

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

Fall 2008



• Sightings Reports • Bird Observatory Updates • Bird Quiz •

YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

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

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Yukon Bird Club Web Site:

www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/

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Yukon Warbler editor: Ben Schonewille
Yukon Warbler - Fall 2008

Cover Photo

Willow Ptarmigan, by Jukka Jantunen
2008-06-02, Chilkat Pass

Back Cover Graphic

From Jim Hawking Photo

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Yukon Bird Club Annual General Meeting will be held on February 25th, 2009. Additional details will be provided at a later date.

The AGM is open to all members and you are encouraged to attend and make your voices heard. New ideas are always welcome and if you are looking to become more involved in the Yukon Bird Club, this is your opportunity to do so.

2008 Board of Directors

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Submissions and Comments Wanted

Please send us your articles and photos. You can email the newsletter editor at:

yukon.bird.club.newsletter@gmail.com .

Or send your regular mail to the Yukon Bird Club post box and put attention newsletter director.

Please include any additional information to accompany photographs including date and location.

We want your comments, good or bad !



YUKON BIRD CLUB NEWS

In an attempt to reduce incidental killing of migratory birds (and their eggs), the Yukon Bird Club recently reached an agreement with the Yukon Department of Highways in regards to brush clearing along Yukon highways. For safety and aesthetic concerns, regular clearing of brush must be carried within the right-of-way of Yukon highways. Due to this recent agreement, there will be no brush clearing along roadways during the most sensitive time for breeding birds (June 1st to July 15th). However, during that time there will be some mowing of invasive plant species (sweet clover) during this time.

YUKON BIRD CLUB UPCOMING EVENTS

Join Ben Schonewille and Ted Murphy-Kelly from the Teslin Lake and Albert Creek Bird Observatories for a slide show presentation. Come see what exciting captures turned up at the observatories in 2008. Both Teslin Lake and Albert Creek continue to learn a great deal about bird migration in the Yukon, including common species and some truly exciting rarities.

Where: Whitehorse Public Library

When: Tuesday, January 13th, 2009 at 7pm

WINTER BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES

With the advent of winter, many birders find themselves thinking back to the past season's birding adventures and undoubtedly thinking ahead to seeing their first robin next spring. However, the winter offers some interesting birding options as well. An excellent place to start is to participate in a Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Many Yukon communities hold a CBC every year in an attempt to participate in a continent wide effort to monitor bird populations. To take part in a CBC, simply contact the count's compiler for a route assignment and brief set of instructions. A list of Yukon counts being conducted this year (including compiler contact information can be found on the following page.

An additional winter birding opportunity is the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) which similar to the Christmas Bird Count, is conducted annually across North America. For all the details regarding the upcoming GBBC (takes place in early 2009), visit the FAQ section at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.



Christmas Bird Counts Schedule 2007/08

Watson Lake

Date: Friday, December 26, 2007
For time and specific route assignment
please contact
Ted Murphy-Kelly, Whitehorse 456-7431

Haines Junction

Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2008
Time: 9:15 a.m.
Location: Visitor Information Centre
For specific route assignment please contact
Julie Bauer, Haines Junction 634-2002

Carcross

Date: Saturday, December 20, 2008
For time and specific route assignment
please contact
Dan Kemble, Carcross 821-3461

Whitehorse

Date: Friday, December 26, 2008
For time and specific route assignment
please contact Wendy Nixon before Dec. 20,
Whitehorse 668-7572

Teslin

Date: Sunday, January 4, 2009
For time and specific route assignment
please contact
Ben Schonewille, Whitehorse, 334-2683

Mayo

Date: Monday, December 29, 2008
For details please contact
Mark O'Donoghue
Mayo 996-2529 (home) or 996-2162 (work)

Marsh Lake – Yukon River

Date: Sunday, December 21, 2008
Time: 9:15 a.m.
Location: Yukon River bridge at Lewes
Marsh (Alaska Highway)
For information please contact
Clive Osborne, Whitehorse 667-6976

Skagway, Alaska

Date: Sunday, December 14, 2007
Compiler: Elaine Furbish
for up to date information please check
(groups.google.com/group/skagway-bird-club)



Bohemian Waxwings are an exciting find on Yukon Christmas Bird Counts (Photo: Cameron Eckert).



Common Redpolls are often one of the most abundant bird species encountered on Yukon Christmas Bird Counts (Photo: Cameron Eckert).



OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Sightings Report – Fall 2007

Compiled by Cameron D. Eckert

Please report your observations to the Yukon Bird Club via the sightings coordinator, Cameron Eckert phone: 667-4630; email: cdeckert@northwestel.net. 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.

In 2007, the Arctic region experienced what scientists have called the “Big Melt.” Local residents and veteran researchers alike viewed this year’s loss of Arctic sea ice with stunned disbelief. The influence on wildlife was swift and pronounced; thousands of walrus were forced to land along the nw. coast of Alaska, while a lost polar bear showed up on the Dempster Hwy. at Ft. McPherson, NWT. Ice-dependent breeders such as Ivory Gull endured yet another season of poor productivity. These are not the “early warning signs” of climate change; this is global warming in action and nothing indicates a positive outcome for our birds, wildlife, and ecosystems. What to do? Make climate change action part of your own life – don’t wait for governments. Walk and bike more, drive and fly less, take the bus or train, follow the 3 Rs (especially reduce), eat locally, grow your own food, enjoy nature, strive for fossil-fuel free (or reduced) birding and share your ideas with family, friends, and neighbours.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A flock of 40 Snow Geese at Herschel I., n. Yukon 22 Aug included 2 (ad. & juv.) blue morph individuals (ph. CE); the only previous Yukon record of this colour morph was from nearby Nunaluk Spit 28 Aug 1971. The Whitehorse sewage ponds has proven to be a s. Yukon waterfowl hotspot; high counts this season were 550 Canada Geese, 250 Gadwall, 1200 American Wigeon, and 500 Bufflehead all on 9 Sept, and 110 Ruddy Ducks 29 Sept (HG). An influx of an estimated 1100 Mallards was recorded at the s. end of L. Laberge, s. Yukon 16 Nov (HG, BSu). Six Harlequin Ducks were seen at Louise L. in Kluane NP., sw. Yukon 1 Sept (LF). About 1200 Surf Scoters and 110 Long-tailed Ducks were noted on Pauline Cove and Workboat Passage at Herschel I., n. Yukon 18 Aug (CE, PF, EN, KR). A fem. Black Scoter at Tagish Narrows 1 Nov (ph. CE, HG), was only the second s. Yukon fall record. A male Hooded Merganser, rare in s. Yukon, was at Shallow Bay 4 Oct (ph. MB, PB). A Dusky Grouse, uncommon but rarely reported in fall, was seen at treeline on Mt. Vanier, sw. Yukon 15 Sept (TS). A Western Grebe, casual in s. Yukon in fall, was reported from Nares L. 29 Oct (BD). A Swainson’s Hawk seen from the Albert Cr. banding station 16 Sept (JJ) provided the first record for se. Yukon. Rough-legged Hawks were on the move through the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon in early Oct; for example, 8 were seen along with 10 unid. buteos 8 Oct (HG, CK). A total of 19 Peregrine Falcons was seen on a trip down the Snake and Peel R., cen. Yukon 27-31 Aug (TJ, ST). Two Peregrines were patrolling Swan L., s. Yukon 5 Sept (CE, BD, HG), and 2 ads. were seen near the Bluefish R., n. Yukon 6 Sept (BSc). American Coot numbers were down this season at the Whitehorse sewage ponds, s. Yukon with a high count of 45 on 11 & 14 Sept (HG). Sandhill Cranes are an uncommon migrant through the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon; 20 were over Kookatsoon L. 8 Oct (MG), about 100 southbound migrants were seen 4 Oct (CB; HG); further east, a flock of 200 was seen at Nisutlin R. delta 17 Sept (DD). Ripping se. winds at Herschel I., n. Yukon 22 Aug produced an exciting shorebird fallout; leading in numbers were American Golden-Plover (50) and Pectoral Sandpiper (500), with numerous flocks streaking by in the distance (CE). While fall shorebird migration in Whitehorse does not produced big numbers, the diversity can be impressive; rarest among the 17 species of shorebirds observed 29 Aug were 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers and 1 juv. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (ph. CE; HG). A flock of 8 juv. Dunlin at Herschel I. 23 Aug (ph. CE), though not unexpected, was the first record of the species for the island. A lone Dunlin, rare in fall in s. Yukon, was seen in Whitehorse 17-19 Oct (HG). A record-late Wilson’s Snipe lingered on the Yukon R. in Whitehorse to 7 Nov (CE; JH; CCM).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

An ad. Glaucous-winged Gull at Herschel I., n. Yukon, apparently returning for the 3rd consecutive year, was seen 22 Jul & 17-23 Aug (ph. CE; PF). An ad. basic **Black-legged Kittiwake**, just the 2nd for s. Yukon, touched down briefly on Schwatka L. in Whitehorse 15 Oct (wd. CE, HG). Black Guillemot monitoring at Herschel I., n. Yukon yielded a high count of about 40 adults (about the same as 2006); a total of 12 nests contained 16 chicks (just slightly higher than 2006) (DA, CE, PF, CG, LJM). A Mourning Dove, rare but regular in the Yukon, was seen at Carcross 21 Sept (ph. GB, LL). Ten Snowy Owls were seen on the nw. side of Herschel I., n. Yukon 18 Aug (ph. CE, PF, EN, KR). A Snowy Owl was reported from the n. Klondike Hwy. between Minto and Lhustaw L. 12 Oct (SS). Two Short-eared Owls were seen along the Snake



R., cen. Yukon 29 Aug (TJ, ST). The Albert Creek Banding Station investigated owl banding this fall with some success; 2 Boreal Owls were banded 2 Sept, and a **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, the first reported from se. Yukon, was heard 2-3 Sept (TMK, JJ, BSc). A hummingbird was reported from Dawson City, cen. Yukon 27 Aug to 18 Sept (ML). A Black-backed Woodpecker at Mayo 31 Aug (ph. FC) provided one of very few well-documented cen. Yukon records. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is rare anywhere in the Yukon; singles were banded at Albert Cr. 29 Jul & 31 Aug (TMK). A hatch-year Blue-headed Vireo, at the edge of its range in se. Yukon, was banded at Albert Cr. 4 Aug; a total of 15 individuals (primarily hatch-year birds) have been banded there since 2003, all during the fall season (TMK). A Steller's Jay, perhaps a holdout from the great invasion of fall 2006, was seen near Judas Cr., s. Yukon 12 Aug (HG, CO). In Watson Lake, se. Yukon, 4 juv. American Crows seen 26 Aug were suggestive of local breeding (ph. JB, TMK). The crow situation in Whitehorse, s. Yukon only became murkier as the year progressed; while American Crows nested in Whitehorse this past summer, the flock of up to 7 crows which lingered through 18 Oct had at least one or two individuals that looked and sounded like Northwestern Crows (vr. CE). A Cedar Waxwing nest, overflowing with 5 large nestlings, in Whitehorse 8 Aug (SCI, ph. CE) provided one of just a few confirmed Yukon breeding records for the species; other Whitehorse-area reports included 2 along McIntyre Cr. 14 Aug (HG), and 2 seen with about 6 Bohemians at Horse Cr. in mid-Sept (RB). Eight Cedar Waxwings were banded at Albert Cr., se. Yukon 1-26 Aug (TMK). Whitehorse saw the usual fall influx of Bohemians with many hundreds feasting on the Mountain Ash berries in late-Nov (m.ob.). Banding totals from Albert Cr., se. Yukon produced a concise picture of fall warbler migration for the Liard Basin with the order of abundance being Yellow-rumped (262), Northern Waterthrush (248), Common Yellowthroat (217), Yellow (214), Wilson's (167), Orange-crowned (152), American Redstart (50), Blackpoll (41), Magnolia (38), Tennessee (22), Cape May (3), and Townsend's (1); the unusually high numbers of Northern Waterthrush may be resulted from a productive breeding season, or high water levels at the study site created exceptional migration habitat (TMK). Dark-eyed Juncos were on the move at Mary L., s. Yukon with 200 tallied 29 Sept (NH). Lapland Longspur migration at Herschel I., n. Yukon peaked 19 Aug with a count of 1500 (CE). The Canadian Wildlife Service (Whitehorse, Yukon) and the Albert Creek and Teslin bird banding stations continued their effort to monitor Rusty Blackbirds through colour-banding this year; a total of 203 was banded in Whitehorse (PS), 1 in Teslin (BSc), and 31 at Albert Cr. (TMK). Please be on the lookout for these birds (banded with an aluminum band on the right leg, and a green plastic band on the left leg) and report sightings to Pam Sinclair (pam.sinclair@ec.gc.ca). A flock of 18 Rusty Blackbirds, rarely reported from n. Yukon, was seen near the Bluefish R. 5 Sept (BSc). It is rare that birdwatchers witness the start of a new population; but such is the case (and we wish it weren't so) with the rapid proliferation of House Sparrows in Whitehorse, s. Yukon. Following last summer's first-ever confirmed nesting, the flock was found at a downtown feeder in mid-October with a high count of 25 on 30 Nov (SCa; ph. CE; HG).

CONTRIBUTORS: Deon Arey, Gwen Baluss, Julie Bauer, Mary Beattie, Pete Beattie, Clarence Berndt, Rose Berndt, Syd Cannings (SCa), Carol Callahan-Maureen, Fabrice Chevreux, Shirley Clark (SCI), Doug Davidge, Boris Dobrowsky, Cameron Eckert, Pierre Foisy, Lloyd Freese, Mike Gill, Colin Gordon, Helmut Grünberg, Jim Hawkings, Nancy Hughes, Jukka Jantunen, Nadine Lamoureux, Maria Ledergerber, Lee John Meyook, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Erin Neufeld, Clive Osbourne, François Rousseu, Kelsey Russell, Ben Schonewille (BSc), Pam Sinclair, Terry Skjonsberg, Betty Sutton (BSu), Shawn Taylor.



While Sanderling is an uncommon migrant in southern Yukon, it is regularly seen in fall at the Whitehorse Sewage Ponds; this individual was photographed there 29 August 2007 (photo Cameron D. Eckert).



Thayer's Gull is an exceptionally rare in spring in the Yukon but is a fairly common fall migrant; this juvenile was photographed in Whitehorse 24 October 2007 (photo Cameron D. Eckert).





American or Northwestern -- you be the judge. While American Crows nested in the Yukon this summer, the identification of these individuals in Whitehorse 4 & 11 Oct hardly seemed straightforward (photo Cameron D. Eckert).

Sightings Report – Winter 2007 / 2008

Compiled by Cameron D. Eckert

Please report your observations to the Yukon Bird Club via the sightings coordinator, Cameron Eckert phone: 667-4630; email: cdeckert AT northwstel.net. 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.

This season brought some real winter conditions to the North – for the first time in a few years, though still nothing like the prolonged deep freezes typical 30 years ago. As usual, Christmas Bird Counts made a significant contribution to winter records in the Region.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A group of 10 Trumpeter Swans (7 ad, 3 imm.) first seen at Johnson's Crossing, s. Yukon 2 Feb were followed through the winter with 7 surviving until spring (ph. AS). Three Mallards were at Klukshu, sw. Yukon 3 Jan (LF). A record high of 43 Mallards were tallied at McIntyre Cr. in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 16 Feb (AM, KM). Winter Bald Eagle reports were limited to s. Yukon with 2 at Lewes Marsh 9 Dec (CaCM, CyCM, HG), one on the Dec 16 Carcross CBC (*fide* DK), one on the Dec 26 Watson Lake count (*fide* TMK), and a record-high count of 5 on the Dec 26 Whitehorse count (CE, DM, JM). A Sharp-shinned Hawk, a species reported just once before in s. Yukon in winter, was seen at Haines Junction Dec 12 (WJ). An imm. Golden Eagle, rare in winter, was a nice find on the Dec 26 Whitehorse CBC (CE, DM, JM).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

Whitehorse's meager Rock Pigeon population scratched its way back from near extirpation a few years ago to a high count of 47 during Dec 8-26; however, scattered pigeon parts found in Jan and a decline in numbers to about 13 by late Feb (HG) suggested that the flock has again attracted the attention of one of the local Northern Goshawks. Northern Hawk Owl reports, mostly from s. Yukon, included singles at Lake Laberge Dec 1 (BD, CE, HG), Whitehorse Dec 23 to Jan 27 (CE; HG, CO), Haines Junction Dec 20&28 (LA, TS), Teslin 3 Jan (*fide* BS), and Mayo, cen. Yukon 29 Dec (MOD). A Great Gray Owl was reported from Quill Cr., sw. Yukon 29 Dec (LA).





A Northern Hawk Owl marks the start of the winter season on December 1 at Lake Laberge, s. Yukon (photo by Cameron D. Eckert).

Black-backed Woodpeckers are scarce in south-central Yukon; one was seen at Tagish Feb 18 (SvD). Wintering Northern Shrikes were seen across s. Yukon this year including one at Marsh Lake 13 Dec (HG, CO), one in Whitehorse Dec 26 (CE) and Jan 1-13 (HG), one at Haines Junction Jan 19 & 24 (WR; BC, GC), one during count week in Teslin (*fide* BS), and one through the winter at Lake Laberge (KO). In the annual duel for Common Raven supremacy; Whitehorse, s. Yukon Dec 26 CBC produced 1476 (*fide* WN), but still couldn't quite match the Yellowknife, NWT Dec 30 count of 1523 (*fide* RbB). Red-breasted Nuthatch was fairly well represented on this year's CBCs including 3 at Marsh Lake, s. Yukon Dec 16 (*fide* HG), 4 at Carcross, s. Yukon Dec 16 (*fide* DK), and 5 at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon Dec 20 (*fide* JB). An American Robin, rare in winter, was seen at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon Dec 8 (CW). A **Northern Mockingbird**, casual in the Region though seen before in winter, was reported on the Dec 26 Whitehorse, s. Yukon CBC (*fide* WN). Small numbers of Bohemian Waxwings remained into winter with Christmas count reports from Marsh Lake, s. Yukon (*fide* HG), Carcross, s. Yukon (*fide* DK), Haines Junction, sw. Yukon (RS), with the highest total being 248 on the Dec 26 Whitehorse CBC (*fide* WN). The only rare winter sparrow was an imm. White-crowned Sparrow at a Takhini Hotsprings Rd feeder, s. Yukon 17 Jan (IP, BD, HG). Yukon CBC's produced a record number of wintering Dark-eyed Juncos with 3 at Marsh Lake Dec 16 (*fide* HG), 9 at Carcross Dec 16 (*fide* DK), 14 at Haines Junction Dec 20 (*fide* JB); and 21 at Whitehorse Dec 26 (*fide* WN). The most hardy junco was one at a Dawson, cen. Yukon feeder through the winter which survived a bone-chilling cold spell of -51°C (ML). However, the winter did take its toll on this fringe winter species; only 4 of the 14 counted early in the winter at one Whitehorse feeder, were still present by Mar (CE, PS). A lone Snow Bunting was at a feeder near Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 13 Feb (GM, NM). Three **Purple Finches**, casual in winter in s. Yukon, were at a Haines Junction feeder Dec 4 (JB). Common Redpolls were present in good numbers this winter in s. Yukon, however sick and dead birds were widely reported. Hoary Redpolls were unusually rare; for example, the Dec 26 Whitehorse CBC tallied 681 Commons and not a single Hoary (*fide* WN). Feeder-based banding of redpolls through the winter in Whitehorse and Teslin, s. Yukon netted 699 Commons and just 4 Hoaries (BS). Evening Grosbeak was considered regular in winter in Watson Lake, s. Yukon a decade ago, but has become quite scarce in recent years; 1 was recorded on the Dec 26 CBC (*fide* TMK). Whitehorse's brand new House Sparrow population, numbering about 2 dozen, apparently had little trouble surviving the winter cold snap as birds were heard vigorously chirping from various nest sites by late Feb (RgB; BD; CE); Carcross, s. Yukon recorded 2 House Sparrows on the Dec 16 CBC (DK).

CONTRIBUTORS: Libby AndersonJulie Bauer, Roger Brown(RgB), Brodie Calef, George Calef, Carol Callahan-Maureen (CaCM), Cynthia Callahan-Maureen (CyCM), Boris Dobrowolsky, Cameron Eckert, Marsha Flumerfelt, Lloyd Freese, Helmut Grünberg, Walter Jux, Dan Kemble, Maria Ledergerber, Aaron Marshall, Karen Marshall, George Maxwell, Norma Maxwell, Don Moore, Joyce Moore, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Wendy Nixon, Mark O'Donoghue, Clive Osborne, Katie Ostrom, Wolf Riedl, Ben Schonewille, Pam Sinclair, Terry Skjonsberg, Adam Skrutkowski, Shyloh van Delft.



Sightings Report – Spring 2008

Compiled by Cameron D. Eckert

Please report your observations to the Yukon Bird Club via the sightings coordinator, Cameron Eckert phone: 667-4630; email: [cdeckert AT northwestel.net](mailto:cdeckert@northwestel.net). 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.

La Niña – the cool sister of El Niño – brought a cold spring to the northwest. This may have accounted for the generally low numbers of swallows, and late arrival of some species like Warbling Vireo. The Yukon's cold spring was oddly punctuated by a record setting heat wave near the end of May.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A visual migration watch at Albert Cr. banding station, se. Yukon recorded a notable count of 320 White-fronted Geese 29 Apr (JJo et al.). Snow Goose is not a common migrant through s. Yukon and this year saw some better than average numbers with a flock of 156 was a Shallow Bay 13 May (MB, PB, CE), and 37 were at the Kluane R. outlet, sw. Yukon 17 May (HG). About 1000 Tundra Swans were recorded flying over Albert Cr., se. Yukon 3 May (JJo et al.). Gadwall were slow to return to s. Yukon, but finally came in a big rush with 21 at M'Clintock Bay and 82 at L. Laberge 30 May (JJa, BS). Single male "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal, annual in small numbers in the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon, were seen at Johnson's Crossing 30 Apr (SD, JJa), and Tagish 10&12 May (JJa; CE). Eurasian Wigeon move through the Southern Lakes area, s. Yukon in small numbers each spring; further n. one was seen at Little Salmon L. 11 May (JeB, ph. YL), and another was reported from Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 15 May (HG, TH). Waterfowl migration counts in the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon produced some high numbers including 5180 Northern Pintail at M'Clintock Bay and Tagish 6 May; and 370 Canvasback at Tagish 10 May (JJa). A hybrid Common x Barrow's Goldeneye was at Watson Lake, s. Yukon 16 May (ph. JJa). Seven Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen near the confluence of Mackintosh Cr. and the Nisling R., sw. Yukon 8 Mar (BS). An impressive 17 Red-throated Loons were on Teslin L., s. Yukon 11 May (JJa). Wetland surveys in the Ross River area, s. Yukon turned up single Eared and Pied-billed Grebes 29 May (PS). Two Double-crested Cormorants, rare in s. Yukon, were seen at a gull colony on Teslin L. 30 May (JJa). A count of migrant Sandhill Cranes flying over Faro/Ross River area, Yukon 9 May produced a jaw-dropping total of **40,000** cranes (PS). In recent years, the first golden-plovers to reach the Yukon in spring have more often been Pacifics. So it was a bit of a surprise when the first seen this year at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon 9 May was an American; however, the cosmos realigned when a subsequent scan of the mudflats yielded 8 Pacifics (CE). Two Pacific Golden-Plovers were seen near Burwash, sw. Yukon 17 May (HG). An early Killdeer was seen in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 28 Mar (SC). The first Surfbird report of the season came from the aptly named Surfbird Mt., along the Dempster Hwy., cen. Yukon 26 May (KT). Three Red Knots, very rare in s. Yukon, and a Stilt Sandpiper, rare in spring, were reported from Marsh L. 28 May (KT). A Short-billed Dowitcher, near the n. edge of its range, was singing at a wetland near Faro, s. Yukon 30 May (PS). The range of Wilson's Phalarope is poorly known n. of the Southern Lakes area, s. Yukon and so 2 seen near Ross River 29 May (PS) were noteworthy. Shorebird migration has not been well-documented in se. Yukon; a migration watch at the Watson Lake airport 17 May recorded 1 Black-bellied Plover, 66 American Golden-Plovers, 17 Semipalmated Plovers, 6 Upland Sandpipers, 398 Long-billed Dowitchers, 489 Pectoral Sandpipers, 88 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 5 Least Sandpipers, 1 Baird's Sandpiper, 18 Lesser Yellowlegs, 38 Solitary Sandpipers, 2 Whimbrel, 2 Wilson's Snipe, and 64 shorebird sp. (JJa).



This flock of 156 Snow Geese at Shallow Bay on 13 May 2008 was one of the largest flocks seen in southern Yukon where this species is an uncommon migrant (photo Cameron D. Eckert).



A migrant Wilson's Snipe blends well with the marsh grasses at Shallow Bay on 9 May 2008 (photo Cameron D. Eckert).



GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

An ad. Ring-billed Gull, rare but regular in s. Yukon, was seen in Whitehorse 8 May (CE et al.), and another 2-cy bird was seen there 22 May (BF, JS). Glaucous-winged Gull is regularly seen in the Whitehorse area in spring but records are scarce from elsewhere in the territory; two were reported from Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 15 May (HG, TH). Caspian Terns showed up in s. Yukon in small numbers this spring with 2 at Judas Cr. and 4 at M'Clintock Bay 30 May, and 6 at M'Clintock Bay 31 May (JJa). A Great Gray Owl was seen 11km w. of Faro, s. Yukon 30 May (PS). Single Short-eared Owls were reported from Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 1 & 13 Mar (LF; LF, TS). A Red-breasted Sapsucker, a fairly regular spring vagrant to s. Yukon, was seen at Marsh L. 6 Apr (NB). A hybrid Red-shafted x Yellow-shafted flicker (red nape patch and red moustache with yellow underwings) was seen near Jakes Corner, s. Yukon 12 May (CE). A Blue-headed Vireo, only recorded once before in the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon, was singing at Hidden Lks. 26 May (PS). The first crow of the season was seen in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 25 Mar (SC); numerous subsequent reports of small numbers of crows, some carrying nest material, fueled the debate as to which species comprise the Whitehorse crow population. Cold weather in mid-May had swallows seeking creative means of survival; one observer in Whitehorse, s. Yukon watched 12-14 Tree Swallows jam themselves into one nest box 14-16 May (ph. AS). Apparently bucking the cold weather was an outrageously early Barn Swallow seen at M'Clintock Bay, s. Yukon 2 Apr (JJa). Most intriguing was the report of a Gray-headed Chickadee at Tombstone Park, cen. Yukon 26 May (KT). A male Cape May Warbler, the first for the Teslin area, s. Yukon, was banded at Teslin L. 31 May (BS). A Yellow-rumped Warbler discovered at Pauline Cove on Herschel I., n. Yukon 30 May and seen for the next 2 weeks (ph. AK et al.) was the first warbler species of any kind for the island. A record-early male Blackpoll Warbler was banded at Albert Cr., se Yukon 9 May (JJo). Warblers accounted for the majority of the 2074 birds banded at Albert Cr., se Yukon this spring with 468 Yellow-rumped, 361 Orange-crowned, 199 Yellow, and 159 Wilson's (*fide* TMK). Dark-eyed Juncos dominated opening day at the Teslin L. banding station, s. Yukon 6 May with a total of 134 banded (JJa); ultimately White-crowned Sparrows, with 311 banded, surpassed the junco's spring total of 255 (BS). A **Vesper Sparrow**, the 2nd well-documented Yukon record, was at the Albert Creek banding station, se. Yukon 16 May (ph. JJa, JJo). A massive flock of about 2500 Lapland Longspurs was at the rodeo grounds n. of Whitehorse, s. Yukon 7 May (CE). Snow Bunting migration seemed thin in s. Yukon this year, with one of the few notable reports being a count of about 460 along the Alaska Hwy. between Mendenhall and the Donjek R., sw. Yukon 18 Mar (BS). The concern over Rusty Blackbird population declines has prompted more intensive surveys of their nesting areas and migration sites in the North. A total of 47 Rusties were colour-banded at Albert Cr., se. Yukon during the spring season (*fide* TMK). In sw. Yukon Rusty Blackbird breeding surveys located a nest at Sulphur L., and a pair with nest material was seen at Lloyd Keith pond 17 May (JuB, TH). An Evening Grosbeak, rare in s. Yukon, was seen at M'Clintock Bay 12 Apr (JJa).

CONTRIBUTORS: Jeremy Baumbach (JeB), Julie Bauer (JuB), Mary Beattie, Pete Beattie, Norman Beebe, Syd Cannings, Sarah Davidson, Cameron Eckert, Lloyd Freese, Bert Frenz, Helmut Grünberg, Todd Heakes, Jukka Jantunen (JJa), Jillian Johnston (JJo), Alice Kenney, Yvette Lepage, Ted Murphy-Kelly, John Schenck, Ben Schonewille, Pamela Sinclair, Terry Skjonsberg, Adam Skrutkowski, Khahn Tran.



The Yukon's second confirmed record of a Vesper Sparrow, this individual touched down briefly at Albert Creek on 16 May 2008 following two days of strong southeast wind (Photo Jukka Jantunen)



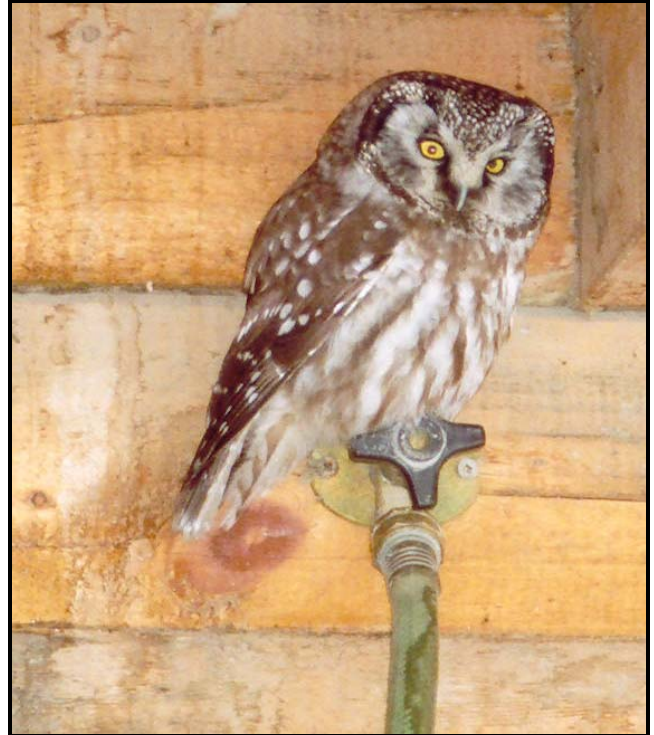
An enthusiastic group of birders take in the avian splendor of the Quartz Road wetland on 8 May 2008 (photo Cameron D. Eckert).



YOUR PICTURES

This is your space. We want your photos !

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Mountain Bluebird, Lewes Marsh, Photo: David Weaver

Boreal Owl, Haines Junction, Photo: Wolf Reidl



Trumpeter Swan trio, Tagish, Photo: David Weaver

Swallow Swarm

The following photos were taken by Adam Skrutkowski along the Takhini Bluffs (Whitehorse) on May 14th, 2008. While it is not unusual for migrant Tree Swallows to investigate potential nesting cavities, what Adam witnessed was somewhat interesting. A total of 12 Tree Swallows crammed themselves into the box, where they spent the night and departed the following morning. One would assume that they were taking advantage of each other's body heat to keep warm during a cool, early spring evening in the Yukon.



The Impact of Predation by Free Ranging Domestic Cats on Bird Populations

Submitted by Yukon Board Club Board Member, Clive Osborne

Throughout the past 2 decades, there has been increasing concern about the magnitude of predation by domestic cats on birds among wildlife ecologists. Scientists now list domestic cats *Felis catus*, which are the most ubiquitous of invasive species, as the second most serious threat to bird populations worldwide behind habitat loss and human development. To illustrate the enormity of the problem, a study conducted in Michigan that examined cat predation of birds in corridors defined by breeding bird survey routes through a continuum of rural to urban landscapes found that cats were killing a minimum of 1 bird per 1 kilometer per day. The American Bird Conservancy estimates that there are 90 million pet cats and over 100 million stray or feral cats in the U.S. today. A study in the early 90s showed that about 35% of pet or owned cats are kept exclusively indoors. This leaves 159 million cats in the U.S. killing birds at a rate of approximately 1.4 birds per week per cat. Clearly, domestic cats are having a significant impact on bird populations. Moreover, numerous studies have determined that the prey items of free-ranging cats consists of 60-70% small mammals, 20-30% birds, up to 10% reptiles, amphibians and insects. Numerous studies and experiments have discovered that cats will stalk and kill prey regardless of their levels of hunger; indeed, even interrupting a meal of commercial food to make a kill. Attempts to diminish cats capture success rate, such as bell collars, have been singular failures because birds do not seem to associate bell-ringing with danger in an increasingly noisy landscape. Some research suggests that free-ranging cats in high densities cause enough avoidance disturbances to significantly depress bird reproductive rates. So if we wish to champion the conservation of birds, we must advocate for less tolerance of free-ranging cats. If you own a cat, keep it indoors or under your control outdoors. Think about how you might exclude any free-ranging cat from parts of your property that are attractive to birds (feeders, nest sites, perches). And pass the word to your friends and neighbours. The house cat has a far greater negative impact on wildlife than any other domestic animal around the world.



YUKON BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATES

Teslin Lake Bird Observatory Spring Update

Written by Ben Schonewille

This year, the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory completed its fourth consecutive spring season of migration monitoring and continues to learn a great deal about bird distribution and migration patterns within the Teslin region. In addition to the research activities, the observatory continues to welcome visiting individuals and school groups. This spring, the station hosted a total of 112 visitor hours and 75 volunteers. Among the visitors to the station this spring was the Renewable Resource Management class from Yukon College.

A total of 1,248 birds of 45 species were banded (51.1 birds/100 net hrs) and 115 species were observed. The following outline the migration and subsequent banding of the various species of birds encountered this spring. Note that the station focuses on monitoring songbird migration through banding; however incidental observations and visual migration counts are also conducted for other types of birds including waterfowl, waterbirds, raptors and shorebirds.

Very few loons are typically observed during the spring season due to limited areas of open water and this year was no different; however, both Common Loon and Red-throated Loon were observed in low numbers during late May and early June. A pair of **Double-crested Cormorants** observed on the nearby gull colony on May 30th constituted the first record of this species for the observatory and one of only a few records in the Teslin area. Three species of goose (Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose) were observed in low to moderate numbers with Canada Goose being the most common. Although relatively few Trumpeter Swans were seen, relatively high numbers of Tundra Swans were seen with high counts of 165 (May 2nd), 329 (May 3rd) and 196 (May 7th). A total of 15 species of ducks were observed this spring, the most notable of which were a pair of **Harlequin Ducks** feeding at the 10 Mile Creek mouth on May 19th and a single **Gadwall** in migration on May 8th.

Visual migration counts conducted this spring yielded some truly impressive numbers of migrating raptors. The most common raptor observed was Northern Harrier with 270 individuals observed. In addition, one individual was captured and subsequently banded opportunistically on May 4th. Sharp-shinned Hawks were also quite common with 66 individuals observed and 1 individual banded. Other raptor species seen including Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon. The most notable raptor observation of the season was a single **Swainson's Hawk** observed in migration on May 4th.



Northern Harrier, May 4th, Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Sharp-shinned Hawk, May 3rd, Photo: TLBO



Once again this year, Ruffed Grouse was an ever present species as there is a drumming log within the study site which was once again used heavily. A single Spruce Grouse was also observed on May 2nd and was likely a resident of the spruce forest along the margin on the study area. The observatory once again did not see very high numbers of shorebirds (11 species encountered) with the exception of Wilson's Snipe. On May 3rd and 7th, there were noticeable migration movements of this species with 71 and 51 individuals observed. Lesser Yellowlegs was observed in relatively high numbers with up to 120 individuals observed daily in early May. Spotted Sandpipers are one of the few species which are likely breeders at the study site, and as such, it isn't surprising that this species was observed daily in late May and 1 individual was banded on May 31st.

Northern Flicker was the most common woodpecker observed this spring with up to 5 individuals seen daily throughout much of the season. The lone woodpecker banded was a male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on May 8th. Once again this spring, the flycatchers were well represented with Hammond's Flycatcher being the most common with 18 banded. The Olive-sided Flycatcher, recently listed by COSEWIC as "threatened" was seen in good numbers with 6 banded including 5 individuals on May 18th. Other flycatchers banded this spring included Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher and Say's Phoebe (Western Wood-Pewee also observed but not banded). Horned Larks were not very common this year and were observed on three days with a high count of 77 in migration on May 3rd. The first swallows seen this spring included a pair of Cliff Swallows and 4 Tree Swallows on May 6th. A season high 87 Tree Swallows were seen in migration on May 17th. Both Bank Swallow and Violet-green Swallow were also seen this spring. Ever present at the station once again this spring, both Black-capped and Boreal Chickadees were seen daily with up to 4 individuals of each species seen daily. A pair of **Mountain Chickadees** banded on May 2nd were an exciting capture.



Say's Phoebe, Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Mountain Chickadees, Photo: Jukka Jantunen

Typically a common sight early in the season, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet once again held form with 72 banded during the season and a high count of 30 observed on May 3rd. New for the station, a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was observed on May 11th. Always an exciting observation, Mountain Bluebirds were observed infrequently early in the season with a high count of 12 on May 7th. An early Swainson's Thrush was banded on May 10th and increased in numbers toward the end of May. Both Hermit and Gray-cheeked Thrush were uncommon and single individuals were banded on May 8th and 30th, respectively. An impressive spectacle of bird migration was observed on a number of days this spring with between 100 and 700 American Robins observed in migration daily during the first 10 days of May. Varied Thrush followed suite with the robins in a lesser magnitude with up to 18 individuals seen daily during the period. Although not the most glamorous of species, a pair of **European Starlings** were observed in migration on May 8th. American Pipits were a common migrant observed during the first two weeks of May with a high count of 161 on May 3rd. During the same period, a flock of Bohemian Waxwings were ever present within banding area and luckily 23 were banded. In all, 10 species of warbler were encountered this spring. Not the most common species of Yukon warbler, 2 Tennessee Warblers were banded during late May. Contrastingly, the closely related Orange-crowned Warbler was seen frequently throughout most of May with a banding total of 61 and high count of 11 banded on May 20th.





Hermit Thrush, Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Orange-crowned Warbler, Photo: Jukka Jantunen

Due to the relatively late “green-up” of the study site due to the close proximity to Teslin Lake (which remains frozen until late May), many of the late migrating warblers are not seen at the observatory in high numbers during the spring. Despite this, a number of species were observed although the number of individuals was not very high. One species, Wilson’s Warbler, was encountered in fairly substantial numbers with a banding total of 151 including a fallout of 90 banded on May 18th. Yellow-rumped Warbler was the second most common warbler species with 78 banded including a high daily banding total of 14 on May 7th. Additional species including Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Northern Waterthrush were seen in low to moderate numbers during the last half of May; however, there were no notable movements during this time. A male **Townsend’s Warbler** banded on May 18th was a first for the observatory and made a timely appearance for a number of visitors. Perhaps the most notable capture this spring was a male **Cape May Warbler** banded on May 31st.



Blackpoll Warbler, Photo: TLBO



Townsend’s Warbler, Photo: TLBO



Cape May Warbler, Photo: TLBO

As a whole, the sparrows are typically very well represented during the spring season and this year was no exception. The “Big 3” once again included White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco and American Tree-Sparrow with banding totals of 311, 224 and 41. Sparrows migrate north primarily during the first half of May and this year White-crowned Sparrows peaked with 220 observed on May 6th. On the same day, over 800 Dark-eyed Juncos were observed and the Bander In Charge stated that it was “raining juncos” as flock after flock few overhead following the lakeshore north. Species such as Fox Sparrow, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow and Golden-crowned Sparrow followed suite with the more common species, but at a much smaller magnitude. Lapland Longspurs were also seen in earnest during the first ten days of May with over 650+ observed on May 6th and 7th. A small number of individuals were also banded this spring for the first time at



the observatory. The late migrating Chipping Sparrow was added to the species list during the final days of May when 2 individuals were banded.



White-crowned Sparrow, Photo: TLBO



Dark-eyed Junco, Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Golden-crowned Sparrow, Photo: TLBO



Lapland Longspur, Photo: Jukka Jantunen

This spring was somewhat disappointing for Rusty Blackbirds as none were banded; however, a number were observed in migration including a high count of 125 on May 7th. Other blackbird species seen in low numbers included Red-winged Blackbird and Brown-headed Cowbird. In regards to finches, the Common Redpoll was another ever present migrant during early May. Over 150 were observed daily from May 1st to 7th and total of 22 were banded. Other finch species encountered included Red Crossbill, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin.



Migration Watching



Giving a banding demonstration



Banding a Townsend's Warbler



Albert Creek Bird Observatory Spring Update

Written by Ted Murphy-Kelly

For the first year since it's beginnings in 2001, Albert Creek saw a new Bander-in Charge take my place. Jillian Johnston of Donnelly, Alberta came to us with much experience from other migration monitoring stations such as Thunder Cape, Last Mountain and Mackenzie. Although it was her first time in the BIC chair, Jillian soon proved herself as a willing and capable person for the job. Set up at Albert Creek went rather well this spring thanks to help from Sarah Davidson and Jillian. Despite the blustery, snowy weather on April 23rd we had things up and running by the 24th. Temperatures climbed as high as +17 during the first week. On our first day of banding we had a very exciting catch, Albert Creek's third Boreal Owl. Due to their nocturnal habits, a daytime catch of this species is very unusual. The expected harbingers of spring were there from the start such as Dark-eyed Junco, American Tree Sparrow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. A large flock of Common Redpolls were still working the area as well as a small group of Bohemian Waxwings. The odd raptor including Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Harrier were also seen. Unlike most other years, waterfowl were very scarce until April 29th except for a small flock of White-fronted Geese on the 24th. By early May, American Widgeon, Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, Mallards, Goldeneyes, Northern Pintail, Bufflehead and other dabblers and divers were seen. On April 26th, Sarah added an other mammal to the stations list when she had the fortune of coming face to face with a Lynx. The loud and distinctive call of the Pileated Woodpecker returned to Albert Creek on the 27th. Banding totals were very low until the 29th when things picked up giving us 51 birds to band made up of mostly kinglets and juncos with a few White-crowned Sparrows, American Tree Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows and the seasons only Northern Shrike.



Boreal Owl, American Tree Sparrow, Common Redpoll, Northern Shrike, White-crowned Sparrow

By April 30th the flock of Redpolls had grown to 200+ and we were treated to spectacular views of American Kestrels and Sharp-shinned Hawks making several dives after the flock. Our first warbler, a handsome male Yellow-rumped Warbler was banded on May 1st and the seasons first American Robin and Rusty Blackbird showed up on the 2nd but banding totals remained very low. Jillian was left to run the station alone from May 3rd to 5th. This was also when things really picked up regarding sparrows. With a maximum of nine and as few as five nets open, Jillian managed 75, 60 and 78 birds on the 3rd, 4th and 5th. The 4th saw the season's first Hermit Thrush and a pair of Trumpeter Swans returned once again to the Ox Bow Lake beyond the marsh. Luckily, thanks to CWS, Julia Montgomery spent May 6th to the 13th helping out and receiving bander training as the first wave of migrants flowed through. The first notable warbler push occurred on May 6th when 3 Wilson's Warbler and 6 Orange-crowned Warblers were banded while the Yellow-rumped Warblers began show force with 26 banded. On May 9th the station had the season's first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Swamp Sparrow and a very early Blackpoll Warbler. Common Yellowthroat and Northern Waterthrush joined the marsh's songbird chorus on the 10th. As the marsh began to become ice free so did begin the familiar sound of Wood Frogs on May 11th. On May 12th Jukka Jantunen joined the team and Albert Creeks observations increased tenfold. Thanks to the sharp eyes and keen ears, Jukka recorded many migrants. A south easterly wind kept a steady flow of migrants flying over. 18 Canvasback were a nice addition to the list of waterfowl, as were Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Shoveler and Common Loon during the next few days. Shorebirds such as Semipalmated Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Common Snipe as well as Herring Gull and Mew Gull were all added



to the growing list of migrants. By the 13th, the sparrows were thinning out and the marsh was taken over by the much awaited neotropical songbirds.



Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Swamp Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird

May 14th marked a second phase in the spring migration as the seasons first Swainson's Thrush was banded. Although, usually recorded earlier we banded the season's first Hammond's Flycatcher and observed a Say's Phoebe on the same day. Swallows also became much more apparent. A banded White-throated Sparrow that was seen and photographed by Jukka was a season first and probably a returning bird from a previous year. Two days later a banded White-throated Sparrow was caught, most likely the same bird. On May 15th, the crew including special guest Ben Schonewille witnessed a very windy day. By 9:30 a.m. the wind was estimated at a level 7 as large spruce began to come crashing down. Nets were quickly closed. The next day Jillian and Jukka arrived to see the banding tent in shambles and several trees had fallen but luckily none fell on nets. Perhaps the wind storm blew in the Yukon's second Vesper Sparrow on this day which was well photographed by Jukka. The springs first Gray-cheeked Thrush was banded and four more Lincoln's Sparrow were banded. On the 14th, the nets were soon closed due to rain but visual migration totaled 796 waterfowl of 15 species with 339 being listed as "unidentified scaup or duck". An American Golden Plover was recorded as well as 90 Pectoral Sandpiper. On the 18th after seeing Yellow Warbler at Wye Lake in Watson Lake, the crew were not surprised to add this to the season banding list along with 2 Olive-sided Flycatcher. Chipping Sparrow and a Townsend's Warbler were also added to the obs list. High daily numbers of swallows were noted with 80 Tree, 50 Violet-green, 20 Bank and 3 Cliff and 100 unidentified recorded. On the 19th, Yellow Warbler numbers saw a marked increase. Yellow-rumps dominated the warbler numbers with Wilson's being banded at half that total. The estimated totals which calculate birds banded with those observed told a different story as there were 3 times the number of Yellow-rumps as there were Wilson's. A Western Tanager was also recorded as the seasons first. Jillian was alone again on May 20th and 21st. She was treated to a net full of Swallows, mostly Tree Swallows with 2 Violet Greens which were a station first. The season's first Townsend's Warbler and Western-Wood-Pewee was banded as Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers continued to dominate the warbler numbers. Visitors are always welcome at Albert Creek. The local visitor's center in Watson Lake is often the source of tourists traveling up the Alaska Highway. May 21st was a memorable day for Jillian as she was faced with plenty of birds and more than plenty visitors. As luck would have it an American birding tour group of over twenty persons streamed through the area expressing much interest in the whole process of migration monitoring. The bander-in-charge still managed 82 birds banded and 40 species observed.

The daily narrative on the 22nd says it all when Jillian wrote "Funny how it is that when I'm not alone bird activity dies down, only 24 birds banded today" as Jukka returned to help. Forty Long-billed Dowitchers and 50 Cliff Swallow were recorded. A Cedar Waxwing was a season first on the 23rd. This species occurs erratically, sometimes being absent from the region for years at a time. Finally on the 24th we began to experience the peak of Neotropical warbler and other songbird migration. Compared to previous years it was late but it was truly spectacular! On the 23rd my parents and younger sister from Quebec arrived in Whitehorse. They had arranged the trip months earlier with a special interest in finally visiting the banding station. They truly "lucked out" as Hollie, Cora, Brenna and I treated them to a very memorable 4 day holiday in the southeast Yukon's birding haven. We arrived just as the action began to start on the morning of the 24th. The early morning was fairly busy but by 9:30 a.m. we saw that it would become a warbler day. Once the daily tally was done



with only seven recaptures out of 136 birds handled we suspected that birds were on the move. Wilson's Warbler numbers were noticeably lower than what would be expected but Orange-crowned Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler almost tied with 43 and 50 banded respectively. The next day saw a similar total (109 banded) but a noted decrease in Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warbler with an obvious increase in Yellow Warbler. Common Yellowthroat and Northern Waterthrush increased and anytime a daily total like 6 Blackpolls are banded we start to get excited. With all the warblers came 2 Savannah Sparrows, a couple of Sapsuckers, a Northern Flicker and the season's first Tennessee Warbler. May 26th went down in the record books as Albert Creek's biggest single banding day ever with 291 birds banded of 19 species. What was interesting was the weather. It was much like the day before with winds from the south/ south west. A front had moved in bringing clear skies, no wind and high temperatures (2 at 5a.m to 26 degrees at 2:30 P.m.) This all seemed to result in a massive movement of neotrops. Despite the high pressure it also seemed to bring many of these birds down into the marsh. The number one bird was Yellow Warbler (86 banded, 100 e.t) but the Yellow-rumps and Orange-crowned Warblers seemed to surge again with (66 banded, 100 e.t'ed) and (49 banded, 63 e.t) respectively. The big surprise was the incredible number of Blackpoll Warblers banded and observed, (41 banded, 52 e.t.) This Blackpoll number shattered any previous single day total and even broke most season totals. The other noticeable observation about this species was the number of singing males noted. Jukka and I also noted that although we banded many Yellow Warblers, we saw or heard relatively few. An after second year Cape May Warbler was also banded and another was heard. Chipping Sparrow and Alder Flycatcher were other season firsts on the banding list. The next day numbers plunged with only 52 birds banded but included 4 Tennessee Warblers and 2 Purple Finch.

By May 28th, we began to see the last of the neotropical migrants arrive at Albert Creek. On the 28th the season's first Least Flycatcher was banded as the Alder Flycatchers, Tennessee Warblers and Warbling Vireos continued to trickle in. Long time volunteer Julie Bauer arrived on May 30th and was treated to the season's first 3 American Redstarts. One of them was a bird that she had actually banded in 2007 at Albert Creek. Julie and Jillian were beginning to see a high number of recaptures which was to be expected as many birds by this date are probably local breeders. Banding numbers steadily decreased over the next few days; however, a Dusky Flycatcher was banded on the 31st and constituted Albert Creek's second record ever. A moose was seen on June 1st wading in the marsh near net 13 and Magnolia Warbler was the new arrival.



Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, American Redstart, Cape May Warbler, Alder Flycatcher

The station was rained out on June 3rd but on the 4th, the banders experienced one last push of migrants with 31 birds banded. Wilson's Warbler made up 12 of these with 2 Magnolia and an other Cape May Warbler but what was interesting was a very late American Tree Sparrow. A Killdeer was recorded and the American Crows that been recorded throughout the season were still hanging around. The next day the top bird was still Wilson's Warbler and 2 Pine Siskin were new for the season. Julie left on the 5th and Jillian was left to pack the station up for the season with some help from Scott Cole of Watson Lake. The last day saw 7 Alder Flycatchers banded but the female which was banded in 2001 and had returned every year was not one of them. The season total was 2,086 banded of 50 species and 124 species were observed.



Panama Birding Adventure

The following was submitted by Julie Bauer and Terry Skjonsberg of Haines Junction.

During January and February of 2008 myself and my partner Terry travelled to Panama to bird in a few different areas of the country. We used the book *A Guide To The Birds of Panama* by Ridgely and Gwynne. A few days following our arrival we visited the Darien National Park which borders with Colombia on an organized trip with Ancon Expeditions (www.anconexpeditions.com). This is a remote area with lots of endemic species and the guide was excellent. We were based out of the old gold mine camp but also hiked up into the Pirre cloud forest where we spent time looking for the Golden-headed quetzal without luck, but were rewarded with spotting other endemics such as the Pirre Bush-Tanager, Green-Naped Tanager, Yellow-Green Tyrannulet, Veraguan Mango and Beautiful Treerunner. Our highlight of the entire trip was locating ant swarms and being able to watch numerous birds such as antbirds and woodcreepers eat with little regard to our presence. Our five days flew by and birdwatching filled every daylight minute. Chiggers were very common and next time I would use much more bug-spray to avoid the nasty bites. After Cana we headed to the Gamboa area that is famous for the Pipeline Road and very high bird numbers during the Christmas Bird Counts. We had arranged to meet with a guide by the name of Guido Berguido who set up the Advantage Tours Panama group (www.advantagepanama.com). We lucked out and managed to volunteer at a banding station that was operating for a few days with the focus on banding migrants. Captured some local birds in the mistnets and three migrants which were Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Waterthrush and a Kentucky Warbler. Bus travel across the country was easy and we welcomed the coolness of the Chiriqui highlands of western Panama. After a few days in the tourist town of Boquete we walked the Quetzal trail to Cerro Punta. In addition, La Amistad National Park is nearby with many walking trails. Many birding tours are available in Panama and travel is straight forward. Local transport is easy but some spanish is required. Panama city is quite hectic but great international food. As amateur birders we totaled 275 species.



Golden-collared Manakins, Photo: Julie Bauer



Red-capped Manakins, Photo: Julie Bauer



Bi-colored Antbird, Photo: Julie Bauer



Harpy Eagle, Photo: Julie Bauer



Alaskan Birding Trip

The following was submitted by Yukon Bird Club President, Helmut Grunberg

It is easy to get to Haines and Skagway, even Juneau. I had also been to the Aleutians, but never to the more remote areas such as the Pribilof Islands and St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea or Nome and Barrow on the mainland of Alaska to find some special birds that are hard to find elsewhere. I left Anchorage on May 23 to join High Lonesome Birdtours for a few days. As we approached the airport of St. Paul, Pribilof Islands, with our small plane, we realized we couldn't land because the cloud cover was too low. So the pilot circled a few times and flew over to the Aleutians where we waited for a couple of hours till the pilot decided to go back to Anchorage – one day of birding lost...

The next day was fine, and we found good accommodations right in the airport of St. Paul. We went out birding almost immediately and found some unusual species (by Yukon standards): Eurasian Green-winged Teal, Tufted Duck, King Eider, Red-faced Cormorant, Rock Sandpiper, Red-legged Kittiwake, a number of alcids (murrelets, murrelets, auklets and puffins) and many Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches. The next few days we also saw an almost black Ruff and Vega Herring Gulls, and among the auklets, several Crested Auklets were new for me. We also had great views of a Gray Wagtail, a Eurasian species. Northern Fulmars were common, and a few Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers were around too. Arctic Foxes with different degrees of white and brown fur were roaming the island, especially near the few buildings.

Before I went on the next tour, I went to the Palmer Hayfields near Anchorage and saw about 500 Bank Swallows that must have just arrived from the south. Then I met another group of High Lonesome Birdtours of about 10 people. This time we flew to Gambell on St. Lawrence Island. As we approached the island in the northern Bering Sea, we had great views of the coast of Siberia. It seemed much closer than the 80 km it was supposed to be. This is the area where you expect the most Asian vagrants. When we arrived, word got around that there was an Ivory Gull by the coast. I had never seen one, and it was #1 on my "wish list". I was hoping it would still be there when we got there, and, yes, there were two Ivory Gulls, feeding on some guts left by a native hunting party.



From where we stayed at Gambell, we could see amazing flights of seabirds from the roosting sites in cliffs to the feeding places in the open water. We estimated about 10 000 Common Murres, 50 000 Thick-billed Murres, 50 000 Parakeet Auklets, 50 000 Least Auklets and 100 000 Crested Auklets in a few hours. Other alcids were Black Guillemots, Pigeon Guillemots, Horned Puffins and Tufted Puffins. I was thrilled to see my first ever Dovekies on a cliff. This is one of the smaller alcids, and there had been no "guarantee" that we would find it.

There was a unique way of cooperation between the various birding groups. They used walkie-talkies to inform each other about rare species. I realized that most people went to these remote areas to improve their ABA checklist, the checklist of the American Birding Association. One day we were walking in a row through one of the old "bone yards", an area where bones have been discarded by hunters over the decades or maybe centuries. This is an area where one may find rare songbirds. We were looking for a Bluethroat that had been reported. I was walking on the outside, and when I looked up, everybody was running away to a different bone yard. What was going on? When I caught up, I was told that another group had seen a Little Bunting, an Asian species. We didn't see it right away, but later in the day we had excellent views of this small pretty sparrow-like bird. When we resumed our search for the Bluethroat, we saw a number of Snow Buntings, and all of sudden, a call went out, "McKay's Bunting!". Another "Wow" bird: almost completely white and clearly different from Snow Bunting. I remember searching for one unsuccessfully on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. Other rare species we saw were White Wagtail, Steller's, King and Common Eider, Yellow-billed Loon, Red-necked Stint,



the Common Ringed Plover from Eurasia, Bluethroat, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Northern Wheatear, the Asian subspecies of the Barn Swallow, the distinctly different Siberian subspecies of the American Pipit, Sooty Fox Sparrow and all three jaegers. Interestingly, all the Herring Gulls I saw on my whole trip were Vega Herring Gulls (soon to be split into “Vega Gull” and “Herring Gull”, I expect.). There were, of course, many other birds at Gambell, and this is an area I definitely want to go back to.

The next section of my Alaska trip was going to Nome, also with High Lonesome Birdtours. The main attraction here was the “guaranteed” Bristle-thighed Curlew. We joined another small group, and the two vehicles drove far away from Nome into the uplands, and we actually found a curlew right by the road. Other interesting new species in Nome were Arctic Loon (which I missed), Red Knot, Sabine’s Gull, Aleutian Tern, Rock Ptarmigan, Merlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, a Gyrfalcon on a nest, Slaty-backed Gull and Arctic Warbler.

To get to Barrow I had to first fly back to Anchorage. I went to Barrow on my own but met up with birders along the few roads around Barrow, the northernmost city of the U.S. On one of those days I joined a day tour to Point Barrow, the northernmost point of continental North America. We were looking for Polar Bears. The whole Barrow area was still ice-bound and there would have been a Polar Bear somewhere because the Eskimos leave the remains from their hunting expeditions up there to keep the bears away from town. Well, we didn’t see a bear... The second part of this trip was intended to look for birds. When we came to a side road, the Dew Line Road, I mentioned to the trip leader that I had seen several White-rumped Sandpipers along this road the day before, and whether he wanted to make this little detour of 200 m so the other people could see this rare shorebird. Then I saw this blank look in his face: he didn’t know what I was talking about. He then proceeded to explain a few things about “bigger“ birds like ducks. I learned a lot about where you can best shoot which bird and which ones taste best, and that was about it. Well, that’s a different way of looking at birds.

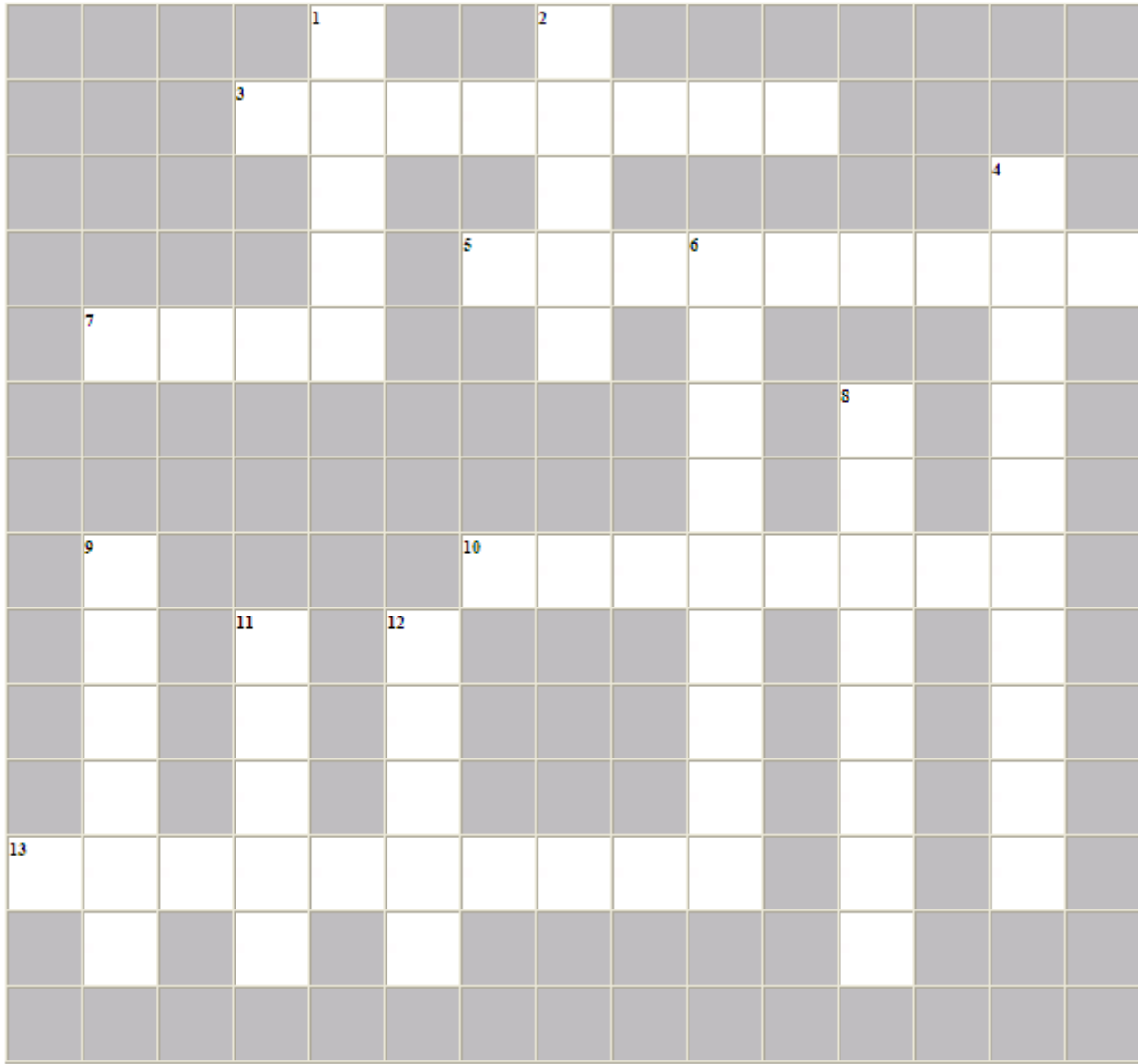


One of my spectacular sightings was a pair of Spectacled Eiders| some other birders had pointed out to me. The colouration of the male is just out of this world, much brighter than the bird books show. Another new rare trip species was the Snowy Owl. I saw several of them on little hills in the tundra. Red Phalaropes could also be seen everywhere. A rare species for Barrow was a lone Bank Swallow. I had no idea what it was doing there. There were quite a few lemmings running around so it was not surprising to see a Peregrine Falcon come up with a lemming.

This Alaska trip was different from any trip I had done before and I saw more new birds than I had expected.



Yukon Birds Crossword Puzzle



Down

1. Common Yellowthroat breeding habitat
2. Bald Eagles prefer to nest near _____
4. swan haven
6. long-billed, short-billed
8. “teacher, teacher, teacher”
9. Violet-green Swallow rump
11. Wilson's Warbler cap
12. color of Tennessee Warbler undertail coverts

Across

3. Swainson's, Hermit, Gray-checked
5. wood warblers
7. loon diet
10. _____ Pintail
13. alder, dusky, least



Bird Identification Challenge

Time to test your bird identification skills ! A rationale for the identification will be provided in the next edition of *The Warbler*. The goal is to provide a variety of difficult levels and if you have suitable (difficult) photos for future challenges, please email the newsletter editor. Good Luck !



Whitehorse Sewage Ponds, 15 Sept 07, Photo: Cameron D. Eckert



Herschel Island, 20 Aug 07, Photo: Cameron D. Eckert



Teslin Lake, May 2008, Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Not taken in the Yukon, but a Yukon species. Photo: M. Boothroyd



Not taken in the Yukon, but a Yukon species. Photo: M. Boothroyd



Teslin Lake, August 2008, Photo: Jukka Jantunen





May or may not be a Yukon species, Photo: M. Boothroyd

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