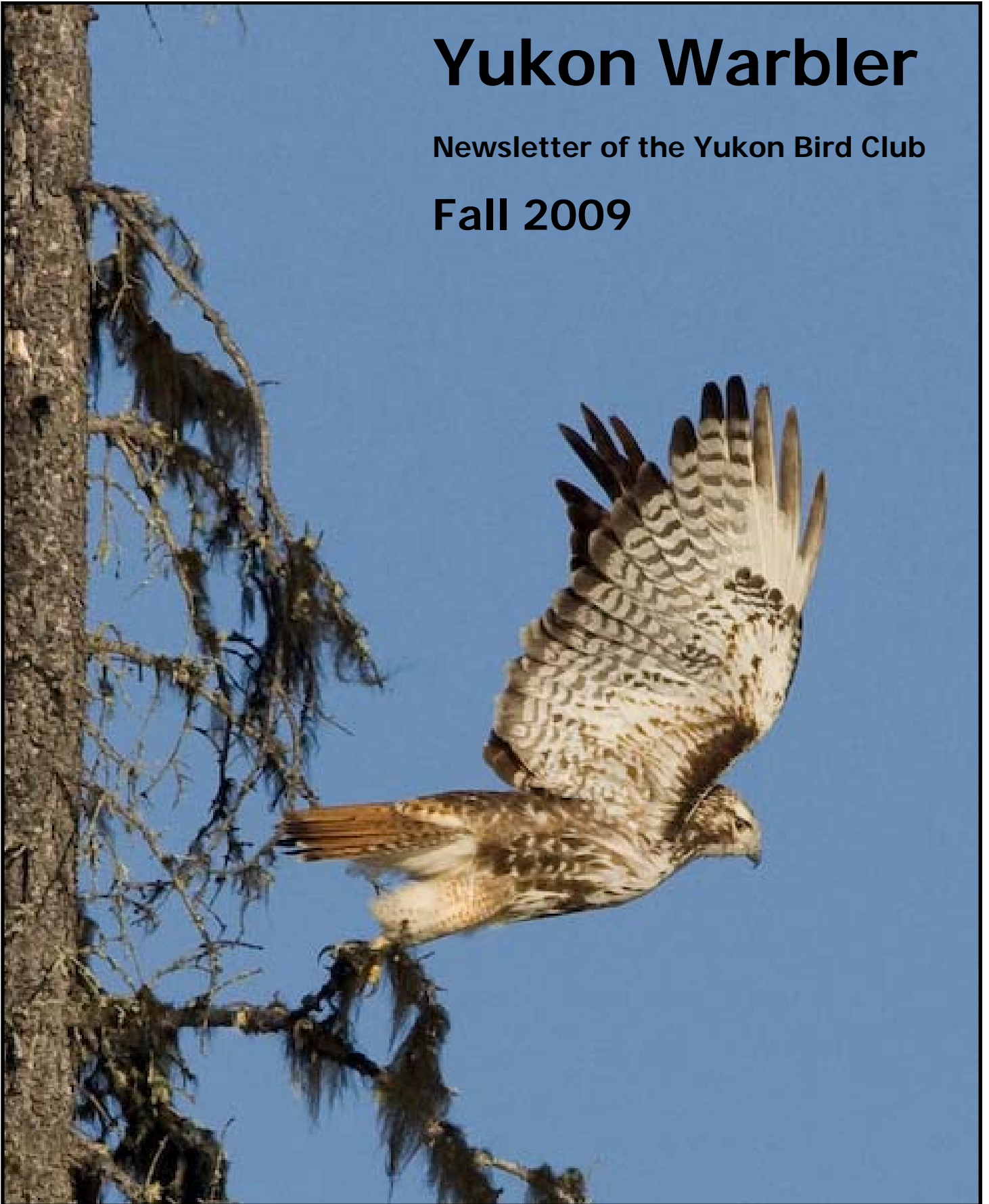


Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

Fall 2009



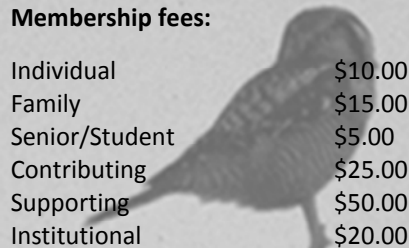
BIRDATHON SUMMARY– SIGHTINGS REPORTS – BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATES

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**

Email: yukonbirdclub@gmail.com

YBC BIRDS: A free email information flyway with updates of sightings, events and issues. To subscribe email yukonbirdclub@gmail.com with the message "subscribe YBC BIRDS". To cancel send "cancel YBC BIRDS".

Yukon Bird Club Web Site:

www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/

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Yukon Warbler editor: Ben Schonewille
Yukon Warbler - Spring 2009

Cover Photo

Light morph Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, by Jukka Jantunen
2008-05-19, Watson Lake

Back Cover Graphic

From Jim Hawking Photo

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 !

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Yukon Bird Club News & Upcoming Events

YBC Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Late February 2010, date TBA

Whitehorse Public Library All YBC members welcome and encouraged to attend.

Presentation: Teslin Lake & Albert Creek Bird Observatories

Tuesday, January 12th, 2010 7 – 9pm

Whitehorse Public Library

All members of the public are welcome, see what kind of avian treasures showed up during 2009.

2010 Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12th to 15th, 2010

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc for more information or to sign up.

2009 -2010 Christmas Bird Count

From December 14 through January 5 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season. Each of the citizen scientists who annually braves snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count makes an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action. From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

Please find the 2009-2010 Yukon Christmas Bird Count schedule on the following page.



Christmas Bird Count Schedules 2009/10

<p><u>Watson Lake</u> Date: Saturday, December 26th For details and route assignments contact Jenny Skelton at 536- 7488</p>	<p><u>Johnson's Crossing</u> Date: Saturday, December 26th Compilers: Ben Schonewille/Minnie Clark. For route assignment contact Ben at 334-2683 e-mail: teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com or Minnie at: timberpoint@northwestel.net</p>
<p><u>Whitehorse</u> Date: Saturday, December 26th Compiler: Jim Hawkings; for route assignment, please phone Jim at 668-2639 or e-mail: hawkings@northwestel.net</p>	<p><u>Kluane</u> Date: Monday, December 28, 2009 Compiler: Todd Heakes; please phone Todd ahead of Count Day at 334-9014; or e-mail: theakes@hotmail.com</p>
<p><u>Mayo</u> Date: Tuesday, December 29, 2009 For details please contact: Mark O'Donoghue: 996-2529 (home) or 996 -2162 (work) e-mail: mark.odonoghue@gov.yk.ca</p>	<p><u>Haines Junction</u> Date: Saturday, December 19, 2009 Compiler: Julie Bauer; for details please phone Julie at 634-2002; or e-mail julie-ann-bauer@northwestel.net alternate phone: Todd Heakes at 334-9014</p>
<p><u>Marsh Lake – Yukon River</u> Date: Sunday, December 20, 2008 Time: 9:15 a.m.; Location: Yukon River bridge bridge at Lewes Marsh (Alaska Highway) For information please contact Clive Osborne at 667-6976</p>	<p><u>Teslin</u> Date: Sunday, December 20, 2009 Compiler: Ben Schonewille. For route assignment contact Ben at 334-2683; or e-mail: teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com</p>
<p><u>Skagway</u> Date: Saturday, December 19, 2009 Compiler: Elaine Furbish For information please check the internet at groups.google.com/group/skagway-bird-club</p>	<p><u>Carcross</u> Date: Saturday, December 19, 2009 Compiler: Rick Halladay; for route assignment, please phone Rick at 821-4613 or e-mail: rflldy2@yahoo.ca</p>



2009 Yukon Birdathon Summary

Submitted by YBC Birdathon Coordinator Wendy Boothroyd

I sat on a log eating potato salad. Ken Madsen and I had worked hard to arrive at Swan Lake before the Birdathon began. It was twenty to five. White flashed from the long wings of a bird flying over the marsh. A Common Nighthawk! I like nighthawks but seldom see them. The bird jerked and bobbed away over the marsh. "I hope the nighthawk returns in twenty minutes," I said.

In 1984, Jim Hawkings organized the first annual Yukon Birdathon. On May 29, bird lovers slung their binoculars around their necks and embarked on the 25th annual Birdathon. For some birders the Birdathon is a 24-hour competition to find the most species. For others it is a chance to go for a walk while enjoying the spring migrants. This year many new birders joined the old stalwarts. Jeremy Baumbach returned to the Birdathon along with his partner Yvette Lepage. I asked Yvette if they saw any exciting birds. "I'm excited by all birds!" she exclaimed. In the early 1990's Jeremy originated the non-fossil-fuel Yukon Birdathon; he has been dubbed "Father of the Yukon Enviro-Birdathon." Jeremy did it because he didn't have a car. All birders are now encouraged to walk, cycle, paddle, car-pooling or travel by public transport to get around during the Birdathon.



Yellow-rumped Warbler. Takhini Hot Springs
Photo: Cameron Eckert

Malkolm Boothroyd saw the most species in the 2009 Enviro-Birdathon. He identified 83 bird species and cycled nearly 200 kilometres. Because the wind shifted while he slept at Judas Creek, he got to ride into a headwind the whole way. Jukka Jantunen and Julie Bauer, who birded around Watson Lake, identified the most species this year: ninety-seven. They even found a Western Kingbird,

only the second-ever sighting in the Yukon. Ben Schonewille came in second. He banded at McIntyre Marsh for five hours in the morning, and then hit up the Whitehorse area hotspots, finding ninety one species. Hector MacKenzie was this year's "Feature Birder." Hector admitted that non-stop birding can be tiring – and this from somebody who has skied to the Magnetic North Pole, among many other adventures. A Birdathon rookie was the boldest birder. Undaunted by the fresh snow that fell on Friday night, Scott Williams cycled to the top of Mt. McIntyre on Saturday. He recorded the only Gray-crowned Rosy Finches and Lapland Longspurs



of the day, as well as a respectable 35 species for his arduous ascent. 3 year-old Kalia Graham was the youngest birder this year. She reported seeing a Blue-footed Booby, a first for the Birdathon. Ken and I finished our Birdathon by taking a bird walk with representatives from three levels of government. Thanks to Yukon Minister of the Environment Elaine Taylor, City Councilor Dave Stockdale, Green Party candidate John Streiker and MP Larry Bagnell.

The wind-up BBQ, held at Robert Service Campground, was the biggest ever. Over forty people ate and drank and swapped “bird stories.” Jim Hawkings took a tally of all the birds we had spotted. We circled around Jim and he read out the checklist of Yukon birds. You have to listen closely. Jim can be tricky. “Did anyone see a Common Raven?” asked Jim. “YES, “we all cried. “American Crow?” “YES!” “How many people got American Crow?” Dozens of hands shot up. “Wow... and it’s only two years since they first arrived here. Canadian Crow?” Puzzled silence. Jim smiled and read on. “Purple Martin? Tree Swallow? *Violent*-green Swallow?” (Jim makes the violent green joke every year.) The cumulative tally was 135 species. That did not include Common Nighthawk.

Helmut Grunburg once again raised the most money – a whopping \$1263. Altogether, we raised \$5126. Yukon Bird Club will use its share to help fund the bird observatories which gather information about local and migrating birds. The rest of the money will help Yukon Conservation Society in its campaigns to protect McLean Lake, McIntyre Creek and other local Whitehorse area green space. YCS’s sustainable forestry work also protects bird habitat. Yukon Bird Club won the 1st annual “Bluebird Cup,” a challenge between the Bird Club and the Yukon Conservation Society to see which group could raise the most sponsorship dollars. The “Bluebird Cup” is a photograph of a Mountain Bluebird by local photographer Ken Quong. We are still looking for a public place to display it.



Thanks to everyone who took part and to the sponsors who generously supported the participants. And watch out . . . Helmut is already planning for his 2010 Yukon Birdathon.



OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Sightings Report – Winter 2008/2009

Compiled by YBC Sightings Coordinator Cameron D. Eckert

Deep cold snaps were experienced throughout the region this winter – possibly making some wonder if the winters are truly becoming warmer. Despite cold conditions, the birds are telling us that our northern winters are becoming increasingly warm. Record high numbers of wintering Trumpeter Swans, Mallards, and Bald Eagles are all indications of our changing climate. However, the same warmer conditions that allow some species to winter further north, also result in continued reductions in Arctic sea ice thickness, and greater over-winter survival of spruce bark beetles.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Trumpeter Swans (5 ads., 3 imm.) once again over-wintered along the Teslin R., s. Yukon (ph. AS).



Trumpeter Swans – Johnson's Crossing (early March 09)
Photo – Adam Skrutkowski

Five late Mallards were at Carcross, s. Yukon 1 Dec (HG, CO); one lasted there long enough to be recorded on the 20 Dec CBC (*fide* DK). McIntyre Cr. wetlands in Whitehorse, s. Yukon is known to host the Region's largest Mallard flock each winter; this year the flock increased from 25 birds on the 26 Dec CBC (CE) to a record-high 49 by 14 Feb (HG). A late-winter trip to Mush L., sw. Yukon turned up 2 male Mallards and 3 Common Goldeneye 27 Feb (TS). A male Long-tailed Duck at Lake Laberge s. Yukon lingered late enough to provide a rare winter record on 4 Dec (BD, HG). Tagish Narrows, s. Yukon hosted good numbers of the two common winter diving duck species with 50 Common Goldeneye and 7 Common Mergansers 1 Feb (HG, CO). Nine Willow Ptarmigan were recorded on the Kluane L., sw. Yukon 28 Dec CBC (*fide* SD).

Whitehorse, s. Yukon's record-high count of 9 Bald Eagles (up from last year's record of 5) on the 26 Dec CBC (CE) is a certain sign of changing winter bird populations in the North. In sw. Yukon, an ad. Bald Eagle was seen at Haines Junction 22 Jan (KA, LA). Northern Goshawk reports, all from CBCs, were 2 at Mayo, cen. Yukon 29 Dec (MOD), and 2 at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 30 Dec (*fide* JBa).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

A lingering juv. **Glaucous Gull** at Tagish 1 Dec (HG, CO; JD, PD) provided s. Yukon's second winter for the species. Great Horned Owl reports from sw. Yukon included 2 calling at Haines Junction 11 Jan (CDu), one seen there 12 Jan (TS), and one with a dead snowshoe hare at the Mush L. Rd. 12 Jan (TS). A satellite tracking study of Snow Owls found that one individual spent the winter in Fishing Branch Territorial Park, cen. Yukon (JFT). A couple of Northern Hawk Owls were a daily sight in Whitehorse from late fall through early Jan (m.ob.); CBC reports of the species included 1 at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 28 Dec (*fide* SD), and 1 in Teslin, s. Yukon 4 Jan (*fide* BS). A Great Gray Owl, rare in the Yukon Southern Lakes area, was seen near Tagish 17 Jan (ph. SB, SW).





Great Gray Owl – Tagish Road (17 Jan 09)
Photo – Scott Williams

The count of 129 Black-billed Magpies on the 26 Dec Whitehorse CBC (*fide* JH) included the remarkable observation of 55 sitting in one bush (CE). Whitehorse, s. Yukon finally claimed top spot as the North's Common Raven capital! Not that it's a competition or anything. The total of 1934 ravens tallied on the 26 Dec Whitehorse CBC (*fide* JH), narrowly surpassed 1820 ravens tallied on 4 Jan CBC at Yellowknife, NWT (*fide* RB).. The Carcross-Tagish area, s. Yukon is the Region's winter hotspot for Mountain Chickadees; 6 were recorded on the Carcross 20 Dec CBC (*fide* DK), and 3 were at Tagish 11-12 Feb (ph. SvD). Red-breasted Nuthatches can be a fairly scarce winter bird in the Region and so a count of 13 at Haines Junction, s. Yukon on 30 Dec CBC (*fide* JBa) was noteworthy. A few tardy American Robins remained into winter; 1 at

Dawson, cen. Yukon until 7 Dec (ML), 1 at Mayo cen. Yukon 8 Dec (ph. MOD), 1 at Whitehorse, s. Yukon 3 Dec (HG), and another on 14 Dec (TMK). Reports of wintering American Tree Sparrow, all from s. Yukon, included 1 on the 28 Dec Kluane L. CBC (PoS), 1 at Windy Arm through mid-Feb (JBo), and 2 at Shallow Bay through the season (MD, CG). An imm. White-crowned Sparrow, rare in s. Yukon in winter, visited a Whitehorse feeder 11 & 22 Dec (HG). A lone Dark-eyed Junco clinging to life in Mayo, cen. Yukon was last seen 29 Dec (MOD), narrowly missing out on their CBC. Carcross, s. Yukon turned up the highest numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos with 6 on the 20 Dec CBC (*fide* DK); at least 2 remained at a feeder there into Feb (DK). While juncos are regular on s. Yukon & NWT CBC's there are relatively few reports of over-winter survival; this year, one junco lasted the winter a Whitehorse feeder (CE, PaS). A flock of 6 Snow Buntings, rare in winter, was at Marshall Cr., sw. Yukon 27 Jan (KA). An interior-race Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, casual in the Region in winter, frequented a Whitehorse, s. Yukon feeder through the season (ph. RL). Red Crossbills are highly localized in winter; this year the Whitehorse CBC was the only to report the species with a total of 38 on 26 Dec (*fide* JH). Redpolls were remarkably scarce throughout the region this season; though by mid-Feb small flocks of Common Redpolls began to turn up at feeders. A Pine Siskin, likely an early spring arrival, appeared at a Whitehorse feeder along with 50 Common Redpolls 26 Feb (ph. CE, PaS). A fem. Evening Grosbeak, rare in s. Yukon winter, was at a Whitehorse feeder through the season (RE; ph. CO). Whitehorse, s. Yukon recorded a *high* CBC count of 14 House Sparrows on 26 Dec (*fide* JH).

CONTRIBUTORS (subregional editors in bold-face): Ken Anderson, Libby Anderson, Julie Bauer (JBa), Selena Boothroyd, Jim Borisenko (JBo), Judy Dabbs, Paul Dabbs, Sarah Davidson, Boris Dobrowolsky, Marianne Douglas, Claude Dulac (CDu), Cameron Eckert, Robb Ellwood, Helmut Grünberg, Chad Gubala, Jim Hawkings, Dan Kemble, Maria Ledergerber, Rob Lewis, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Mark O'Donoghue, Clive Osborne, Garnett Raven, Ben Schonewille, Polly Sias (PoS), Pam Sinclair (PaS), Terry Skjonsberg, Adam Skrutkowski, Jean-François Therrien, Shyloh van Delft, Scott Williams.



Snowy Owl tracking in the North

Satellite-tracking of Snow Owls has provided new insights into the movements of a species that winters in North America's most harsh and remote landscapes. The research sponsored by the Université Laval (Jean-François Therrien, Gilles Gauthier, Joël Bêty, and Frank Doyle) is following marked Snowy Owls from nesting sites at Bylot I., Nunavut, and Herschel I., n. Yukon. The owls marked on Bylot I. showed tremendous individual variability in their movements and winter locations. While some birds wintered in s. Canada and n. US (from North Dakota to the tip of Newfoundland), most birds stayed at high latitudes in n. Quebec and s. Baffin Island. One bird headed north towards the tip of Ellesmere Island – latitudes at which there is no daylight in winter. Western birds marked on Herschel I. wintered in a variety of locations in n. Yukon and Alaska, where the individual birds remained for several months in comparatively small localized areas in the mountains, or river delta areas.



Snowy Owl – Northwest Territories
Photo www.arcticecosystems.com

Thanks to our colleagues in the USFWS who visited the sites over the winter, we now have detailed information on the habitat and potential prey in these areas.



Evening Grosbeak – Whitehorse (1 January 09) Photo Clive Osbourne



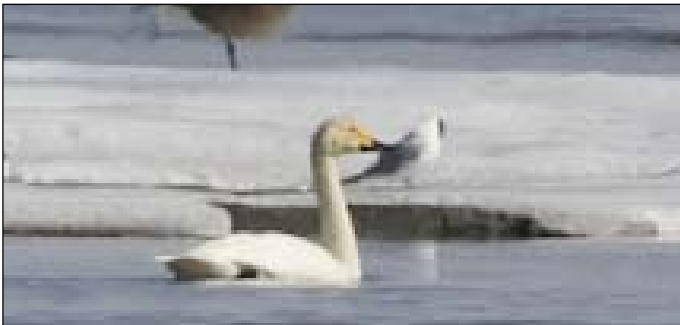
Sightings Report – Spring 2009

Compiled by YBC Sightings Coordinator Cameron D. Eckert

The northern landscapes are dramatic, remote, and encompass much of the Planet's last remaining true wilderness. Sparse populations with few birdwatchers in most areas means that visiting birders, scientists, and tour guides are essential to increasing our knowledge of the Region's birdlife. Please take the time to submit observations from your birding adventures in the North. Spring migration for some species in s. Yukon was flavoured by record snow falls during the previous season; for example, lingering snow coverage in early May likely accounted for the large flocks of Lapland Longspurs that invaded towns and settlements. However, migration progressed normally for other species groups such as waterfowl, shorebirds, and warblers.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A flock of 100 Brant, a rare late spring migrant in the Yukon Southern Lakes area, was seen over Swan L. 30 May (HG). Swan migration peaked at M'Clintock Bay, s. Yukon 25 Apr with counts of 730 Trumpeters and 829 Tundras (JJ). An ad. **Bewick's Tundra Swan** at M'Clintock Bay, s. Yukon 10-11 May (ph. JJ, CE) established just the 2nd record for the Territory.



Bewick's Swan – McIntock Bay (10 May 09)
Photo Jukka Jantunen

A flock of about 200 Canvasback was at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon 14 May (BS *et al*). An unusually early trio of Redheads arrived at M'Clintock Bay, s. Yukon 6 Apr (JJ). A movement of Long-tailed Ducks through Whitehorse, s. Yukon was noted with counts of 170 at Schwatka L. 18 May, and 100 at the Whitehorse sewage ponds 20 May (HG). Hooded Merganser has not yet been confirmed breeding in the Yukon, though observations of pairs in spring, such as a pair at Tagish 23 Apr (JD, PD), and another at Hidden Lks. 29 May (MW), indicate that birders should be on the lookout for nesting birds. Concern for Horned Grebe

populations underscores the importance of recording counts of any significant migration concentrations; a flock of 100 was at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon 12 May (CE). An Eared Grebe, casual in s. Yukon, was seen in Whitehorse 19 May (ph. PS). An imm. Double-crested Cormorant, rare but regular in s. Yukon, was at Nisutlin Bay 25 May (MG, TaH, ToH). A Great Blue Heron, a rare wanderer to the Region, was at Squanga L., s. Yukon 6 May (YS). A **Turkey Vulture**, casual anywhere in the Region, was seen over Whitehorse, s. Yukon 5 May (KF). There have been a number of credible Whooping Crane reports in the Yukon over the years, but none accompanied by a photograph; the Territory's first documented **Whooping Crane**, a first-year bird, was photographed at Ross River on about 17 May (FE, ph. HN).



Whooping Crane – Near Ross River (17 May 09)
Photo –Henry Nukon



Sparse coverage of shorebird migration in se. Yukon means that any observations from the area are of interest; among the shorebirds seen at the Watson Lake airport 25-26 May were 2 Black-bellied Plovers, 4 Whimbrel, 1 Ruddy Turnstone, 1 Sanderling, and 1 Upland Sandpiper (ph. JJ).



Upland Sandpiper – Watson Lake Airport (26 May 09)
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

An impressive 22 Solitary Sandpipers were noted at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon 12 May (CE). A White-rumped Sandpiper, rare in s. Yukon, was at Lewes Marsh 25 May (ph. JM). High counts for Long-billed Dowitchers in the Yukon Southern Lakes area included 200 at Shallow Bay 12 May, 250 at Judas Cr. 13 May, 300 at M'Clintock Bay 13 May, and 300 at Horse Cr. 18 May (CE).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

Bonaparte's Gulls migration in s. Yukon peaked in mid-May with counts of 350 at Judas Cr. and 600 at M'Clintock Bay 13 May (CE). Nares Lake, s. Yukon hosts the Region's highest numbers of migrant Mew Gulls; a flock totaling 570 was there 6 May (CE, JJ). Two of the 3 ad. Ring-billed Gulls seen at Quartz Rd. wetland in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 7 May remained through the spring and looked like they might nest there, but in the end it seems they did not (ph. CE). A peak count of 950 Herring Gulls was recorded at M'Clintock Bay, s. Yukon 27 Apr (JJ). Small numbers of Glaucous-winged Gulls make it to the Yukon Southern Lakes each spring; 2 first-year birds were at Nares L. 3 May (CE). Glaucous Gull is

an uncommon migrant through much of the Region's interior; single ads. were seen in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 22 Apr (CE), and Watson Lake, se. Yukon 25 May (ph. JJ). Thayer's Gull is an extremely rare spring migrant in the Yukon; a migrant flock of about 15 was at Watson Lake, se. Yukon 26 May (ph. JJ). A Great Gray Owl was seen near Fox L., s. Yukon 5 Mar (GW, MW). Two Short-eared Owls were at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 26 Apr (CE, PS). A spate of daytime sightings of Boreal Owls perched in the open around s. Yukon in early Mar was indicative of deep snow conditions in the woods likely limiting their access to prey. Rufous Hummingbird is rare but regular in s. Yukon; singles were seen in Whitehorse 14 May (JSt) & 19 May (KS). A **Western Kingbird**, the Yukon's 2nd, was at Watson Lake airport 28-29 May (ph. JJ, JB).



Western Kingbird – Watson Lake Airport (28 May 09)
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

Migration monitoring at Albert Creek Bird Observatory, se. Yukon found that warblers dominated the totals for the 1582 individuals banded this season; leading the way were Yellow-rumped Warbler (505), Wilson's Warbler (274), Orange-crowned Warbler (170), Northern Waterthrush (113), Yellow Warbler (96), and Blackpoll Warbler (66) (TMK, JJ). A Canada Warbler, an uncommon breeder in the extreme se. Yukon and unheard of anywhere else in the Territory, was about 900 km nw. of its range at Beaver Creek, sw. Yukon 21 May (PS). Swamp Sparrow is common in se. Yukon but rare elsewhere in the Territory; one



singing at McIntyre Cr. wetlands 27 May to 3 Jun provided the first Whitehorse-area record (ph. PS; ph. CE).



Swamp Sparrow – MacIntyre Wetland (28 May 09)

Photo – Cameron Eckert

A sensational fallout of Lapland Longspurs across s. Yukon in mid-May delighted birders as flocks in the hundreds descended on backyard birdfeeders.



Lapland Longspurs – Whitehorse (13 May 09)

Photo – Cameron Eckert

A small flock of 3 Smith's Longspurs (1 male, 2 fem.), a first for se. Yukon, was at the Watson Lake airport 26-27 May (ph. JJ).



Smith's Longspur – Watson Lake Airport (26 May 09)

Photo – Jukka Jantunen

An interior race Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, an uncommon alpine breeder but rare lowland migrant, was seen near Lake Laberge, s. Yukon 11 Apr (KO). Early spring saw the redpolls suffering from some kind of respiratory illness with many sick and dead birds reported in s. and cen. Yukon. It seems that Evening Grosbeaks have become increasingly rare around Watson Lake, se. Yukon in the past decade; and so a male seen there 12 May was exciting (ph. JSk). A fem. Evening Grosbeak that wintered in Whitehorse, s. Yukon was last seen 31 Mar (RE).

CONTRIBUTORS: Julie Bauer, Judy Dabbs, Paul Dabbs, Cameron Eckert, Robb Ellwood, Fran Etzel, Kent Forrest, Helmut Grünberg, Mike Gill, Martin Haelele, Tami Hamilton (TaH), Todd Heakes (ToH), Jukka Jantunen, John Meikle, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Henry Nukon, Katie Ostrom, Ben Schonewille, Kirstie Simpson, Pam Sinclair, Jenny Skelton (JSk), Jennifer Staniforth (JSt), Yammy Stote, Gerry Whitley, Mary Whitley.



YOUR PICTURES

This is your space. We want your photos !

Send them to the newsletter editor at yukon.bird.club.newsletter@gmail.com



Red-necked Grebes – Fish Lake (31 May 09)
Photo – John Meikle



American Tree Sparrow – Tagish (26 Apr 09)
Photo – Shyloh van Delft



Boreal Owl in nest box – Whitehorse (16 June 09)
Photo – Linda Gerrand



Ruddy Turnstone – Watson Lake Airport (26 May 09)
Photo – Jukka Jantunen



Black-bellied Plover (female) – Watson Lake (25 May 09)
Photo – Jukka Jantunen



Black-bellied Plover (male) – Watson Lake (25 May 09)
Photo – Jukka Jantunen



MacIntyre Marsh Bird Banding Demonstration Site Report

Submitted by Station Manager Ben Schonewille

This spring, the decision was made to not operate the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory due to financial constraints. As an alternative, the decision was made to operate a bird banding demonstration site at MacIntyre Marsh on the Fish Lake Road. The site chosen was known as an excellent bird watching location and it was hoped that the close proximity to Whitehorse would attract large numbers of visitors.

As the goal of the demonstration site was to catch and band birds to show members of the public, all banding was conducted in a non-standardized fashion. In total, a total of 1,401 net hours were tabulated on 30 days of operation, many of which were partial days. A total of 892 birds of 36 species were banded and 78 species were observed (see table below). The number and the diversity of the birds captured were modest; however, the later season migrants were under represented in the mist net captures.

Common Name	# Banded	Common Name	# Banded	Common Name	# Banded
American Green-winged Teal	4	Boreal Chickadee	9	Savannah Sparrow	58
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5	Fox Sparrow	6
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Swainson's Thrush	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	25
Solitary Sandpiper	7	American Robin	6	White-crowned Sparrow	113
Wilson's Snipe	5	American Pipit	4	Golden-crowned Sparrow	18
Belted Kingfisher	1	Orange-crowned Warbler	9	Dark-eyed Junco	77
Hammond's Flycatcher	6	Yellow Warbler	3	Lapland Longspur	39
Northern Shrike	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	72	Red-winged Blackbird	5
Tree Swallow	89	Northern Waterthrush	8	Rusty Blackbird	25
Violet-green Swallow	103	Common Yellowthroat	26	Purple Finch	1
Black-capped Chickadee	8	Wilson's Warbler	57	Common Redpoll	31
Mountain Chickadee	2	American Tree Sparrow	63	Pine Siskin	3



Savannah Sparrow, MacIntyre Marsh, Photo: John Meikle



Yellow-rumped Warbler, MacIntyre Marsh, Photo: John Meikle

The majority of the birds banded at MacIntyre Marsh were species which are commonly captured at Teslin Lake and Albert Creek. However, 2 species banded at MacIntyre Marsh (American Green-winged Teal and Lesser Yellowlegs) have never been banded at the well established bird observatories. The number of swallows banded were also relatively high although this was somewhat expected as the marsh is a well known swallow hotspot. The presence of Rusty Blackbirds at the marsh was also positive as the opportunity was taken to color band individuals of this species in conjunction with a larger color banding project with Pam



Sinclair of the Canadian Wildlife Service. A definite highlight for the station was a male Yellow-rumped Warbler recaptured on May 1st which was originally banded in Portland, Oregon during April of 2008.



Violet-green Swallow, MacIntyre Marsh, Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Tree Swallow, MacIntyre Marsh, Photo: Phil Hoffman

The public education component of the demonstration site was extremely successful. Due to a wealth of advertising (including a full page article in the Yukon News), we were able to attract 150 different visitors to the site. In total, these visitors spent over 310 hours onsite! Most importantly, many of the visitors were completely new to birds and bird migration monitoring. Included in the numerous visitors were 3 school groups, all of which were from Whitehorse.



School Group (OPES 11 – Wood Street School), MacIntyre Marsh, Photos: John Meikle.



Golden-crowned Sparrow, MacIntyre Marsh, Photo: John Meikle.



Albert Creek Bird Observatory Spring 2009 Report

Submitted by Station Manager Ted Murphy-Kelly

Albert Creek Bird Observatory's spring 2009 season was delayed this year due to logistical and funding constraints. The station was up and running on May 13th after 2 days of set up work. Being so late the work of preparing the site was much easier due to the lack of snow pack. Many migrants had already arrived and we soon realized that we had completely missed the Ruby-crowned Kinglet migration. Amazingly, not a single Ruby-crowned Kinglet was banded during the entire season! The first day of migration monitoring ended with a flash snow pellet storm and a very close lightning strike.

During the first few days of operation, Albert Creek observed many of the anticipated early migrants including Common Loon, Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, American Widgeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Scoter Sp., Long tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Goldeneye Sp., Merganser Sp., Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Herring Gull, Belted Kingfisher. Through mist netting and observations, the typical landbirds including Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Varied Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Northern Waterthrush.



Northern Waterthrush, Albert Creek Bird Observatory, Photo: Jukka Jantunen

Typically Albert Creek records a big sparrow movement in late April to early May. This year this movement seemed to be delayed reflected in the large numbers of American Tree Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos that were seen and banded as late as May 20th. May 21st was the first big neotropical wave recorded at Albert Creek that saw a huge number of Yellow-rumped Warbler (147), Orange-crowned Warbler (80) and Northern Waterthrush (20) dominating the daily banding total of 268 individuals. Once again, it seemed as though the proverbial neotropical floodgates had again opened in the Albert Creek marsh. The warm weather and relative wind strength/direction seemed to pile up birds at the marsh as we hit an all time daily banded record of 341 birds of 21 species on May 23rd. On this day alone we banded 134 Yellow-rumped Warblers, and 110 Wilson's Warbler. The willows and alders were truly "dripping" with warblers. By May 25th, things had slowed down but picked up again on May 26th when some season firsts arrived such as Chipping Sparrow, Alder Flycatcher and a stunning male Cape May Warbler. As late May arrived, the migration slowed and it ended with a Black and White Warbler banded on May 31st. As we have often seen at Albert Creek over the past 9 years many of the southeast Yukon specialties such as Magnolia Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow and Western Tanager arrived at Albert Creek in the last 5 to 10 days of the monitoring season (May 25th to June 5th). In total, the 2009 spring banding total was 1,576 individuals of 39 species (see following table).



Common Name	# Banded	Common Name	# Banded	Common Name	# Banded
Solitary Sandpiper	2	Orange-crowned Warbler	170	Fox Sparrow	11
Wilson's Snipe	1	Yellow Warbler	96	Lincoln's Sparrow	32
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	9	Yellow-rumped Warbler	505	White-crowned Sparrow	64
Hairy Woodpecker	1	Blackpoll Warbler	65	Golden-crowned Sparrow	3
Alder Flycatcher	35	Cape May Warbler	1	White-throated Sparrow	7
Hammond's Flycatcher	2	American Redstart	2	Slate-colored Junco	15
Least Flycatcher	1	Northern Waterthrush	113	Unid. Dark-eyed Junco	1
Warbling Vireo	5	Common Yellowthroat	35	Lapland Longspur	6
Gray-cheeked Thrush	2	Black-and-white Warbler	1	Red-winged Blackbird	2
Swainson's Thrush	19	Wilson's Warbler	274	Rusty Blackbird	1
Hermit Thrush	2	Western Tanager	3	Purple Finch	4
American Robin	9	American Tree Sparrow	28	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	1,576
Bohemian Waxwing	2	Chipping Sparrow	2	TOTAL SPECIES	39
Tennessee Warbler	8	Savannah Sparrow	37		



Cape May Warbler, Albert Creek Bird Observatory, Photo: Jillian Johnston



Black-and-white Warbler, Albert Creek Bird Observatory, Photo: Jukka Jantunen

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped out during this short season, particularly Jukka Jantunen for taking over after my short stay at the start of the season.



Birding Afield (Jamaica and South Africa)

Submitted by YBC Board Member Judy Klein

Have the advertisements in birding magazines ever caught your eye and you've wondered what it would be like to join a tour outside of North America? The idea intrigued me so in March 2008 I went to Jamaica with Victor Emmanuel Nature Tours. It didn't take long for me to realize that I was the novice in the group of seven. As I listened to the comments made at dinner the first night it sounded as if everyone had been everywhere. This turned out to be a benefit to me since the other participants readily shared their knowledge even suggesting other tour groups and more eyes scanning an area for a bird are always a good thing. It was important to the group that everyone got a good look at every bird. Since I was the first person anyone had met from the Yukon I got labelled "a lifer".

I understand there are beaches in Jamaica. I never saw one. Marshes, dry coastal scrub, lush tropical forests and mountains 2000 meters high were the focus. The pace was gruelling. Every morning we were up while it was still dark and on the way to the first habitat of the day. We stayed overnight in only two places during the 7 days. The food was delicious but falling into bed at 9 and up at 5 or 6 o'clock didn't give me time to truly enjoy the luxurious accommodations. There were no decisions to make on this type of trip. Everything is planned and you fit in.

Most people were anxious to see the island's 28 endemic birds and that goal was reached. It was wonderful having a Red-billed Streamertail sit on my finger and drink sugar water from the vial in my other hand at



Rockland's Bird Sanctuary. Another first for me was spotting the Jamaican Lizard Cuckoo and alerting the rest of the group. "Good call Judy" was indeed a compliment from this very experienced group. When a Clapper Rail responded to the recorded calls and gave us clear views I was thrilled. Ned from Mississippi was less so. His reaction would be much like any of us viewing another Raven.



I had a different birding experience in May 2009 when I travelled to South Africa to teach at an elementary school along the Eastern Cape with a volunteer group. Over the Internet I'd made contact with small tour groups in both Cape Town and Port Elizabeth for several days of birding before and after the teaching. Having local experts take me out was much less expensive than going with an organized tour. The leader gave me choices of what I wanted to see. I could take as long as I wanted with the scope set up just for me. I will never forget the first birds I saw in South Africa. Two Blue Cranes were silhouetted on a hill against the sunrise. In



Blue Crane, South Africa
Photo: www.outdoorphoto.co.za

and around spectacular Cape Town the focus was seeing as many birds as possible in the short amount of time I had. The total for the day and a half was 116 species. In Port Elizabeth the pace was slower. That leader made me work on identifications and justify why I thought what I did. This questioning seems to be a universal trait of really good birders. He had time to relate many interesting behaviours of the birds we were seeing.

A field guide, a list of birds from the area and the flickr.com photo sharing site have been the study combination that most enhanced my experience in the field. I spent many enjoyable hours preparing for these

trips by choosing photos from this site which best showed field markings. Seeing the birds in many different positions was also helpful. I am proud of the 33 birds I identified by myself on the weekends. My next trip will be a combination of commercial birding with a group and hiring a local guide. There are advantages to both. Panama, here I come!



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 (see the following page for answers to the previous challenge). The goal is to provide a variety of difficulty levels. If you have suitable (difficult) photos for future challenges, please email the newsletter editor. Good Luck !



Whitehorse, November 2009 Photo: Malcolm Boothroyd



Teslin Lake, August 2009 Photo: Jukka Jantunen



Watson Lake, May 2009 Photo: Jukka Jantunen



ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS BIRD ID CHALLENGE

Prepared by Ben Schonewille



Lincoln's Sparrow (Hidden Lakes) – August 2008

Photo – Malcom Boothroyd

This small bird can be identified as a sparrow by its overall brown coloration, relatively large legs and conical (seed eating) bill. Field marks for this species include ; the lack of a central breast spot, streaked flanks/back/chest, brown crown with gray central stripe, gray face and supercilium, brown streak extending beyond the eye and a thick malar stripe bordered by a white throat.



Sharp-shinned (Hidden Lakes) – August 2008

Photo – Malcom Boothroyd

This small raptor has a relatively long, barred tail with a square tip. The underparts are white with extensive brownish streaking. As the similar Cooper's Hawk isn't present in the Yukon, we can conclude that this individual is a Sharp-shinned Hawk.



Hybrid Barrow's x Common Goldeneye – May 2008

Photo – Jukka Jantnen

This interesting individual can easily be identified as either a male Barrow's or Common Goldeneye. The intermediate shape of the white face spot and the amount of white on the sides of the back suggest this bird is a hybrid between the two species.



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