

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club



Fall 2013

One Sandhill Crane
Willet Number Two
Birding in Nicaragua
A Windows Upgrade for Birds?
Young Ornithologists at LPBO

Yukon Bird Club

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

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charitable organization.

Membership fees:

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June 2, 2013
Photo: Jukka Jantunen

Yukon Warbler — Fall 2013

Submissions and Comments Wanted

Please send us your articles and photos
(with dates and locations). The newsletter
editor can be reached at:

YBCnewsletter@gmail.com

Regular mail can be sent to the Yukon Bird
Club post box, with attention to:
Newsletter Editor.

Suggestions for content are always welcome.

IMPORTANT:

All sightings of rare or notable birds
should be sent directly to the Sightings
Coordinator at: yukonbirdclub@gmail.com

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Yukon 
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2013 Yukon Christmas Bird Count Schedule

Sponsored by the Yukon Bird Club through your Yukon Birdathon donations!

All are welcome — beginners, feeder-watchers, and seasoned field experts! With Christmas Bird Counts scheduled for most Yukon communities, this is an excellent chance to get out birding this winter and take part in a continent-wide bird monitoring and conservation program. To participate, contact the count compiler before count day.

Yukon Communities without Christmas Bird Counts: There are no established Christmas counts in Beaver Creek, Faro, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing, Rancheria, Champagne, Keno, Eagle Plains, Ross River, and Herschel Island. If you are a birder in one of these communities and would like to organize a Christmas Bird Count, then please e-mail: yukonbirdclub@gmail.com to get started!

<p>Skagway December 14 Compiler: Elaine Furbish E-mail: snowshoes@aptalaska.net Tel: 907-983-2049</p>	<p>Teslin December 15 Compiler: Ben Schonewille E-mail: teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com Tel: 867-334-2683</p>
<p>Carcross December 21 Compiler: Dan Kemble Tel: 867-821-3461</p>	<p>Haines Junction December 21 Compiler: Julie Bauer E-mail: julie-ann-bauer@northwestel.net</p>
<p>Tagish December 22 Compiler: Shyloh van Delft E-mail: yukonbirder@gmail.com Tel: 867-399-3022 Meet at the Tagish Bridge day-use area at 10:00 AM</p>	<p>Marsh Lake December 22 Compiler: Clive Osborne E-mail: cosborne@northwestel.net Tel: 867-667-5976</p>
<p>Dawson City December 22 Compiler: Sebastian Jones E-mail: sebastian@northwestel.net Tel: 867-993-4430</p>	<p>Whitehorse December 26 Compiler: Wendy Nixon E-mail: wendy.nixon@ec.gc.ca Tel: 867-668-7572</p>
<p>Watson Lake December 26 Compiler: Jenny Skelton E-mail: jskelton@northwestel.net Tel: 867-536-7488</p>	<p>Takhini-Laberge December 27 Compiler: Cameron Eckert E-mail: cameron.eckert@gmail.com</p>
<p>Carmacks December 27 Compiler: Jessica Condon E-mail: jaybee79@hotmail.com</p>	<p>Kluane Lake December 28 Compiler: Julie Bauer E-mail: julie-ann-bauer@northwestel.net</p>
<p>Johnson's Crossing December 28 Compilers: Minnie Clark & Ben Schonewille E-mail: timberpoint@northwestel.net E-mail: teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com Tel: 867-334-2683</p>	<p>Mayo December 29 Compiler: Mark O'Donoghue E-mail: mark.odonoghue@gov.yk.ca Tel: 867-996-2529</p>
<p>Old Crow <i>The Old Crow Count needs a compiler this year. If you are a birder in Old Crow or know a birder in Old Crow then please e-mail yukonbirdclub@gmail.com.</i></p>	

Yukon Christmas Bird Count Summary 2012

by Clive Osborne

The annual Christmas Bird Counts continue to increase in popularity in the Yukon, with counts conducted in 13 locations in 2012. The data from 12 counts have been posted to the [Audubon Society's website](#), the official sponsor of the Christmas Bird Count throughout North America. This article summarizes the information collected from all 13 Yukon Christmas Bird Counts in 2012 by field observers only (feeder watch counts excluded). A total of 5985 birds comprising 36 species were counted by 138 participants during the period December 16 – January 5. The location of the counts is shown in Figure 1, and the counts are summarized in Tables 1–3.

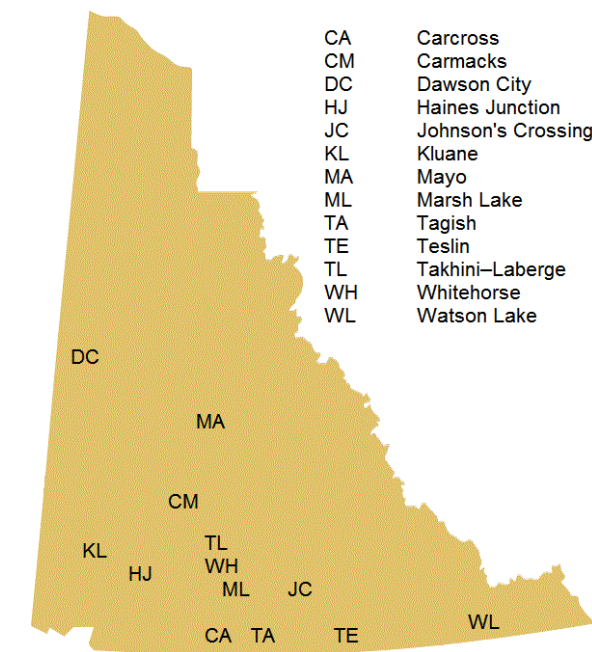


Figure 1. Locations of 2012 Yukon Christmas Bird Counts.

Count	Date	No. Field Observers	No. Species Observed	No. Birds Observed
Whitehorse	26/12	37	27	2594
Haines Junction	16/12	19	18	571
Marsh Lake	23/12	6	13	533
Watson Lake*	26/12	18	13	443
Carcross	16/12	17	21	357
Tagish	26/12	13	15	242
Kluane	05/01	7	9	69
Mayo	29/12	6	11	345
Dawson	23/12	6	7	253
Teslin	16/12	3	8	145
Johnson's Crossing	26/12	3	6	71
Carmacks	27/12	2	7	147
Takhini-Laberge	27/12	1	12	215

*Count data not on Audubon website

Table 1. Summary of Yukon Christmas Bird Counts.

Unusual sightings where a species was observed in only one count were: Trumpeter Swan (6 – Johnson's Crossing), Mallard (50 – Whitehorse), Bufflehead (2 – Tagish), Bald Eagle (8 – Whitehorse), Northern Goshawk (1 – Kluane), Rock Pigeon (14 – Whitehorse), Eurasian Collared Dove, (1 – Haines Junction), Snow Bunting (1 – Carcross), and House Sparrow (24 – Whitehorse).

Species	No. Birds	Rank
Common Raven	1588	1
Common Redpoll (redpoll sp.)	1200 (141)	2
Pine Grosbeak	1025	3
Bohemian Waxwing	727	4
Black-capped Chickadee	329	5
Boreal Chickadee	240	6
Black-billed Magpie	216	7
Gray Jay	88	8
Red Crossbill	51	9
Mallard	50	10

Table 2. The top ten most abundant species over all counts.

Other observations that stood out as notable to the author were: Bohemian Waxwings in Whitehorse (727), Mountain Chickadee in Carcross (10), Hoary Redpoll in Takhini-Laberge (15) and in Watson Lake (7), Willow Ptarmigan in Carcross (10), Barrow's Goldeneye in Whitehorse (1) and in Carcross (1), American Tree Sparrow in Haines Junction (1) and in Carcross (1).

Species observed during count week but not counted on count day were: Common Merganser (Marsh Lake), Ruffed Grouse (Teslin), Northern Goshawk (Dawson), Great Horned Owl (Haines Junction, Dawson), Northern Hawk Owl (Dawson), Boreal Owl (Haines Junction), Northern Shrike (Whitehorse), Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (Mayo), Red Crossbill (Teslin), Hoary Redpoll (Haines Junction), Common Redpoll (Marsh Lake).

Species	Counts
Common Raven	13
Pine Grosbeak	13
Black-capped Chickadee	12
Boreal Chickadee	11
Black-billed Magpie	11
Common Redpoll	11
Gray Jay	9
Spruce Grouse	7
Hairy Woodpeckerl	7
Dark-eyed Junco	7

Table 3. The top ten most widespread species as determined by the number counts on which they were observed.

Summertime Presentations

by Elizabeth Sutton

Ione Christensen was busy this summer keeping the YBC Events going, with several slide shows and talks at the MacBride Museum of Yukon History. Presentations included *Birds of Spring*, *Birds of Summer*, and *Birds of Fall and Winter*. With some repeats, approximately nine shows were given, along with a Bird Talk for the Miles Canyon Railroad Society for a kids camp at Kopper King. Ione also gave some talks at Carcross and Tagish. Shyloh Van Delft assisted Ione on some of her MacBride Museum talks, and Jim Hawkings assisted as well at the museum. These talks were well attended by locals, and a significant number of tourists traveling through town also took in the presentations.

Sandhill Cranes – Up Close and Personal

by Chris Wilkinson

[Editor's Note: The following is an account of an abandoned Sandhill Crane that spent the 2011–2012 winter in rehabilitation at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve (YWP). Thanks to former and current YWP Directors of Programming & Education, Chris Wilkinson and Jake Paleczny for respectively writing and forwarding the story. Thanks also to Biologist Dave Mossop (Professor Emeritus, Yukon Research Centre) for providing information about the crane's fate after its release near Faro in the spring of 2012.]

I am sure that lots of people will be heading to Faro on the weekend of May 11th [2012], many with the hope of viewing Sandhill Cranes. It is, after all, the Sheep & Crane Viewing Festival! Many of us have been in previous years, and those of you who have will no doubt remember straining your necks looking upwards to see hundreds of cranes kettling in the sky. For most people, this is as close as they get.

At the Yukon Wildlife Preserve this year, however, we have been lucky enough to get up close and personal with one of these magnificent birds. In fall 2011, a Sandhill Crane was brought to our Animal Research and Rehabilitation Centre. The crane was found in Faro by Doug and Yasmine Hannah near their home at Lynx Track farms. He was found in the forest, which is somewhat unusual for cranes, who normally prefer more open spaces. Doug and Yasmine brought him down to Whitehorse, and he was admitted into the Rehabilitation Centre. An examination by [YWP Curator and Veterinarian] Maria [Hallock] revealed no major injuries other than being weak and thin. Maria suspected a muscle injury had likely caused the crane to be unable to join his flock mates in their southern migration.

The crane has been cared for all winter by Maria and our other dedicated staff. In this time, we've learned a lot. Apparently despite all the logic, knowledge, and research, this particular bird prefers to feed on fish rather than grain and insects! Not only that, he likes each piece to be freshly

rinsed before he eats it. He takes it to the artificial pond in his enclosure, rinses it and shakes the excess water off — only then is it good to go! He spends hours weeding his brome grass planters and digging roots from the willow patch. He flies around his 2800-cubic-foot room and enjoys chatting with his imaginary friends in the reflection of two mirrors.

The crane was taken up to Faro during the Sheep & Crane Viewing Festival this spring and released. Just before releasing him he was banded, so should anyone find him again, we will be able to recognize him. The release went very smoothly. The crane casually strolled away across the sandbar, inspecting the rocks and sticks as he went. We left a small snack of his favourite char, and left him to rediscover the wild.

UPDATE: Unfortunately, the crane is reported to have been picked up by Angelika Knapp on May 13th, 2012, at Johnson Lake, about six miles south of Faro. The bird had been killed by a natural predator; he had lasted only one day after being banded.

Please remember, not all animals that appear to be in distress are actually in need of our help, especially youngsters that could just be undergoing a normal stage of their development. However, should you ever come across an orphaned, distressed, or deceased wild animal, your first call should be to the Yukon Conservation Officer Services T.I.P.P. line (1-800-661-0525). They will advise you as to your next steps in assisting the animal in distress. Other helpful hints can be found at: www.env.gov.yk.ca/wildlifebiodiversity/problemwildlife.php, or here: www.iwrc-online.org.

2013 Yukon Birdathon Report

by Jim Hawkings

The annual Yukon Birdathon was held on 31 May to 1 June 2013 – as late on the calendar as we can have our Birdathon, because it traditionally takes place on the last weekend of May. Many of us may have been focused on the likely dearth of migrants such as shorebirds and ducks owing to this late date, but it turned out the weather was the conversation starter – in keeping with the very cool spring to that point. Things started out splendidly in Whitehorse at 5 pm Friday with shorts-and-T-shirt conditions close to 20°C. I was out with my son Lee, looking for a memorable bike-birding adventure along the downtown waterfront. Sadly, it was all downhill from there, as the evening rapidly deteriorated to rain showers and plummeting temperatures. It was memorable alright. Fortunately I lived to regret my choice of apparel and we retreated, soaked and shivering, to a well-known but not revered fast-food outlet that starts with “M”. Anything hot to eat or drink would have tasted good at that point. I had harboured visions of another epic enviro-(i.e. non-motorized)-Birdathon, but after I recovered the use of my hands, Lee and I decided it was wiser to nurse our bikes back to the SS

Klondike and drive home in the rain to Pineridge by car. Thus we lived to fight another day.

Saturday in the Whitehorse area was not much better – rain and fog shrouded the countryside pretty much until 5 pm mercifully brought the birding to an end. I got up late, dusted off my raingear – something you can live without for years in Whitehorse – and slogged around Pineridge and Wolf Creek for an hour and a half. It was pretty quiet, even around the hotspot wetland where American Redstarts would likely be lurking on a finer day. So ended my Birdathon with a grand total of 36 species – and not even enviro-birded. For shame.

Others were more stubborn, fortunately, making what verged on superhuman efforts considering the weather. Those lucky enough to be birding in Watson Lake faced less adversity – and found more diversity: it was only cloudy (not raining) there all day, and temperatures soared to over 14 degrees! Our perennial champion in recent years, Jukka Jantunen, ended the grueling 24 hours in the southeast with 114 species, leaving a trail of exhausted companions in his wake! He managed some dillies, including Barred Owl (not even ON the 2005 Yukon checklist!), Willet, Starling (Ugghh), Blue-headed Vireo, Western Tanager, Clay-coloured Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Swamp Sparrow.

A good crowd attended the après-Birdathon barbecue at Robert Service Campground, where the WARM fire was a popular gathering spot to exchange tales of survival. As usual, the high fliers in terms of bird numbers were looking a bit droopy-eyed. After everyone was suitably stuffed with food, we went through the checklist to assess the damage done by our collective efforts. As expected, Jukka's 114 species topped the charts, matching exactly his total from 2012. The total number of species seen was 143, well shy of 155 last year and the second best year of 147 in 2011. This year finally broke a 3-year trend of increasing species counts.

After the pledge sheets trickled in over the next few months, seven "parties" emerged as official fundraisers in the Birdathon. Through their collective efforts, especially the outstanding work of Ted Murphy Kelly, Shyloh and Marilyn van Delft, Helmut Grünberg, and feature birder Nick Guenette, over \$5,000 was raised to support the conservation education efforts of the Yukon Bird Club and the Yukon Conservation Society. I take my hat off especially to Helmut Grünberg, who maintained his incredible record of fundraising in spite of significant health issues. Thanks again to all the participants, sponsors, and to Betty Sutton, who once again turned up with a wonderful collection of prizes for participants.

Will-Will-Willet!

by Jukka Jantunen

[Editor's Note: With central Alberta and Saskatchewan as the northern limit for its normal summer breeding range, the Willet would be a most impressive and unusual sight in the Yukon. Jukka Jantunen and fellow birders were in for just

such a treat during their Birdathon last May, as they were able to document the territory's second Willet sighting. Willet or not, Jantunen et al. had a most epic 24 hours (the Birdathon is from 5:00 PM Friday to 5:00 PM Saturday), to which the following account can attest. Thanks to Jukka for agreeing to have his story reprinted here.]

We were very lucky with many things, but also put in a full effort. First we headed to the Rancheria area, and I was surprised to find that I was able to bring my little Toyota Matrix all the way up to the west radio tower, which is where we started our adventure. Our bird number one was Willow Ptarmigan, a pair of which we watched for 24 minutes until the clock hit 5:00 PM! We also added a Golden-crowned Sparrow there, and downhill a Townsend's Warbler sang in the same spot where Ben [Schonewille], Ted [Murphy-Kelly] and I got ours a couple of years ago. There was too much water at Rancheria Falls (not really a surprise), and so we dipped out on Dipper. The next hour was spent on the flats at Swift River, where we added a bunch of higher-altitude birds like the American Tree Sparrow and Gray-cheeked Thrush. Then it was time to head home via an Osprey nest, but the first one had fallen down, the next one was empty, and the third looked abandoned as well...until I spotted a bird sitting on a branch some distance away. High fives followed!

At this point we were running late and headed straight back to Watson Lake. Liard River flood waters had risen on the new fields next to the bridge, and a quick check gave us several species, including totally unexpected Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, and Wilson's Phalarope. It was then time to get some fuel for the car, but our plan was interrupted. It was a surreal moment when, as we drove east on the Alaska Highway at Kathy's Kitchen, a flock of four gulls and one non-gull flew west — toward us — low over the road, and then the non-gull turned out to be a Willet! As the Willet abandoned its company and headed toward Wye Lake, I too made an abrupt turn that way. With a little burst of speed and sharp braking, I was able to get to a position to shoot the first set of photos.

This was followed by a frantic dash to Wye Lake park for a few more photos, a phone call to Susan [Drury], a text message to a bunch of people, a little jiggle dance and jumping up and down, and then back to professional calm. When looking at it in Wye Lake park I also realized that I had forgotten my scope at the trailer! So, the gals — Ayla Mullen and Rhianna Stavish — watched the Willet while I retrieved my scope and refueled the car. Then it was off to the races again.

The Watson Lake airport was disappointingly quiet, but we did add most of the expected sea ducks and three species of loon to our list. To our great disappointment, the Yellow-bills were nowhere to be seen. A fly-over peeting Nighthawk caused some yelps of excitement! At that point we didn't really know what to do next. It had been raining solid since the start of our Birdathon, we were getting tired and cold, and it was getting dark. On Ayla's suggestion we headed to Albert Creek Bird Observatory (ACBO) to ensure we could add Barred Owl and Sora to our list. This was a



Willet: full pixel crop of a photo taken from the road near the grocery store as the bird was landing on the opposite shore.

good move, as we didn't hear the latter in the morning. Ayla and Rhianna went to sleep, and I made numerous stops at various wetlands for birds never (or almost never) seen or heard in the Yukon, as well as for some owls, but not surprisingly failed to find any. Finally, we pushed through the overgrown forestry road of Cosh Creek, and I too fell asleep for an hour.

When I could hear the first Yellow-rumps singing, it was time to work our way back along this jewel of a road for forest birds, except that we failed to find any of the real targets we had. I only heard a little snippet of what surely must have been a MacGillivray's Warbler, but it wasn't enough to call the species. That was it except for our only Golden-crowned Kinglet of the day. Luckily, we found a couple of Ovenbirds singing along the highway. Even more awesome were full-binocular-view sightings of a black and a gray wolf!

Back to Watson Lake, a quick check for breeding Horned Grebes gave us no grebes, but a tree-tapping Three-toed Woodpecker and a singing Olive-sided Flycatcher were both nice surprises. Back to Wye Lake to check on the Willet: it was still there, but this time it had moved right onto the lawn of the park! Wye Lake was totally rocking, as we also added Trumpeter Swan (five yearlings), the season's first Alder Flycatcher, and a Clay-colored Sparrow: the second rarity of the Birdathon for us, and in the same place as the Willet! On a fairly quick check we found the airport area almost empty of birds and quickly headed down to ACBO, where we were able to add Cape May and Magnolia Warblers, Western Tanager, and Lesser Yellowlegs, which we had somehow mysteriously missed until then.

A few stops along the highway near Rantin Lake failed to give us Townsend's Solitaire, but lady luck was to give us a Blue-headed Vireo! At that point it was past 9:00 AM and therefore time to move into pond checking at Watson Lake. A few species were added, but nothing of true excitement except a surprise Merlin. We also experienced a relatively humiliating yet very educating moment when cooing from the Skelton's yard was first checked off as Eurasian Collared-Dove (with high fives) and then found out to be



Willet taken at Wye Lake park. Note the leg injury the bird had.

domestic Pigeons! Well, the cooing did sound like dove rather than pigeon, but since we didn't have a visual we scratched that one over.

On the second check of Wye Lake we found Cameron [Eckert] and Ted looking for the now-absent Willet (which they did later find), and we entered our longest drought of the Birdathon, as we spent the next three hours without a single new bird. So, it was time for one final major trip: up the Robert Campbell highway, which was rumoured to be in a very bad condition. The paved section to Target Lake went by quickly, and our spirits were lifted again with views of Horned Grebe and an unexpected sight of a pair of Ruddy Ducks. The pavement then gave way to washboard and potholes, but I was able to navigate around them with relative ease, and so we did indeed reach the north end of Simpson Lake. Gadwall was added within a minute of our arrival. Despite lots of birds present, no further species were added until finally a small flock of Red-necked Phalaropes was spotted from the open lake. The south end had almost nothing, but the luck was still on our side as we added one last species at 3:52 PM, a Spruce Grouse, on our way out from the campground. The last hour was spent looking for the missing forest birds in random locations along the highway and finally along Sa Dena Hes road, but so it was that 114 would be our final species tally and only two species short of my personal "greater" Watson Lake area (southeast Yukon east of Swift River) record. I want to thank my teammates Ayla and Rhianna, as they spotted many birds and made the 24-hour Birdathon a fun event! I'm also very glad that I finally found a bird that drew people to Watson Lake all the way from Whitehorse, and that the twitch was a successful one! Well done Cam and Ted!



A Short Visit to Nicaragua, Land of Mangoes

by *Mary Whitley*

January is a cold, dark month in the Yukon. Not so in Nicaragua. Every day is sunny and warm, or hot, depending on the altitude. No wonder some of our migrants go there.

Arriving in Managua at midnight we were bewildered, tired and jet lagged. But the next morning we found ourselves in a birders' paradise. Turns out the grounds of the Best Western Hotel in Managua, literally across the street from the airport, support a large number of birds. Mostly in the tops of the giant mango trees.

Taking a bus from Managua to Esteli was easy, cheap and fast. Esteli is a small city in western Nicaragua, in an agricultural area but close to the mountains. From there we took local buses into the hills, one to meet a local birder for a day at Miraflores and another to go to a hostel for a night. Both trips were easy to arrange. The birding was wonderful, the trails were good, if sometimes slippery, and the people were friendly. Memorable birds at Miraflores were the wrens: Band-backed, Rufous-naped and White-breasted. At the hostel we had very good views of the shy national bird, Turquoise-browed Motmot.

From the roof of our Esteli hotel we discovered morning and evening flocks passing by. The most amazing was the Long-tailed Tyrant, a type of flycatcher. They fly in a looping pattern in small groups. Amazing that they can fly at all with two long tail feathers dragging.

After returning to Managua, we met our birding guide, Lenin, and driver. We were driven to Montibelli, a private reserve south east of Managua. There we met young Alejandro, a bird guide associated with the resort. He was very knowledgeable and patient for one so young, taking the time to teach me some of the birds by ear. The highlight there, seen from the deck of our room, was a posing Black-headed Trogon, one of many seen passing in flocks. At night we could hear the Common Pauraque, which Alejandro had shown us nesting.

Another drive brought us to a coffee plantation and famous bird reserve, El Jaguar. There we met Georges Duriaux, the co-owner. It is in the highlands where it is misty and cool (and muddy). The birding from the dining room was spectacular with flocks of birds, including many hummers, at the nearby feeders and in the fruit trees. The flashy black and red Passerini's Tanager, formerly Scarlet-rumped, and Crimson-collared Tanager were like animate Christmas tree ornaments in the green foliage.

After three days in the highlands we went directly to the Corn Islands for some quality beach time. Little Corn Island is a delight with no motorized vehicles. We were told that there were seven kinds of mangoes growing there. We only got to sample two. It even has an endemic pigeon, the White-crowned, which, though very elusive, was seen.

The tropics present challenges to Canadian birders. There are entire families of birds we do not have: Antbirds, Antthrushes, Antpittas, Puffbirds, Motmots, Trogons, and Manakins, for example. There are 64 Tyrant Flycatchers on the Nicaragua list and 35 Hummers. It is hard to become familiar with these before leaving home.

In spite of our amateur birding skills we saw 165 species of the 656 on the Nicaragua checklist. Of these, 29 species were new for us. (Those big mango trees at the hotel? Dropping ripe mangoes for the appreciative Canadian tourist at the time of departure.)

Nasty, Brutish, and Short

by *Jeremy Baumbach*

August 15: Today as I sat in my study working, I could not help but notice a family of magpies — maybe an extended family, as there were at least eight birds — hanging out in our driveway. They were making a fair bit of noise, but that's not unusual, so after watching them a bit I focused my attention back on my work.

Then Yvette called to me to come and see a bird, that there was a brown bird, a hawk of some kind, back in our trees on the other side of the driveway, and the magpies were after it. We had a look through her study window and then went outside. The magpies were all spread out amongst the trees, squawking away, and every once in a while there would be a bit of a goings-on deeper in the brush. Finally, we were able to see this hawk, sitting on a branch, getting hassled by the magpies off and on.

We were feeling rather sorry for it, poor thing, being ganged up on, until I noticed something odd on the street. On closer inspection, it turned out to be magpie remains. Not much was left: a pair of wings and a bit of gore where they would've been attached to their owner. Understandably, the magpies were after the perpetrator, a sharp-shinned hawk. Every once in a while it would fly out of the bushes, sometimes seeming, itself, to be chased and other times clearly trying for a second magpie, all amidst great squawking. In the middle of all this, one of our neighbours came up, nodded to the carnage, and said he'd actually seen the hawk nail the magpie, grabbing it from behind. Amazing, actually, as magpies are a bit bigger than a sharp-shinned, and according to my bird book, sharp-shinned hawks usually prey on songbirds. I guess this one decided to do some bulk buying.

It was interesting to see what else, beyond Yvette and me and John from down the street, was drawn to the kaffle. At one point I saw a raven on our roof carrying the back end of the magpie, just the groin and a pair of legs dangling rather grotesquely. Kind of the bird equivalent to frogs' legs, it seemed. And about fifteen minutes after we came back inside, a little fox arrived in the driveway and sat beside my car, looking at the magpie remains in the middle of the street and licking its chops. When I next looked up it had gone, and everything seemed calm. Just a pair of glossy wings in the middle of Hawkins Street to remind us that life can be, in Hobbes' words, "nasty, brutish, and short".

Bird-Window Collisions

by Justine Kummer

Birds face many threats when they come into contact with urban populations. One of the leading causes of avian mortality in cities is window collisions. In Canada it is estimated that 25 million birds are killed each year as a result of bird-window collisions.

For my master's thesis I have developed the *University of Alberta Birds and Windows Project* to use citizen science and active participation to continue to identify the factors that affect collision risk at residential homes.



In late September, Environment Canada released a report on the leading causes of bird deaths, with collisions with houses or buildings tied for second spot with power lines, collisions and electrocutions, behind domestic and feral cats. Most studies on window collisions are focused on tall skyscrapers, but based on the sheer number of houses relative to tall skyscrapers, houses represent 90% of the mortality rate. More work is needed; only four studies in the past have focused on bird-window collision mortality at houses.

To better understand what can be done to reduce bird window collisions at your home, the University of Alberta has developed this project to actively involve YOU in data collection. We are asking you to think about bird-window collisions you have observed in the past and would like you to regularly search around your residence for evidence of bird window collisions in the future.

This project is still in the beginning phase; we just launched in September and intend to keep it running for at least a full year.

To get involved in the *Birds and Windows Project*, visit: birdswindows.biology.ualberta.ca.

Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists Workshop

by Nick Guenette

I was fortunate to attend the Young Ornithologist Workshop at Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) in August of this year. I was sponsored by the Yukon Bird Club, who covered all my travel costs.

LPBO is located along Lake Erie. They have three research stations: Old Cut, Breakwater, and the Tip. I was hosted at the Old Cut research station, which is the one open to the public. It is at the base of Long Point and is ac-



Participants of the 2013 Doug Tarry workshop.

cessible by car. We did not get to visit the Breakwater station, but we did go to the Tip for two nights.

The Tip is only accessible by boat and is about an hour away from Old Cut. There is a cabin there for volunteers and staff. You are surrounded by small sand dunes and brush and close to marshy areas that are densely filled with cattails and tall grasses. The birds we observed at the Tip were different from those at Old Cut, because of the habitat; the habitat around the Old Cut research station is forest.

The majority of birds we saw were gulls, terns, and cormorants. We did see a Long-tailed Duck that we suspected was suffering from botulism because it was lying on the beach. I learned that healthy Long-tailed Ducks will rarely stray onto lake shores, except females during breeding season when they come ashore to lay their eggs.

We spent our time at the Tip identifying and counting



Male Long-tailed Duck with Ring-billed Gulls.

birds and doing census walks on specific routes. Weather conditions delayed our start each day until about 7:00 AM while there.

When at Old Cut research station, our day started at around 5:30 each morning. We opened the mist nets right before sunrise. All 14 nets were opened unless weather conditions were



Female Blue-winged Warbler.



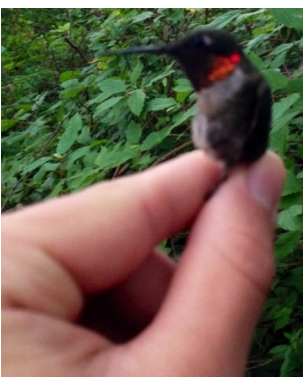
First-year Yellow-breasted Chat.

unsuitable. This kept me and the other six participants busy. We always had at least two instructors with us, one to supervise banding, and one to accompany us on net

rounds.

The birds we saw at Old Cut included various species of wrens, warblers, sparrows, thrush, and much more. I documented over 80 new species for my life list, some of which included the Catbird, American Woodcock, Canada Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Blue-Grey Gnat Catcher, and a special catch of a Yellow-breasted Chat, which is a warbler species at risk.

I had the opportunity to band Ruby-throated Hummingbirds with one of only nine banders in Ontario who have hummingbirds on their banding permit. There are only 200 banders in all of North America who can



Male Ruby-throated Hummingbird.



Recording data at the banding table.

band hummingbirds, one of whom is our very own Jukka Jantunen! At Old Cut we caught an adult male Ruby-throated Hummingbird that we couldn't band, as we didn't have anyone with the qualifications at the time, but took measurements of its wing length and aged and sexed it.

We also learned about "skinning birds" which is a method of preserving specimens for research purposes. I got to skin a belted kingfisher. All the specimens that are skinned are set to dry and then placed in a shelved cupboard for future research.

The instructors working with us were very enthusiastic and patient while helping us develop our skills. I'm looking forward to returning to Long Point to volunteer and improve my skills toward getting my own banding permit.

My experience at Long Point was unforgettable, and I would encourage any young birders to apply for the Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists Workshop. I would also like to thank the Yukon Bird Club for sponsoring me and all my friends at the Yukon Bird Observatories for helping me get to Long Point.



A Baltimore Oriole in hand during a busy day at the mist nets.

Sightings – Fall 2012

by Cameron D. Eckert

Every autumn, a few migratory species seem poised to winter in the North; this season, most won't have survived the bitter late November cold snap that saw temperatures plunge past the -40° C mark. Birders ferreted out a goodly number of rarities, with one new species for the Yukon and a possible new breeding species for Canada this season.

A peak count of 3137 Greater White-fronted Geese was recorded at Teslin Lake 26 Aug (AHM, JJ). A total of 400 Snow Geese migrated past Herschel Island 22 Aug (CE). A flight of 950 swans, most Tundras but with a few Trumpeters, was seen over Whitehorse 12 Oct (CE). Two Black Scoters, casual in the Yukon, were at Teslin Lake 22 Sep (AHM, JJ). Two Ruddy Ducks at the north edge of their range were at Gravel Lake 4 Aug (SE). Dusky Grouse is localized across southern Yukon and is infrequently reported; one was seen on Donjek Mountain 15 & 17 Oct (JAB, TS). Waves of migrant Sandhill Cranes flying through the night were heard over Watson Lake 10 Sep (*fide* SD). Turkey Vulture, while still very rare, is now considered annual in the Yukon; one was at Pelly Crossing 20 Oct (ph. FA, DT). A small movement of raptors over Whitehorse 19 Oct included 30 Golden Eagles, 12 Rough-legged Hawks, and 3 Red-tailed

Hawks (CE). American Kestrel migrants included 17 at Teslin Lake 10 Sep (JJ, SVD). Two Peregrine Falcons were checking out a flock 590 dabblers at Swan Lake 8 Sep (BD, YBC); and one was reported over Hillcrest 15 Sept (MW). A juv. **Common Ringed Plover**, a Yukon first, was first detected by call as it blew by in howling winds, but thankfully opted to change direction and take refuge on the island (ph. CE, RG). A juv. Black Turnstone, casual in s. Yukon, touched down briefly at Teslin Lake 27 Aug (AHM, ph. JJ). Noteworthy shorebirds at Drury Creek were a juv. Sander-



Juvenile Sanderling. Photo: Yvette Lepage.

ling (shown below) 24 Aug and a juv. Buff-breasted Sandpiper (pictures at right) 26 Aug (JB, ph. YL). A juv. Red Phalarope, casual in southern Yukon, made a brief stop in Whitehorse 19 Oct (ph. CE).

An ad. Thayer's Gull, known as "T4," was seen at Whitehorse 27 Sep (ph. CE); the bird had been banded as an ad. at St. Helena, NU 10 Jul 2003 (*fide* KA). A juv. Glaucous Gull, rarely reported from central Yukon, was on Mayo Lake on about 20 Oct (BS). Does **Kittlitz's Murrelet** breed in the Yukon? While an actual bird was not technically seen, and there is some error associated with the location, a radio-tagged individual was tracked to a probable nest site at 2500 m on the coastal side of the St. Elias Mountains in June (MK). An unidentified small murrelet was an intriguing flyby at Teslin Lake 23 Sep (ph. JJ, AHM). The season's high count of Black Guillemots at Herschel Island was 52 on 17 Aug; the colony there had a successful year, with 20 nests producing 32 chicks; a fledgling chick on the water 24 Aug (ph. CE) was perhaps the earliest on record. Two Thick-billed Murres, casual on the Yukon's North Coast, flew by Herschel Island 19 Aug (CE).

Snowy Owls are rare on migration anywhere in the Yukon; one was seen at Haines Junction 13 Nov (DOF), and another was seen in the Davidson Range near McQuesten Lake in mid-Nov (SW). An incursion of Northern Hawk Owls in the Yukon produced 5 along a 10-km stretch of the Alaska Hwy. by Haines Junction and another at Pine Lake 19 Oct (JAB); 4 along the North Klondike Hwy. near Whitehorse 4 Nov (BD, ph. CE); and 2 along the lower Dempster



Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Photo: Yvette Lepage.

Hwy. 8-9 Nov (CE). A Great Gray Owl was seen along the North Klondike Hwy. at Crooked Creek 21 Oct (BS); and perhaps the same bird was seen in the area 24 Oct (ph. NJ). Short-eared Owl reports from southern Yukon included 3 at the Kusawa Lake burn 19 Oct (RC), 2 between Canyon and Champagne 12 Oct (TS), and one at Shallow Bay 19 Oct (BD, CE).

A Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher, likely Pacific-slope by range but still casual in s. Yukon, was banded at Teslin Lake 26 Aug (ph. JJ). Three Eastern Kingbirds, rare in the Yukon, were seen at Albert Creek 10 Aug (ph. SD). A count of 20 Black-billed Magpies was recorded along the North Klondike Hwy. between Lake Laberge and Carmacks 5 Aug (MK). American Crow populations in the Yukon continue to grow; 17 were at Watson Lake 29 Aug (ph. SD). A lingering European Starling, generally rare in s. Yukon, was seen in Carcross 18 Nov (DK, ph. NM). A late Gray-cheeked Thrush on the Yukon River in Whitehorse 24-25 Oct (ph. CE, SVD), was replaced by a late American Pipit there the next day, which was joined by 2 more on 29 Oct (ph. CE). Rare warblers at Teslin Lake included a Nashville Warbler 1 Oct (AHM, ph. JJ) and a Cape May Warbler 2 Sep (AHM, JJ). American Tree Sparrow reports included 10 at Swan Lake 8 Sep (BD, YBC), and a tardy individual that lingered through the season at Mayo (ph. MOD). Harris's Sparrow is

amazingly rare in the Yukon, so a long-staying imm. male at Whitehorse 20 Oct to 1 Dec (ph. CE) was enjoyed by many. An imm. White-crowned Sparrow survived at a Mayo feeder until 28 Nov but died as the temperatures plunged to -47° C (MOD). A Golden-crowned Sparrow moved between bird feeders in downtown Whitehorse 12 Sep (KW; HG); unusual in fall was an ad. Golden-crowned Sparrow, together with an imm., at a Whitehorse feeder 15 Sep (CE, PS). A juv. male Yellow-headed Blackbird found with a broken wing at Whitehorse 22 Aug (CH) later died (ph. ML). Also at Whitehorse, a very late Rusty Blackbird was briefly stunned after a window strike but quickly recovered 27 Nov (ph. KW). Scarce in central Yukon was a juv. Brown-headed Cowbird at Mayo 10 Aug (ph. MOD). Good numbers of migrant Common Redpolls were noted in mid-Oct, with a flight of 2294 at Teslin Lake 12 Oct (JJ), and a flock of 500 with 2 Hoary Redpolls along the Swan Lake Rd. in Whitehorse 21 Oct (BD, CE). Small flocks of Hoary Redpolls totalling 63 were seen along the lower Dempster Hwy. 9 Nov (CE).

Observers: Freda Alfred, Karel Allard, Julie-Ann Bauer, Jeremy Baumbach, Richard Cherepak, Boris Dobrowolsky, Susan Drury, Cameron Eckert, Susan Elliott, Richard Gordon, Helmut Grünberg, Claudia Hammig, Abril Heredia Morales, Niels Jacobsen, Jukka Jantunen, Mathias Kaiser, Dan Kemble, Yvette Lapage, Meghan Larivee, Nancy Maides, Mark O'Donoghue, David O'Farrell, Ben Schonewille, Pam Sinclair, Terry Skjonsberg, Don Trudeau, Shyloh Van Delft, Mary Whitley, Keith Williams, Stu Withers, Yukon Bird Club.

Sightings – Winter 2012/13

by Cameron D. Eckert

Where do you think it went? That's the question often asked when a marginal wintering bird, such as an American Robin or wayward Harris's Sparrow, is no longer seen. It seems most likely they finally succumb to the cold, such as the frozen robin found in a Whitehorse woodshed this season – though perhaps we can hold out hope that some simply do grow weary of the bitter northern winter, and finally head south. And it was a cold season throughout the Territory, though one which didn't seem to bother the wintering waterfowl, and also produced some good numbers of finches.

Trumpeter Swan continues to have a winter toe-hold at Johnson's Crossing; the flock of 6 there 26 Dec (JC, MC, AS) increased to 9 on 16 Jan (AS). A variety of ducks were represented on Christmas Counts; Whitehorse once again hosted the Territory's only regular wintering flock of Mallards which numbered 50 at McIntyre Creek (CE, NG), as well as 5 Common and 1 Barrow's goldeneye, and 2 Common Mergansers 26 Dec (*fide* JH); Tagish recorded 2 Bufflehead, casual in winter, along with 8 Common Goldeneye and 2 Common Mergansers 26 Dec (SVD); while Carcross had 1 male Barrow's Goldeneye 9-16 Dec (ph. RH). It's a hardy breed of Christmas counters that take on the task of chasing down ptarmigan; a snowmachine ride up Montana Mountain produced 10 Willow Ptarmigan for the Carcross

count 16 Dec (DK, SVD). The combination of open water on the Yukon River and McIntyre Creek, a large landfill, and warmer winters can be credited with maintaining the annual wintering population of Bald Eagles in Whitehorse, which numbered 8 on 16 Dec (CE, NG; *fide* JH).

A Eurasian Collared-Dove wintering in Haines Junction was duly noted on the 16 Dec CBC (*fide* JAB). A Northern Shrike, a true wintering bird, was seen at Valleyview 31 Jan (JL) & 12 Feb (JH). Whitehorse counters turned up the Territory's highest number of Black-billed Magpies with 147 on 26 Dec (*fide* JH). Warm weather on Christmas Count day dashed Whitehorse's hopes of taking Northern Canada's Common Raven Crown this year; a mere 1164 were tallied there 26 Dec (*fide* JH), as compared to 2160 at Yellowknife, NT 30 Dec (*fide* RB). Mountain Chickadee is rare and localized in southern Yukon; 10 were recorded on the Carcross CBC 16 Dec (*fide* DK), 2 were at Shallow Bay 27 Dec (CE), and 2 were near Tally Ho Mountain 29 Dec (MM). A few American Robins attempted to over-winter in Whitehorse; one was found frozen in a wood-shed in early Jan (TH), while another which fed daily along the Yukon River through much of the season, finally met its demise during a final late-Feb cold snap (CE). An unusually late arrival of Bohemian Waxwings in late fall resulted in a fairly high count of 727 on the Whitehorse CBC 26 Dec (*fide* JH).

A lone Snow Bunting, rare in winter, was at Carcross 16 Dec (*fide* JH), while a flock of 19 was at McIntyre Creek in Whitehorse 30 Dec-1 Jan (CE, SVD). Rare winter sparrows included an American Tree Sparrow at Haines Junction 16 Dec (*fide* JAB), and another at Carcross 16 Dec (RH); and single White-crowned Sparrows at Porter Creek 14 Dec (NG), Carcross 16 Dec (DK), and Shallow Bay at least through 6 Jan (CG; CE). An imm. Harris's Sparrow, casual in southern Yukon, which turned up in Whitehorse in Oct, lingered or survived just long enough to establish a Dec 1 winter record, but was not seen again (CE; KW). An extremely tough male Rusty Blackbird survived the winter season at Caribou Lake (ph. SW). Pine Grosbeak was recorded in good numbers on some CBCs with 189 at Marsh Lake 23 Dec (*fide* CO), and 156 at Whitehorse 26 Dec (*fide* JH). Redpoll identification is the Territory's official winter sport and so Christmas Count results are anticipated with interest – A good redpoll season this year produced 209 Common and 4 Hoary at Marsh Lake 23 Dec (*fide* CO); 153 Common and 15 Hoary at Lake Laberge 27 Dec (CE); 69 Common, 1 Hoary, and 80 redpoll sp. at Mayo 29 Dec (*fide* MOD); 141 Common at Dawson 23 Dec (*fide* SJ); 117 Common and 1 Hoary at Haines Junction 16 Dec (*fide* JAB); 105 Common and 6 redpoll sp. at Whitehorse 26 Dec (*fide* JH); 79 Common & 2 Hoary at Tagish 26 Dec (*fide* SVD); and 71 Common at Carcross 16 Dec (*fide* DK). A total of 24 House Sparrows was recorded on the Whitehorse CBC 26 Dec (*fide* JH).

Observers: Julie-Ann Bauer, Robert Bromley, Cameron Eckert, Chad Gubala, Nick Guenette, Rick Halliday, Tanya Handley, Jim Hawkings, Sebastian Jones, Dan Kemble, Jennifer Line, Megan Marjanovic, Mark O'Donoghue, Clive Osborne, Gavin Platt, Adam Skrutkowski, Shyloh van Delft, Keith Williams, Stu Withers.

Yukon Birds Crossword Puzzle

by Ruth McCullough

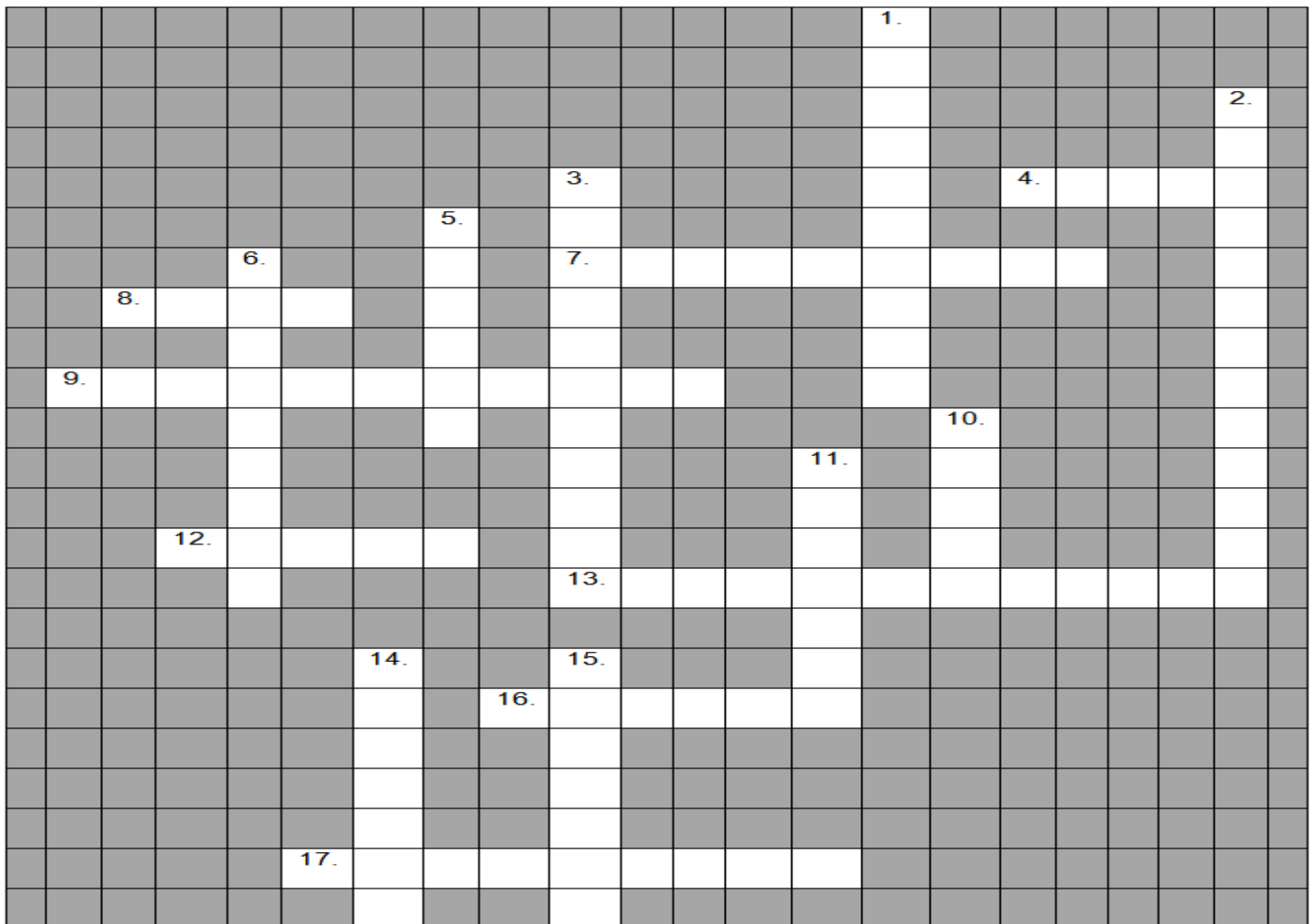
The theme this time: hunters with sharp talons (answer key on following page)

Across

- 4. Common and rather tame, this hawk is easily recognized by its broadly barred tail.
- 7. Identified by its colored tail: reddish above, pink below, and has a dark bellyband.
- 8. A small buteo found mostly south of the Mexican border.
- 9. Both adult and immature have rich dark-brown body plumage with golden neck feathers, visible only at close range.
- 12. This hawk is rare in the U.S., with wings and tail very wide, even for a buteo.
- 13. This small accipiter preys on small birds up to the size of pigeons.
- 16. Found in the U.S. Southwest and in Mexico, it is slimmer than most buteos with a longer tail.
- 17. This hawk has a heavy terminal band on its long finely barred tail.

Down

- 1. This hawk seems to mimic a Turkey Vulture in plumage.
- 2. Common in Eastern North America, it has reddish shoulder patches and narrow white bands on a dark tail.
- 3. Common on the Great Plains, this hawk does not hover.
- 5. Has conspicuous crook in long wings with black "wrist" marks.
- 6. Easily identified by its white head and tail in the mature bird.
- 10. Best identified by its white rump patch.
- 11. This hawk's call is a series of 15-20 cackling noises.
- 14. This Yukon hawk has gray or blue gray under-parts.
- 15. This uncommon hawk is one of the most difficult to identify.



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The Yukon Bird Club is pleased to announce that we are moving to full e-memberships for all members. Please provide your e-mail address to receive a full-colour digital version of the *Yukon Warbler*, as well as other notices and publications. We will continue to send a paper copy of the *Yukon Warbler* to members who prefer to receive it from Canada Post – though we ask that you specify that preference below.

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