

# Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club - Spring 2002



Downy Woodpecker, Whitehorse, Yukon. March 31, 2002.  
Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

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**INSIDE: Great Egret ♦ Watson Lake Migration Monitoring ♦ Birds of Vuntut National Park**

## Yukon Bird Club Field Trips and Events ~ Spring 2002

*All are welcome! For more information or to arrange a ride call Wendy Nixon at 668-7572.*

**What's with the Swans?** Join waterfowl biologist Jim Hawkings for a special presentation highlighting the remarkable story of the Yukon's swans. The presentation will be hosted as follows; Swan Haven Interpretation Centre on Tuesday 16 April at 7:30 PM; Beaver Creek Community Club on Wednesday 17 April at 7:30 PM; Haines Junction Visitor Centre on Thursday 18 April at 7:00 PM.

**Raptors Return! Saturday 27 April.** Join Jukka Jantunen at his perch above Schwatka Lake for an introduction to raptor migration. Wear warm clothing. Meet at the **S.S. Klondike at 9:30 AM.**

**Northern Shrikes and Mountain Bluebirds! Thursday 2 May.** Join Boris Dobrowolsky and Mary Whitley for an outing in search of early migrants. Meet at the **Porter Creek Super A at 6:30 PM.**

**Schwatka Lake Waterfowl Workshop! Wednesday 8 May.** Join Jeanette McCrie for an easy-paced introduction to waterfowl identification. Beginners welcome! Meet at the **S.S. Klondike at 6:30 PM.**

**International Migratory Birds Day! Saturday 11 May.** To participate in this annual count or to initiate a count in your community call Cameron Eckert at 667-4630.

**Jackfish Bay Waterfowl and Shorebird Bonanza! Wednesday 15 May.** Join Boris Dobrowolsky for this delightful outing to this rich bay on Lake Laberge. Meet at the **Porter Creek Super A at 6:30 PM.**

**Yukon River Birds! Tuesday 21 May.** Join Mary Whitley along the rich habitats of the Yukon River. Meet at the **Department of Education Building parking lot at 1000 Lewes Boulevard at 6:30 PM.**

**Walk with the Shorebirds! Thursday 23 May.** Delve into the myriad complexities of migrant shorebirds with Cameron Eckert. **Meet at the S.S. Klondike at 5:30 PM.**

**Watson Lake Double Header! Saturday 25 May.** Ted Murphy-Kelly is leading a morning trip to the Albert Creek banding station, and then an evening walk around Wye Lake. The Albert Creek trip meets at the **Wye Lake picnic site at 8:00 AM.** The Wye Lake walk meets at the **picnic site at 7:00 PM.**

**Judas Creek Migration Finale! Wednesday 29 May.** Join Jim Hawkings on this legendary outing to southern Yukon's premier rarity hotspot. Meet at the **S.S. Klondike at 5:30 PM.**

**Birdsong Identification Workshop! Sunday 26 May.** Join Pam Sinclair at the McIntyre Creek wetlands for this ever-popular bird song spring primer. Meet at the **Porter Creek Super A at 7:30 AM (morning).**

**Migration Happens! Monday 27 May.** Join Helmut Grünberg for an outing to the Whitehorse waste water treatment facility. Meet at the **S.S. Klondike at 6:30 PM.**

**Yukon Birdathon! Friday 31 May to Saturday 1 June.** Join our annual conservation education fundraiser. Meet at Wolf Creek campground for the potluck barbeque, Saturday at 6:00 PM. Call Boris Dobrowolsky (633-6404) for more information.

**Mary Lake Waterbirds! Thursday 6 June.** Join Wendy Nixon at this rich boreal lake near Wolf Creek which hosts nesting Barrow's Goldeneye & Red-necked Grebes. Meet at the **S.S. Klondike at 6:30 PM.**

**The Takhini Beaver Pond! Tuesday 11 June.** Journey with Jeanette McCrie to this fascinating wetland along McIntyre Creek. **Meet at the Takhini Elementary School parking lot at 7:00 PM.**

**Hidden Lakes Nesting Birds! Saturday 15 June.** Join Peter Sandiforth on this morning outing to the diverse shores of Hidden Lake. Meet at the **S.S. Klondike at 9:30 AM.**



## Yukon Bird Club Supports Community Projects

### Haines Junction Cliff Swallow Nesting Sites Project

The Yukon Bird Club has pledged \$500 in support of the “Haines Junction Cliff Swallow Nesting Sites” project. The project is being conducted by Hans Nelles and Henry Henkel of Haines Junction. The goals are; 1) to provide alternate nesting locations to lure Cliff Swallows away from buildings, and 2) enhance natural mosquito control near the community via Cliff Swallows. In May of 2001, Hans and Henry constructed eight Cliff Swallow nesting platforms similar to those found at Jake’s Corner. The platforms were placed around Haines Junction and were successfully used by nesting Cliff Swallows. This year the Yukon Bird Club’s contribution will go towards materials for additional nest platforms. Other supporting partners include the Town of Haines Junction, Parks Canada, and Northwest Tel.

### Southeast Yukon Songbird Migration Monitoring Station

The Yukon Bird Club is pleased to provide \$500 in support of the “Southeast Yukon Songbird Migration Monitoring Station” near Watson Lake. The migration monitoring and bird-banding station is coordinated by master bird-bander, Ted Murphy-Kelly of Watson Lake. The banding site is located along Albert Creek at Upper Liard just west of Watson Lake. The area is well known as the best Yukon location for Pileated Woodpecker. The project has received enthusiastic support from community members. Ted has been the Yukon Bird Club’s link to Watson Lake area bird sightings for the past few years and will be leading a field trip to Albert Creek and Wye Lake this spring. Ted describes the project below. For more information call Ted at 536-2057.

## Bird Banding and Migration Monitoring at Watson Lake

*By Ted Murphy-Kelly*

If you like seeing birds up close and personal, the Albert Creek Bird Banding Station near Watson Lake is where you want to be. An ideal site was found near Albert Creek and the Liard River. The mix of White Spruce forest and riparian habitats host diverse boreal songbird species including southeast Yukon specialties like Magnolia Warbler, American Redstart, Western Tanager, White-throated and Swamp Sparrows.

With the help of keen volunteers, 1,221 birds of 37 species were banded in 2001. The goal is to expand the banding station by integrating with the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network standardized protocols. These include both banding and field point counts to accurately assess migration activity. Plans also include working with the community to offer demonstrations for school children and citizens to promote understanding of bird biology, bird migration, and the ecological importance of southeast Yukon’s boreal forests.

**Visit the Albert Creek Banding Station!**  
**Saturday 25 May 2002**  
**Meet at the Wye Lake picnic site at 8:00 AM.**



The Liard River’s rich old-growth White Spruce forests are home to Pileated Woodpeckers and Western Tanagers. Photo by Pam Sinclair.



## A Great Egret touches down in central Yukon

By Cameron D. Eckert and Pamela Sinclair



Great Egret on the Stewart River, Yukon. May 19, 2001. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert.

When Del Buerge called on May 18, 2001 the excitement in his voice was obvious - and with good reason. Moments before, Del and his wife, Virginia were enjoying their lunch when a Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* landed at a puddle in the field in front of their farm house. The extreme rarity of this occurrence is evident when one considers that their farm is located 330 km northwest of Whitehorse, at the confluence of Partridge Creek and the Stewart River. That is, 2000 km northwest of south-coastal British Columbia where this species is considered very rare (Campbell et.al. 1990).

The Great Egret's arrival on the Friday of a long weekend and the fact that Del relocated it later that day on the Stewart River confirmed our plans for the weekend. As well, daylight was not a limiting factor. On Saturday, the Buerges' neighbour Ron Barrett kindly took us out in his riverboat for

a good look and to take some photos. Later on Saturday, Ron pointed the egret out to a group of eight canoeists on the river. Canoeist Maureen Wallingham took a photo which appeared along with the story in a local newspaper the following week. Helmut Grünberg also arrived later that day and enjoyed a good view of the egret. The Great Egret looked in good health and spent the day feeding at Steamboat Bar on the Stewart River. It had no trouble capturing small fish from the muddy pools along the gravel bar. This tall white egret, similar in size to a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*, with its long curved neck created a most striking image as it foraged alongside large chunks of river ice. Long white plumes trailed from its rump and the tips, which dipped into the murky river, were stained brownish. Its long legs and feet were black and its long dagger-like bill was bright orange with a bluish-green base to the upper mandible, extending through the lore to the eye.





Great Egret takes flight along the Stewart River, Yukon. May 19, 2001. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

The Great Egret at the Stewart River provided the Yukon's first record for this species. Del checked the river a few times through the following week or so, but the egret was not seen again after May 19. The nearest records from British Columbia are of one at Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands, on September 24, 1983; and one at Stum Lake in central B.C. on May 23, 1987 (Campbell et.al. 1990). There are at least seven Alaskan records, all from coastal locations on the Gulf of Alaska (Gibson and Kessel 1992; Gibson and Kessel 1997), the most recent being one at

Juneau on June 25-26, 1999 (David Sonneborn, Paul Suchanek, Gus van Vliet). It is impossible to know what route the Great Egret took on its journey to central Yukon. However, anyone who has ever flown over that country can appreciate the awesome and intimidating view it must have experienced. Partridge Creek farm would have appeared to this remarkable vagrant as a welcome relief in a vast landscape of mountains and forest. It was our good fortune that it landed at the doorstep of two of the very few birders in central Yukon.

### Acknowledgements

We very much appreciated the warm welcome we received at Partridge Creek farm from Del, Virginia, Michael, John and Rachel Buerge. Ron Barrett ensured that we obtained good photos and Gus van Vliet provided information on Alaskan records.

### References

- Campbell, R.W., Dawe, N.K., McTaggart-Cowan, I., Cooper, J.M., Kaiser, G.W., and C.E. McNall. 1990. The Birds of British Columbia, Volume 1, Nonpasserines, Introduction, Loons through Waterfowl. Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, B.C., Canada.
- Gibson, D.D., and B. Kessel. 1992. Seventy-four new avian taxa documented in Alaska. 1976-1991. Condor 94:454-467.
- Gibson, D.D., and B. Kessel. 1997. Inventory of the species and subspecies of Alaska birds. Western Birds 28(2):45-95.



## Interim Report on the Birds of Vuntut National Park - October 2001

This report presents a compilation of all bird species and breeding records documented by field staff within Vuntut National Park from 110 field days spanning the time period July 1997 through August 2001. We would like to thank all the people who submitted bird and breeding records to the database during this time period.

In addition, we draw your attention to bird species and breeding records from the Birds of the Yukon database. These records occur over a larger area, namely, the Old Crow Flats Special Management Area together with Vuntut National Park. The most current version of this database is given as Appendix 1, Chapter 11, Resource Description and Analysis for Vuntut National Park. This document is available at the DIAND Library, 3rd floor, Elijah Smith Building, 300 Main Street, Whitehorse, Yukon. From the Birds of Vuntut National Park database that is attached below, at the present time we conclude that 102 bird species are known to occur within VNP, and 17 of these species are known to breed there.

Several birds that occur within the park have been identified by COSEWIC as species at risk. These birds are:

Anatum Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) Status: Threatened

Tundra Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus tundrius*) Status: Special Concern

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) Status: Special Concern

The Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plan (2000; Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa) stresses that all arctic-breeding shorebirds are at some risk and in need of conservation measures. Keeping this main conclusion in mind, Appendix 6 of this report sets priorities concerning shorebirds that

occur in the United States and Canada. Species are classified according to the following categories: Highly Imperiled Species, Species of High Concern, Species of Moderate Concern, Species of Low Concern, and Species Not at Risk. For Vuntut National Park, shorebird species occur in the High or Moderate Concern categories; they are identified as follows:

### **Status: Shorebird Species of Moderate Concern**

Solitary Sandpiper  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
Common Snipe  
Red-necked Phalarope

### **Status: Shorebird Species of High Concern**

American Golden-Plover  
Whimbrel

Field observations suggest that there are healthy and fairly dense populations of American Golden-Plovers and Whimbrels occurring within Vuntut National Park. They have been observed in various open and tundra habitats in a number of locations within the park (see checklist below). Territorial displays suggest that both species breed within the park, although documented breeding records for the park have not yet been obtained.

Arctic-breeding shorebirds, especially the species identified above, are a valuable component of the wildlife of Vuntut National Park.

Comments concerning this interim report on the avifauna of Vuntut National Park would be welcomed. Please send them to David\_Henry@pch.gc.ca

Compiled by:  
David Henry, Conservation Ecologist  
Brian Farkas, Warden Patrolperson  
Rhonda Markel, Chief Park Warden



## Bird Sightings and Breeding Records from Vuntut National Park and Surrounding Areas, 1997-2001

This database records all bird species and breeding records documented by field staff within Vuntut National Park collected from 110 field days spanning the time period July 1997 through August 2001. The listings for relative abundance reflect the data as of September 18, 2001. One species, Barrow's Goldeneye, was not observed but is abundant in adjacent areas of Old Crow Flats. We would like to thank all the people who submitted bird and breeding records to the database during this time period.

### PARAMETERS:

Location codes listed for each species are formatted as a string with a code for each record.

Tally = total number of records (1997-2001).

% of 110 days = percent of field days that a species was observed.

### LOCATIONS:

Location #1: 2/3 up Thomas Creek (June 98), 68 30.23'N, 140 40.89'W

Location #2: 1/2 up Thomas Creek (June 99), 68 24.65'N, 140 42.63'W

Location #3: Old Crow River from Black Fox Creek to Town of Old Crow

Location #4: Town of Old Crow and immediate surrounding areas

Location #5: Foothills overlooking the O.C.Flats and NE towards Timber Ck. near aufeiss

Location #6: Boundary Patrol Mt. Ammerman & Vicinity

Location #7: Old Crow River between Thomas and Blackfox Creeks

Location #8: Old Crow Flats out of Park

Location #9: Old Crow Flats in the Park

Location #0: North East corner of Park

Location A : Old Crow River from Timber Creek to Blackfox Creek

Location B : Dog Creek area

Location C : North of Mount Clement

Location D : Sam Lake Area

### RELATIVE ABUNDANCE:

Common: The species is sighted on 50 percent or more of the daily checklists.

Uncommon: The species is sighted on between 49 and 20 percent of the daily checklists.

Rare: The species is sighted on less than 20 percent of the daily checklists.

Hypothetical: A record for the species within Vuntut National Park has not been established.

### CONFIRMED BREEDING CRITERIA:

Breeding is confirmed by the sighting of an active nest with eggs or offspring, or an adult bird with flightless young.

### CHECKLIST:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Relative Abundance	Tally	percent of days	Breeding Record (m-d-y)	Locations
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Rare	8	7.3%		1133333B
Pacific Loon	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>	Rare	8	7.3%		1233377D
Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		733
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Rare	15	13.6%		12222223398099999
Gr. White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	Uncommon	23	20.9%	61899,	1777777233330AAA333BDD
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Uncommon	22	20.0%	61599,	11111117222222232003BD
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Rare	4	3.6%		5233
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		73
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Rare	11	10.0%	61398,62098,	51117722330
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		10D
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Rare	6	5.5%		23380B
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	Rare	6	5.5%		733330
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		7
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		1B
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		1
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		11

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Common Name	Scientific Name	Relative Abundance	Tally	percent of days	Breeding Record (m-d-y)	Locations
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Rare	4	3.6%	80697(f w/5young)	522B
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		13
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Rare	9	8.2%		12330A333
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		13B
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		DD
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Rare	4	3.6%		1122
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		172
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		13D
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Rare	10	9.1%		37700AA33B
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Uncommon	22	20.0%	60999,	11111117222220000BBDD1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		111
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		77
Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		3
Rough-legged Hawk	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Rare	8	7.3%	61601(4eggs)	5662000C
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Uncommon	30	27.3%	61101(with1young)	5511172300000A3BBBBBC CCC0DDD11
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		173
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Rare	6	5.5%		5177A3
Gyrfalcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		B
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Rare	19	17.3%		56777713300AA3333
Willow Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Rare	19	17.3%	60999,	200000000BBBBBC0DDDD
Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>	Rare	19	17.3%	61498	5661000BBBCCCCCCCC
Sandhill Crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		7
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		1
American Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	Uncommon	26	23.6%		51111120000000BBCCCC CCCCD
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>	Rare	6	5.5%	62198,61999,	112333
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Rare	4	3.6%		200D
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Uncommon	33	30.0%	61099,	11111111222220000000B CCCC0DDDD
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		1
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Uncommon	27	24.6%	61298,61598,6089 9,61199,	11111112222220000000 00A0
Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>	Rare	6	5.5%		12233C
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Rare	18	16.4%		111111122222222B
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		C
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	Rare	5	4.6%		2CCDD
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		DD
Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Rare	5	4.6%		55CDDD
Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Uncommon	31	28.2%		51111112220000000BBCCC CC0DDDD
Mew Gull	<i>Larus brachyrhynchos</i>	Rare	15	13.6%		122224AAA333B1
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisea</i>	Rare	5	4.6%		22229
Northern Hawk Owl	<i>Surnia ulula</i>	Rare	7	6.4%		5221111
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Rare	18	16.4%		56111111722200CDDD
Great Gray Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		3
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		A
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		560
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus borealis</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		22
Alder Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		24
Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Rare	20	18.2%		5111200000BCCCCCDD
Tree Swallow	<i>Iridoprocne bicolor</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		333
Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		23
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Rare	8	7.3%		11337AA3
Cliff Swallow	<i>Hirundo pyrrhonota</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		43
Gray Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	Uncommon	22	20.0%	61698,	5111111172222300311111
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Uncommon	43	39.1%		5611117722222233400AAA 333BBBCCCCDD111111
Gray-headed Chickadee	<i>Parus cinctus</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		2
Boreal Chickadee	<i>Parus hudsonicus</i>	Rare	8	7.3%		11720B11
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>	Rare	4	3.6%		111C
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		BB

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Common Name	Scientific Name	Relative Abundance	Tally	percent of days	Breeding Record (m-d-y)	Locations
Gray-cheeked Thrush	<i>Catharus minimus</i>	Rare	21	19.1%		11222222222222300
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		4
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	Uncommon	42	38.2%	61798,	5111111111111122200000000000BBBBBCC11111
Varied Thrush	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>	Rare	9	8.2%		222222333
American Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	Rare	14	12.7%		5110BBBCCCCCCC
Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		2222000
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Vermivora pergrina</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		0
Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Vermivora celata</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		1
Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>	Rare	18	16.4%		11111222220000BCC1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Uncommon	34	30.9%		11111111117222220000000001
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Dendroica striata</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		5
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>	Rare	11	10.0%		111122220B9
American Tree Sparrow	<i>Spizella arborea</i>	Uncommon	30	27.3%	61199,	5111111111177222220AABBBBB9D1
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		CCD
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	Uncommon	37	33.6%	61199,	561111122222200000BBBBBCCCCCCCC0DD
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	Uncommon	47	42.7%		51111111111172222000000000000ABBBBBCCCCCD
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Rare	10	9.1%		12227220003
Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Rare	9	8.2%		0BBBBCCCD
Smith's Longspur	<i>Calcarius pictus</i>	Rare	7	6.4%		111BCO
Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		112
White-winged Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		111
Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Uncommon	26	23.6%	61701nest	51000000BBBBBBCCCCC CDDD11
Hoary Redpoll	<i>Carduelis hornemanni</i>	Rare	22	20.0%		11111111112222200000C
Redpoll species	<i>Carduelis spp.</i>	Rare	10	9.1%		000000000
Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>	Rare	10	9.1%		1112240BBD
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolnii</i>	Rare	6	5.5%		BBBBBB
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		C
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Rare	1	0.9%		5
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	Rare	2	1.8%		22
Pine Siskin	<i>Carduelis pinus</i>	Rare	3	2.7%		55D



Common Redpoll – a confirmed breeder at Vuntut National Park. 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](mailto:grunberg@yknet.yk.ca)), or Cameron Eckert (phone: 667-4630; email: [ceckert@yknet.yk.ca](mailto:ceckert@yknet.yk.ca)). Include important details such as date, location, number, and observer(s). Please provide 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.

### Summer 2001 (June - July)

The northern summer brought a mix of wet and hot weather. A late but interesting spring sighting was of a **Yellow-billed Loon** at Strickland Lake in central Yukon on May 25 (DC). Two **Snow Geese**, late on migration, were at Dawson City on June 2 (SS). Three uncommon duck species for the Dempster region were one male **Gadwall**, one male **Eurasian Wigeon**, and two male **Redhead**, all at Two Moose Lake on June 17 (PJ). A pair of **Gadwall** seen on June 19 at Stokes Point on the Yukon's North Coast (Arctic Ocean) was at the limit of the species' range (PJ). A count of 15 **Redhead** was made at Tthe Ndu Lake (Rock Island Lake) just north of Minto on June 6 (CE,AM). **Peregrine Falcon** reports included one at Stokes Point on the Yukon North Coast (Arctic Ocean) on June 19 (PJ), one flying over Whitehorse on June 23 (HG,YBC), one near Dawson City on July 22 (MG), and a nest at a new location along the North Klondike River in central Yukon (GB).



The Ndu Lake south of Pelly Crossing is part of the Von Wilczek Lakes complex which is recognized as one of the Yukon's significant wetland areas. This photo was taken on August 3, 2001 by Cameron D. Eckert.



All three **ptarmigan** species were seen at Mt. Victoria in the Dawson Range on June 9 with four **Willow**, six **Rock**, and three **White-tailed Ptarmigan** (CE,AM). A female **Rock Ptarmigan** with eight small downy young was seen on top of Mt. McIntyre on July 2 (HG,RH) for a rare Whitehorse area breeding record. A **Blue Grouse** with one chick provided a breeding record for Mt. McIntyre on July 17 (MM,IR,RW).

**Upland Sandpiper** sightings included six at the Rodeo Grounds on the North Klondike Highway north of Whitehorse on June 9 (HG), six pairs in the vicinity of Mt. Victoria in the Dawson Range on June 9 (CE), and one at Mt. McIntyre on July 17 (MM,IR,RW). A late movement of **Whimbrels** produced two at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge on June 4 (HG), a remarkable nine, apparently stalled out on migration perhaps due to snow cover at higher elevations, at Halfway Lake, northeast of Mayo on June 7 (CE), and three at the Atlin slough, B.C. on June 8 (MC). Fall shorebird migration at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons produced ten adult **Western Sandpipers** on July 26, and 150 **Red-necked Phalarope** on July 29 (CE). Reports of **Wilson's Phalarope** included a pair at Tthe Ndu Lake (Rock Island Lake) on June 6 (CE,AM), which provided an extension to the species' known range; two females at Judas Creek, Marsh Lake on June 15 (PJ), seven at Swan Lake, north of Whitehorse on June 12 (HG,BS), and two juveniles at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on July 26-29 (CE).

A nice find at Marsh Lake on June 15 was a 2nd-summer **Franklin's Gull** (PJ) which provided the second Whitehorse area and third Yukon record for the species. A count of 80 **Bonapartes's Gulls** at Halfway Lake on June 7 (CE) suggested that migration was still underway. A count of 243 **Herring Gull** chicks was made at three small colonies on the west shore of Lake Laberge on July 27 (BL,SR). Summer rarities at the Whitehorse landfill included a 2nd-summer **California Gull** on June 21-22 (CE), a 1st-summer **Glaucous Gull** on July 24-30 (CE;LC), and an adult **Glaucous Gull** on July 27-30 (CE). The **Mourning Dove** is a rare but regular wanderer to the Yukon, and singles were noted at Lake Laberge on June 6 (BL,SR), and at Marsh Lake on June 11 (RFI,JH). A **Rufous Hummingbird** put in an appearance in downtown Whitehorse on July 9 (JB).

Our knowledge of the distribution of **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** in the north was edged ever forward with two singing birds at Keno City on June 9 (CE); three were noted at their regular location on the Mt. McIntyre Breeding Bird Survey near Whitehorse on June 13 (CE). A singing **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Ethel Lake on June 7 (CE) established a new central Yukon location for this species. **Dusky Flycatchers** were noted on three Breeding Bird Survey routes with ten on the Mt. McIntyre route on June 13 (CE), one on the Rancheria route on June 16 (HG), and one at White Mountain on the Atlin Road route on June 17 (PS); as well, two were at the Coal Lake uplands south of Mt. Granger on July 4 (MGi), and one was at Bear Creek, southern Yukon on July 9 (MGi). Two singing **Blue-headed Vireos** were noted along the Rancheria Loop Road near Upper Liard on June 11 (PJ), and one was heard and seen in the area on June 17 (HG). A staggering 3000 **swallows**, mostly **Bank**, but also **Tree**, **Violet-green** and **Cliff** were staging at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on July 26 (CE). Two **Northern Rough-winged Swallows**, rare in the Yukon, were in the company of a group of **Bank Swallows** along the Yukon River at Wolf Creek campground on June 9 (PJ). A **Brown Creeper**, noted on June 10 near Haines Junction (MGi) provided further evidence that this species is established in the area. Reports of **Winter Wrens**, only regularly found in southeastern Yukon, included two in the Teslin area on June 13 and 28 (MGi), one at Montana Mountain on July 17 (JT,IR,RW), and the Yukon's northernmost at Dah Grhow (McArthur) hotsprings in central Yukon on July 23 (BM,MO). A rare **Cedar Waxwing** was seen on the Rancheria Loop Road near Upper Liard on July 12 (RFo).

A count of 15 **Tennessee Warblers** along the Rancheria Loop Road near Upper Liard on June 17 (HG) was high for the area. The Rancheria Loop Road near Upper Liard hosts a number of species at the western limit of their range including **Magnolia Warbler**, and nine were tallied there on June 17 (HG). **Townsend's Warblers** were reported in low numbers from Whitehorse, Teslin, Montana Mountain, Dawson City and Paint Mountain near Kluane Lake; this species apparently has been increasing along the



North Klondike River in recent years (GB). **American Redstarts** continue to have a toe-hold in the Whitehorse area with two at Huanka Creek on the Atlin Road on June 17 (PS), and one at Beaver Creek on June 7 (MGi). Single **MacGillivray's Warblers** were heard near Teslin on June 11 and at Nistulin River Delta on June 14 (MGi).

A **Clay-coloured Sparrow** singing at Wye Lake in Watson Lake on June 11 and 14 provided a rare Yukon record (PJ). A **Timberline Brewer's Sparrow** was heard singing at its regular location on Montana Mountain at the abandoned mining camp on June 10 (PJ), and two were in the Coal Lake uplands south of Mt. Granger on July 4 (MGi). A singing **White-throated Sparrow** was noted right at the edge of its range on the Rancheria Breeding Bird Survey route on June 16 (HG). **Snow Buntings** are known to nest in driftwood piles along the Yukon North Coast (Arctic Ocean), which accounts for a male singing from the driftwood at Stokes Point on June 19 (PJ). A female **Brewer's Blackbird**, very rare in the Yukon, was reported by two independent observers in downtown Whitehorse on June 2 (HH;NH).

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### **Fall 2001 (August, September, October, November)**

Yukoners enjoyed pleasant early fall weather with relatively warm temperatures and sunny days. By contrast, October and November temperatures were well below normal. Even the larger lakes, such as Lake Laberge, had mostly frozen over by the end of November. An adult **Red-throated Loon** looked out of place at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on September 1 (BD,CE,HG,YS); up to five were present on Lake Laberge through October 6 (BD,CE,HG), and one was there on October 30 (BD,HG). A total of 20 **Common Loons** was noted at Upper Snafu Lake on August 25 (MGi), and 35 were tallied at Lake Laberge on September 26 (BD,HG). A long-staying **Yellow-billed Loon** was at Schwatka Lake in Whitehorse from October 17 to November 5 (CE,HG), and a juvenile was at Lewes Marsh on November 20 (JJ). A **Western Grebe** was a nice find at Lake Laberge on September 26 (BD,HG). Single **Great Blue Herons**, rare in the Yukon, were seen at the confluence of the Little and Big Rancheria Rivers on August 28 (KR,MR), and near the old Meister River bridge about 55 km west of Watson Lake on September 2 (TM-K).



A female Gadwall with young at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons on August 9, 2001 established the first breeding record for the Whitehorse area. This photo was taken on June 14, 2001 by Cameron D. Eckert.



A flock of 50 **Brant** was noted on the Yukon's North Coast just west of the N.W.T. border on September 21 (BMT). A **Tundra Swan** was encountered at Pine Lake near Haines Junction at the late date of November 26 (MA,BD,YS). Noteworthy **Gadwall** observations from the Whitehorse sewage lagoons included an adult female with one tiny duckling on August 9 (CE), which established the second confirmed breeding record of the Yukon and the first of Whitehorse; an adult female with seven nearly fully grown young on September 1 (CE), and a record high count of 44 on October 18 (CE,HG). Waterfowl numbers at the Whitehorse lagoons were dominated by **American Wigeon** with high counts of 2500 in September, and **Northern Shovelers** with high counts of 1000 in August (CE,HG). A fully albino **Northern Shoveler** was a striking sight at the Whitehorse lagoons on August 23 (BD,CE,HG). Three **Harlequin Ducks** on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on October 8 provided the only report of the season (CE,PS). An impressive concentration of approximately 1000 **Surf** and 500 **White-winged Scoters** was noted at Lake Laberge on September 26 (BD,HG). Three **Ruddy Ducks** were at the Faro Sewage Lagoons on August 17 (HG).

A **Northern Goshawk** was at the clay cliffs in Whitehorse on August 9 (KW), and an adult bird put on a fine show at Shallow Bay, Lake Laberge on October 13 (CE,YBC). Two dark-morph **Swainson's Hawks** were carefully noted at Henderson Corner near Dawson on September 8 (GB,MBr). Three **Rough-legged Hawks** were moving south over Whitehorse on September 30 (CE,PS). Small numbers of migrant **Rough-legged Hawks** were regularly seen through October, but most unusual were two light-morph birds which spent about a month from mid-October through the third week of November in Whitehorse (m.ob.). **Merlin** were a regular fixture at the Whitehorse lagoons through the season; one was seen taking a juvenile **Lesser Yellowlegs** there on September 4 (CE). Single **Gyrfalcons** were seen at the Whitehorse lagoons on August 23 (BD,CE,HG) and September 12 (CE). **Peregrine Falcons** were also regularly noted at the Whitehorse lagoons with a high count of three on September 5 (CE). An adult female **White-tailed Ptarmigan** with two small young was seen at Klaza Mountain in the Dawson Range on August 8 (CE). Nine (two adult, seven juvenile) **American Coots** were at the Faro sewage lagoons on August 19 (HG). In sharp contrast to the fall of 2000, a mere trickle of **coots** was noted at the Whitehorse lagoons this season with just 1-2 birds noted on a few occasions through September (CE;HG).

Regular checks of the Whitehorse sewage lagoons turned up a remarkable 26 shorebird species: Highlights included this season's only report of a **Black-bellied Plover** on September 28 (HG); the Yukon's first fall records of **Pacific Golden-Plovers** (all juveniles) with one on September 2 (HG), two on September 7-8 (CE), and three on September 12 (CE); southern Yukon's first fall record of **Red Knot**, a juvenile, on August 22-24 (TL;HG,YBC;CE); a juvenile **Dunlin** on August 25 (HG), and single **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** on August 23 (BD,CE,HG), September 2 (HG), and September 4 (CE). At the Whitehorse lagoons, a few individual **shorebirds** demonstrated remarkable staying power including a record late juvenile **Semipalmated Plover** on October 11-22 (CE,HG), and a record late juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** on October 4-18 (CE,HG). A high count of 25 **Killdeer** was made at the Whitehorse lagoons on September 7 (CE), and a very late **Killdeer** was feeding between the ice patches on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on October 27 (CE). A record-late **Spotted Sandpiper** was on the Yukon River in Whitehorse on October 8 (CE,PS). Four **Upland Sandpipers** were feeding on the runway grasses of the Whitehorse airport on August 9 (KW). **Stilt Sandpipers** peaked at the Whitehorse lagoons at 35 on August 25 (CE). Elsewhere, a **Baird's Sandpiper** was seen at an elevation of 1750 metres on Klaza Mountain in the Dawson Range on August 8 (CE). The last **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen at the Whitehorse lagoons on October 23 (HG). Single juvenile **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were seen at the Whitehorse lagoons on September 1 (CE;BD,HG), September 7-8 (CE), and a record-late bird on October 14-23 (CE,HG). Single juvenile **California Gulls** were noted at the Whitehorse landfill on August 17 and 30 (CE). An adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** seen 60 km northwest of Herschel Island on September 13 (BMT) provided a very rare Yukon record. **Snowy Owls** are rarely encountered on migration in the Yukon; one was seen in Tagish on October 22 (AS,RS); one was at Kluane National Park in southwestern Yukon on November 6-7, and then found dead on November 8 (LF), and one was noted at McQuesten airstrip in central Yukon on November 15 (KS). A remarkable eight individual **Northern Hawk Owls**



were tallied in the vicinity of Whitehorse through November (m.ob.). A **Great Gray Owl** was seen at the Tom Creek Road just north of Watson Lake on November 24 (TM-K). **Short-eared Owl** sightings included one near Dezadeash Lake in southwestern Yukon on November 1 (BD,HG), one in downtown Whitehorse on November 3 (JJ), one at Whitehorse-Porter Creek on November 12 (CE,PS), and one at Watson Lake on November 20 (TM-K). A feeding concentration of 40 **Common Nighthawks** was noted in Whitehorse on August 28 (CE). A female-type **Rufous Hummingbird** was exciting in Whitehorse-Riverdale on September 17-18 (MBo,KM). An unidentified **hummingbird** was seen at Whitehorse-Pine Ridge on August 17 (JH). A male **Hairy Woodpecker** appeared at a Teslin feeder in on November 13 (MGa). A **Pileated Woodpecker** was regularly seen along the Rancheria Loop Road (also known as Albert Creek Road) at Upper Liard, southeastern Yukon during banding operations there from August 25 to September 4 (TM-K). The latest sighting in that area was made on November 20 (MGo), although a **Pileated Woodpecker** was subsequently sighted in Watson Lake during the winter (*fide* TM-K).

A record-late **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Lake Laberge on October 6 was foraging successfully despite its wildly crossed bill (CE). **Northern Shrike** sightings included an adult eating a **Common Redpoll** in Whitehorse on November 6 (HG), one at McIntyre Creek on November 20 (JJ,ARou), and an adult near Schwatka Lake in Whitehorse on November 23 (HG). An adult **Warbling Vireo** was feeding three fresh juveniles at Whitehorse-Porter Creek on August 17 (CE,PS). A minor incursion of **Steller's Jays** was noted with one or two in Carcross in mid October (DK), one at Tagish on October 24 (TG), and one at Atlin, B.C. on November 2 (MC). Two **Common Ravens** eating Mountain Ash berries in Whitehorse on November 23 were competing with the **waxwings** for the last of the berry supply (CE,PS). A **Boreal Chickadee**, rare along the Arctic Ocean, was seen at Shingle Point on September 14 (BMT). A migrant flock of 60 **American Robins** was noted at Swan Lake near Whitehorse on September 9 (BD,YS); and a flock of 17 was flying south over Lake Laberge the same day (CE). Among late **robins**, one was heard at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge on October 30 (HG) and two were sighted in Whitehorse-Hillcrest on November 7 (LC). **Bohemian Waxwings** started building up in mid October to peak with record numbers of at least 1200 birds in Whitehorse by late November (m.ob.). Up to 40 **Bohemian Waxwings** were noted feeding on Mountain Ash berries in Teslin on November 10-20 (MGa).



Many of the Bohemian Waxwings that invaded Whitehorse in November stayed through the winter. This bird, showing its prominent crest, was photographed in Whitehorse on December 2, 2001 by Cameron D. Eckert.



A late **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was eating soapberries at Shadow Lake, near Whitehorse on October 29-31 (DR,SR). An "**Audubon's**" **Yellow-rumped Warbler** provided a rare fall record at Marsh Lake on November 3 (JJ). A record-late **Townsend's Warbler** appeared to be fleeing from the cold in downtown Whitehorse on October 20 (CE).

A late **Lincoln's Sparrow** appeared at a downtown Whitehorse feeder on October 27 and remained through November but apparently succumbed to the cold shortly thereafter (HG). In central Yukon, a **Fox Sparrow** remained at a feeder until October 17 to provide a late record for Mayo (MOD). Two interior-race **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** were at a Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge feeder from November 8-10, with one remaining through the season (ARob,MRob,m.ob.); another interior-race bird was at a Simpson Lake feeder in southeastern Yukon on November 25-28 (HMK,TM-K,RR,UR,). In Teslin, a good winter for **Pine Grosbeaks** began in November with up to 36 visiting a Fox Point feeder (MGa). A flock of 60 **Common Redpolls** was seen at Five Mile Lake near Mayo on August 5 (PS).

### **Observers:**

Monty Alford, Jeremy Baumbach, Malcolm Boothroyd (MBo), Greg Brunner, Marlene Brunner (MBr), Linda Cameron, Mark Connor, Dorothy Cooley, Boris Dobrowolsky, Cameron Eckert, Rob Florkiewicz (RFI), Roger Foxall (RFo), Lloyd Freese, Margaret Garolitz (MGa), Mike Gill (MGi), Terry Gireaux, Marie Gordon (MGo), Helmut Grünberg, Jim Hawkings, Heidi Hehn, Rudi Houtrouw, Nancy Hughes, Jukka Jantunen, Paul Jones, Dan Kemble, Tim Lawton, Brian Lendrum, Bruce MacTavish (BMT), Ken Madsen, Bruce McLean, many observers (m.ob.), Mitch Meridith, Anne Munier, Holly Murphy-Kelly (HMK), Ted Murphy-Kelly (TM-K), Mark O'Donoghue (MOD), Kerry Reese, Melanie Reese, Reiner Rembe, Ulla Rembe, Alf Roberts (ARob), Marlene Roberts, Ian Robertson, Susan Ross, Amélie Rousseau (ARou), Don Russell, Sharon Russell, Betty Siegel, Pam Sinclair, Kent Sinnott, Sandy Sippola, Art Smith, Renie Smith, Sandy Sippola, Yammy Stote, John Toochin, Keith Williams, Robert Worona, Yukon Bird Club (YBC).

### **Hoary Redpoll classic:**



Observers reported good numbers of redpolls in the winter of 2001/02. As usual, Common Redpolls greatly outnumbered Hoary Redpolls by about 100 to 1. This **Hoary Redpoll** was photographed by Cameron Eckert in Whitehorse on April 1, 2002. It shows the species' distinctive face shape and small bill, white undertail coverts, thin flank streaking, relatively pale back and scapulars, and bushy leggings. Not seen in these photos is its pristine white rump. For comparison refer to the Common Redpoll photo on page 9.



## YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

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<http://www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/>

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**YBC BIRDS:** A free email information flyway with updates of sightings, events and issues. To subscribe email ybc@yknet.yk.ca with the message "subscribe YBC BIRDS". To cancel send "cancel YBC BIRDS".

## THANKS JIM!

On behalf of the membership, the Yukon Bird Club Board of Directors extends its sincere thanks to Jim Hawkings for his service as Events Coordinator. Our spring 2002 schedule shows that Jim will continue sharing his wonderful enthusiasm for birds, especially the spectacular Trumpeter Swans, through field trips and talks.



## Welcome aboard Peter!

Peter Sandiforth, a biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service has joined the Yukon Bird Club's Board of Directors as Events Coordinator. He is keen to hear your ideas for club events and can be reached by phone (667-2838) or email (petersan@yukon.net).



## ... more thanks!

The Yukon Bird Club thanks the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society for permission to reprint Ted Murphy-Kelly's article entitled "Bird Banding and Migration Monitoring at Watson Lake" which originally appeared in *Yukon Wild*.

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