

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club - Fall 2002



Rough-legged Hawk on migration in Whitehorse, April 18, 2002. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

INSIDE: Field Notes ♦ Watson Lake Migration Monitoring ♦ Yukon Birdathon 2002

Yukon Bird Club Fall Field Trips and Events

Wednesday 2 October - Bird Photography with Mario Villeneuve. Learn the secrets of successful bird photography with Mario, a long-time wildlife photographer. He will cover both technical camera works as well as field techniques. No need to bring a camera, but do bring your notepad. **7:00 pm at the Whitehorse Public Library**

Sunday, October 6 - Lake Laberge Loon and Waterfowl Trip. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Approximately 4 hour trip. Trip Leader: Boris Dobrowolsky. Meet at **Porter Creek Super A at 10 a.m.**

Wednesday 23 October - Gyrfalcons with Norm Baricello. The Gyrfalcon is a true symbol of wilderness. This presentation will highlight the ecology of this enigmatic bird of prey. **7:00 pm at the Whitehorse Public Library.**

Tuesday 12 November - Albert Creek Banding Station with Ted Murphy-Kelly. Enjoy a presentation on Ted Murphy-Kelly's most intensive banding season to date at his station in the Southeast Yukon. This region is well known for its rich avian populations and species not found elsewhere in the Yukon. You'll also find out how this banding project fits into the bigger picture of bird conservation in North America. **7:00 pm at the Whitehorse Public Library.**

Thursday 28 November - Boreal Majesty Book Launch. Hosted by CPAWS-Yukon, Join David Henry (National Parks Ecologist) and Wayne Lynch (Acclaimed wildlife photographer and writer) in a celebration of Canada's Boreal Forests. These two authors are sharing this opportunity to launch their books related to the conservation of Canada's largest Biome. **6:30 pm at the Beringia Centre.**



News & Notes

Annual General Meeting

A small but dedicated group of members met March 14, 2002 to review the past year and set the course for the upcoming one. This year's board members are listed on the back page of the *Yukon Warbler*. The positions for newsletter and youth co-ordinators are vacant. A dedicated group is now filling the newsletter position. Our financial report shows that we have a positive balance, largely due to our Birdathon fundraising efforts. We have a healthy number of members, but need more active volunteers. New trip leaders and members of the board would be most welcome. Some projects supported by the Bird Club this year are the Swallow Housing in Haines Junction and the Southeast Yukon Monitoring Project in Watson Lake. Funds were provided to the former for construction materials and to the latter for the purchase of nets. It was announced that the long awaited *Birds of the Yukon* book would be going to the publisher in the near future. This volume will be a summary of bird distribution throughout the Yukon.

Cliff Swallow nest project

In Haines Junction, Henry Henkel and Hans Nelles constructed Cliff Swallow nesting structures to lure nesting swallows away from buildings. The Yukon Bird Club helped this group with the purchase of materials. This spring Henry and Hans established 16 structures near the Haines Junction weigh scale. It was a community event with a group of volunteers assisted by a crane. Henry reports that even as the structures were being hoisted by the crane, the birds were flying around investigating them. By the end of June there were 96 nests. Every day he poured water on the ground to provide mud for the birds to construct their nests. There has been some opposition by people who don't see the wisdom of this project. Swallows eat large numbers of insects, and project provides swallows with alternate nest sites to buildings. But it seems that public opinion is swinging in favour of the birds. The successful design of these structures is being employed by groups from Dawson City and England.

Spring 2002 Field Trip Report

Shrikes and Bluebirds, April 29 - A small but intrepid group of birders braved a cold north wind to search for shrikes and bluebirds on the Alaska Highway north of Whitehorse. Expectations were low, so the sighting of five raptor species was a pleasant surprise. Shrikes and bluebirds and a heck of a lot of other species eluded us. Some open water at Drury's farm gave us the opportunity to get close views of various duck species. The highlight of the trip was an osprey dive bombing a bald eagle. Trip leaders were Mary Whitley and Boris Dobrowolsky. They were accompanied by Judy and Christen Klein. Stay tuned for a new name for this field trip.

Jackfish Bay, May 15 - An intrepid band of Yukon Bird Club stalwarts met in the Super A parking lot and welcomed that well-known, globe girdling man of birds, Helmut Grünberg back to town. The six participants led by Boris Dobrowolsky headed to Jackfish Bay - still mostly covered in ice. Shorebirds and ducks were in short supply, though weather conditions were pleasant and the group got fine views of an American Golden-Plover.

Yukon River Bird Walk, May 21 - Four birders accompanied by leader, Mary Whitley, searched for spring migrants. They walked from the education building upstream to the fish ladder. Seventeen species of birds were observed.

Mary Lake, June 6 - Eight birders accompanied Wendy Nixon on this walk around Mary Lake. Bird activity was quiet compared to previous years. Those present were rewarded with good views of some of the common local species.

Whitehorse Sewage Lagoon, May 27 - On the strength of tourists from America and southern Canada, a group of 18 people led by Helmut Grünberg ventured to the sewage lagoons. The half-hour drive through dust was perhaps a bit longer than our visitors had expected, but birders all over the world know that sewage lagoons attract quite a number of birds. The area is known to be good for ducks, and it came as no surprise that 14 duck species were seen. Most interesting for us were over 50 Ruddy Ducks. About 50 Long-tailed Ducks were spread over the lower lake as well. The most common ducks were Northern Shovelers and scaup with 200 each. Other nice finds were four Gadwalls and four Redheads. The location is good for American Coots, so it was not unexpected to find ten. Four shorebird species were seen; Semipalmated Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, and Red-necked Phalarope. Mew and Herring gulls were present, and only five songbird species, all local nesters. Everybody enjoyed this little outing, especially since the trip was strategically guided to be upwind of any sewage smells.



Birders take in the ... *uhh* ... sights at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons. Photo by Boris Dobrowolsky.

Albert Creek Banding Station Report

Spring 2002

by Ted Murphy-Kelly

The banding station was one of the Southeast Yukon Proper Land Use Society projects which was funded by Environment Yukon, Canadian Wildlife Service - Yukon, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Yukon, Yukon Lotteries and the Yukon Bird Club. The Albert Creek banding station had an interesting third season of banding this spring. The effort was more intense as we attempted to adhere to the protocols followed by the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. This standard is a method to identify bird species and their numbers during spring and fall migration. It combines banding, a daily census and observations to arrive at an estimated total (ET) for each species. The station was in operation for 32 days between May 8th and June 15th. 702 Birds were banded of 36 species. Through daily ETs there were 89 species detected throughout the season.

It seemed for a while that migrant birds would never show up this spring. The Watson Lake area had a good amount of snow still on the ground by the 1st of May. By May 8th 80% of the ground was still covered with snow at Albert Creek. Fearing that we would miss the first push of sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers we set up nets even though we had to hike in for more than a kilometre along the road. It soon became apparent that the sparrows and Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers and maybe some of the thrushes had already gone through, bypassing the more southerly snow-covered parts of the Yukon. Compared to last year's banding totals, species such as White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco and Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler were way down. A measly (9) Yellow-rumps were banded this spring compared to 67 individuals last spring at about 1/3 the effort. Banding was slow going at first but migration monitoring was full tilt as we recorded numbers of waterfowl passing over. Tundra Swans were well represented as were a barrage of dabbling and diving ducks. A flock of White-fronted Geese was

a welcome addition to our daily tallies on the 15th of May. On May 16th the first Gray-cheeked Thrush was detected. Hermits and Swainson's were close behind with the latter dominating the banding totals. The first notable movement of warblers occurred on May 17th when 48 birds were banded. The stars on this day were Orange-crowned Warblers and Wilson's Warbler, the earlier Orange-crowns edging the more abundant western Wilson's ever so slightly. The next two days were fairly good with 29 and 31 birds banded. As the first White-throated Sparrows arrived, some of the Lincoln's were already well established on territory, and the waterfowl push subsided. May 27th was the day that we waited for. An invasion of warblers occurred dominated by Wilson's, Yellows, Northern Waterthrushes and Common Yellowthroats. The fallout was so intense that we were forced to close nets in order to process birds. We banded 69 birds, which made it the 2nd best banding day. Our big day was June 3rd when a steady, and luckily manageable, flow of birds let us band 90. Thirty of these were Yellow Warblers and thirty-nine were Wilson's while the first of the Alder Flycatchers found their way into the nets. Albert Creek finally greeted the much sought after southeastern specialties, namely American Redstart and Magnolia Warbler by June 4th and 5th. A Western Tanager was on territory by now and a female was finally ringed on the 10th. By this time we were recapturing some birds every day or so. These were local breeders. By the 15th most birds had arrived, locals were incubating eggs and it was time to wrap it up for the season.

One interesting outcome of this project was the number of birds banded last year that were captured again this year. A total of six birds were recaptured; 2 Lincoln's Sparrows, 2 Northern Waterthrushes, 1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 1 White-throated Sparrow and 1 Boreal Chickadee.

This illustrates that these species are very site-specific when they choose where to breed. An other notable observation was that of two Pileated Woodpeckers. We were able to identify one of them as a female, and they were both acting very "territorial" being sighted almost daily. Just after the banding operations ceased, Helmut Grünberg and I identified a male Cape May Warbler at km 6.5 along the same road. This is a Yukon record for the furthest west that this species has been found.

There was one problem that we faced and had to deal with during the project: With so few qualified volunteers daily census became a problem. It was not conducted on most days. It was decided that running the nets was more productive. Often a good representation of what species were around was still achieved by using our observations throughout the day. This can be rectified if we recruit more volunteers. Other than this I believe that the project was a success. The number of birds per net hour were not huge but considering the type of spring that we had and the northerly location of the station it still proved to be a worthwhile endeavour. I would like to thank all the groups and government bodies for their interest and financial help. Without them this would not have been possible.

Finally I would like to send out a big thanks to all the volunteers who did make it out, namely Linda Cameron and Julie Bauer whose help was invaluable. Thanks to Brian Ladue and Graeme Pelchat for their help setting up and keeping the banding lab from blowing away, my mother-in-law Rosemary Murphy for travelling all the way from Toronto by bus to take care of our little girl Cora, and my wife Hollie for her ongoing support and understanding of my obsession. Last but not least, Ben Schonnewille, a student who was an exceptional apprentice. Ben, you were a pleasure to work with, and I hope that I gave you a lasting and enjoyable introduction into the world of birds.

Participants: Ted Murphy-Kelly (bander in charge), Ben Schonnewille (Student apprentice, Teslin), Hollie Murphy-Kelly, Cora Kelly, Kerry Rees, Melanie Pratch, Jan Adamczewski, Brian Ladue (Watson Lake), Ulla, Reiner Rembe, Elfie Lenzin (Simpson Lake), Rosemary Murphy (Toronto), Julie Bauer, Linda Cameron, Graeme Pelchat, Peter Sandiford, Karen Baltgailis, Jukka Jantunen, Amélie Rousseau (Whitehorse).

Visitors: Susanne and Reiner Pisalla (Hannover, Germany), Charles and Sue Taft (one of the Dakotas), Rick, Blair, Alex and Lee Relkoff, Tara and Geoff McGowan, Jackie and Johnny Vanlangen (Watson Lake), Enid and Gord Mallory (Peterborough).

Note: Visitors are given the opportunity to learn about and see birds up close. When they walk away, we hope that they have learned something new or built on something they knew little about.

Table 1: Total number of all species banded at the Albert Creek banding station from May 8 to June 15, 2002.

Species	Total
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2
Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker	1
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1
Alder Flycatcher	19
Least Flycatcher	5
Warbling Vireo	8
Gray Jay	4
Black-capped Chickadee	4
Boreal Chickadee	5
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	20
Gray-cheeked Thrush	9
Swainson's Thrush	25
Hermit Thrush	2
American Robin	6
American Pipit	1
Tennessee Warbler	12
Orange-crowned Warbler	78
Yellow Warbler	84
Magnolia Warbler	2
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler	9
Blackpoll Warbler	8
American Redstart	9
Northern Waterthrush	51
Common Yellowthroat	38
Wilson's Warbler	189
Western Tanager	1
American Tree Sparrow	9
Chipping Sparrow	7
Savannah Sparrow	7
Fox Sparrow	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	29
White-throated Sparrow	19
White-crowned Sparrow	7
Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco	15
Purple Finch	9
Pine Siskin	6
Total Birds:	702
Total Species:	36
Total Days Banding:	32

Yukon Birdathon 2002 - Feature Birders Report

Helmut Grünberg reports on the many successes of ...

Team Dobrowsky-Grünberg

Somebody wrote that Boris and I were going to try for the “elusive 100 species” on an *Environmental Birdathon*. Well, elusive was the right word. As hard as we tried, we fell short again. Maybe the cracked birders should sit together and design a route that potentially yields 100 species (and be in shape to actually carry it out by bicycle, canoe, on foot etc.).

Before the Birdathon started, Bob Murkett took Boris and I to near the top of Mount McIntyre for a little birding trip to scout out the area. We heard a few mountain species singing that we later missed on the Birdathon (it seems that some birds have the habit of stopping to sing right at 5 p.m.) - these were Townsend’s Solitaire and American Tree Sparrow; the Golden-crowned Sparrow that had been singing here was not heard all afternoon.

5 p.m. - Yes, the Dusky Flycatcher was there. We were quite happy about this sighting because we missed the Dusky last year in the same location. So we started “rolling” down the mountain on our bicycles, stopped here and there and picked up some of the common species. This was probably the easiest part except the hands were getting sore from putting the brakes on. At the “Townsend’s Warbler spot” Boris heard the warbler way in the distance. It was too far for me, and running after it through a dense forest which was sloping down steeply was out of the question, but we both heard our only American Kestrel.

We moved down to the base of Mt. McIntyre and started the Copper Haul Road towards the Fish Lake Road. We stopped at a location where Cameron Eckert had found a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher on his BBS route - nothing this time. On we went to the pond along the Copper Haul Road where McIntyre Creek flows through. We encountered our first ducks, and after a few minutes we saw a Rusty Blackbird and a Belted Kingfisher, both difficult to get on our route. At the Fish Farm we heard the Hammond’s Flycatcher, virtually “guaranteed” there if there is such a thing in birding. We also saw our only

Bald Eagle and some swallows, again missing the Barn Swallow. We also noted some more ducks and the first shorebirds.

We bicycled down the Fish Lake Road, stopping briefly at the Pumphouse Pond, cycled a little ways along the Alaska Highway and then through Porter Creek to the Yukon River. Here we had a canoe tied up, put the bicycles in the canoe and paddled across. On the other side our major challenges began. We had scheduled about ten minutes, but it took us more like half an hour to get up the hill, and I painfully realized how tough it is to get your bicycle uphill, but there was worse to come. We did hear Ruffed Grouse drumming along the way.

Next we checked out the sewage lagoons, went in with one key and out with another key. We found some Canada Geese, a good number of Gadwalls, the first Redheads and Greater Scaup. We also saw several Long-tailed Ducks and about 50 Ruddy Ducks and two American Coots. A Great Horned Owl was calling in a distance. We lost some time when at first we did not find the right gate to get out of the sewage lagoon area. Those little mishaps can be costly. We were now about one hour behind schedule. It was 11 p.m., and our tents were at Swan Lake.

For me the toughest stretch of the road began. The track was so sandy that the tires would slip and slide, and you lost your direction even downhill. I wiped out once, but no harm was done. We had to get off the bikes many times, and it took us nearly two hours to get to Swan Lake, a little faster than walking speed.

At Swan Lake we were greeted by a glorious early morning chorus of calling and singing birds. A Sora was calling continuously all night; the display flight of snipe was heard all over the sky; and several thrushes and a Lincoln’s Sparrow were singing as well. After getting organized, we got into our tents, falling asleep instantly.

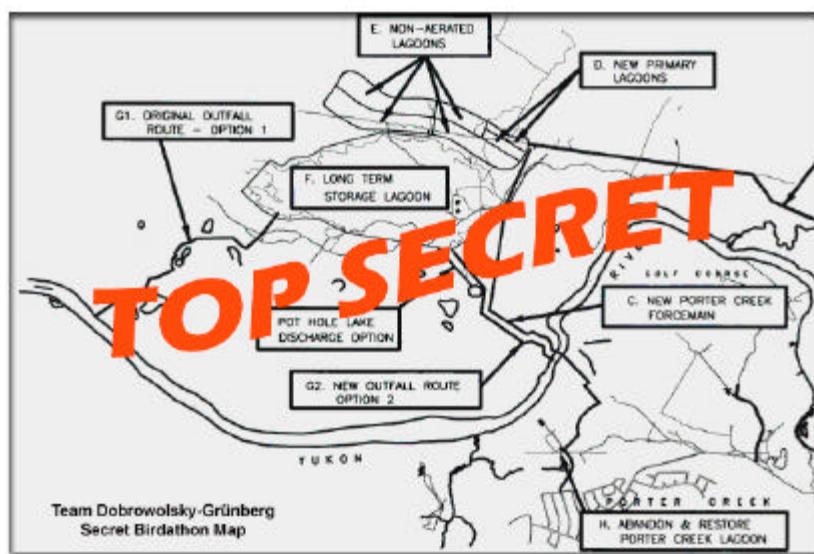
After three and a half hours, we got up (5 am) and had a decent breakfast and morning coffee courtesy of Boris. We then spent five hours exploring the Swan Lake area and found 58 species. A whole Birdathon in the Swan Lake area could probably turn up about 70 species, but there is a limit. The rarest and most exciting was a Short-eared Owl which Boris discovered flying over the marshes. I almost missed it because I had “something else” to do at the moment, but I got my pants up just in time. Sixteen other species not seen elsewhere were Horned Grebe, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson’s and Red-necked Phalarope, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Alder and Least Flycatcher, Black-capped Chickadee, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned and Blackpoll Warbler, Purple Finch, and a Red Crossbill which Boris heard fly over. We cycled to the Yukon River at Burma Road. Since we had to push on, the scheduled “snooze” never materialized.

We had a second canoe at the Yukon River and took the bicycles across again. One bird we saw and had been missing for a few years was the Black-billed Magpie. Amazing was a Golden Eagle being attacked by a Red-tailed Hawk. This was a very nice sighting and gave us two species we had missed last year. The Upland Sandpipers at the Rodeo Grounds did not disappoint us although they can be hidden in high grass at times. The Mountain Bluebirds were there too.

The cycling was just wonderful now compared to what we had been through last night. At Shallow Bay we heard our only Fox Sparrows. Our last stop was Jackfish Bay. We waded through the muddy water to get to Dog Island. This was a very good though exhausting move. We found seven more species at Jackfish Bay: Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Trumpeter and Tundra Swan, Harlequin Duck, Red-breasted Merganser and Semipalmated Plover. With 20 minutes to go we went on the bicycles again to search for the Wandering Tattler, but this one eluded us. Yammy picked us up and drove us to the barbecue at Wolf Creek, and the reason why I was still half way coherent at the barbecue was that I had a wonderful power nap in the bumpy vehicle.

We tried our best to get 100 species, but 95 was not too bad either. Boris tells me I should not gloat, but it feels rather good that we got the most species of any group and also more than any group driving a car. Thanks to many sponsors we also raised the highest amount of money with over \$2000.00. The Feature Birder mailings gave the Yukon Bird Club and the Yukon Conservation Society an amazing additional \$750.00. I can’t get over it that some very generous people gave over \$100.00. - Considering that I was dead-tired and probably not in best shape, I am thinking of doing a regular Birdathon with a vehicle next year, but who knows, maybe I will be talked into another Environmental Birdathon.

Unusual
map
discovered
at
Birdathon
Barbeque



Two great places to add to your Yukon birding travels



Babbage River, June 1993. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

1. The **Yukon Coastal Plain** features a diverse array of Arctic breeders including Red-throated and Pacific loons, Long-tailed Ducks, Buff-breasted and Stilt sandpipers, Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers, Bluethroat, and Yellow Wagtail. Charter tours or flights can be taken to Stokes Point, Komakuk Beach, Firth River, and Herschel Island.

2. **White Mountain** on the Atlin Road is home to spectacular macro-fauna such as Dusky Flycatcher, Blue Grouse, Townsend's Warbler and Brewer's Sparrow. While the birding is good along the road, a hike up to higher elevation improves chances of finding more elusive species. Mountain Goats are also seen here.



White Mountain, June 14, 2002. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

Field Notes: Observations from the field

Please report your observations to the Yukon Bird Club via the sightings coordinator, Helmut Grünberg (phone 667-6703; email: grunberg@yknet.yk.ca), or Cameron Eckert (phone: 667-4630; email: ceckert@yknet.yk.ca). In general, the most important details such as date, location, number, and observer(s). Please include as much detail as possible for breeding records, and descriptions of rare sightings. All observations will be forwarded to the Canadian Wildlife Service for inclusion in the comprehensive Birds of the Yukon Database.

Winter 2001/02 (December/January/February)

Overall, winter conditions in the Yukon were fairly typical with cold temperatures and normal snow pack. An edgy cold spell in December with temperatures plunging to about -40 °C gave way to relatively warmer temperatures (-5 to -25 °C) in January with temperatures dropping off again in February. There were a couple of mini-Arctic air invasions during the second week of December and the third week of January, the latter depositing the most snow of the period.

Curiously, a lone **swan** was noted at Johnson's Crossing on February 4 (MCI). A flock of 13 **Mallards** was at McIntyre Creek wetlands, its traditional wintering location in Whitehorse on the December 26 Christmas Bird Count (CE). An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen at Carcross on December 9 (BD,CE,HG), and a pair wintered at their traditional nest site at McIntyre Creek wetlands, being dutifully noted on the December 26 Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count (CE). A **Northern Goshawk** was observed spooking a group of **Rock Doves** in Whitehorse. It was flying off into the airport escarpment (HG,LC). Feathered remains of various birds were reported from the **goshawk's** "feeding station" above Jarvis St. (RC). A subadult **Golden Eagle**, seen at the Whitehorse landfill on December 13 (JJ,ARou), was probably the same bird seen at nearby McIntyre Creek on Whitehorse's December 26 Christmas Bird Count (WN). Twelve **Willow Ptarmigan** were seen along the South Klondike Highway at Windy Arm on February 23 (JJ). In marked contrast to last year, there were few reports of **Northern Hawk Owls** except in southern Yukon where they were fairly common in the Whitehorse area through the season (many observers); sadly, two of the Whitehorse owls were killed by cars. Away from Whitehorse, three **Hawk Owls** were seen in the Mendenhall area on December 6 (BD,HG), and one was at Jarvis Creek in southwestern Yukon on January 1 (MG). A **Boreal Owl** was heard calling from a small wetland complex at Cowley on January 2 (BB,RM). Calling **Boreal Owls**, all singles, were also heard at Cowley Creek on February 16 (WN).

Two **Downy Woodpeckers** noted on the December 29 Mayo Christmas Bird Count (fide MO'D) provided a rare winter record for central Yukon. A male **Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker** provided the Territory's first documented winter record in Whitehorse on January 29 (RE - photos), probably the most unusual sighting this winter. A **Pileated Woodpecker** seen in the town of Watson Lake on December 15 (LH,RHa) provided further evidence that this species regularly winters in the Territory. **American Robin** sightings included three at Whitehorse-Wolf Creek on December 12 (JJ,ARou), one at Jackfish Bay on Lake Laberge on December 7-13 (ARob,MR), one through January at Whitehorse-Hillcrest (many observers), and two through January at Whitehorse-Riverdale (many observers). The latter survived the winter at least into March (RE). An **American Tree Sparrow** survived at a Whitehorse feeder through December 23 but subsequently disappeared (CE,PS). **Snow Buntings** appeared on schedule in February although numbers were relatively low. The **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch**, first seen in late fall at a feeder at Jackfish Bay on Lake Laberge, was last seen on January 10 (ARob,MR). **Pine Grosbeaks** were noted in relatively high numbers in southern Yukon with flocks of up to 40 birds at many feeders (many observers). **Redpoll** numbers rebounded from a lackluster winter in 2000/01. Flocks of up to 100 **Common Redpolls** with a few **Hoaries** were at many Whitehorse area and Watson Lake feeders (many observers). A female-type **Evening Grosbeak**, rare in Whitehorse, was at a Riverdale feeder through January (RE).

Spring 2002 (March/April/May)

A record cold-late spring with low temperatures through early May eventually gave way to glorious weather by the end of May. The early migrants responded with a resounding lack of enthusiasm. A migration watch by the Canadian Wildlife Service conducted by Jukka Jantunen and Amélie Rousseau in Whitehorse through the spring produced impressive totals although some of the early spring numbers were lower than in spring 2001. The totals included 15,543 **geese** (2115 **Greater White-fronted**, 61 **Snow**, 2883 **Canada**, 10484 **unidentified geese**), 18,503 **swans** (2870 **Trumpeter**, 6976 **Tundra**, 8657 **unidentified swans**), 100 **Bald Eagles**, 553 **Northern Harriers**, 245 **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, 1347 **Buteo** hawks (10 **Swainson's**, 260 **Red-tailed**, 229 **Rough-legged Hawks**, 848 **unidentified Buteo**), 308 **Golden Eagles**, 23 **Peregrine Falcons**; 1128 **Bonaparte's**, and 2664 **Mew Gulls**.

A total of 180 **Common Loons** was tallied at Tagish on May 15 (JJ,ARou). A breeding plumage **Yellow-billed Loon** at Army Beach on Marsh Lake on May 25 provided the only report of the season (JJ). A **Great Blue Heron** was reported from the Stewart River, central Yukon, just upstream from U-Slough for three days about May 25 (DMcD). Five **Snow Geese** were in Atlin, B.C. on May 5 (MCo), and a flock of about 70 was at the south end of Lake Laberge on May 19 (CE,HG). **Trumpeter Swans** were well behind schedule with the first birds noted at Tagish in mid-March, although they were still absent at M'Clintock Bay by the end of March. **Gadwalls** were widely reported in good numbers including a count of 23 at M'Clintock Bay on May 27 (JJ). Single male **Cinnamon Teals** were noted at Lake Laberge on May 18 (JJ,ARou) and May 19 (CE,HG) and at Nares Lake on May 18 (JJ,ARou). **Eurasian Wigeons** were widely noted in small numbers in the Southern Lakes area of the Yukon (many observers). A male **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** at M'Clintock Bay on May 11 was about the fourth Yukon record (CE). The Yukon's first **Tufted Duck**, a male, was an exciting find at Lake Laberge on May 18 (JJ,ARou). Two pairs of **Harlequin Ducks** were at Carcross on May 18 (CE,HG,PS), and eight individuals were seen at the edge of the Yukon River, 20 km northwest of Whitehorse on May 26 (HG). A flock of 400 **Surf Scoters** was noted at Judas Creek on May 20 (PS). Two rare **Black Scoters**, a male and a female, were at Jackfish Bay on May 25 (JJ,ARou). **Hooded Merganser** sightings included a female at M'Clintock Bay on April 28 (JJ), a female at Schwatka Lake, Whitehorse on May 27 (JJ,ARou), and a pair there on May 28 (JJ). A single **Ruddy Duck** was seen at Nordenskiold Wetlands, km 338 North Klondike Highway on May 1 (BB). About 50 **Ruddy Ducks** were at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on May 27 (HG,YBC).



Up to two Grizzly Bears at Judas Creek (one seen here on May 23, 2002) curtailed birding there through May.
Photo by Cameron D. Eckert.

The first reported migrant **Bald Eagle** in Whitehorse was noted on March 20 (JJ), and Watson Lake's first one was seen on March 21 (TMK). Two **Red-tailed Hawks** and one **Rough-legged** were noted at the Minto Burn on April 16 (MO'D). A migration watch from a hill above Schwatka Lake in Whitehorse tallied 75 **Golden Eagles** from March 19-30, with the highest one-day count of **38** on March 29 (JJ). These numbers were lower than recorded in spring 2001. An immature **Golden Eagle** was seen near Rock Island Lake near Pelly Crossing on April 17 (MO'D). A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen at the Stewart Crossing bridge on May 1 (BB).

Black-bellied Plovers were scarce this spring; singles were at Judas Creek on May 23 (CE,HG), at Lake Laberge on May 25 (JJ), and at M'Clintock Bay 27-30 May (JJ,ARou). The only **Pacific Golden-Plover** reported was one at Laberge on May 25 (JJ). Seven **Greater Yellowlegs** were at Nares Lake near Carcross on May 5 (CE,PS), and seven were at Lewes Marsh on May 19 (JJ,ARou). A **Wandering Tattler** was at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge on May 26 (HG), and two were seen at a nearby location on Lake Laberge on May 27 (BL,SR). Seven **Upland Sandpipers** were at the Rodeo Grounds northwest of Whitehorse on May 16 (BD,HG). On May 18, about 70 **Baird's Sandpipers** were at Tagish, and about 1000 **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Lewes Marsh (CE,HG,PS).

Rare shorebirds included a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Army Beach, Marsh Lake on May 22 (JJ), single **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Lake Laberge on May 25 (JJ), at Lewes Marsh on May 26 (JJ), and at Judas Creek on May 28 (JJ,ARou), a **Stilt Sandpiper** at Lewes Marsh on May 23-24 (JJ,ARou), a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Shallow Bay on May 24 (CE), and likely the same bird at Lake Laberge on May 25 (JJ), and the Yukon's first **Ruff**, a female, at Lewes Marsh on May 19 (JJ,ARou, many observers). Rare **gulls** at the Whitehorse landfill included a **Ring-billed Gull** on May 11 and an adult **Thayer's Gull** on May 9 (CE). About six individual **Glaucous-winged Gulls** were noted in Whitehorse from late April on (CE;JJ).



Extremely rare in spring was this "classic" adult Thayer's Gull in Whitehorse on May 9, 2002. Its small bill, short legs and distinctive wing tips easily differentiate it from a Herring Gull. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert



The Yukon's first Ruff at Lewes Marsh on 19 May 2002. Photos by Jukka Jantunen.

A good season for **owls** produced many reports of calling **Great Horned** and **Boreal Owls**. Seven **Great Horneds** and six **Boreals** were heard during 20 stops along the Atlin Lake Road, Yukon, and five **Great Horneds** and five **Boreals** were calling north of Jake's Corner during 15 stops on April 15 (JJ); a few nights earlier, one **Great Horned** and eight **Boreals** were observed along the Tagish Road. Six **Great Horneds** and three **Boreals** were between Swan Haven and the Carcross Corner (JJ). Ten **Great Horneds** and 6 **Boreals** were counted between Squanga Lake and Jake's Corner on April 24 (MG). Five **Great Horneds** and three **Boreals** were at Swan Lake, north of Whitehorse on May 21 (HG). Single **Boreals** were heard at the Takhini River Road on March 9 (BD), at the Kusawa Lake Road on March 11 (BD), at Wolf Creek on March 16 (MG), at Minto Lake on March 29-31 (MO'D), at Joe Creek near Teslin on March 29 (MG), at the Fish Lake Road on April 6 (MG), at M'Clintock River on April 24 (MG), and at Silver Creek, southwestern Yukon on May 16 and 18 (MG,AH). These records add up to an amazing **34 Great Horned** and **39 Boreal Owls**.

The Yukon's second **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was calling at Haunka Creek, Atlin Road from April 15 at least through mid-May (JJ, many observers) An interesting winter for **Northern Hawk Owls** continued with one sighting at Meadow Lake in Whitehorse through March 12 (JJ), one at Mendenhall on March 15 (JJ), one in downtown Whitehorse at least through 19 March (many observers), one at the Takhini Burn, west of Whitehorse on March 23 (CE), two at Fox Lake on March 30 (CE,PS), and numerous birds seen along the North Klondike Highway between Pelly Crossing and the Minto Burn (MO'D). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Shallow Bay on May 16 (BD,HG).

A **Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker** flying past the Schwatka hill migration watch on March 22 (JJ) may have been an early migrant, although one had been reported wintering in nearby Whitehorse-Riverdale (RE). A **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen near the Yukon border at Lower Post, B.C. on March 10 (KR). **Northern Shrikes** are among the earliest migrants; singles were spotted in downtown Whitehorse on March 22 (JJ), at the Whitehorse airport on March 24 (JJ), and at Porter Creek in Whitehorse on March 28 (CE). An **American Robin** survived the winter at least through March at a Riverdale feeder in Whitehorse (RE); one heard calling in Porter Creek on March 22 (PS) may have been a wintering bird. A singing **Tennessee Warbler** was a nice find at Swan Lake on May 29 (HG). **Snow Buntings** appeared on schedule in February and March although numbers were relatively low; numerous small flocks were seen in the Whitehorse area and west to Haines Junction; a flock of 12 was at Watson

Lake on March 10 (TMK), and the first spring flock of four was seen in the Mayo area at the Minto Burn on March 19 (MO'D). Flocks of 500 and 100, respectively, were still moving up the Alaska Highway at Irons Creek on May 15 (HG). Stiff north winds grounded a few migrant **Smith's Longspurs** with four at Tagish on May 17 (JJ,ARou), one at Shallow Bay on May 19 (CE), and one at Army Beach on May 19 (JJ,ARou). A female-type **Evening Grosbeak** continued to visit a feeder at Riverdale in Whitehorse through March (RE).



An adult Ring-billed Gull at the Whitehorse landfill on May 11, 2002. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert.

Summer 2002 (June/July)

The Yukon summer brought pleasant weather, relatively few bugs, and at least one sensational rarity. There was enough rain that we had a very good growing season without drought conditions. A **Red-throated Loon** was on Mayo Lake on June 28 and 29 (HG,RHo). A **Double-crested Cormorant** was at Jackfish Bay on June 1 (BD,HG). Unusual was a **Tundra Swan** on Mayo Lake on June 26 and 27 (HG,RHo). An estimate of 50 **Gadwall** at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on July 31 (HG). Two **Harlequin Ducks** were at Jackfish Bay on June 1 (BD,HG). Two pairs of **Ruddy Ducks** were on Rat Lake, South Klondike Highway on June 11 (HG); about 50 were at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on June 12, and 27 on July 31 (HG); two males were observed at "Coot Lake", 8 km south of Pelly Crossing on July 2 (HG). A **Red-tailed Hawk** attacking a **Golden Eagle** was quite an aerial display at Burma Road and North Klondike Highway on June 1 (BD,HG). A **Rock Ptarmigan** was on top of Mt. McIntyre on June 8 (HG,DF,LF,CH,KH). A **Blue Grouse** was seen on White Mountain on June 7 (BD,YS). Among an amazing chorus of bird songs and calls in the early hours of June 1 at Swan Lake were two **Soras** (BD,HG); a **Sora** was calling during the Rancheria Breeding Bird Survey on June 22 and one along the Albert Creek Road (also known as Rancheria Loop Road) on June 23 (HG). An **American Coot** was seen at Swan Lake on June 1 (BD,HG); six were at the sewage lagoons on June 12 (HG) and one was at "Coot Lake", 8 km south of Pelly Crossing on July 2 (HG).



Coot Lake, 8 km south of Pelly Crossing, is a well-known Yukon location for American Coot, Gadwall, and Ruddy Duck. August 3, 2001. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

An **Upland Sandpiper** was seen on the Rodeo Grounds by the Klondike Highway northwest of Whitehorse on June 12 (BD,HG). Five **Wilson's Phalaropes** were observed at Swan Lake on June 1 (BD,HG). A **Short-eared Owl** at Swan Lake near Whitehorse on June 1 raised the possibility of local breeding (BD,HG); another was seen over alpine tundra near Wolf Lake in southeast Yukon on June 20 (CE). Eight **Boreal Owls**, often calling during the day, were heard by numerous observers in June: one was calling at Silver Creek, southwestern Yukon on June 7-8 (MG); one was heard at Sulphur Creek, Kluane National Park on June 8 (MG,SG); one was at the Nisutlin Bay Marina on June 10-20 (MG,SV); one was calling at Hayes Creek near Teslin (CE); one was heard at Hermit Lake near Teslin on June 26 (MG,SV); and three were heard at Mt. McIntyre on June 8, 12 & 14 (HG,DF,LF,CH,KH).

A **Common Nighthawk** was videotaped sitting on the gravel pavement of Frenchman Lake Road, 80 cm from the edge of the road with an egg in front of it aggressively opening its bill and hissing at the intruder but not flying off even within a distance of 2 metres on July 6 (RHo). Although traffic was sparse, there must have been a few traumatic moments for the bird. In Whitehorse, a female **Rufous Hummingbird** was seen feeding on Delphinium on July 20-21 (DH,SB,DVW), and a male was seen on July 22 (AK,LK,PK). More hummingbirds were reported from Whitehorse (EK) and the Annie Lake Road (reported to EK) for the middle of July making this a pretty good season for hummingbirds. A **Black-backed Woodpecker**, generally rare in the area, was noted at White Mountain on June 7 (BD,YS). A **Pileated Woodpecker** was calling at the Albert Creek Road (a.k.a. Rancheria Loop Road) on July 7 (HG,TMK). **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** sightings included two near Morley Lake (in the Yukon) on June 18 (CE), one near Teslin on June 19 (MG), two at McIntyre Mountain June 22 (CE), and one at Mayo Lake on June 27 (HG). Two **Blue-headed Vireos** were heard during the Rancheria Breeding Bird Survey on June 22, and one was singing at the Albert Creek Road (also known as Rancheria Loop Road) on July 7 & 19 (HG). A count of 14 **Warbling Vireos** was made at the Albert Creek Road on June 23 (HG).



An abundance of deciduous habitat at Haunka Creek makes this an ideal location for vireos and warblers. June 14, 2002. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert.

A closely observed and well-documented male **Siberian Blue Robin** foraged in a Dawson resident's garden on June 8 (NC,AS); this established not only a first Yukon record, but also a first for mainland North America. A **Cedar Waxwing** was at Upper Liard on July 18 (HG). A **Tennessee Warbler** was heard near Teslin on June 17 (CE,MG), and 12 were at the Albert Creek Road near Upper Liard on June 23 (HG). Two **Magnolia Warblers** were at the Albert Creek Road on June 23 (HG). A male and one or two female **Cape May Warblers** at the Albert Creek Road on July 7 provided the Yukon's westernmost record (HG,TMK). They were repeatedly seen with caterpillars and moths in their bill suggesting breeding nearby. **Townsend's Warblers** were noted in good numbers at a few locations near Teslin during June surveys (MG); elsewhere, two were at White Mountain on June 7 (BD,YS,HG). Five **American Redstarts** were at Haunka Creek on June 7 (BD,YS,HG); seven were on the Albert Creek Road on June 23 (HG). Three **Western Tanagers** were at their usual location at the Albert Creek Road on June 23 (HG). A count of 40 **American Tree**, 20 **Savannah**, and 20 **Golden-crowned Sparrows** was made in the alpine above Wolf Lake in southeastern Yukon on June 20 (CE). Two **Snow Buntings** were singing and calling and appeared to be quite agitated by the presence of the observers as if they were near a nest on a 2100 metre peak in the Ruby Range near Kluane Lake on June 30 (MW,HW).

Observers: Susan Barth, Bruce Bennett, Linda Cameron, Norm Carlson, René Carlson, Minnie Clark, Mark Connor, Boris Dobrowolsky, Cameron Eckert, Robb Ellwood, Dick Flynn, Lenora Flynn, Scott Gilbert, Mike Gill, Helmut Grünberg, Doug Hamilton, Linda Harder, Rick Harder (RHa), Chris Havard, Ken Havard, Rudi Houtrouw (RHo), Jukka Jantunen, Ernie King, Arlene, Lee & Paula Kubica, Brian Lendrum, Dan McDiarmid (DMcD), Randi Mulder, Ted Murphy-Kelly (TMK), Wendy Nixon, Mark O'Donoghue (MO'D), Kerry Rees, Alf Roberts (ARob), Marlene Roberts, Susan Ross, Amélie Rousseau (ARou), Aedes Scheer, Pam Sinclair, Yammy Stote, Debbie Van De Wetering (DVW), Mary Whitley, Hilary Wilkinson, Yukon Bird Club (YBC).

YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

2002/2003 Board of Directors

President:	Mary Whitley
Treasurer:	Nancy Hughes
Secretary:	Pam Sinclair
Special Projects:	Cameron Eckert
Field Trip Coordinator:	Wendy Nixon
Events Coordinator:	Peter Sandiford
Sightings Coordinator:	Helmut Grünberg
Checklist Coordinator:	Lee Kubica
Birdathon Coordinator:	Boris Dobrowolsky
Director at Large:	Jeanette McCrie
Newsletter Editor:	open
Youth Coordinator:	open

The Yukon Bird Club is a registered non-profit, charitable organization.

Membership fees:

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

Family memberships cover two or more people living at one address. Foreign members please pay with a Canadian dollar money order.

For more information contact:

Yukon Bird Club, Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 5P7

Email: YBC@yknet.yk.ca

Yukon Bird Club Web Site:
www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/

Yukon Warbler is published by the Yukon Bird Club. Copyright © 2002 Yukon Bird Club. All rights reserved. Printed material, artwork or photographs may not be reproduced by any means without permission from the author, artist or photographer. All other material may not be reproduced by any means without the Editor's permission.

Yukon Warbler editor: Cameron D. Eckert
Yukon Warbler - Fall 2002 - Volume 8, Number 2.



Yukon Bird Club Online

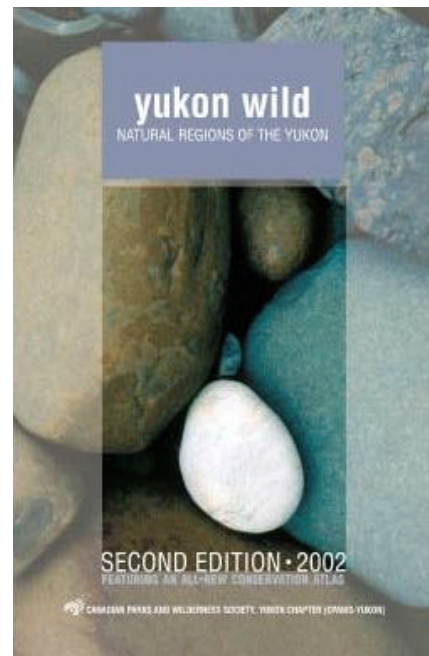
www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/

Yukon Bird Club's web site is the world's guide to birding North of 60°. The YBC web site is fully funded by the *Yukon Birdathon*.

YBC BIRDS: Email updates of sightings & events. To subscribe email ybc@yknet.yk.ca with the message "subscribe YBC BIRDS". To cancel send "cancel YBC BIRDS".



Yukon Wild – Second Edition, 2002



CPAWS-Yukon has published a beautiful natural history guide covering the rich diversity of the Yukon from the icy expanses of the St. Elias Mountains, east to the White Spruce forests of the Liard River, and north to the arctic tundra at the edge of the Beaufort Sea.

Contact; CPAWS-Yukon, Box 31095,
211 Main St., Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5P7.
Tel: (867) 393-8080.

For more information about the *Yukon Warbler* or back-issues contact:

**Cameron Eckert, 1402 Elm Street
Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 4B6
Phone: 867-667-4630
Email: ceckert@yknet.yk.ca**