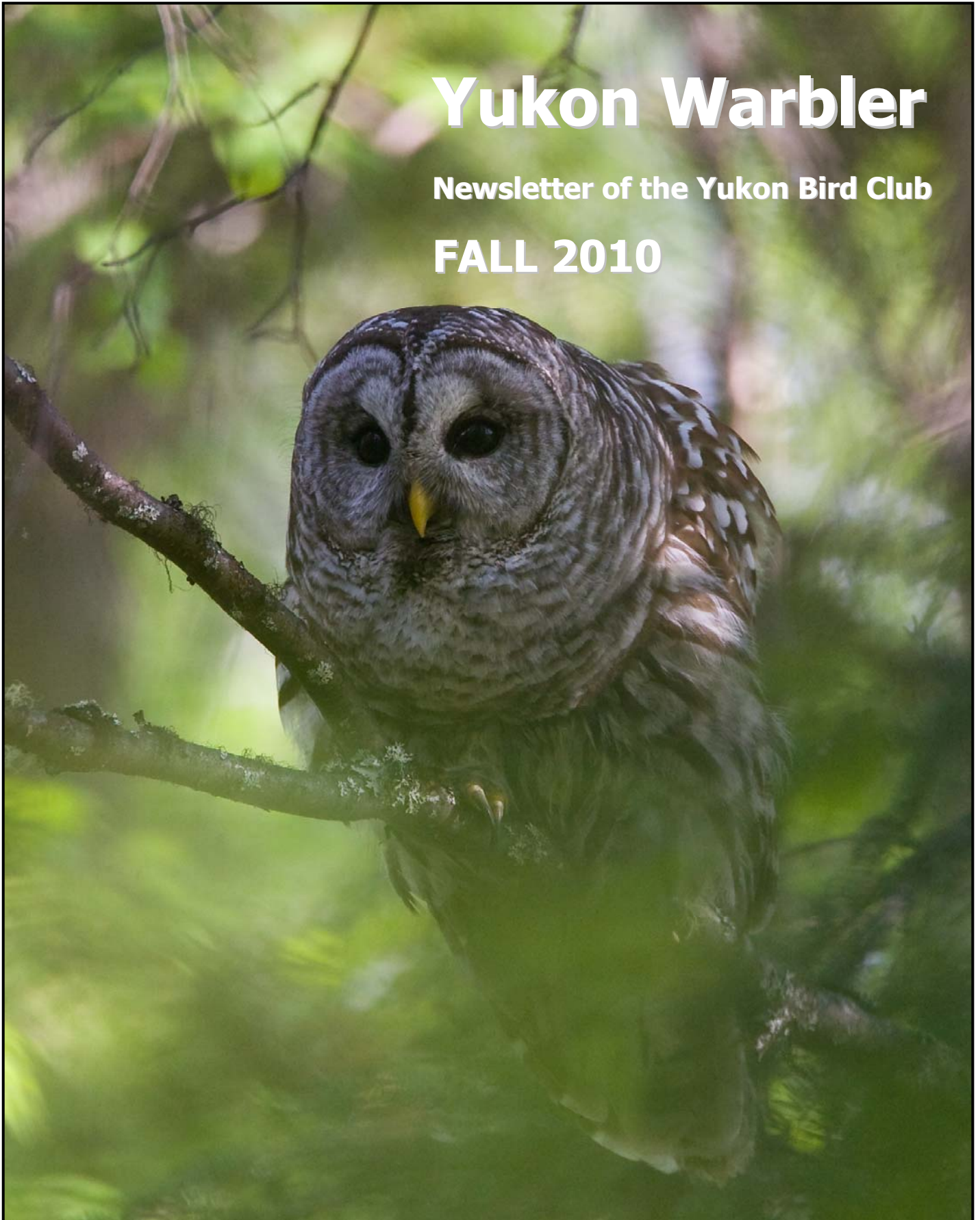


# Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

FALL 2010



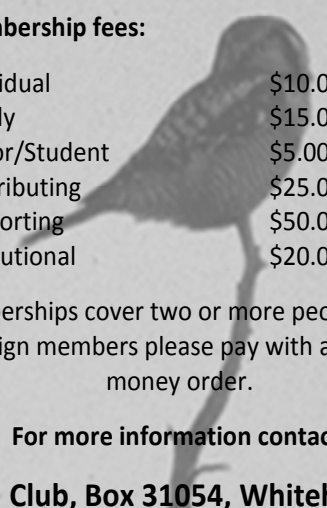
**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS— SIGHTINGS REPORTS – BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATES**

## 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**

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**YBC BIRDS:** A free email information flyway with updates of sightings, events and issues. To subscribe email [yukonbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto: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/](http://www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/)

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Yukon Warbler editor: Ben Schonewille  
Yukon Warbler – Fall 2010

### Cover Photo

Barred Owl (first Yukon Record), Jukka Jantunen  
2009-06-01, Albert Creek Bird Observatory

### Back Cover Graphic

From Jim Hawkings Photo

## Submissions and Comments Wanted

Please send us your articles and photos. You can email the club at the following address and your submissions will be forwarded to the newsletter editor.

[yukonbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:yukonbirdclub@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.

## 2010 Board of Directors

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## Yukon Bird Club News & Upcoming Events

### Yukon Bird Club Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The 2010 Annual General Meeting for the Yukon Bird Club will take place on February 22, 2011 at the Whitehorse Public Library. All members of the club are welcome and encouraged to attend. Attending the AGM will allow you to get up to date on the activities of the club during 2010 and equally important, have your say in how the club will operate for the upcoming year.

### Christmas Bird Counts

A total of 11 Christmas Bird Counts are scheduled for this winter (plus an additional count in Skagway, AK). Counts will take place in most Yukon communities and anyone interested in birds is encouraged to contact the count compiler and take part in a count. Observers are not required to be expert birders to take part; being able to identify the common birds is all that is required. Activities can be as simple as watching your bird feeder for a few hours or spending the better part of a day out skiing or hiking at your favourite spot to look for birds. Prior to the count day, be sure to contact the count compiler who will assist you with choosing your route. A list of counts, dates and compilers can be found on the following page.



Pine Grosbeaks, Fox Lake, 30 Jan 10, Photo: B. Schonewille



## 2010 / 2011 Christmas Bird Count Schedule

Eleven Christmas Bird Counts are scheduled for this year; all birders are encouraged to take in this year's counts. Keep in mind, you never know when something interesting will turn up! Participants are strongly encouraged to contact the count compiler prior to count day.

### **Whitehorse**

Date – December 26<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Jim Hawkings  
Contact – hawkingsATnorthwestel.net

### **Marsh Lake**

Date – December 19<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Clive Osborne  
Contact – cosborneATnorthwestel.net

### **Johnson's Crossing**

Date – December 26<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Minnie Clark  
Contact – timberpointATnorthwestel.net

### **Teslin**

Date – December 18<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Ben Schonewille  
Contact – teslin.bird.bandingATnorthwestel.net

### **Haines Junction**

Date – December 19<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Julie Bauer  
Contact – julie-ann-bauerATnorthwestel.net

### **Watson Lake**

Date – December 26<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Jenny Skelton  
Contact – jskeltonATnorthwestel.net

### **Mayo**

Date – December 29<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Mark O'Donoghue  
Contact – Mark.ODonoghueATgov.yk.ca

### **Tagish**

Date – December 26<sup>th</sup>  
Compiler – Shyloh van Delft  
Contact – shylohvandelft5ATgmail.com

### **Carcross**

Date – December 19  
Compiler – Dan Kemble  
Contact – (867) 821-3461

### **Old Crow**

Date – December 26  
Compiler – Birch Kuch  
Contact – flageoletAThotmail.com

### **Dawson City**

Date – December 19  
Compiler – Sebastian Jones  
Contact – sebastianATnorthwestel.net

### **Skagway**

Date – December 18  
Compiler – Elaine Furbish  
Contact – cefurbyATyahoo.com



## 2009 Yukon Christmas Bird Count Summary

Compiled by YBC Board Member Clive Osborne

Last year was a year of growth in participation in the annual Christmas Bird count with the number of counts growing to 11 from 6 the year before. However, the information from only 9 of these counts was available to the author at the time of writing, and only 6 of these counts has been posted on the Audubon Society's website. The Audubon Society is the official sponsor of the Christmas Bird Count throughout North America. This article summarizes the information collected from 9 Christmas Bird Counts conducted in the Yukon Territory in 2009 by field observers only (feeder watch counts excluded). A total of 3460 birds comprising 37 species were counted by 104 participants during the period December 19 – 29.

The most unusual species (as determined by showing low numbers in only one count) were Ring-necked Duck (Marsh Lake – Yukon River), Sharp-tailed Grouse (Old Crow), Eurasian Collared Dove (Whitehorse), American Robin (Whitehorse), White-throated Sparrow (Haines Junction), White-crowned Sparrow (Mayo), Snow Bunting (Haines Junction) and Pine Siskin (Whitehorse).

Count	Date	No. of Field Observers	No. of Species Observed	No. of Birds Observed
Whitehorse	26 Dec	41	29	1940
Haines Junction	19 Dec	14	18	517
Mayo	29 Dec	1	12	372
Tagish*	26 Dec	18	15	186
Teslin	20 Dec	3	9	162
Marsh Lake	20 Dec	7	15	180
Kluane*	28 Dec	10	6	35
Johnson's Crossing	26 Dec	3	9	38
Old Crow*	26 Dec	7	4	30

\* Count not registered on Audubon website

Species	Total Number of Birds Counted	Rank
Common Raven	1,462	1
Black-capped Chickadee	327	2
Boreal Chickadee	317	3
Pine Grosbeak	254	4
Black-billed Magpie	183	5
Bohemian Waxwing	173	6
Common Redpoll	167	7
Gray Jay	119	8
Redpoll sp.	106	9
Rock Pigeon	38	T – 10
House Sparrow	38	T – 10



## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

### Sightings Report – Winter 2009 / 2010

Compiled by YBC Sightings Coordinator Cameron D. Eckert (*cdeckert AT northwestel.net*)

Relatively mild fall weather gave way to one of the warmest winters on record throughout the Region. The season was characterized by lower than average snowfalls, with little in the way of bitter cold in southern parts of the Region, and record-breaking high temperatures recorded at many locations in February. The Region was well represented by Christmas Bird Counts this year with participation in 12 Yukon communities – which is perhaps the highest rate of CBC participation in North America.

#### WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Warmer winters are expected to result in higher numbers of wintering waterfowl in the North and that trend seems to be underway. A flock of 8 Trumpeter Swans was at Johnson's Crossing through mid-Jan with at least 6 remaining through the season (ph. AS). The regular wintering flock of Mallards in Whitehorse numbered 26 on 26 Dec (CE), and 4 were at Carcross 19 Dec (*fide* DK). Two scaup identified as a Greater, not previously documented in winter, and Lesser, casual in winter, were recorded on the Carcross CBC 19 Dec (SyC); a trip there 23 Dec to photo-document these two winter rarities could only relocate the Lesser Scaup (CO, ph. HG). A Ring-necked Duck, a Yukon winter first, was at Marsh L. 20 Dec (HG, DY). Counts of wintering Common Mergansers, all from s. Yukon, included 2 at Carcross 19 Dec (*fide* DK), 23 at Tagish 26 Dec (SVD), 3 at Whitehorse 26 Dec (*fide* JH), and 4 at Johnson's Crossing 26 Dec (*fide* BS). Ruffed Grouse is a fairly common winter bird, but even so 8 on the Mayo CBC 29 Dec (MOD) was a good number. Likewise, 12 Spruce Grouse was a relatively high count on the Marsh Lake CBC 20 Dec (*fide* CO). Willow Ptarmigan were noted on two Christmas Counts this year with 14 at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 19 Dec (*fide* JuB), and 10 at Old Crow 26 Dec (BK, DK, LS). The Yukon's only record of Sharp-tailed Grouse was of 2 on the Old Crow CBC 26 Dec (BK, DK, LS). The Whitehorse CBC produced another record-setting count of wintering Bald Eagles with 14 on 26 Dec (*fide* JH).

#### GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

The Eurasian Collared-Dove present in Whitehorse since late Sept, put in an appearance on the 26 Dec CBC and went on to survive the winter (LC, m.ob.).



Eurasian Collared-Dove, Hillcrest, 2 Oct 09, Photo; C. Eckert.

A chance encounter with a Great Gray Owl is a highlight of any field outing; one was seen near Tagish 11 Dec (ph. BD, HG); and one was seen along the Auriol Trail, sw. Yukon 17 Jan (RS). A Short-eared Owl, casual in winter, was an exceptional sight at Shallow Bay 14 Jan (MB, PB). Downy Woodpecker is rare in winter in northern parts of the Region and so one at Dawson 19 Dec (*fide* SJ) was noteworthy. An early-winter Northern Shrike was in Whitehorse through early Dec (HG; KW). Late-February saw the start of spring migration for Northern Shrikes with singles on 17 & 20 Feb at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon (MC; MH). Christmas counters in Whitehorse, s. Yukon recorded just 1100 ravens on 26 Dec CBC (*fide* JH) and pointed to warm weather as the cause of the low count since the ravens were out wandering the landscape instead of congregating en masse at the local landfill. A Black-billed Magpie in Dawson from





late fall through at least 24 Jan (ph. SB, SJ) provided the first winter record for cen. Yukon. American Robin is a rare winter bird in southern parts of the Region; one was near the Kathleen R., sw. Yukon 16 Dec (TS); two were recorded on the Whitehorse CBC 26 Dec (*fide* JH), with one surviving at least to 13 Jan (HC). Rare winter sparrows included a Lincoln's Sparrow at Fox L. from early Nov through the season (BM, EM; ph. BS); a White-throated Sparrow, a first for sw. Yukon, which survived long enough to be recorded on the Haines Junction CBC 19 Dec (ph. WR); and an imm. White-crowned Sparrow which hung on until the Mayo 29 Dec CBC (ph. MOD).



**Lincoln's Sparrow**, Fox Lake, 9 Jan 10, Photo; B. Schonewille.

A relatively high total of 10 Dark-eyed Juncos was recorded on the Whitehorse CBC 26 Dec (*fide* JH); singles were at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 19 Dec (*fide* JuB), and at Watson Lake, se. Yukon 26 Dec (*fide* TMK). Snow Bunting is rare anywhere in the Region in winter; a single lingered at Destruction Bay, sw. Yukon from mid-Oct through 7 Jan (LL); a flock of about 40 was at Destruction Bay 27 Dec (CE, PSi); and a single was at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 19 Dec (*fide* JuB). Spring arrival Snow Buntings began to appear in s. Yukon in late Feb (m.ob.). A Rusty Blackbird, casual in winter in s.

**Observers:** Julie Bauer (JuB), Jeremy Baumbach (JeB), Mary Beattie, Pete Beattie, Shelley Brown, Robert Bromley, Linda Cameron, Heather Carleton, Syd Cannings (SyC), Merrilee Chambers, Boris Dobrowolsky, Cameron Eckert, Dorothy Gibbon, Millie Hall, Jim Hawkings, Helmut Grünberg, Sebastian Jones, Dan Kemble, Clare Kines, Burch Kuch, Dennis Kuch, Yvette LePage, Linda Martin, Bob McAdam, Edith McAdam, John McKinnon, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Mark O'Donoghue, Clive Osborne, Richard Popko, Adam Skrutkowski, Sheldon Snow, Wolf Riedl, Ben Schonewille, Pam Sinclair (PSi), Terry Skjonsberg, Rick Staley, Leila Sumi, Shyloh van Delft, Keith Williams, Devon Yacura.

Yukon, was at a Fox L. feeder from late Oct through the season (BM, EM; ph. BS).



**Rusty Blackbird**, Fox Lake, 30 Jan 10, Photo; B. Schonewille.

An interior-race Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, casual in winter, was at Carcross 11 Dec (ph. DG). An imm. male **House Finch**, casual in s. Yukon, was seen in Whitehorse 12 Dec (ph. JeB, YL), and again 10-11 Feb (HG, ph. BD, ph. BS).



**House Finch**, Whitehorse, 10 Feb 10, Photo; B. Schonewille.

Red Crossbill is highly localized in winter in the Region and was recorded on just two s. Yukon Christmas Counts this year; a total of 17 at Whitehorse 26 Dec (*fide* JH), and 2 at Teslin 20 Dec (*fide* BS). A total of 38 House Sparrows was recorded on the Whitehorse CBC 26 Dec (*fide* JH).



## Sightings Report – Spring 2010

Compiled by YBC Sightings Coordinator Cameron D. Eckert (*cdeckert AT northwester.net*)

This season saw the publication of two regional bird checklists – a 15-year update to the Whitehorse checklist, and the first-ever Dawson City checklist. Whitehorse birders were amazed by the significant changes to the area's birdlife, especially the addition of 47 new species in the past decade or so, while Dawson birders were inspired by our relatively scant knowledge of area's bird to get out in the field and improve their checklist. No doubt the next edition will be much expanded and more accurate. Environment Canada reported an early spring across the Region, and this was reflected by a remarkably early Trumpeter Swan migration in s. Yukon, as well as advance arrivals for a few species in other areas.

### WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Tallies of 310 Greater White-fronted and 70 Snow Geese were recorded at Faro on 8-9 May respectively (JJ). A flock of 11 Snow Geese was feeding daily along the Yukon R. in Dawson 8-11 May (ph. CC); and a flock of 71 was at the s. end of L. Laberge 20 May (CE). An exceptionally early lone Brant reported from M'Clintock Bay 21 Apr (*fide* JJ) appeared at Wolf Cr. the following day (JH), and then lingered at the s. end of L. Laberge through early May (CE; JJ). A pair of Cackling Geese, a rare but regular s. Yukon migrant, was nicely photographed at the Mendenhall R. wetlands 21 May (ph. JK). The timing of the Trumpeter Swan migration at M'Clintock Bay was exceptionally early with unprecedented numbers seen in early to mid-April; a high count of 2355 was recorded there 7 Apr; while numbers at nearby Tagish Narrows peaked at 1108 on 3 Apr (JJ). An impressive evening flight of 3800 Tundra Swans over Albert Cr., se. Yukon was recorded 21 Apr (CE). While Eurasian Wigeon is a regular spring migrant in the Yukon Southern Lakes area, there are few reports from other parts of the territory; a male was at the s. end of Kluane L., sw. Yukon 24 Apr (LF). The only Eurasian Green-winged Teal reported this season was a male at M'Clintock Bay 24 Apr (ph. JJ). Early ducks at M'Clintock Bay were 2 male Redhead and a male Ring-necked Duck 30 Mar (JJ). Single male Cinnamon Teal, casual in the Region, were seen at Tagish 9 May (JD, PD), and Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 27 May (DB, SD).

A White-winged Scoter on the Yukon R. in Dawson 21 May (SJ) was surprisingly the first local record. A pair of Hooded Mergansers, a species not yet confirmed breeding in the Yukon, was at Bob L. 26 May (JH et al.). A total of 33 Ruddy Ducks was recorded at the Whitehorse sewage ponds 8 May (DY et al.). A count of 60 Horned Grebes was recorded at the Dezadeash R. wetlands, sw. Yukon 3 May (LF). A soaring **Turkey Vulture** was reported from Whitehorse 13 May (HC). The annual Crane Festival in Faro witnessed a stunning migratory movement of over 30,000 Sandhill Cranes 8 May (ph. JJ). An ad. male Pacific Golden-Plover, now considered rare but regular in spring in the Yukon Southern Lakes, was at L. Laberge 28 May (CE). Rare spring migrants at Watson L., se. Yukon were a late Sanderling 29 May, and a White-rumped Sandpiper 23 May (ph. JJ).



Sanderling, Watson Lake, 29 May 10, Photo: J. Jantunen





A count of 68 Wilson's Snipe at the sewage ponds Faro 9 May (JJ) was a clear indication of a strong migratory movement. Wilson's Phalarope is a very rare breeder anywhere in the Region; a total of 8 was seen at Swan L. 29 May (HG, THa).

### GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

A Long-tailed Jaeger, casual in spring in s. Yukon, was at Judas Cr. 23 May (ph. CE, PS).



Long-tailed Jaeger, Judas Creek, 23 May 10, Photo; C. Eckert

An ad. **Franklin's Gull**, casual in the Yukon, was at Watson L. 31 May (ph. JJ). Herring Gull migration at M'Clintock Bay peaked with a count of 740 22 Apr (JJ). A stunningly beautiful ad. **Little Gull** at L. Laberge 4 May provided the Territory's 3rd well-documented record (ph. CE, ph. JJ, HG).



Franklin's Gull, Watson Lake, 31 May 10, Photo; J. Jantunen

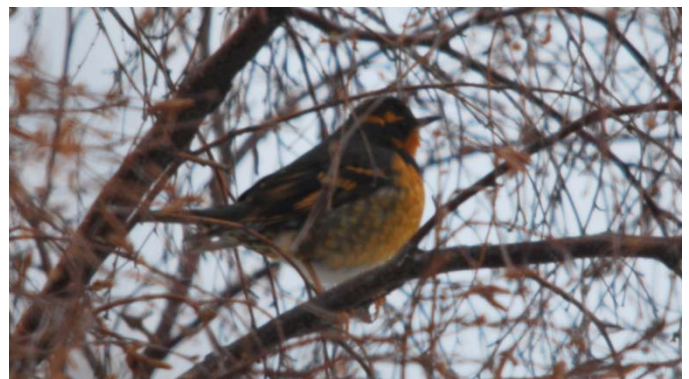
A first-year Glaucous-winged Gull seen on the Yukon R. in Whitehorse 6 May was at L. Laberge the following day (CE). A flock of 37 Sabine's Gulls, casual in s. Yukon, was flying n. along Marsh L. 29 May (wd. CE, PS, SVD). The Eurasian Collared-Dove which over-wintered in Hillcrest was

enthusiastically calling for a mate through the season (LC; MR; MW; et. al.); and it seemed it's chances were not too bad given that single Eurasian Collared-Doves were also reported nearby from Burma Rd., n. of Whitehorse 30 May – 4 Apr (ph. CS); and at Little Atlin L. 10-14 May (ph. KG).



Little Gull, Lake Laberge, 4 May 10, Photo; C. Eckert

The Yukon's long-awaited first well-documented **Barred Owl** was heard at Albert Cr., se. Yukon 20 Apr (The), and subsequently recorded and photographed 21 Apr (ph. CE, The, TMK); it remained in the area through the season (m.ob.). A Northern Flicker at Mayo 28 Apr was one of a few species that were early there this year (MOD). An **Eastern Kingbird**, rare in s. Yukon, was at Horse Cr. 29 May (AP). The recent Winter Wren split will require close scrutiny of every bird in North where both are rare; a wren recorded at Teslin 7 May proved to be a Pacific Wren (vr. The, PK). An early Hermit Thrush was at Mayo 27 Apr (MOD). An amazingly early male Varied Thrush was seen in Whitehorse 4 Mar (ph. KW).



Varied Thrush, Whitehorse, 4 Mar 10, Photo; K. Williams



An influx of Tennessee Warblers was noted in Whitehorse through the last week in May (m.ob.). A Yellow-rumped Warbler at Mayo 25 Apr (MOD) set a new early arrival date for cen. Yukon. A male Western Tanager, w. of its range, was seen at McIntyre Cr. in Whitehorse 18 May (ph. PS). Single Clay-coloured Sparrows, casual in the Yukon, were reported from Whitehorse 29 May (ph. CE, PS, SVD), and Wye L., se. Yukon 29 May (JJ).



**Clay-colored Sparrow**, Marsh Lake, 29 May 10, Photo. C. Eckert.

An exceptional Fox Sparrow migration observed across s. Yukon produced a high count of 81 at an Aishihik Rd. feeder 25 Apr (RRH). Single Swamp Sparrows w. of their range in s. Yukon singing on territory were at Tagish 29 May (CE, PS, SVD), and Teslin 30 May (THe). Also w. of its range was a singing White-throated Sparrow at Fish L., in Whitehorse 23-29 May (AP). A classic –male Oregon Dark-eyed Junco, casual in s. Yukon, was at

M'Clintock Bay 22 Apr (ph. JJ); another was at an Aishihik Rd. feeder 25 Apr (RRH).



**Oregon Junco**, McClintock Bay, 22 Apr 10, Photo; J. Jantunen

Unfortunately, a fly-bye Bobolink at Watson Lake, se. Yukon 29 May did not touch down for either a photo or detailed observation (JJ). An exceptionally early Red-winged Blackbird in Mayo 21 Apr subsisted on Mountain Ash berries (ph. MH). A Brown-headed Cowbird, casual in cen. Yukon, was at Dawson 27 May (CC). A male **Brambling**, the Yukon's 4<sup>th</sup> but the first in 19 years, frequented a L. Laberge feeder 27 Apr – 3 May (ph. KO). Purple Finches are at the edge of their range at Mayo ; a pair arrived to a feeder there 3-4 May (MOD). A massive feeding flock of about 1500 Common Redpolls was playing havoc with banding operations at Albert Cr., se. Yukon 22 Apr (CE, TMK, SD).

**Observers:** David Blakeburn, Corey Cartwright, Hilary Cooke, Judy Dabbs, Paul Dabbs, Shyloh van Delft, Susan Drury, Cameron Eckert, Lloyd Freese, Ken Gabb, Helmut Grünberg, Thomas Hafen (THa), Jim Hawkings, Todd Heakes (THe), Melody Hutton, Jukka Jantunen, Sebastian Jones, Jozien Keijzer, Piia Kukka, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Mark O'Donoghue, Adam Perrier, Michael Reynolds, Robyn Rufiange Holway, Pam Sinclair, Cathy Stannard, Mary Whitley, Keith Williams, Devon Yacura.





## YOUR PICTURES

This is your space. We want your photos !

Send them to the newsletter editor at [yukonbirdclubATgmail.com](mailto:yukonbirdclubATgmail.com)



Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Carcross, 11 Dec 09, Photo: D. Gibbon



American Crow, Teslin, 17 Apr 10 Photo: D. Hett



White-throated Sparrow, Haines Jct., 5 Nov 09, Photo: W. Reidl



Boreal Owl, Whitehorse, 16 Jan 10, Photo: P. Muir



White-crowned Sparrow, Tagish., May 2010, Photo: S. van Delft



Brown-headed Cowbird, Teslin, May 2010, Photo: A. Skrutkowski





## 2010 Field Trip Report

*Compiled by YBC Field Trips Coordinator Jenny Trapnell*

Our field trip leaders outdid themselves once again during 2010, offering a wide range of successful outings for visitors and residents alike. Twenty trips were scheduled from April to September, with 13 of these taking place in May during the spring migration. Most events were held in Whitehorse, but others were offered in Carcross, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Faro. Turn-out averaged about 13 people a trip, but there were exceptions.

The start-off event was again led by Boris Dobrowolsky in his search for shrikes and bluebirds on the North Alaska Highway. While there were no stand-out rarities on the trips, participants in Jim Hawkings' Judas Creek trip had a "field day" recording more than 40 species, including a pair of Hooded mergansers at Bob Lake and a "blitz" of warblers, including a Tennessee warbler near the Lakeview Marina site. The evening was topped off by cocoa offered at the home of Jean Kapala. Dragonflies and birds were featured in Syd Cannings' trip to a special "fen" in the area below Copper Ridge. Katie Aitken gave a wonderful interpretation of "cavity" nesting during her guided visit to the wetlands behind Yukon College. One of the highlights of that trip on a very grey and sunless day was a Sora. Dan Kemble and his partner Nancy guided birders up the ridges above Nares Lake to see and hear Dusky Grouse perform their dramatic mating rituals during early spring. The popular early morning trip to the McIntyre wetlands continued for another year, led by long-time leader and YBC board member Pam Sinclair. Sarah Davidson also who stepped up to lead an early-morning trip in Haines Junction. Birders also enjoyed the chance to meander along the Millennium Trail again with trip leader, and former bird-year trip leader Malkolm Boothroyd. A few of the trips were planned to complement other birding adventures: In addition to her annual Paddy's Pond trip in Hillcrest, Mary Whitley led a trip during the Faro Crane and Sheep Festival in Faro, and Clive Osborne led a tour around the Tagish Loop on the heels of the Festival of Swans. YBC also helped to promote the annual Birds on the Wing viewing adventure on the Dempster Tombstone Interpretive Centre during early June.

The wonder of migration could also be enjoyed at the bird observatory field stations at Albert Creek and MacIntyre Marsh where bird monitoring activities continue. Beginner birders were able to get some help from Mark O'Donoghue during his bird identification trip in Mayo, and in a beginner's bird walk offered by Wendy Boothroyd and Ken Madsen in Whitehorse, as a pre-event to the successful Birdathon organized by Wendy. As a fall "finale" Helmut Grünberg led the annual visit to the sewage lagoon ponds, aided by Devon Yakura (who is studying the bird populations there). Ione Christensen was slated to guide YBC's final field trip to Lake Lebarge to view loons, but a stubborn early snowfall and icy roads led to a rare field trip cancellation. Ione did lead two successful trips earlier in the season, to Fish Lake Road and to her favourite spot, Hidden Lakes in Riverdale. As well as our committed field trip leaders, the Yukon Bird Club would like to thank The Whitehorse Star, Yukon News, What's Up Yukon, and CBC radio, CKRW, CHON-FM, for helping to advertise our trips. The Yukon Department of Environment, the Yukon Conservation Society and the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture also helped promote these events.

If you have thoughts or suggestions about the Yukon Bird Club field trips, please send them to [Jennifer\\_trapnell@hotmail.com](mailto:Jennifer_trapnell@hotmail.com). We are always looking for new ideas for trips, trip leaders and are considering having assistant trip leaders on some of our more popular trips.



## Interesting Leucistic Birds

Among the most difficult birds to identify are the birds that have abnormal plumage. They aren't in any field guides, and sometimes the unusual plumage removes key field marks. There has been some disagreement in the scientific community about what exactly to call birds with white spots. Solid white birds with pink eyes everyone agrees are albinistic, and pale birds with normally colored but pale plumage everyone agrees are leucistic. But birds with white patches intermingled with normal plumage have been described with a variety of terms. Albinism is a genetic mutation that prevents the production of melanin in the body. Leucism is a genetic mutation that prevents melanin from being deposited normally on feathers. Since the white patches on birds have no melanin, birds with these patches have been said to have partial or imperfect albinism. More recently, however, scientists are clarifying the definitions and pointing out that since birds with white patches do have melanin in the body, they cannot be albinistic. Therefore the white patches are caused by a defect preventing normal deposition of the melanin. And since leucism is a deposition problem, it makes sense that birds with white patches would be leucistic. Consequently leucism comes in two main varieties — paleness, an equal reduction of melanin in all feathers; and pied, an absence of melanin in some feathers creating white patches.

Leucism is relatively unusual in birds, and albinism is rare. Typically birds with abnormally white feathers do not survive long because they are so much more visible to predators. Those that do survive may have trouble attracting a mate. Consequently, the mutated genes that cause albinism and leucism are less likely to be passed on to a new generation. If you are ever fortunate enough to see one of these oddly plumaged birds, consider yourself lucky!

[http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/AboutBirdsandFeeding/Albinism\\_Leucism.htm](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/AboutBirdsandFeeding/Albinism_Leucism.htm)



**Leucistic pied Dark-eyed Junco**, Teslin, 18 Apr 10,  
Photo; D. Hett



**Leucistic pied White-crowned Sparrow**,  
Whitehorse, 3 May 10, Photo; B. Schonewille



**Leucistic pied Fox Sparrow**, Whitehorse, 25 Apr  
10, Photo; M. Whitley



## McIntyre Marsh Bird Banding Demonstration Site – Spring 2010 Summary

Submitted by Station Manager Ben Schonewille

This spring marked the second consecutive year of operation for the McIntyre Marsh Bird Banding Demonstration Site. This year, mist netting/banding was conducted on 28 days from April 18 to May 30. One of the primary objectives of this project is to provide an opportunity for members of the public to visit and learn about bird banded and the Yukon's bird life in general. The close proximity to downtown Whitehorse makes this possible and the site has become a popular outing for the public, often including families with small children. All visitors are able to watch the birds being banded and are often allowed to view how the birds are captured and safely extracted from the mist nets. This project provides a valuable educational environment for people to learn about migratory birds and to gain an increased understanding of their natural surroundings. During the entire 2010 spring season, a total of 218 people visited the site and spent a over 310 visitor hours at the site.

Banding totals for the 2010 season included 1,582 birds of 38 species. A very large sparrow fallout during late April/early May resulted in relatively high captures of Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. Warblers were once again well represented in the banding captures, with Yellow-rumped Warblers being the most common. A single Olive-sided Flycatcher was also banded, providing a very exciting time as this species is banded very infrequently at the Yukon Bird Observatories.

**Table.** Birds banded at McIntyre Marsh during the spring of 2010.

Species	# Banded	Species	# Banded
Mallard	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	212
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Blackpoll Warbler	5
Solitary Sandpiper	7	Northern Waterthrush	16
Spotted Sandpiper	1	Common Yellowthroat	53
Wilson's Snipe	8	Wilson's Warbler	144
Belted Kingfisher	1	American Tree Sparrow	75
Olive-sided Flycatcher	1	Chipping Sparrow	5
Hammond's Flycatcher	6	Savannah Sparrow	83
Tree Swallow	1	Fox Sparrow	109
Violet-green Swallow	22	Lincoln's Sparrow	75
Black-capped Chickadee	4	White-crowned Sparrow	342
Boreal Chickadee	1	Golden-crowned Sparrow	34
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	25	Dark-eyed Junco	247
Swainson's Thrush	3	Lapland Longspur	1
American Robin	15	Red-winged Blackbird	3
Varied Thrush	2	Rusty Blackbird	11
American Pipit	6	Common Redpoll	33
Tennessee Warbler	2	Hoary Redpoll	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	16	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	1582
Yellow Warbler	8	TOTAL SPECIES	38







Olive-sided Flycatcher, 15 May 10



Blackpoll Warbler (male), 20 May 10



Common Yellowthroat (male), 20 May 10



Golden-crowned Sparrow, 14 May 10



Sharp-shinned Hawk (adult male), 14 May 10



Savannah Sparrow, 1 May 10



## Albert Creek Bird Observatory – Spring 2010 Summary

*Submitted by Station Manager Ted Murphy-Kelly*

Albert Creek Bird Observatory celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive spring season this year. The season started off very well with the Yukon's 1<sup>st</sup> Barred Owl fully documented at the site by volunteer Todd Heakes on April 20<sup>th</sup>. The station banded 2,623 birds of 46 species and operated for 44 days April 20 to June 6. Unlike past years set up at the site was quite easy. Snow coverage was only 30 - 40% as compared to the near 100%. The early spring saw the usual sparrow frenzy with a record number (257) of Fox Sparrows banded. We were also kept on high alert for the first week due to the high numbers of congregating Common Redpolls. We estimated a high of 1200 individuals on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Visual counts of Tundra swans were exciting with 3500 estimated on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

The peak of warbler migration occurred took place over the period of May 15 to 30. In particular, it was an exceptional year for Myrtle Warbler with 776 individuals banded. This year's highest daily banding total was 284 birds of 17 species on May 20 which occurred following the passage of a storm front. There was an interesting late push of Wilson's Warbler during the very end of the season. On June 1, the observatory's first Clay-colored Sparrow was also banded. Exceptional captures or sightings included Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Sora, Cape May Warbler and Western Tanager.

The banders in charge title was shared between Ted Murphy-Kelly, Gwen Baluss (Juneau, AK) and Jukka Jantunen. Our volunteer effort greatly improved this year

primarily due to a number of very keen residents of Watson Lake including Marnie Cooke, Susan Drury, Jessica Condon, Megan Cohoon, Wayne Kaye and Christina Guillemette. Long time volunteer Sarah Davidson also returned early in the season for a week. We also received help from two banders from Haines, AK (Mario Benassi and Pam Randles) who are hoping to establish a banding station there in the near future.



**Myrtle Warbler (male), 13 May 10**



**Clay-colored Sparrow 1 June 10**





## Whitehorse Sewage Lagoon Project

Submitted by Project Lead & YBC Board Member Devon Yacura

In conjunction with the Yukon Bird Club, a six month research project was conducted at the Whitehorse sewage lagoon near Whitehorse. The aim of the study was to investigate the biological, chemical, and physical features of the lagoon that make this area so attractive to birds. Surveys to identify nesting waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines were completed. Also, aquatic invertebrates, water chemistry parameters, and plant communities were quantitatively measured and analyzed as they relate to various bird species. Collection and documentation of this information had not yet been done for this area and the data is being used to help provide insights as to why these ponds are so productive.

Fifty-six broods of seven species of ducks were found to be nesting at the lagoon including Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Northern Pintail and American Wigeon. Fifty-four of the broods were observed on the upper cells of the lagoon and two broods were seen on the long term storage pond. Four species of shorebirds were also found nesting at the lagoon including Semi-palmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Killdeer and Lesser Yellowlegs. Semipalmated Plover was the most numerous (10 broods), followed by Spotted Sandpiper (4 broods), Killdeer (1 brood), and Lesser Yellowlegs (1 brood). A point count survey revealed that 12 passerine species are suspected to be breeding on the lagoon property including Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, American Robin, Common Yellowthroat, Alder Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Savannah Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco.



Among the invertebrates sampled, *daphnia* and *chironomids* were the most abundant. Their populations were very high in the long term storage pond, and secondary cells 2, 3 and 4. Based on the available literature, it is thought that the invertebrates are a major reason why the Whitehorse sewage lagoon is used so heavily for breeding and spring/fall staging. Other reasons why the sewage lagoon may be preferred for nesting habitat is the predator reduced environment created by the perimeter fencing and the abundance of willows as riparian vegetation around the secondary cells.





## A Trip to Long Point and Teslin Lake Bird Observatories

*Submitted by Shyloh van Delft*

This summer was the best summer I've ever had, because I got to spend most of it doing what I love: bird watching, bird banding, and spending time with awesome people. After Ben Schonewille suggested applying to the Young Ornithologist Workshop at Long Point Bird Observatory, Helmut, Cameron and Pam kindly wrote my letters of recommendation, I was accepted to the workshop at the end of last May.

I flew with my dad and brother to Hamilton, where we spent a day before driving to Old cut Field Station on Long Point. The other teenagers, Mark, Reuven, Muhammad, Emma, and Katie arrived around noon the next day. After they had gotten settled, we all set up mist nets then practiced opening and closing them. The real action started the next day, when we got up at 5:00am and opened the nets. Ten minutes after net opening, we caught a Red Bat, and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. The mist nets opened every morning at 6:00am, and closed at 12:00pm, which meant getting up at around 5:00am. Every day was filled with new birds, such as my first Turkey Vultures circling in a flock of fifteen overhead one morning. Some were so common in the nets, that even though they were lifers I got used to them pretty fast. Gray catbirds were so plentiful that by the third day they were getting a little old! Some were little gifts waiting to be found and banded, such as Baltimore Orioles, Trail's Flycatchers, Northern Cardinals, Carolina and House Wrens

We made a trip to the tip of Long Point after a few days, travelling by motorboat and disturbing a giant Snapping Turtle at the dock. I was a little bit freaked out because of the waves (which were safe to drive the boats in but much bigger than Yukon waves!), but the water was so shallow even a long way out from the shore that in one spot we almost had to get out and push the boat. Once there, we had a race to see which team could push the boats up the shore the fastest. After we packed our stuff up the beach to the house we were staying in, the other teenagers and I were sent on a scavenger hunt, with the main purpose being to get oriented around the tip and have fun. Our list was made up of things like: take a picture of a turtle, snake, dragonfly, a butterfly and four different kinds of birds (identify all of them). Identify 20 species of birds, find



Black-billed Cuckoo  
Long Point Bird Observatory

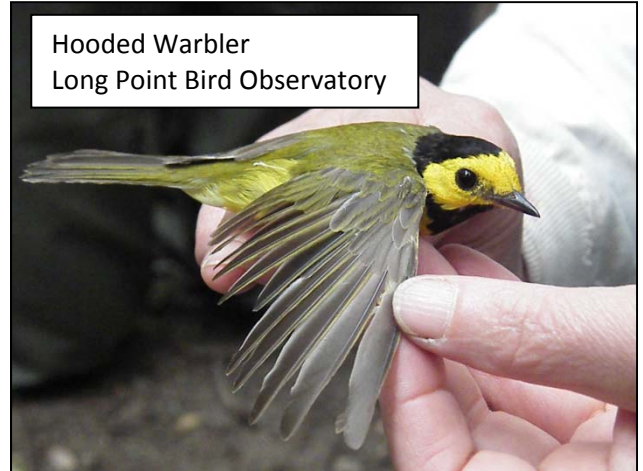
three different buildings on the tip, find three bird nests and wildlife tracks (identify all of them), as well as feathers from three different species of birds (identify the species) and pick up at least three pieces of garbage. The girls won by three points, which meant the boys were doing the supper dishes that night.

Our next day was very busy, and involved a lot of walking in the heat. We went on an hour long area census counting birds, and then a monarch butterfly census which was supposed to also be an hour long, but ended up lasting three! While counting the monarchs, we got distracted by some dragonflies in the area, so we "paused" the census and went dragonfly hunting. We found two different kinds of saddlebags, many skimmers, dashers, darners, a couple Halloween Pennants, and much more. The best



one we found was a pair of Citrine Forktails, the first seen at Long Point! We also found a Painted Turtle and two Black Garter Snakes. After the census was over, we trapped birds in a Heligoland Trap, and caught a Black-billed Cuckoo as well as a Field Sparrow. After a long day we went for a swim in Lake Erie, which I thought was surprisingly warm.

When we went back we were sad to leave the tip, but we did many more exciting things once we were back at Old Cut. One day we went to St. Williams Forest to look for the endangered Hooded Warbler and their nests. We found two that had been being monitored, and got to see six nestlings (three from each nest) get banded. We caught one adult with a little mist net set up between the bird and its nest. We also saw three other adults in the trees. Another day we went to a town called London for the evening. We split up into groups, and monitored the sky as well as the local chimneys for Chimney Swifts. My group saw a flock of about



twenty Swifts flying around at dusk, and the other groups saw the Swifts going into a chimney. I see what people mean when they say "Chimney Swifts are like little flying cigars". Their bodies are shaped exactly like a cigar! We were taken to Pterophylla Farm to do hummingbird banding as a surprise afternoon outing. We got to band one Ruby-throated hummingbird each that got trapped in a special feeder trap meant for hummingbirds only. It was such finicky work, the bands had to be cut out of a sheet of bands that were almost as thin as tin-foil, then you had to hold the birds very gently and try to put the band on their tiny little leg.

Another afternoon we went on a field trip to the University of Western Ontario to watch our leaders put on a bird banding demo for a first nations school group. I was able to see my lifer American Goldfinch there, which was mostly what was being caught. We went on a tour of the University and saw many different rooms and cages filled with varieties of species. We went into a room where the scientists there studied bird voices, and got to see a few bird songs played on a computer graph. The pitches were amazing. There is so much more to a bird's song than just what you hear with your ears! We were also shown a wind tunnel room that was totally air sealed. Being air-sealed allows the scientists to control the humidity, temperature, climate, wind speed, altitude, and more. Birds are put into the wind tunnel for study of their flight pattern, wing movement, as well as the amount of energy used in migration under different circumstances. There is a camera and laser that blink together one-thousand times per second, focused on the bird in the wind tunnel.

The days flew by, and after what seemed like just a couple days, our last day had arrived. We spent the morning banding, and then had a "skinning bee". We each had to prepare a bird for scientific study by skinning them, stuffing the skins, and attaching them to sticks. I was given a female Red-winged Blackbird, (now every time I hold a blackbird I think about that skinning bee) which I skinned after we watched our instructor, Mary Gartshore do a bird. Though I felt really sick when I started, I found that after I worked for a few minutes I was starting to enjoy it. I was the first to finish, and would have done another happily if I had to!



The next day was the day parents came to pick us up, and was officially the end of the course. Everyone's parents arrived at noon when we were in our last hour of banding, so I got to band a few birds for my dad and brother. Everyone went for a very sad last swim in Lake Erie, and then we all left. It was really sad leaving, I wasn't ready to go, but mostly because it would be a long time before I got to see everyone again. The other young ornithologists and I still keep in touch, and we are planning a Long Point reunion some year soon. I also saw so many awesome birds, I got 109 lifers during the ten day period!



Young Ornithologist Workshop Participants at the tip of Long Point

When I came back to the Yukon, I went to the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory to continue banding and carry on what I had learned in my course. Ben brought me to his parents' house the day I arrived to practice extracting



Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Teslin Lake Bird Observatory

before I started at the observatory, which was good because I had not done any extracting since last winter. I got a lot more practice extracting in Teslin which I was happy about, because we did not get to extract birds at Long Point. I also did lots of banding at Teslin, mostly when the volume of birds was lower. One of the birds that I banded was a Sharp-shinned Hawk, the first raptor that I had ever held, let alone extracted and banded! By the end of my stay I was lucky enough to band three of them. I saw seventeen lifers while I was in Teslin, including a Wilson's Snipe, Osprey, Upland Sandpiper, Olive-sided, Hammond's, and Dusky Flycatchers, Thayer's Gulls,

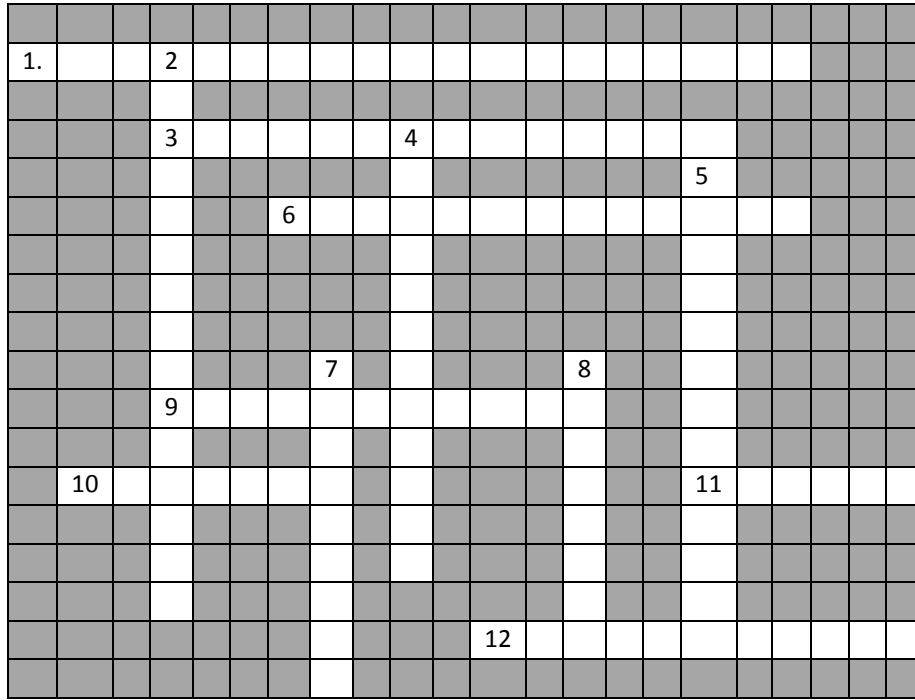
Blackpoll Warbler and many more. During one net run I found a beautiful American Redstart which came right down to me when I pished, and I had left my camera behind. I was so mad when I missed that beautiful picture, I decided I was going to get a picture of a Ruffed Grouse that had been hanging around instead. I found the grouse, which was a female, and stumbled upon an angry male in full display. I was able to get good pictures of him in full display, and drumming on a log. I didn't have a preference for either one of the observatories that I spent time at this past fall, I enjoyed my time at both for different reasons. Long Point was mostly about seeing the new birds and meeting kids my own age who were also into birds. I loved that, we got very close and I keep in touch with them regularly. I plan to go back and volunteer there or apply for the internship after graduation, and have a reunion. At Teslin, I got to see and experience how a bird observatory really operates, and what is involved in running one. Working at Teslin gave me some insight into how a banding station really works, which I found interesting and loved doing. I spent time with some great people while I was there, who taught me and helped me learn the tricks of the trade. I can hardly wait for next summer to arrive so I can volunteer at the Yukon bird observatories again !





### Yukon Birds Crossword Puzzle

This version of the crossword puzzle is provide by YBC member, Ruth McCullough.



**Across:**

- 1. Irregular migration, call sounds like a nasal car horn
- 3. Distinctive bill for opening pine cones, usually found in small flocks
- 6. This bird’s “ears” are hard to see.
- 9. This Carrion eating bird is the official bird of the Yukon
- 10. This bird has an uncanny ability to “know” when humans with food are around.
- 11. One of only three North American land birds whose tail is longer than the body.
- 12. Known to prey on Dall Sheep lambs

**Down:**

- 2. Common at feeders, distinctive , slow hoarse call
- 4. This bird feels it can hide by staying perfectly still
- 5 White in Winter, found in flocks
- 7. This bird has a brown cap with a gray headband
- 8. This large bird, almost pure white feeds primarily on rodents and Hares

### Key to Spring 2010 Crossword Puzzle

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## 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 !



**McIntyre Marsh (May 2010)**

*Photo – B. Schonewille*



**Whitehorse**

*Photo – C. Eckert*



**Teslin Lake Bird Observatory (July 2010)**

*Photo – B. Schonewille*



## ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS BIRD ID CHALLENGE

Prepared by Ben Schonewille



**Townsend's Solitaire (Teslin Lake) – September 2009**  
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

This bird is a Townsend's Solitaire, a member of the thrush family. Key diagnostic features for this species include; overall gray coloration, relatively long tail with white on the outer tail feather, short broad bill and a buffy wing bar at the base of the primaries / secondaries,



**White-winged Crossbill (Albert Creek) – May 2008**  
Photo – Ted Murphy-Kelly

This bird is a female White-winged Crossbill, one of only two Yukon species which have a crossed beak. In all plumages, this species has two white wing bars. Males and females can be distinguished by their overall coloration with males being red and females being yellow.



**Hoary Redpoll (Fox Lake) – April 2010**  
Photo – Ben Schonewille

This small bird is a Hoary Redpoll, often confused with the Common Redpoll. Distinguished characteristics which distinguish this redpoll include; short stubby bill, faint brown streaking on the flanks, light gray back, a whitish band in the greater coverts and an overall paler coloration than Common Redpoll. Other key features for this species but not visible in the quiz photo include completely white undertail coverts and a predominantly white rump.





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