycatchers typically occur at significantly higher elevations (800-1200 metres) than Hammond's Flycatchers which are limited to lowland deciduous forests usually along rivers. Currently there are no known Yukon locations where Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers occur together. The habitat used by Dusky Flycatchers at our study site in the Kotaneelees was typical of other treeline locations where this species is found in the Yukon. The Dusky were found in tall (approximately 2 metres), dense shrubs (alders and willows) along wet draws in open forest habitat.

Hammond's *E. hammondii*, Least *E. minimus*, and Alder *E. alnorum* Flycatchers are all common in the lowland forests and shrub habitats of the La Biche and Beaver River Valleys, and in 1995 we observed one Yellow-bellied Flycatcher *E. flaviventris* along the Beaver River. This was the first time we observed Dusky Flycatcher in our study area. The nearest Yukon location where Dusky Flycatchers are found is approximately 360 km west at treeline in the Cassiar Mountains near Rancheria Falls, and in British Columbia approximately 180 km southeast at Fort Nelson (Campbell et. al. 1997). While Dusky Flycatcher has not been documented in Northwest Territories (Sirois and McRae 1994), it should be looked for at treeline on the east (N.W.T.) side of the Kotaneelee Range just a kilometre or so from our study site.

Our discovery of Dusky Flycatchers in the Kotaneelees is part of an ongoing study which has found that the forest and wetland habitats of the La Biche and Beaver River Valleys support exceptionally rich and productive bird, wildlife and plant communities. Clearly there is no other area like it in the Yukon, and we are now recognizing that in many ways the area is unique on a much broader spatial scale. Given the continued onslaught of industrial interests (logging and oil & gas) in the region, it is critical that the La Biche and Beaver River Valleys be made high priority candidates for protection with significant areas set aside immediately to allow for long-term conservation.



Kotaneelee study site along the upper La Biche River in the extreme southeast Yukon.

Acknowledgments

This study was funded by Parks and Habitat Branches of the Department of Renewable Resources (Yukon Territory Government), and the Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Whitehorse, Yukon. In 1998, bird surveys were conducted by Cameron Eckert and Mike Gill and vegetation surveys were conducted by Jennifer Staniforth, Bruce Bennett and Rhonda Rosie. Mike Gill and Pam Sinclair kindly reviewed a draft of this note. This article first appeared in *Birders Journal* 7(4):205-207.

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Song Sparrows at Little Atlin Lake

by Cameron D. Eckert



A view of Little Atlin Lake overlooking the "Song Sparrow Marsh". Photo by Cameron Eckert

This year Pam Sinclair and I had a chance to explore a very attractive wetland at the edge of Little Atlin Lake. On numerous trips down the Atlin Road, we had always eyed the wetland from a distance but had never had a chance to get our feet wet. On May 16, 1998 we packed our camping gear, put the canoe on top of the car and headed for the "Pride of the Yukon" campground on Little Atlin Lake. The following day, we put our canoe in the water and carefully navigated the labyrinth of shifting ice en route to the marsh.

The wetland was a complex mix of grassy marshes, beaver ponds, and dense shrubs, with a border of White Spruce and Balsam Poplar forest. Numerous dead trees provided the essential feeding and nesting areas which are characteristic of such wetlands. As expected, the area was rich with bird life. Many species appeared to be breeding in the area including Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrows.

However, it was one species in particular that captivated our attention. From the outer edge of the wetland Pam picked out the melodious voice of a Song Sparrow emanating from the distant shrubs. We soon found that there were three male Song Sparrows singing on territories. Even though this is one of North America's most common sparrows, in the Yukon a Song Sparrow is a superb rarity. This was only my third encounter with this species in the Yukon, the previous two being single birds along the Nahanni Range Road and the La Biche River many hundreds of kilometers to the east. When we relayed our discovery to Helmut Grünberg he immediately (and successfully) went to Little Atlin Lake in search of the sparrows -- this was one of few Yukon species which had eluded him during his 25 years of birding in the Yukon.

The first Yukon record for Song Sparrow was of a pair seen by C.H.D. Clarke at Squanga Lake on June 27, 1943. Clarke returned to that location on August 4-9 in time to observe young being fed, and on August 5 he collected the adult female.



Portrait of a Song Sparrow

**Little Atlin Lake, Yukon, May 17, 1998.
Photos by Cameron Eckert**

The description of a “streaky sparrow with a spot on its breast” fits a number of Yukon sparrows including Fox, Savannah, Lincoln’s and Song Sparrow. However, with careful study one can readily differentiate these similar species. For example, the streaking on the breast and sides of a Song Sparrow is obviously coarser than that of a Savannah or Lincoln’s Sparrow, yet is not blotchy like a Fox Sparrow. Learning the songs makes the whole process much easier.

While the Little Atlin Lake wetland appears to provide ideal Song Sparrow breeding habitat, we did not have the chance to return later in the summer. However, the area is worthy of many return visits, and the quest for a Song Sparrow breeding record would be a fine way to spend a Sunday in June.



Ring-billed and California Gulls visit Whitehorse, Spring 1998

by *Cameron D. Eckert*

This spring, Whitehorse gull enthusiasts had the opportunity to study California and Ring-billed Gulls which are both infrequent visitors to the Whitehorse area. The Ring-billed Gull, an adult, was very cooperative and could be found in virtually the same place at the Whitehorse dump from 19-21 May, 1998. The California Gull, a first year bird was only seen on 19 May, 1998.

With careful attention to detail an adult Ring-billed Gull is unmistakable. Two features lost in these black and white reproductions are the vivid red orbital ring and bright yellow legs that were very obvious in life.



A Ring-billed Gull's distinctive wing pattern with extensive black and small white spots readily distinguishes it from a Mew Gull. Photographed by Cameron Eckert on May 19, 1998 in Whitehorse.



An obvious black ring on the bill combined with a pale grey mantle and vivid yellow eyes are immediate clues to the identity of this adult Ring-billed Gull in Whitehorse on 19 May, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert

This first-year California Gull presents a more significant identification challenge than the adult Ring-billed Gull. Characteristics that were helpful for picking this bird out of the crowd were its long-winged and short-legged look, pencil-shaped bill and distinctly tapered body shape. Lost in these black and white reproductions is the blue-grey leg colour typical of California Gulls at this age. By adulthood this species has greenish-yellow legs. California Gulls have dark eyes at all ages.

California and Ring-billed Gulls are very rare anywhere in the Yukon. However, with diligent searching birders can expect to see them.



First-year California Gull (right) with an adult Herring Gull (left) in the background. This bird will retain its obviously worn and ratty wing coverts and flight feathers until its summer moult when those feathers are renewed. Photographed on 19 May, 1998 in Whitehorse by Cameron Eckert.



Its hard to deny the unique beauty of a gull in flight. The extensively dark tail, and dark flight feathers of the first-year California Gull are obvious. This bird shows only a vague pale window on the inner primaries which would be much more obvious on an immature Herring Gull. This bird retains just a hint of the dark bar across the greater wing coverts which is a conspicuous feature on juvenile birds. Photographed in Whitehorse on 19 May, 1998 by Cameron Eckert.



Red Crossbill wing bars

An interesting feature of this male Red Crossbill (right) is that it shows a thin but conspicuous white wingbar. This is not the first observation of its kind in the Yukon. In 1949, Earl Godfrey collected an immature male Red Crossbill near Carcross and wrote that “the greater and middle coverts of the wing are conspicuously tipped with white, but the resulting wing bands are much narrower than in White-winged” (Godfrey 1951). Despite Godfrey’s note, the National Museum mistakenly re-labeled the bird as White-

winged Crossbill. The National Geographic Field Guide points out for Red Crossbill that “a few juveniles and a very few adult males show white wing bars, the upper bar thinner than the lower”. While these white wing bars are not likely to be a significant source of confusion, birders should be aware of their existence.

Cameron D. Eckert

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A pair of Red Crossbills size up their mating opportunities. Photo by Jeanette McCrie



Courtship begins with a gift of regurgitated sunflower seeds. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

FieldNotes: Observations from the field



Please send sightings to Helmut Grünberg, (807 Wheeler, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2P8. Phone/Fax: 867-667-6703. Email: hgrünberg@hypertech.yk.ca). Include details such as number, date, location, sex/age, and observers' names. Highlight interesting observations and please include descriptions of rare species. 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).

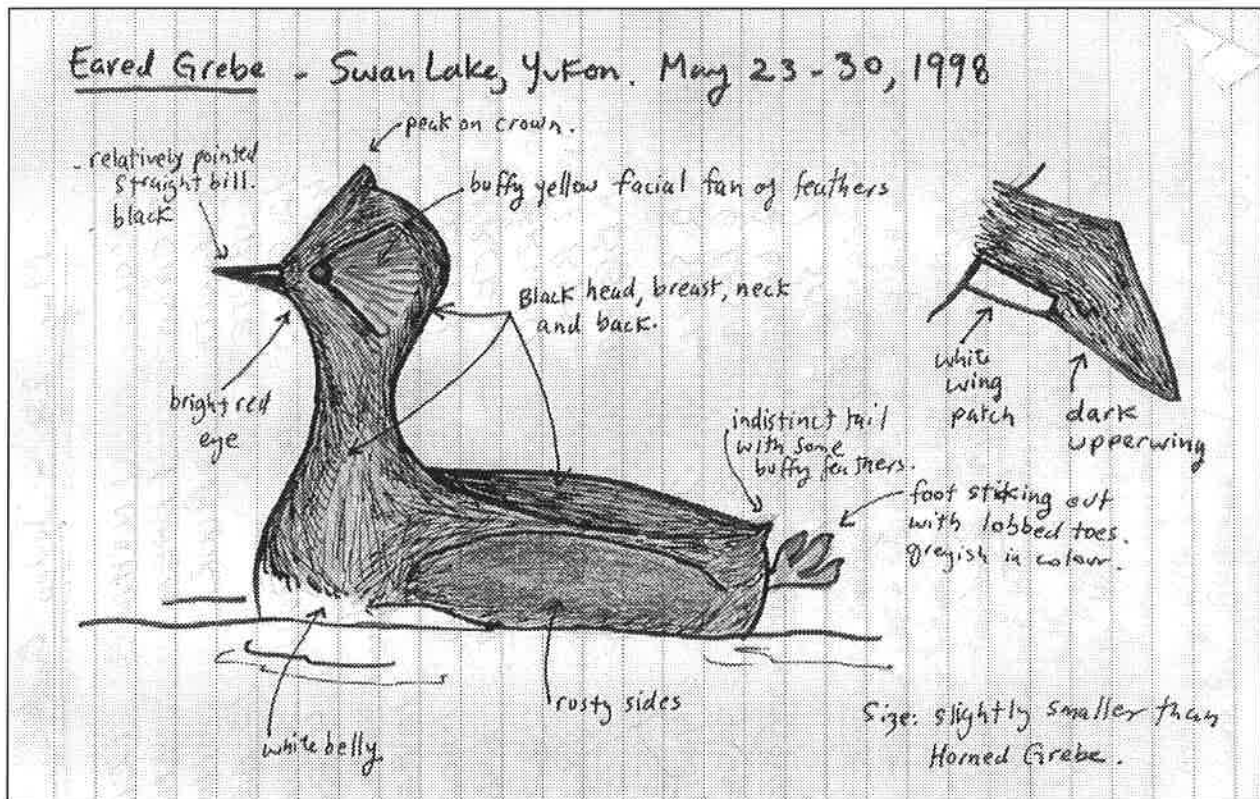
Spring 1998

While Yukoners endured relentless southwest winds through much of late April and May, the Weather Centre experts assured us that on average the winds were in fact normal. However, very strong winds during daytime hours (when most birders are active) was responsible for our perception of the Yukon as a giant wind tunnel.

A **Red-throated Loon** was at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge on May 13 (CE,PS,YBC). A **Pacific Loon** was at Wye Lake in Watson Lake on May 6 (JMcC), and one was on Ice Lake in Whitehorse on May 16 (HG). A record early **Common Loon** was spotted at M'Clintock Bay on April 17 (LC). Two breeding plumage **Yellow-billed Loons** at Marsh Lake on May 29 were a great Birdathon find (RC). Two **Horned Grebes** and two pairs of **Red-necked Grebes** were at Wye Lake in Watson Lake on May 6 (JMcC). **Red-necked Grebe** nests from southwest Yukon included one at a wetland near Pine Creek Café, and one on a large lake near the Canada/U.S. border in south-western Yukon on May 26 (BB). The Yukon's first documented **Eared Grebe** was a delightful find at Swan Lake on May 23 (CE,PS). The bird remained at that location well into the summer (HG).

Making Sense of FieldNotes

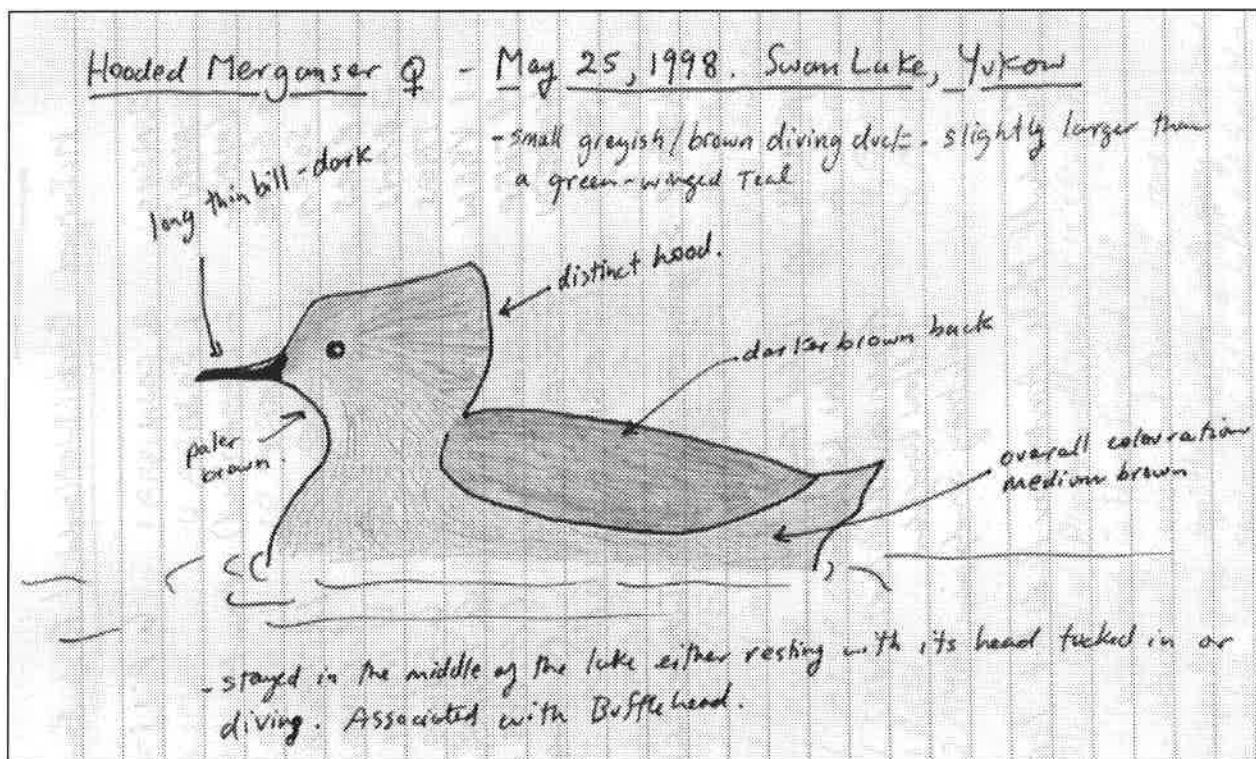
An underline indicates exceptional sightings due to rarity, numbers, or date. We encourage all observers to report their sightings regardless of their "rarity value". Often reports of common species help elucidate interesting patterns. While not every sighting can be included in this report, they are all forwarded to the Canadian Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Birds of Yukon database.



Field sketch of Eared Grebe by Cameron Eckert -- a Yukon first at Swan Lake on May 23, 1998.



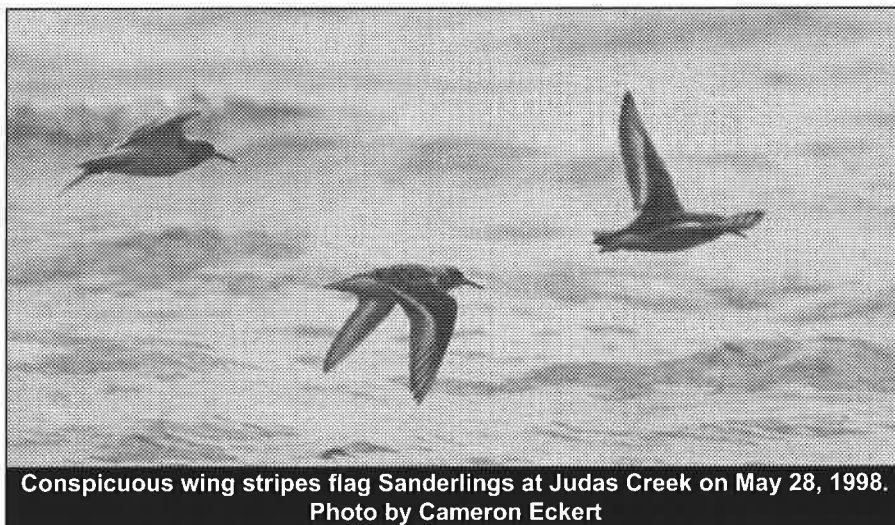
A **Great Blue Heron** seen along the Yukon River near McCrae on May 30 (KR), and another one well north of its normal range, was reported by residents of Aklavik, NWT in May (fide IMcL). The first **Trumpeter Swans** of spring were reported from Johnson's Crossing at the early date of March 3 (fide RK); by April 14 there were about 1000 at M'Clintock Bay. Thirty-four **Tundra Swans** were in Carmacks on April 28 (RiM). **Snow Geese**, usually very rare in southern Yukon were noted in higher than normal numbers with one near Mule Creek (Haines Summit, BC) on April 29 (KA), a flock of 15 at Shallow Bay on May 5 (PS), a flock of eight at Lewes Marsh, a first for a YBC field trip, on May 5 & 9 (CB,YBC;CE), 31 at Teslin Lake on May 6 (MG), and one at Judas Creek on May 16-17 (CE;HG). A flock of 55 **Brant** seen on the May 29 Birdathon provided a first record for the Swan Lake area (CE,PS). A northbound flock of 35 **Brant** over Mary Lake on June 1 closed out spring migration for this species (IB,NH). A **Canada Goose** occupied the same ice flow as a **Common Merganser** in the Yukon River above the S.S. Klondike on April 7 (BaS,BoS). Four **Canada Geese** were on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on April 12 (MB), and 13 were at Burma Road north of Whitehorse on April 19 (JMCC,PN). Five "Cackling" **Canada Geese** were at Judas Creek on May 31 (CE). Three uncommon duck species, **Redhead**, **Gadwall** and **Blue-winged Teal** were all noted in relatively high numbers and at many locations this spring. **Eurasian Wigeon** (all males) were well-reported this spring with one at Swan Lake May 2 (HG), two at Tagish Narrows on May 3 (HG,YBC), one at Lewes Marsh on May 4 (CE,HG), one just beyond Donjek River on May 5 (BB), and one at Jackfish Bay on May 13 (LC,YBC). A hybrid **American x Eurasian Wigeon** was at Lewes Marsh on May 5 (CE). The first **Cinnamon Teal** of spring, a male, was reported from Bob Lake near Judas Creek, on May 27 (JH,YBC), one was at the mouth of Judas Creek on May 28 (CE); and a male was at Swan Lake on May 30 (HG). **Northern Shovelers** were commonly reported this spring; three pairs were on Wye Lake in Watson Lake on May 6 (JMCC). Quite striking was an albino **Northern Pintail** at the mouth of McIntyre Creek on April 18 (CE,MM,PS); Approximately 250 **Northern Pintails** were there on April 23 (LK). About 70 **scaup**, mostly **Lesser** and some **Greater Scaup** were at Wye Lake in Watson Lake on May 6 (JMCC). A pair of **Harlequin Ducks** was at Kookatsoon Lake on the Carcross Road on May 24 (JMCC,PN), and a group of three pairs at Lewes on May 27 was a delight (JH,YBC). About 37 **Common Goldeneye** on the Yukon River in Whitehorse was a fairly high count on April 12 (MB). A female **Hooded Merganser** at Swan Lake on May 25 provided one of the few documented records for the Whitehorse area (HG,CE). Twelve **Red-breasted Mergansers** were counted on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on May 9, and 14 **Common Mergansers** were counted there on April 12 (MB).



Female Hooded Merganser at Swan Lake, Yukon on May 25, 1998. Field sketch by Cameron Eckert.

An **Osprey** was circling over the Whitehorse Shipyards on April 30 (LC,HG). **Bald Eagle** sightings included two at Morley River Lodge on March 24 (LE), one at Grey Mountain on April 26 (HH), an immature in Carmacks on April 27 (RiM), an adult feeding its young by tearing up food at McIntyre Creek on May 16 (JMcC,PN), and a nest with at least one newly hatched white fuzzy chick at a large lake near Kluane Wilderness Camp on May 26 (BB). On March 6, skier surprised a **Northern Goshawk** eating a Red Squirrel at the World Cup 5 km ski trail on Mt. McIntyre (MGi). An immature **Northern Goshawk** had the masses of shorebirds and waterfowl in the air at Lewes Marsh on May 4 (CE). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Drury's Farm on April 5 (CE,PS), and one with a nearly white head was near Haines Junction on April 9 (HG). **Golden Eagles** were reported as follows: One at Swan Lake on March 28 (HG), one near Drury's Farm on March 31 (MB,HG), one at Braeburn in early April (LK), one at the upper Victoria Creek, Kluane National Park (altitude 1300 m) on April 11 (MW,RMcC,CV,GW), several along the Dempster Highway, but only as far north as the Ogilvie Mountains on April 11-13 (CB), one at Tagish on April 13 (MB,LC,HG), and one winging over the Eagle Plains along the Dempster Highway on May 16-17 (BK,DK). The first **American Kestrel** was at the Whitehorse airport on April 7 (CE). On the May 9-10 Shadow Lake residents watched the courtship and mating of a pair of **American Kestrels** at their nest box on the lake (DR,SRu). An **American Kestrel** was catching lunch at the Atlin Warm Springs on May 18 (BP,MV). A **Merlin** was chasing redpolls in a Whitehorse yard on March 27 (PN); one was perched near McIntyre Creek on April 23 (CE,HG); one was at km 93, Dempster Highway on May 19 (RiM); one, apparently near a nest at Little Atlin Lake, was calling from a snag at the intruder on May 20 (HG), and one was near Jarvis Creek on May 26 (BB). A **Peregrine Falcon** was hunting yellowlegs near Swede Johnson Creek on May 5 (BB). Two **Gyrfalcons** were along the Dempster Highway about 75 km south of Eagle Lodge on April 11-13 (CB), and one was reported from Swift River on May 5 (JMcC).

A **Blue Grouse** at Crag Lake on April 18 provided the spring's only report of this stealthy Yukon grouse (MW). Many **Willow Ptarmigan** and a **Rock Ptarmigan** were at km 93, Dempster Highway on May 19 (RiM). We do not normally report bird tracks, but ptarmigan tracks in Old Crow on March 8-9 are interesting because we get only few reports from that area (JMcC). A **Sharp-tailed Grouse** was at Duke Meadows on May 16-18 (GK,LK). **American Coot** sightings included one at Swan Lake on May 18 (HG); four there on May 30 (CE,HG,PS), and one on Schwatka Lake on the Birdathon (JB). Hundreds of **Sandhill Cranes** moved northwest over Faro on May 4-6, at times combining into huge vertical spirals, with the major movements associated with strong southerly winds (GW).



Conspicuous wing stripes flag Sanderlings at Judas Creek on May 28, 1998.
Photo by Cameron Eckert

A record early **Black-bellied Plover** was at Drury's Farm on April 28 (PS,LK,YBC). The only other **Black-bellied Plover** reported closed out the migration season at Judas Creek on May 31 (CE,HG,PS). An **American Golden-Plover** was at lower McIntyre Creek on May 11 (JMcC,EM,PN), and two were there on May 16 (HG). A non-breeding plumage **American Golden-Plover**, a strange looking bird, was at Duke Meadows on May 16-18 (GK,LK). It was a "once in a hundred years" bird

at Judas Creek!! The Yukon's first **Snowy Plover**, a breeding plumage male on May 27, was the undisputed champion rarity of the spring season (CE,PS, JH,YBC). It was last seen on May 29 by one very lucky birder on the annual Yukon Birdathon (RC). A pair of **Greater Yellowlegs** was at the old Whitehorse dump on May 11 (JMcC,EM,PN). A partial-albino **Lesser Yellowlegs** was a strange sight at Lewes Marsh on May 5 (CB,YBC). A **Wandering Tattler**, rare during migration, was seen near Kloo Lake on May 5 (BB), and one was at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge on the Birdathon (JMcC,EM,PN,HT). Two pairs of **Upland Sandpipers** were at Duke Meadows on May 16-18 (GK,LK). Four **Whimbrel** in the Blackstone Uplands on May 16-17 were a highlight of a Dempster trip (BK,DK).



Significant movements of **Hudsonian Godwits** were noted in their best showing in recent years with four at Tagish Narrows on May 3 (HG,YBC), two at Lewes Marsh on May 5 (CE), two breeding plumage birds at Judas Creek on May 7 (CE), a **total of 62** in the Whitehorse area on the May 9 Migratory Birds Day count (CE,PS,LK), and one (perhaps two) at Atlin Warm Springs, B.C. on May 18 (BP,MV). Up to four rare **Sanderlings** were at Judas Creek on May 27-31 (CE,HG,PS). Among 40 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** at Judas Creek on May 17, one had an aluminum band on the right leg (HG). A rare **White-rumped Sandpiper** was at Lewes Marsh on May 16 (HG). A **Dunlin**, a rare migrant, was at Tagish on May 17 (HG). A **Common Snipe** was at the Takhini Ponds on the early date of April 28 (LK,YBC). Shorebird migration was in full swing at Lewes Marsh on May 4 with a tally of one **American Golden-Plover**, one **Semipalmated Plover**, one **Killdeer**, three **Greater Yellowlegs**, **800 Lesser Yellowlegs**, one **Solitary Sandpiper**, 20 **Least Sandpipers**, seven **Baird's Sandpiper**, one **Pectoral Sandpiper**, ten **Short-billed Dowitchers** and 20 **Common Snipe** (CE,PS). Shorebirds were on the move at Judas Creek on May 14 with 9 **American Golden-Plovers**, 60 **Semipalmated Plovers**, 20 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, one **Solitary Sandpiper**, one **Hudsonian Godwit**, 40 **Least**, 2 **Western**, 15 **Baird's**, 100 **Pectoral**, 200 **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, 6 **Short-billed** and 100 **Long-billed Dowitchers** and 2 **Common Snipe** (CE,PS). Another **Western Sandpiper** was at Judas Creek on May 28 (CE). Two female **Wilson's Phalaropes** at Lewes Marsh were a highlight on May 27 (JH,YBC). In short, it was a sensational season for shorebirds -- does anyone need a better reason to grab a scope, toss on a pair of rubber boots and head for the mudflats? See you there next May!



Part of a big movement noted on International Migratory Birds Day - Nine of the sixteen Hudsonian Godwits tallied at the Quartz Road marsh in Whitehorse on May 9, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert

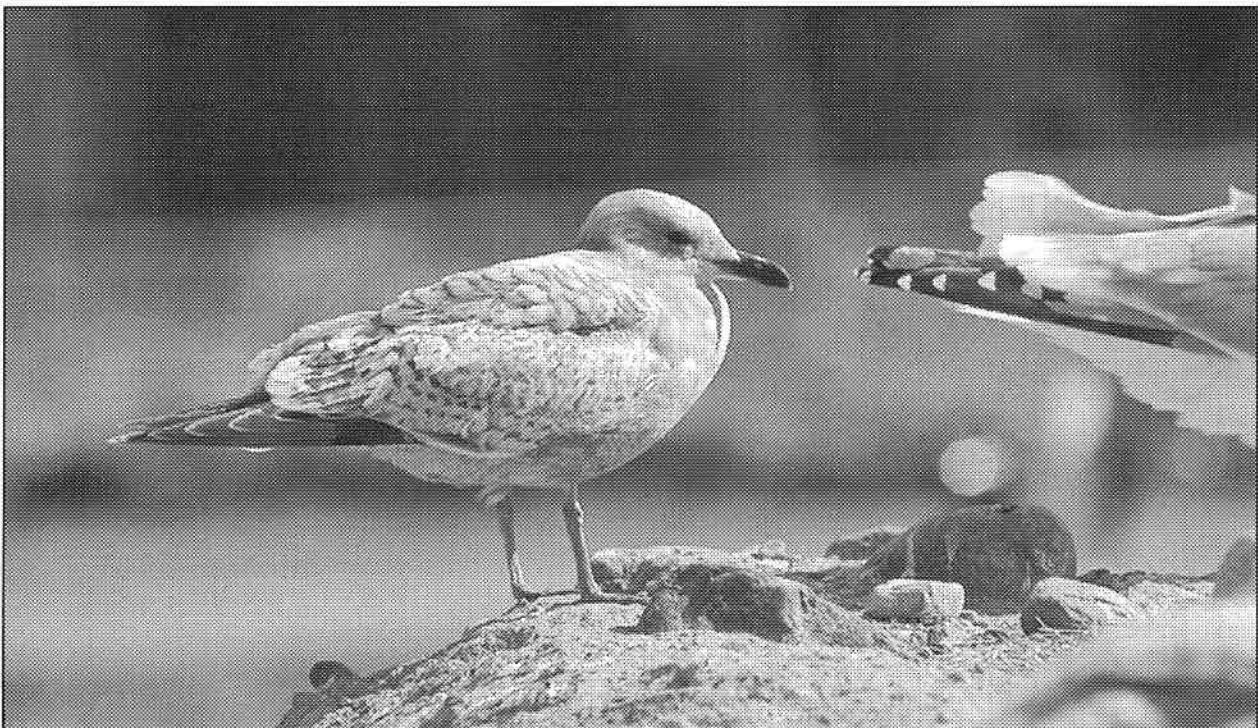
A **Long-tailed Jaeger** (a Central Yukon specialty in spring!) and a **Mew Gull** were at km 93 on the Dempster Highway on May 19 (RiM). An adult **Mew Gull** sporting a ring on its bill was at the Whitehorse dump on May 21 (CE) -- it seems that nothing is ever straight-forward in the world of birds! Rare wanderers to the Whitehorse dump were an adult **Ring-billed Gull** on May 19-21 (CE), and a 1st-year **California Gull** on May 19 (CE). A count of **900 Herring Gulls** at the Whitehorse dump on April 21 (one of the highest numbers ever reported) indicated a significant movement of this species through the area (CE). Southern Yukon gull devotees are well aware that the Thayer's Gull is a fairly common fall migrant -- but NOT so in spring when this species is extremely rare; as such a first-winter **Thayer's Gull** at the Whitehorse Dump on May 6-11 was exciting. Perhaps driven by the strong southwest winds, Whitehorse birders saw an unprecedented invasion of **Glaucous-winged Gulls** with at least seven different individuals tallied from April 17 to May 19 (CE). As is normal for this regular spring rarity, the majority were 1st-year birds with just one adult. The Yukon's third documented record of **Caspian Tern** was a pair at M'Clintock Bay on May 31 (CE,PS). Since 1996, the Caspian Tern has occurred each year in the Whitehorse area, and with its continued population expansion in the south, this may be the beginning of its regular occurrence in our area. Please keep your eyes open for any signs of breeding activity.

Glaucous-winged Gull versus Thayer's Gull

These photos illustrate the structural differences between Glaucous-winged (top) and Thayer's Gull (bottom). Note especially the Thayer's Gull's smaller bill and long-winged look. Overall, the Glaucous-winged is a full-bodied, heavily built gull that can hold its own against any gull in a battle for scraps.



First-winter Glaucous-winged Gull at the Whitehorse dump on April 17, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert



First-winter Thayer's Gull at the Whitehorse dump on May 6, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert



Changing Times for Whitehorse Rock Doves

Two events coincided this spring which may result in a decline in Rock Dove numbers in the Whitehorse area. First, a long-time Rock Dove feeding station closed its doors in late-April and for the first time in many years the pigeons were forced to look elsewhere for feed. Rock Doves are now turning up in lots of new downtown locations. Then in early May, Whitehorse residents noted an abundance of pigeon feathers, wings and other parts in downtown Whitehorse. The best guess was that a raptor, likely a Northern Goshawk or Gyrfalcon was at work. The frequent occurrence of an adult Northern Goshawk over downtown Whitehorse this spring seemed to support this theory. The 1997 Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count recorded a record number (456) of Rock Doves. The upcoming 1998 count will tell us what effect these recent events have had on Whitehorse's pigeon population.

The **Northern Hawk Owl** which wintered along McIntyre Creek in Whitehorse put in a brief appearance on April 23 (CE,LK,JMcC), another was 3 km east of the Takhini River along the Alaska Highway on March 15 (HG), one was near Drury's Pond on March 29 (MB,HG), and one was between Pelly Crossing and Carmacks in early April (LK). Two **Short-eared Owls** were at Swan Lake on March 27 (HG), one was near Mendenhall on April 9 (HG), three were in the Richardson Mountains on May 16-17 (BK,DK), one was at a nest with one egg at km 93, Dempster Highway on May 19 (RiM), and one was near the Canada/U.S. border and a second one near Dry Creek south of Beaver Creek on May 5 (BB). Two **Boreal Owls** were heard at Swan Lake on March 27 (HG).



The Northern Hawk Owl perched on a light standard along Mountain View Drive in Whitehorse, April 23, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert

A **Rufous Hummingbird** in Pine Ridge on May 14 was the only reported this spring (HH). A **Black-backed Woodpecker** was near Jarvis Creek on May 5 (BB). A female **Downy Woodpecker** was in Watson Lake on March 23 and a male on March 29 (LE). A pair of **Hairy Woodpeckers** arrived at a nest site near Braeburn on April 2 (GR). **Hammond's Flycatchers** arrived later than normal with 3 on May 7 at the McIntyre wetlands (HG); subsequent numbers (3) at that site seemed low compared to other years (CE,HG). On May 18 the first reported **Dusky Flycatcher** of spring was singing on the shrubby sides of White Mountain along the Atlin Road; This location provides the Yukon's best access for viewing of this enigmatic flycatcher (CE,PS), another was seen and heard in the subalpine of the Auriol Trail near Haines Junction on May 31 (MW). **Say's Phoebe** sightings included several pairs near the Whitehorse airport area on May 2 (MB), one at km 93, Dempster Highway on May 19 (RiM), and an active nest near Kluane on May 26 (BB). A pair of **Eastern Kingbirds** at the Yukon College Beaver Pond on May 30 was a great Birdathon score (VL,JS).



A migrant Northern Shrike rides the April wave. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

The first **Northern Shrike** was reported from M'Clintock Bay on March 21 (DP). After that, shrikes were reported in numbers between one and at least three in southern Yukon from April 5 to 19. Three **Warbling Vireos** singing at Haunka Creek on May 16-18 provided the first spring report (CE,PS). A **Gray Jay** was collecting nest material in Pineridge on April 28 (HH). A nest-building pair of **Black-billed Magpies** was at lower Kishwoot Island in Whitehorse on April 12 (MB). **Three American Crows**, normally rare, were noted in the Whitehorse area this spring: One first discovered at the old Whitehorse Shipyards on April 8 (CE) was ticked at the nearby Quartz Road marsh on the Birdathon (HT et al.), and was last seen in the area on June 8 (CE). Likely the same bird was at the escarpment near Wheeler Street on April 28 (HG). The identity was confirmed with photographs and tape recordings. Another was at Lewes Marsh on May 9 (CE,PS), and another was at Judas Creek on May 27 (WN,JH,YBC). A **Common Raven** nest on one of the NorthwTel towers across from Valleyview was reported on May 21 (DvdW). The impressive nest was constructed of a lot of dead branches, some were very large. There were also young in the nest. The nest was first found because the young were making so much noise! (DD). Five large baby ravens precariously perched in their little nest were counted on Grey Mountain on May 29 (BB,MW).

A mixed flock of 20 **Horned Larks** and 30 **Lapland Longspurs** was at the Whitehorse Airport area on May 2 (MB). An impressive flock of at least **200 Horned Larks** and **700 Lapland Longspurs** was at Carcross on May 9 (CE,PS). Two **Violet-green Swallows** were foraging along the lower McIntyre Creek on Sunday April 13 (CE,PS; JMcC,PN). This arrival date is on par with 1997. **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** sightings included the first at upper McIntyre Creek on April 30 (CE), two at the Yukon College Beaver Pond on May 9 (JMcC,PN), and one along lower McIntyre Creek on May 21 (PS). About **1000 swallows** including **Violet-green,**

Tree and Cliff, small numbers of **Barn Swallows,** and one **Northern Rough-winged** were foraging over McIntyre Wetlands on May 20 (CE); This was a clear indication of the importance of this site to large numbers of migrants.

Perhaps a result of our mild winter, **Mountain Chickadees** were well reported from numerous locations including Cowley Lake near Whitehorse (MGa,RF), Wolf Creek (WN;SRi), Little Atlin Lake (CE), Tagish (HG,YBC), and Lewes Marsh (CE,PS). A pair of **Mountain Chickadees** and a pair of **Boreal Chickadees** were battling over a nest box in Hillcrest on May 15 (LC). **Red-breasted Nuthatch** sightings included two throughout the season at a Wolf Creek feeder (SRi), and two at a Valleyview feeder on May 28-29 (LG). Two **American Dippers** were at the Whitehorse Power Dam on March 21 (JMcC), one was at Dalton Creek near Alder Creek, Kluane National Park on April 10, and one was at upper Victoria Creek (1300 m) on April 11 (MW, RMcC, CV, GW).

Mountain Bluebirds were well reported following the first sighting of a bird near the Rodeo Grounds along the North Klondike Highway on April 5 (JMcC, PN). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was on a nest along the Swan Lake Road on May 18 and 25 (HG), one was on a different nest on the Swan Lake Road on May 25 (HG), and a third nest (with 2 eggs) was found along the Swan Lake Road on May 28 (HG). A **Hermit Thrush** was at Kookatsoon Lake on May 24 (JMcC,PN). The first **Varied Thrush** of the season was heard at Shadow Lake on April 8 (SRu). Single **Varied Thrushes** were along the Cottonwood Trail, Kluane National Park on April 11 (MW,RMcC), in Carmacks on May 8 (RiM), and at Paddy's Pond in Hillcrest on May 14 (SS).



European Starling sightings included one at Teslin Lake on April 23 (MGa), one at Marsh Lake on May 1 (DP), and one on May 18 which provided a first record for Swan Lake (HG). About 150 **American Pipits** were at the Whitehorse dump on May 2 (JMCC); this species was widely reported in high numbers at that time. Five **Bohemian Waxwings** were in Carmacks on April 15 (RiM). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at McIntyre Creek on May 16 (JMCC,PN). Four **Blackpoll Warblers** were at Haunka Creek on May 18 (CE), three were at Swan Lake on the same day (HG). The first reported **Wilson's Warbler** was in Porter Creek on May 5 (CE), one was in Carmacks on May 15 (RiM), and six were at McIntyre Creek on May 16 (JMCC,PN).

The first **Chipping Sparrow** of spring, on May 14 at Judas Creek, seemed early (CE), one was in the CWS parking lot on May 22 (PS), and one was in Carmacks on May 22 (RiM). A **Fox Sparrow** was at McIntyre Creek on May 2 (JMCC). A **Song Sparrow** colony (3 singing birds) was a stunning discovery at a marsh on Little Atlin Lake on May 17 (PS,CE). This species is very rare in the Yukon. Helmut's enthusiasm to see these rare sparrows for the first time in the Yukon involved two successful jaunts to the area on May 20 and 21 (HG). Two **Golden-crowned Sparrows** were at McIntyre Creek on May 2 (JMCC). The "**Oregon**" **Junco** was last seen at a Whitehorse feeder on April 5 (HG). Extraordinary numbers of **Lapland Longspurs**, many thousands of birds, moved through the Whitehorse area from late April through mid May. Sparrow migration appeared to be peaking on May 5 with high numbers of **Lincoln's**, **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, and thousands of **Lapland Longspurs**. Five **Snow Buntings** were feeding along the Teslin River at Johnson's Crossing on March 22 (HH).

Two male and two female **Purple Finches** were in Watson Lake on April 16 (LE); Cowley Lake observers photographed this common but always delightful bird of spring on April 17 (BB,RaM). A **Red Crossbill** was at a Wolf Creek feeder on March 8 (SRi). The first fledgling **Red Crossbills** were reported from Pilot Mountain during the week of May 10-16 (BM). A newly fledged **Red Crossbill** begging and being fed by an adult was at a Wolf Creek feeder on May 24 (WN). A relatively high count of up to **500 Common Redpolls** was made at a Whitehorse feeder on March 31 (HG). Quite attractive was a partial-albino **Common Redpoll** sporting a white hood and pink legs which frequented a Porter Creek feeder on April 4-6 (CE,PS).



A Common Redpoll with a white hood cut a striking image at a Porter Creek feeder on April 4-6, 1998. Note also its pale bill and feet which are normally dark. Photo by Cameron Eckert

Summer 1998

Yukoners basked in one of the sunniest, most bug-free summers in recent memory (except in the Watson Lake area where mosquitoes were plentiful). The resulting dramatic and widespread forest fires may result in interesting changes in some local bird populations.

A **Red-throated Loon** was at Lake Laberge on June 27 (CE,PS). Two **Pied-billed Grebes** were calling at Lee Lake near the Beaver River, southeast Yukon on June 14 (CE,MGi), and one at Coot Lake, 8 km south of Pelly Crossing on June 17 (RDM,WP), and July 4 (CE,PS) provided the northernmost Yukon record for this species. The **Eared Grebe** first discovered in May at Swan Lake was last seen on July 1 (HG). The discovery of a **Double-crested Cormorant nest** with four eggs on June 7 near Richthofen Island on Lake Laberge provided the Yukon's first confirmed breeding record for this species. Subsequent observations found several young in the nest and up to four adult cormorants in the area (GW,MW); two (perhaps the same birds) were at nearby Jackfish Bay on June 15 (AG). A lone **Double-crested Cormorant** was reported from Kathleen Lake, southwest Yukon on June 9 (MGo). Two **Great Blue Herons** were at Swede Johnson Creek, Kluane area on June 1 (BB). Twelve **Gadwall** were at the Inuvik Sewage Lagoons, N.W.T. on June 14 (RDM,WP). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Coot Lake near Pelly Crossing on June 8 provided a very rare summer record (RDM,WP). A male **Cinnamon Teal** provided a rare summer record in Whitehorse on June 8 (RDM,WP). Six male **Ruddy Ducks** at Lee Lake near the Beaver River on June 13 provided the first documented record for southeast Yukon (CE,MGi).



The Yukon's first confirmed breeding record for Double-crested Cormorant near Richthofen Island on Lake Laberge. The nest with four eggs on June 7 (left), and nestlings on July 7 (right). Photos by Gerry Whitley



An adult Double-crested Cormorant at Richthofen Island on 27 June, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert



Exremely rare was a **Swainson's Hawk** on McIntyre Mountain in early July (MGi). Two **Golden Eagles** and a **Merlin** were at Victoria Mnt west of Carmacks on June 29 (RM). A YTG Wildlife Viewing sign made it easy to find a **Peregrine Falcon** nest (one adult + three young) along the Yukon River at Dawson City on July 7 (CE). **Rock Ptarmigan** sightings included eight at Victoria Mnt on June 29 (RM), and 10 tallied from July 4-12 near Syenite Lake in the Tombstone Range (MW). **Sora** reports included one at Upper Liard on June 18 (AG), one near Rancheria on June 20-21 (HG), and one at Nisutlin Delta on July 31 (PD). Fifteen **American Coots** including two small young were at Lee Lake on June 13 (CE, MGi), one was in Inuvik, NWT, on June 14 (DM, WP), an adult with a downy young at Swan Lake on July 31 (HG).



This Blue Grouse was a great find on June 20, 1998 during vegetation surveys in the Kotaneelee Mountains along the NWT/Yukon border. Photo by Jennifer Staniforth

Late spring migrants on June 5 included a **Black-bellied Plover** and four **Whimbrel** at M'Clintock Bay, and an **American Golden-Plover** at Judas Creek (CE). An **American Golden-Plover** was at Victoria Mountain on June 30 (RM); two different adults, each with two young, were on Keno Hill on July 18 (DK, KH). **Greater Yellowlegs** reports included one at Judas Creek on June 5 (CE), and a pair near Little Rancheria Creek in June (AG). Twelve **Wandering Tattlers** were tallied during a hike in the Tombstone and Cloudy Ranges on July 4-12 (MW). **Upland Sandpiper** reports included one near Kusawa Lake on June 1 (BB), and five plus a pair with young at Victoria Mountain on June 30 (RM). Just three weeks after the last spring migrants, an adult **Baird's Sandpiper** at Lake Laberge on June 27 signaled the beginning of fall migration (CE, PS). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** and four **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at Swan Lake on June 15 (AG); two male **Wilson's Phalaropes** and a male with two young were there on July 1 (HG). Seven **Short-billed Dowitchers** including a downy young were at Swan Lake on July 1 (HG).



A pair of American Golden-Plovers on territory at Keno Hill on 28 June, 1998. Photo by Gerry Whitley

Two flocks of 12 and 20 adult **Bonaparte's Gulls** heading south over Whitehorse on July 20 (CE) were an indication of fall migration for this species, an interesting observation as there are many records of spring migrants but very few of fall migrants. A survey of a **Herring Gull** colony northeast of Richtohofen Island, Lake Laberge tallied 250 adults, 70 downy young and 2 nests each with eggs on June 27 (CE,PS). Another gull colony west of Richtohofen Island had 200 adults, 100 downy young, and 8 nests with eggs on the same day. Unusual summer gulls in the Whitehorse area included a 1st-summer **Thayer's Gull**, likely the same bird as reported in spring, at the Whitehorse dump on June 30 (CE), a **Glaucous Gull** there on June 25 (CE), and a 1st-summer **Glaucous-winged Gull** on Lake Laberge on June 27 (CE,PS). An adult **Slaty-backed Gull** was photographed at the Inuvik dump, N.W.T. on June 14 and at the MacKenzie River in town on June 15 (RDM,WP); the observers had seen an adult in the same location during the previous year.

The source of eleven **Rock Doves** seen in Watson Lake in June (AG) is unknown as this species has never been reported from Watson Lake and there is no known established population in the area. As such, they may have been recent escapees. It is worth noting that there is a newly established pigeon hutch with about 100 free-flying **Rock**

Doves in Carcross. A rare **Mourning Dove** foraging on the La Biche River airstrip in southeast Yukon on June 14-15 (CE,MGi) had apparently been in the area for a few weeks.

Another one frequented a yard near Judas Creek at least over the last two weeks of June (AH). A **Great Gray Owl** was hunting at the edge of a mid-elevation wetland just west of the La Biche River on June 16 (CE, MGi). A **Short-eared Owl** on McIntyre Mountain in early July provided a rare summer record for the Whitehorse area (MGi).



Portrait of the La Biche River Mourning Dove, June 15, 1998. Photo by C. Eckert



The La Biche River Mourning Dove during speed trials on June 15, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert





Common Nighthawk on its doomed nest at Meadow Lakes golf course on June 19, 1998. Photo by Jeanette McCrie

A **Common Nighthawk** nest containing one egg was found on June 18 along the upper La Biche River (JS). The remains of a nest in the form of broken egg shells were at a Whitehorse golf course in late June (HG). **Rufous Hummingbird** reports included two at a Teslin Lake yard on July 19-27 (MGa), one in downtown Whitehorse on July 26 (DMT,FT) and during some of the rest of summer (JB), and one seen once at Hidden Valley on July 18 (LG,JH). Apparently kingfishers are not limited to fish: One observer at the Old Constabulary on Marsh Lake was surprised to see a **Belted Kingfisher** whacking the life out of a **Bank Swallow** clutched in its

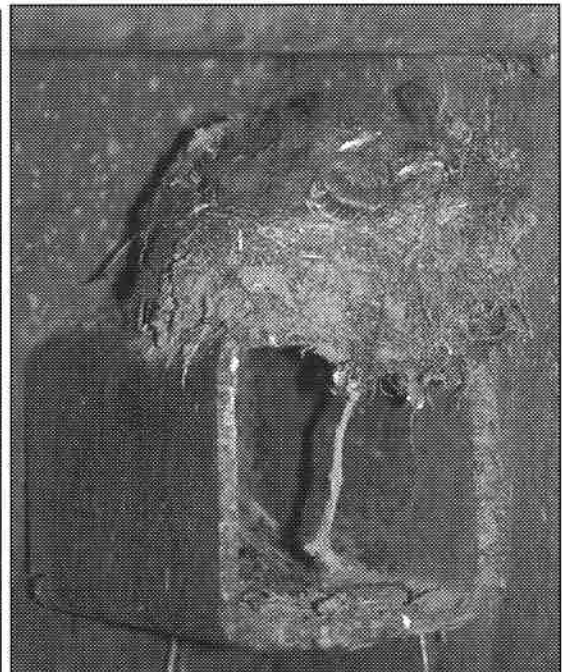
bill (RH). A male **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen near km 1.5 of the Rancheria Loop Road on June 18 (AG).

Northern Flickers nested in a nest box by the Takhini River near the Klondike Highway; the courtship dance was in late May, their raucous activity was tolerated for weeks (LG,JH).

A singing **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at km 33 Dempster Highway on June 11 (RDM,WP) was northwest of its known Yukon range. A **Least Flycatcher**, rare in southwest Yukon, was at the Dezadeash River loop trail near Haines Junction on July 12 (MS). Four **Dusky Flycatchers** singing on territory at treeline in the Kotaneelee Range in southeast Yukon on June 20 established a significant northeast range extension for this species (CE,MGi). A single **Dusky** was noted during the Rancheria Breeding Bird Survey on June 21 (HG). The only report of **Eastern Phoebe** this summer was of a pair at a nest with four young at their usual location (the only known Yukon location) under the La Biche River bridge on June 15 (CE,MGi). An **Eastern Kingbird** was at Swede Johnson Creek, Kluane area on June 1 (BB), and one was along the upper La Biche River on June 19 (CE). An immature **Northern Shrike** was at Versluc Meadows in Whitehorse on July 31 (CE,PS), and one was at Nisutlin Delta on July 31 (BB). A **Philadelphia Vireo** singing on territory along the La Biche River on June 18 was the only reported this season (MGi). A **Red-eyed Vireo** provided the second Watson Lake record on June 18 (AG).



Rufous Hummingbirds seemed more common than usual this summer - this one was frequenting a yard along Teslin Lake yard in July, 1998. Photo by Margaret Garolitz



Eastern Phoebe nest with young under the La Biche River bridge, Yukon. June 15, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert



An Eastern Phoebe near its nest at the La Biche River bridge, Yukon, June 15, 1998. Photo by C. Eckert

Ten **Horned Larks** were at Victoria Mnt on June 30 (RM). Two **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were at the Yukon College beaver pond in Whitehorse on June 1 (CE). A **Mountain Chickadee** was at Little Atlin Lake on June 16 (AG), one was noted during a Breeding Bird Survey along the Atlin Road later in June (PS). Two adult **Red-breasted Nuthatches** with one young were at Wolf Creek on July 22, and a total of four were there on July 26 (SRi). Near the north edge of its range, a **Winter Wren** was singing on territory along the upper La Biche River on June 18 (CE). Three **Marsh Wrens** discovered at Lee Lake on June 14 provided just the second documented Yukon record for this species (CE, MGi); three completed nests were found but did not contain eggs or young and therefore fell short of a confirmed breeding record. A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was near Dalton Post on June 9 (MGo). Four **Golden-crowned Kinglets** along the upper La Biche River on June 18; were the first La Biche record of this species which is absent from forests along the lower La Biche River (CE). In its ongoing march to world domination a **European Starling** was at km 258 Dempster Highway on June 16 (RDM,WP), and even further north, two were in Inuvik, NWT on June 14 (RDM,WP).



Boreal Chickadee in Hillcrest on June 14, 1998. Photo by J. McCrie





A subadult male American Redstart at McIntyre Creek wetlands on 3 June, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert

Six **Yellow Wagtails** reported from Shingle Point on the Yukon's North Coast were a nice find in mid-June (RDM,WP). Three **Cedar Waxwings** seen on June 27 at Lake Laberge were the first reported from the Whitehorse area since 1995 (CE,PS). A male **Tennessee Warbler** at km 53 Dempster Highway on June 16 was very rare that far north (DM,WP). Two **Magnolia Warblers**, relatively common in the area but always a treat to see, were at Upper Liard on June 17 (AG), and another one was singing at the Rancheria Loop Road on June 18 (AG) and July 4-5 (HG). Just 99 years after the first Yukon record of the species, a pair of **Townsend's Warblers** feeding one dependent young at the Yukon River campground in Dawson City on July 7 provided the **Yukon's first confirmed breeding record** for this species (CE,PS). Other sightings of **Townsend's Warblers** included two at McIntyre Mountain on June 7 (CE), three males at km 53, Dempster Highway on June 16 (RDM,WP), and one near Jake's Corner in late June (PS). Rare in the Whitehorse area was a subadult male **American Redstart** singing at McIntyre Creek wetlands on June 3 (CE). Other reports included a subadult male singing near the Haunka Creek on June 16 (AG). In the truly bizarre category, the head of a **Black-and-white Warbler** was found in the Extra Foods parking lot in downtown Whitehorse in June (SRu); it seems safe to assume that this wayward body part fell off the grill of a motor-home and as such this species will not be added to the Whitehorse checklist based on this "specimen". A male **Common Yellowthroat** was observed 20 km south of Inuvik, N.W.T., quite far north for this species, on June 15 (RDM, WP). About **100 Common Yellowthroats** including some short-tailed young were encountered at Swan Lake on July 1 (HG).

Two **Western Tanagers** were singing at the Rancheria Loop Road on June 17 and 18 (AG); on July 5, six males, a female and at least two fully fledged young were tallied there (HG). A **Chipping Sparrow** with two young was at Wolf Creek on July 8 (SRI). A newly established Breeding Bird Survey on McIntyre Mountain recorded a "**Timberline**" **Brewer's Sparrow** on June 8 (CE). Unusually dry conditions in southeast Yukon may have been responsible for the complete lack of **Le Conte's Sparrows** at their usual location along the La Biche River airstrip. However, one **Le Conte's** was heard at the Beaver River wetland on June 12 (MGi), and four were singing at a higher elevation wetland just west of the La Biche River on June 17 (CE,MGi). A **Song Sparrow** was heard-only at Rainbow Camp near Dalton Post, Tatshenshini River on June 9 (MGo). Quite extraordinary was the occurrence of three *Zonotrichia* species, **White-throated**, **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrow** which could all be

heard singing on territories from one location at treeline in the Kotaneelee Range on June 20-21 (CE,MGi). A **Dark-eyed Junco** was delivering and then dropping bird seed into the large open beak of a young **Brown-headed Cowbird** at Hidden Valley (LG,JH). On July 9 a female **House Finch** was at a feeder in Whitehorse -- the same location where this species has been seen in previous years (JB). A male **Evening Grosbeak** was at Larsen Creek airstrip near the Beaver River on June 12 (CE,MGi)

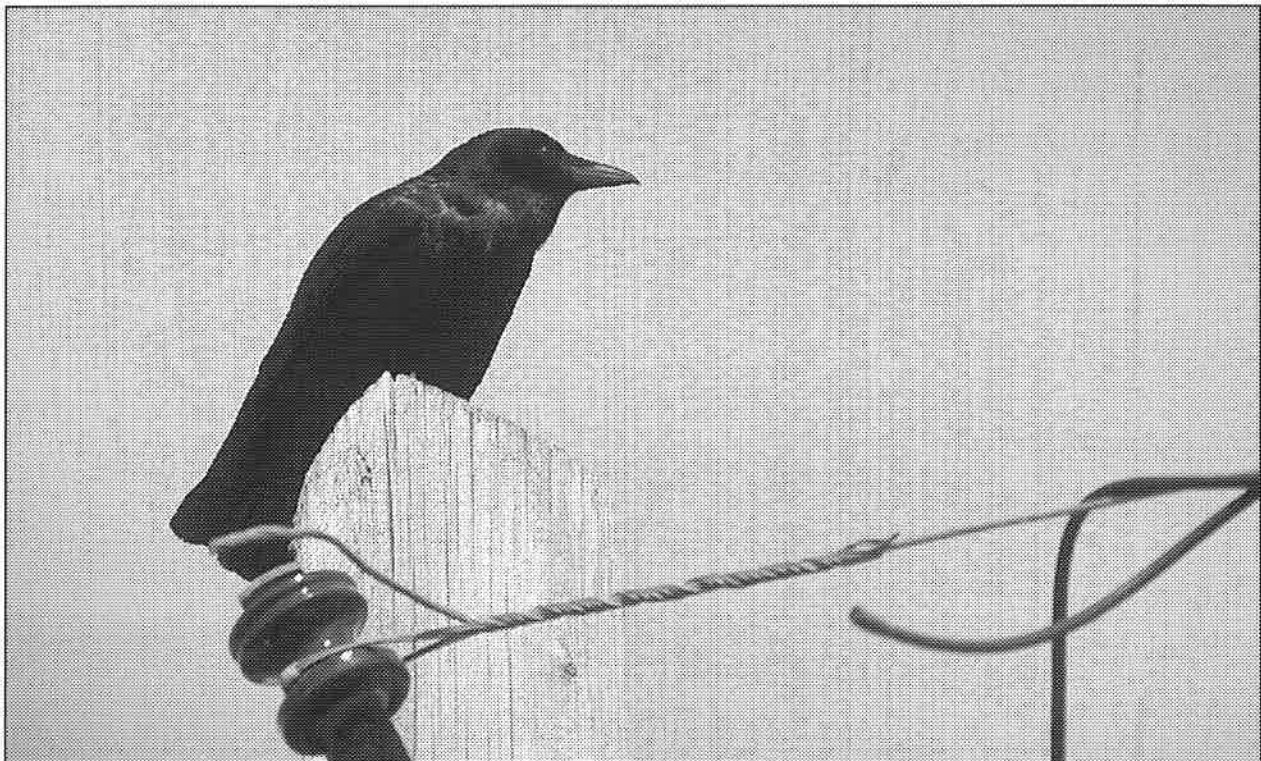
Observers: Ken Anderson, Jeremy Baumbach, Michael Beauregard, Bruce Bennett, Ian Boyce, Carl Burgess, Linda Cameron, René Carlson, Doug Davidge, Patty Denison, Cameron Eckert, Lois Everett, Margaret Garolitz (MGa), Linda Gerrand, Mike Gill (MGi), Max Gotz (MGo), Alex Gray, Helmut Grünberg, Katie Hayhurst, Robin Hamilton, Jim Hawkings, Heidi Hehn, Jürg Hofer, Al Hughes, Nancy Hughes, Russ Knutson, Greg Kubica, Lee Kubica, Birch Kuch, Dennis Kuch, Val Loewen, Monica Mather, Ian McLeod (IMcC), Rob McClure (RMcC), Jeanette McCrie (JMCC), R. Doug McRae (RDM), Elaine Monaghan, Diane Morgan-Thompson (DMT), Richard Mueller (RiM), Randy Mulder (RaM), Bob Murkett, Patti Nash, Wendy Nixon, Dave Odlum, Brigitte Parker, W. Peterson, Doug Phillips, Jean Paul Pinard, George Reginbald, Sandra Richardson (SRi), Don Russell, Kyle Russell, Sharon Russell (SRu), Mark Schwan, Sheila Serup, Pam Sinclair, Joy Snyder, Jennifer Staniforth, Barbara Studds (BaS), Bob Studds (BoS), Fred Thompson, Heather Thompson, Jenny Trapnell, Debbie van de Wetering (DvdW), Catherine Vietch, Mario Villeneuve, Gerry Whitley, Mary Whitley, Yukon Bird Club (YBC).

Thanks to the many observers who took the time to send in their sightings! ~ Helmut.

The Shipyards Crow

Many Whitehorse birders enjoyed this very cooperative American Crow which was first discovered at the old Whitehorse shipyards on 8 April, 1998. American Crows are very rare spring visitors to the Yukon and the Shipyards Crow was the first one known to linger at one location for any length of time. It was tallied on both International Migratory Birds Day and the Yukon Birdathon.

Very careful study of this bird combined with a comparison of recordings of its calls to standard recordings of both American and Northwestern Crows confirmed its identity as an American Crow. The Shipyards Crow was last seen on 8 June, 1998.



American Crow at the Whitehorse shipyards on April 30, 1998. Photo by Cameron Eckert



YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

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Waiting for spring ...



Photo by C. Eckert

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