

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club



Spring 2013

Heading South This Winter

YBC Since '93

Lifetime Membership and Raven Awards

Christmas Bird Counts

The Great Animal Orchestra Reviewed

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	\$15.00
Family *	\$25.00
Senior/Student **	\$10.00
Institutional	\$50.00
Contributing	\$50.00
Supporting	\$100.00
Lifetime	\$200.00

* Family memberships cover two or
more people living at one address.

** Including all for whom finances
are limited.

Foreign members please pay by
Canadian dollar or money order.

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Cover: Arctic Tern, Annie Lake
Photo: S. Boothroyd

Yukon Warbler — Spring 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 
Bird Club

Announcements

Club Membership

Please remember to renew your YBC membership! As low as our Club's dues are, they do make up a significant portion of our budget. Without membership support, the YBC would be unable to carry out all the community functions it does on a regular basis. If you're unsure whether your membership is up to date, please send us an e-mail (yukonbirdclub@gmail.com).

Volunteers

We need volunteers! Tasks include printing and distribution of tax receipts (also involves the printing and application of mailing labels). We could also use someone interested in organizing and conducting public service announcements for YBC field trips through local newspapers and radio. If you're interested in helping out, please e-mail yukonbirdclub@gmail.com.

Species at Risk in KNP

Visiting Kluane National Park and Reserve this summer? Parks Canada is interested in any observations of birds federally listed as *Species at Risk* in the Park. These include: Common Nighthawk, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Peregrine Falcon, Rusty Blackbird, Barn Swallow, Horned Grebe, and Short-eared Owl. Please e-mail **Carmen Wong** (carmen.wong@pc.gc.ca) for an observation form.

The Great White South

Congratulations to Tagish birder **Shyloh van Delft**, who will be part of a select group of youth embarking on an educational expedition to Antarctica toward the end of this year as part of the **Students on Ice** program (www.studentsonice.com).

Shyloh is very familiar to Yukon birders through her many contributions to the birding community. Shyloh founded the Tagish Christmas Bird Count, leads field trips on behalf of the YBC, partnered with long-time birder Ione Christensen on a series of bird presentations in 2012, and is an enthusiastic volunteer with the BC/Yukon Nocturnal Owl Survey, the Yukon Bird Observatories, and the Tagish Volunteer Fire Department.

For information on how to help Shyloh in her fundraising efforts for this expedition, visit her blog page (<http://beakingoff.wordpress.com/2013/03/14/antarctic-fundraising-update/>).

2013 Summer/Fall Field Trips

Hardcopies of this season's field trip schedule can be found as a separate insert for readers receiving the

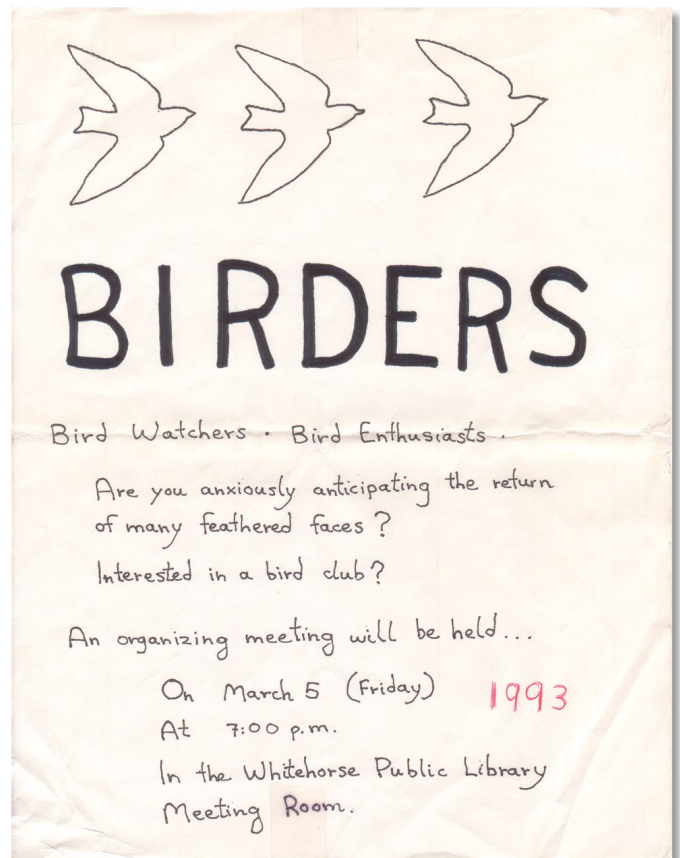
newsletter by mail. As usual, it is also being distributed by e-mail, and will be posted to the YBC website (<http://yukonweb.com/community/ybc/>).

Corrigenda

Three errors appeared in the Fall 2012 issue, resulting from some publishing software kinks at the editor's office. The first occurred in the Masthead, in which the name of **Keith Williams**, one of our two General Directors for 2012, was conspicuously absent. Our apologies to Keith! The other two would have been noticed by crossword puzzle players: 17-Across (*Brant*) had been shifted one row down, where it did not mesh well with 11-Down (*RedThroated*). 6-Across (*Bufflehead*) was followed by a white cell that should have been grey, making it appear as if the answer should mesh with 5-Down (*WesternGrebe*). Our apologies again for any grey hairs or snapped pencils incurred in the process.

Awards and 20 Years of YBC

The Yukon Bird Club has entered its third decade, and has come quite a long way since adverts and flyers were posted for the initial organizing meeting:



Among the handful of current YBC members who have been part of the Club since its beginnings is this year's—and the first—recipient of YBC's *Honorary Lifetime Membership*: **Helmut Grünberg**. Helmut's contributions, not

only to YBC and Yukon birding in general, but to the community at large, are impressive and too numerous to count. He is famous for his ability to identify birds from distances few mortals can master, his annual Birdathon species (and pledge dollar) counts are the envy of all local birders, and his thorough knowledge of our territory's avian species has given him very solid ground from which to advocate for ecological preservation and improved protection of key wildlife regions and corridors. The Honorary Life Membership recognizes significant long-term dedication and contributions by an individual to the Yukon Bird Club and its objectives, and is one way for the Club to express its gratitude. Thanks and congratulations to Helmut!

Former Whitehorse Mayor, Yukon Commissioner and Senator for Yukon, **Ione Christensen** is this year's recipient of the YBC's *Raven Award*. The *Raven* is an annual award that recognizes an individual's outstanding contributions to the Yukon birding community or bird conservation. The spirit of the award reflects the objectives of the Yukon Bird Club, and Ione has dedicated an immense amount of her time and energy to share her passion and knowledge about birds with others. Heading a handful of field trips each season, she is an enthusiastic field trip leader at local hotspots such as Fish Lake Road, Hidden Lakes, and Lake Laberge. In collaboration with Shyloh van Delft and Nick Guenette, she put together several presentations on Yukon birds last summer, helping raise awareness about birds in the territory while increasing the Club's visibility (see page 3 of the *Warbler* Fall 2012 issue for the full story). Congratulations and thanks to Ione for all her hard work!

2012 Yukon Christmas Bird Count Stories

A summary of territorial Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data will appear in the upcoming Fall issue of the *Warbler* because tabulated results for only half of the Yukon communities with organized CBCs have been made available thus far at the Audubon CBC database (<http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>). Therefore, here are some selected highlights and anecdotes submitted by various compilers for counts that took place around the region this past December and early January. We're sorry we couldn't fit all the accounts in here, but do keep an eye out for a comprehensive territorial summary this fall.

Carcross, December 16 (Dan Kemble)

Although not a very nice day, our cumulative experience and enthusiasm coupled with record high participation led to great success. In our early years, we were lucky to get a species count in the double digits. This year, even with a nasty wind chill, we managed 22 species, two short of an all-time high. Two species are new to our Christmas count history—Barrow's Goldeneye and Tree Sparrow—both documented by long-time participant Rick

Halladay. On weather: although winds in the valley reached 50 km/hr, the party that ventured above treeline found calm and milder conditions. This allowed us to find a flock of Willow Ptarmigan and, thanks to Shyloh's sharp eyes and ears, an uncommon Snow Bunting. Conditions deteriorated that evening and for days afterward, so it seems we caught a bit of a "window".

A few comments in terms of birds seen or not seen and of general trends: although our species count was high, individual numbers were low, and a number of species were represented by single birds. This is not a big winter finch year, but Snow Bunting, Junco, and two sparrows—White-crowned and Tree—are good winter birds for us. Dippers are pretty much a given. No birds of prey were recorded, and only one duck (but it was a biggie: Barrow's Goldeneye). The biggest omission to me was that none of us recorded a Canada (Grey) Jay! This should be a "given", but it just didn't happen. Got the chickadee "grand slam" again: Mountains are fairly common here. I'm on the lookout for a Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Our dump is now controlled, so raven numbers are way down.

Big fun as always, and such a break from the regular Christmas mania. Thanks to Anita and Mike for hosting the after-party. Thanks to the team, as usual, and in particular, visiting birders Mary and Gerry Whitley and superbirder Shyloh van Delft. Thanks again to Dick Cannings and BSC, and the Yukon Bird Club for keeping us in the bigger picture.

Marsh Lake/Yukon River, December 23 (Clive Osborne)

Four parties, totaling seven persons, took part in the roving count, and another person conducted a feeder-watch count. Temperatures ranged from -21 to -25°C throughout the day, with a slight southerly wind. We were unable to acquire heat for the Swan Haven lunch rendezvous, which may have contributed to the decrease to only two parties for the afternoon count. Visibility was excellent throughout the daylight hours.

Carmacks, December 27 (Jessica Condon)

Carmacks had its second Christmas Bird Count on December 27th. It was quite a bit colder this year, with temperatures ranging from -39 to -35°C (last year we were spoiled with -16 to -6 temperatures). Field counting was performed by me and one other person between 9:30 AM and 4:00 PM (with breaks to warm up, of course). I was also grateful to have one feeder watcher this year! In total 29 km of trails and roads were covered on snowshoe, foot, snowmobile, and truck. At the Carmacks landfill approximately 105 Ravens and 9 Magpies were counted (down from last year). Other birds observed/heard during field count included 5 more Ravens, 1 Chickadee sp. (heard but not seen), and 2 Gray Jays. The highlight of the day was the Three-toed Woodpecker spotted just outside my house. Feeder counts added two more species to the list: Redpoll sp. (19) and Pine Grosbeak (5). Hoping to get more

people involved next year!

Haines Junction and Klwane Lake (Julie Bauer)

Haines Junction, December 16: Twenty-one participants walked, skied, snowshoed, skidooed and drove the area to locate birds. A total of 18 species were seen. A Great Horned Owl was heard on count week. Missing were the crossbills, raptors, shrike, and owls that are often observed on count day. The cool day ended with an enjoyable potluck.

Kluane Lake, January 5: On the last official day for a CBC, seven participants skied, drove, skidooed and snowshoed the area. A total of 9 species were seen. This count was centered on Christmas Creek on the Alaska Highway. Christmas Creek was open in patches, and an American Dipper was seen from the road. A highlight was a Northern Goshawk seen at the southern edge of the count when driving back to Haines Junction. A Great Horned Owl was also heard during count week.

Mayo, December 29 (Mark O'Donoghue)

We conducted our 14th annual CBC around Mayo on the 29th of December, as always. After a week of temperatures in the -40s, we had a welcome break in the cold snap and had a very comfortable day of temperatures between -18 and -16°C, with mostly cloudy skies and a moderate northeast wind. We had good participation, with four field teams (six observers) covering 115 km driving, 13.2 km walking, and 8 km skiing; we also listened for owls for a half hour in stops over about 15 km. We had five feeder watchers for a total of 19.5 hours. We didn't see anything out of the ordinary this year. The most notable observations were lots of Ruffed Grouse. It has also been a good year for redpolls, and there have been a number of Hoary Redpolls mixed in with the Common Redpolls at feeders this winter, one of which showed up for the count. Our raven count was down considerably this year because there was a large fire at our dump, and we were unable to do the usual dump count because of heavy smoke.

Whitehorse, December 26 (James Hawkings)

The 2012 Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count was on Boxing Day, as usual. This year the weather was a bit challenging—mid -20s and fairly windy in exposed locations. (I checked this year's weather against that of previous counts, and we have definitely had it worse; according to the Audubon web site, in 2009 we suffered through a blistering day of temperatures ranging from 30 to 36°C! (There may be some issues with their temperature records...) We continued our recent history of great participation (37 participants, 61.4 party-hours of effort), and the count circle was pretty well covered. As for the birds, nothing really unusual turned up, perhaps due to the brutal cold, windy weather that dominated most of December and made life very difficult for hangers-on like the robins, which had been eking out a living below Whitehorse Rap-

ids Dam. A total of 27 species were seen, just shy of the record 28 from 2004. There was a good selection of ducks (4 species) including 5 Common Goldeneyes that tied the record number seen in 2008, and beautiful adult male Barrow's goldeneye near the Millennium Bridge. A count-week Northern Hawk Owl was seen on Mountainview Drive both before and after Boxing Day, but managed to successfully hide when the chips were down. Bohemian Waxwings were NOT hard to find. They seemed to be a bit late coming to town, and on count day there were still plenty of mountain ash trees sagging with the weight of unharvested berries. This no doubt contributed to the impressive infestation of waxwings in central Riverdale, leading to a record count of 727, which easily eclipsed the old mark of 461 set last year. The most unusual species seen this year was White-crowned Sparrow (seen on only two previous counts), and the two individuals seen equaled the record count set in 2005. We almost missed a few regular species; Dave Mossop, dutifully traipsing 12 km of streets in Porter Creek, spotted the only Dark-eyed Junco and White-winged Crossbills of the day. Around 30 people enjoyed the post-count dinner/social at the Hawkings residence. Next year we may have to book the Yukon Convention Centre!

Tagish, December 26 (Shyloh van Delft)

The following article and photos are from the January 9, 2013 entry in van Delft's blog: <http://beakingoff.wordpress.com/2013/01/09/the-4th-annual-tagish-christmas-bird-count/>. Thanks to Shyloh for letting us reprint her work here.

The 4th Annual Tagish Christmas Bird Count

I stepped out the door to the biting embrace of -36°C the morning of Boxing Day. The sun had not yet risen, and there were no birds to be seen or heard. The sky was clear and the air perfectly still which I was very grateful for. Minus 36°C can be miserable enough without wind chill added to it! I had already packed my bird guides, count data sheets, binoculars, and scope the previous night, and my camera batteries had been freshly charged. All I had to do



California Beach at -36°C on the day of the Tagish Christmas Bird Count. (photo: S. van Delft).

the morning of the Tagish Christmas Bird Count was help my Mom make some sandwiches for the 'Tagish CBC Social' (as we have come to call it) that would take place after the group members had finished counting in the outdoors. I checked the thermometer again, worried about cancellations due to the cold, and decided to phone some of the participants. 10 people dropped out, and there were a few that I was not sure would come. However, when my Dad and I went to Tagish Bridge at 11:00 AM, 8 brave people met us, bundled up so well that with a few of them you could only see their eyes. 3 more group members, including Dan Kemble (the compiler and leader of the Carcross Christmas Bird Count) loaded their skidoos, skis, and snowshoes onto a trailer and drove to Microwave Road, the Radio Tower Mountain. They spent their day trekking all over the mountain above treeline in search of ptarmigan for the count.

The group of people who met me at the bridge were all eager for an afternoon of chasing birds, and we set off across the bridge at a fast pace. Walking helped to keep us warm; when we stopped the cold fingers of winter would creep through our winter clothing and pinch our cheeks and noses. Though it was freezing, the sky was gorgeous. The pale morning sun shone through ice fog over the ice and valleys, creating a bright golden glow all over the sky. Towards Marsh Lake the icy haze thinned out to reveal the cold blue sky. The cold caused most of the birds to hide away with their feathers fluffed in the trees, and as a result we didn't see very much. Our first bird of the count/walk was Pine Grosbeak. We walked down a short trail beside the river (6-Mile) to the Marina, through the Marina parking lot and back up towards the road to the Tagish Gas Station. From there, 2 more group members met up with us to touch base, and then they set out on a driving expedition from one end of Tagish to the other. The rest of us split up and drove our separate ways from the gas station as well. One team of 3 sisters went to check out Sydney Street, Tagish River Road, Tagish Estates, and Tagish landfill.



A cold, but happy Christmas Bird Counter. (photo: S. van Delft).

The team that I led stayed around the bridge for a while longer, checking out the gas station area, then crossing the road to go and walk through the Tagish Campground. We

saw Magpies, Ravens, and Pine Grosbeaks there before we left. The cars were so welcoming; by the time we finished with the bridge area we were all thoroughly chilled to the bone. The next and last destination for the team of bird-lovers that I led was California Beach. This is an area that everyone looks forward to, as it is a little warmer than the bridge, and because this is the spot where you are almost always guaranteed open water and ducks through the winter, even in -40°C . The currents from the water moving from Tagish Lake into the river pathway seems to always keep the water open in that spot. We didn't stay for very long, but we did get an accurate count of the ducks paddling and diving in the grey water at -36°C . We saw 2 Common Mergansers, 8 Common Goldeneye, and 2 Bufflehead (1 male and 1 female). The Bufflehead were exciting birds; they are considered to be one of the rarest wintering ducks in the Yukon, and this is the second year in a row that Tagish has been lucky enough to record them on the Christmas Bird Count.



A truck-full of Christmas Bird Counters. (photo: S. van Delft)

The 2012 Tagish Christmas Bird Count had a total of 26 bird counters, with 13 being Group Members and 13 being Feeder Watchers. The counting period lasted from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM; the Feeder Watchers racked up a total of 23.6 hours of effort (time of each person's feeder count period added together with other feeder count time periods), while the Group Members added up 12.25 hours of field effort. For group members, a total of 149.49 km was travelled by foot, vehicle, skidoo, skis, and snowshoes. Temperatures ranged from a chilly -36°C to a balmy -30°C , and thankfully there was no wind. Expect for ice haze, the skies were clear and sunny. There was no precipitation experienced on the count.

Our list of birds seen goes as follows: 2 Bufflehead, 8 Common Goldeneye, 2 Common Mergansers, 1 Spruce Grouse, 3 Ptarmigan Species, 1 Gray Jay, 4 Black-billed Magpies, 8 Common Ravens, 20 Black-capped Chickadees, 20 Boreal Chickadees, 2 Juncos, 84 Pine Grosbeaks, 6 Red Crossbills, 79 Common Redpolls, and 2 Hoary Redpolls. We had a total of 15 bird species for the 2012 Tagish Christmas Bird Count.

Some special notes for the 2012 Tagish Christmas Bird

Count:

~This is the 2nd consecutive year in a row that Bufflehead, a rare wintering duck in the Yukon, has been recorded for the Tagish Christmas Bird Count.

~There were no reports of Mountain Chickadees. Tagish and Carcross report the highest numbers of Mountain Chickadees for the whole Yukon during Christmas Bird Count season; in Tagish the observed numbers on count day dropped from 8 individuals in 2011 to 0 in 2012. There have been only three reports of Mountain Chickadees at feeders in Tagish so far this winter. During the past few years since I started watching, many feeders had pairs of Mountain Chickadees coming daily.

~There were no Red-breasted Nuthatches recorded.

~There was a noticeable lack of Gray Jays reported. Only 1 individual was seen.

~All winter, Tagish residents including myself have noticed a dramatic difference in male-female ratios in Pine Grosbeaks. The adult and immature males far outnumber the females and female-type birds. The difference in gender ratio during the past few years that we have been monitoring winter bird populations has never been this substantial. One suggestion from the Yukon Bird Club as to why this may be is that it is possible the males stay up north while the majority of females and immature move further south for the winter. It is an interesting observation, and is being looked into around the Whitehorse area as well by members of the Yukon Bird Club.

~The Tagish CBC in 2012 held the Tagish CBC record for the coldest temperature recorded on the count: -36°C . The lowest temperature recorded before 2012 during a Tagish Christmas Bird Count was -30°C , in 2010.



Counting ducks at California Beach. (photo: S. van Delft)

Each year I look forward to the Tagish Christmas Bird Count, and it is an event that many other Tagish residents look forward to as well. The 2012 Tagish CBC was a success, once again, and I am grateful to all of the participants of the Christmas Bird Count for taking part in the count. The data that participants submit add greatly to our understanding of bird behavior and habits during the cold, dark,

winter months of the Yukon. The Christmas Bird Counts usually discover migratory birds that have made the decision to stay in the Yukon and suffer the winter at a bird feeder or other constant food source. This year's special over-wintering migratory bird for Tagish is a pair of Bufflehead. Again, thank you to everyone who participated in the 2012 Tagish Christmas Bird Count, and I hope to see you again next year!

Communities with Organized CBCs

These communities had organized Christmas Bird Counts this year, each with a dedicated compiler responsible for gathering, organizing, and reporting count data: Skagway, Teslin, Carcross, Marsh Lake, Dawson City, Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Tagish, Johnson's Crossing, Haines Junction (including Kluane Lake), Carmacks, and Mayo.

Old Crow has conducted CBCs in the past, but no one was available this year to organize a count. Old Crow needs a CBC compiler for the 2013 count, so if you are a birder in Old Crow or know a someone in Old Crow who might be interested, please e-mail yukonbirdclub@gmail.com.

Moreover, there are several Yukon communities without established CBCs. These include Beaver Creek, Faro, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing, Rancheria, Champagne, Ross River, and Herschel Island. If you are a birder in one of these communities and would like to organize a Christmas Bird Count, again please send us an e-mail (yukonbirdclub@gmail.com). We can provide you with the information and support to get you started.

Sightings Report Summer 2012

by Cameron D. Eckert

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

King Eiders put on a show with 48 at Herschel I., n. Yukon 8 Jun (CE). A male Hooded Merganser, rare in s. Yukon, was on a pond near Snafu L. 22 Jun (JFJ). Five male and 2 fem. Ruddy Ducks were on McConnell L., s. Yukon 10 Jun (JFJ). There is growing concern about Red-throated Loon populations in the Yukon where this species appears to have declined considerably over the past 40 years on Old Crow Flats (fide DM), and so it is one that we'll be keeping an eye on in future years; reports this season included 5 near Dawson, cen. Yukon 2 Jul (SE), and 1 on the Little Hyland R., se. Yukon 9 Jul (BD, SDr). Yellow-billed Loon is a head-turner wherever it's seen; lucky observers spotted 3 at Watson L., se. Yukon 3 Jun (JJ), and 1 at L. Laberge, s. Yukon 18 Jun (MO). Present since the spring season were 2 Pied-billed Grebes, rare in s. Yukon, at Rat L. 11 Jun (PJ, JFJ, LT). Eared Grebe is rare but regular in s. Yukon; 1 was at a pond along the Robert Campbell Hwy. 11 Jun (JJ). A Great Blue

Heron was seen at a small pond in the icefields near the Logan Glacier, sw. Yukon in mid-Jul (SDa). An ad. Northern Goshawk was noted along the Indian R., cen. Yukon 11 Jun (CC). A pair of American Golden-Plovers with a tiny chick at the headwaters of Wolf Cr. 4 Jul (ph. SK) provided the first confirmed breeding record for the Yukon Southern Lakes region. Two breeding-plumage Sanderlings, perhaps early fall migrants, were at a pond in the icefields near the Logan Glacier, sw. Yukon 10 Jul (ph. SDa). The only Surf-bird report of the season was of 1 at Charcoal Ridge, Tombstone Territorial Park, cen. Yukon 9 Jun (BD, GP, YS).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

A total of 18 east-bound Pomarine Jaegers migrated past Herschel I., n. Yukon 8 Jun (CE). Two Parasitic Jaegers, overland migrants, were at Watson Lake, se. Yukon 3 Jun (JJ). A Thick-billed Murre, rare on the Yukon's n. coast, was seen off Collinson Head on Herschel I. 8 Jun (ph. CE). A Long-billed Murrelet seen briefly at Watson L., se. Yukon 3 Jun (JJ) was certainly unexpected. Eurasian Collared-Dove is now regular in s. Yukon with 1 at Wye L. 14 Jun (SDr), 1 at Little Atlin L. 17 Jun (ph. KG), 2 at Watson Lake 29 Jun (SDr), 1 at Teslin 27 Jun (EM), and 1 at s. end of Kusawa L. 9 Jul (ph. EH); and this season its northward expansion extended to cen. Yukon with 1 at Partridge Cr. farm 19 Jun (DB, ph. MB, VB). Single Mourning Doves, rare but regular in the Yukon, were reported from Teslin L. through early Jun (MG, ph. AS), and Mayo 2 Jun (ph. MOD). A Great Horned Owl nest with one young visible was seen on an old piece of dredging equipment near Dawson, cen. Yukon 2 Jun (ph. CC). A Long-eared Owl, casual in the Yukon, seen at Watson Lake 6 June (ph. JJ, SDr), was unfortunately found dead shortly thereafter (fide DM). Three Common Nighthawks were hawking insects over Klusha Cr., s. Yukon 13 Jun (GW, MW), 4 were seen at the Nahanni Range Rd. campground, se. Yukon 7 Jul (SDr), and the species was reported to be common around Mayo through the season (MOD). Bank Swallow has joined the ranks of species with significant population declines; reports this season included 35 at McIntyre Cr., s. Yukon 2 Jun (BS), 100 at Watson Lake, se. Yukon 6 Jun (JJ), and 30 along Yukon R. in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 30 Jul (MK). An ad. American Dipper was at a nest with at least 2 large young on the North Klondike R., Tombstone Territorial Park, cen. Yukon 15 Jul (ph. MS). A Blue-headed Vireo, casual in the Yukon Southern Lakes region, was singing at Pilot Mt. 5 Jun (vr. BD). Northern Wheatear reports from Tombstone Territorial Park, cen. Yukon were 1 at Discovery Ridge 4 Jun (CWE), 1 on Surf-bird Mt. 5 Jun (CE), and 2 there 12 Jun (GW, MW), 4 along Charcoal Ridge 9 Jun (BD, GP, YS), and 1 at Angelcomb Mt. 16 Jun (RB); elsewhere one was seen along the Donjek route, Kluane NP, sw. Yukon 24 Jul (BB). A flock of 9 Cedar Waxwings was seen at Snafu L., s. Yukon 24 Jun (JFJ). Four Smith's Longspurs were seen at the base of Surf-bird Mt., Tombstone Territorial Park, cen. Yukon 3 Jun (CE). A Brewer's Sparrow was singing on Tally-Ho Mt., s. Yukon 17 Jun (JFJ). A male Harris's Sparrow, casual in the Yukon, arrived at Herschel I. 11 Jun, spent the next 3 days recovering and then started singing 14 Jun (ph. CE). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak which appeared at a Little Atlin L., s.

Yukon feeder 30 May was followed-up by a fem. 2 Jun (ph. KG).

Observers: Brandon Breen, Del Buerge, Michael Buerge, Virginia Buerge, Roger Burrows, Sarah Davidson (SDa), Boris Dobrowolsky, Susan Drury (SDr), Cameron Eckert, Susan Elliott, Ken Gabbs, Margaret Garolitz, Edwin Hammermeister, Jukka Jantunen, Paskal Jean, Jean-Francois Jetté, Mathias Kaiser, Sara Keluza, Erin MacDonald, Lisa Moore, Dave Mossop, Mark O'Donoghue (MOD), Mark Olivier, Ben Schonewille, Merran Smith, Lila Tauzer, Gerry Whitley, Mary Whitley.

Postscript: A male Barrow's Goldeneye (pictured) was photographed on December 9 by Rick Haliday. This bird was seen again on the December 16 Christmas Bird Count.



Book Review

by Mary Whitley

The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places

Author: Bernie Krause

Publisher: Little, Brown & Co.

Publication Date: March 19, 2012

\$29.99 CAD; Hardcover; ISBN: 978-0-316-08687-5

288 pp.; 16 b/w photographs.

"Go placidly among the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence."

It was surprising that Krause never used these well-known opening lines of Max Ehrmann's *Desiderata*. For he extolled the perceived silence of some parts of the natural world. Strangely, Krause spends many pages of his book considering anthropogenic sound, which he terms "anthrophony". He examines the noise pollution of modern civilization through the same lens that he uses for the "world's wild places". The reader is led through a similar analysis of anthrophony as biophony, the sound of the natural world.

Krause begins his analysis of sound with the study of frequency, pitch, timbre, amplitude, and envelope. Frequency we might be familiar with: it is inversely proportional to the wavelength of the sound, usually referred to in hertz (Hz). We are led through a long discussion of the frequencies at which animals, including humans, hear.

Next is pitch, which is akin to frequency, but describes the subjective perception of sound. The various sounds we hear in a musical scale, for example, differ in pitch.

Timbre is the voice, which is different for each instrument.

I would add that it is different for each individual. Can you tell who has called you from the single word "hello"? If so, you are relying on the timbre of that person to identify him or her.

Amplitude is simply loudness, usually expressed in decibels (dB). In much of the book, Krause obsesses about the loudness of anthrophony. He also discusses the amplitude of many natural, but non-animal sounds, which he terms geophony.

The acoustic envelope is the sound through time, thus adding a fourth dimension to the study of sound.

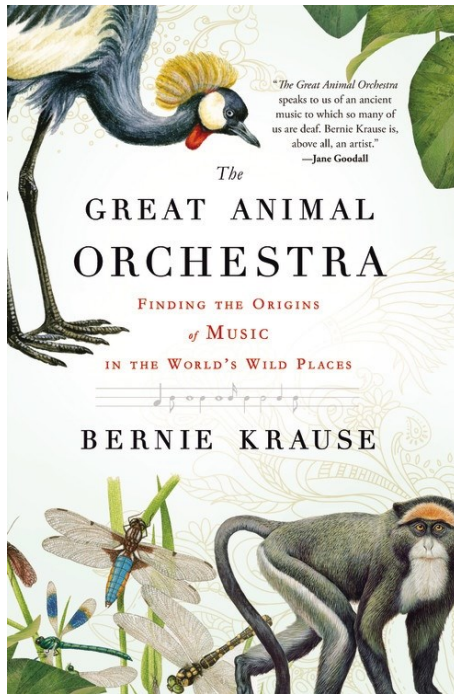
At this point it is well to remember that humans are not expert at sound: not detection, description nor distance and direction. Compared with many animals we are as if blind. Is this why we use words related to sight or emotion to describe sound?

Of the nine chapters of this book, two are not concerned with sounds from the "animal orchestra". Chapter 2, Voices from the Land, is about sounds from the Earth: wind, waves, water, earthquakes, rockfall. Chapter 7, The Fog of Noise, is solely about anthrophony, sound created by humans. Without these two chapters, this slim volume (241 pages) might have been too short to publish.

I take exception to some of Krause's theories. One is that the first people on the land did not alter it, that the coming of the Europeans changed the landscape and thus the soundscape. I am aware that the first peoples in the Yukon used fire to change the land to favour certain plants and, as a result, the animals that ate those plants.

In the book's Prelude, Krause describes the world warming after an ice age, and the people beginning to disperse around the globe and beginning to develop language. It is my understanding that language developed much earlier than the 16,000 years ago described here. Dispersal of humans out of Africa is thought to have begun some 60,000 years ago.

Despite some clear shortcomings of the book, Krause does pay homage to the Earth's remote places, where the biophony can be heard loud and clear. Or, in the case of some isolated and barren lands, where silence reigns like the silence of the Yukon on a calm winter day or in August after most birds have gone.



The book makes us realize the value of the "animal orchestra" and the need to preserve it. Of course, this requires preserving the land and the water to support the biophony. As birders, for some of whom bird vocalization is the best method of identification, we would respond with quiet agreement.

This book may be borrowed from the reviewer, Mary Whitley.

Bird Identification Challenge

No photos were submitted for an ID challenge for this issue, so below are just the answers from Fall 2012



Greater White-fronted Goose

08.May.2012
Teslin
photo:
Shyloh van Delft



Peregrine Falcon

04.August.2012
Peel River
photo: David Sinclair

08.May.2012, Teslin
photo: Shyloh van Delft



American Golden Plover



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

06. May. 2012, Carcross
photo: Joel Luet



26. May. 2012
Albert Creek Bird
Observatory

Black-and-white Warbler

Yukon Birds Crossword Puzzle

by Ruth McCullough

The puzzle's theme this issue is **water birds**, and in response to popular demand, the answer key is now available alongside the puzzle (no more waiting for publication of the next issue)!

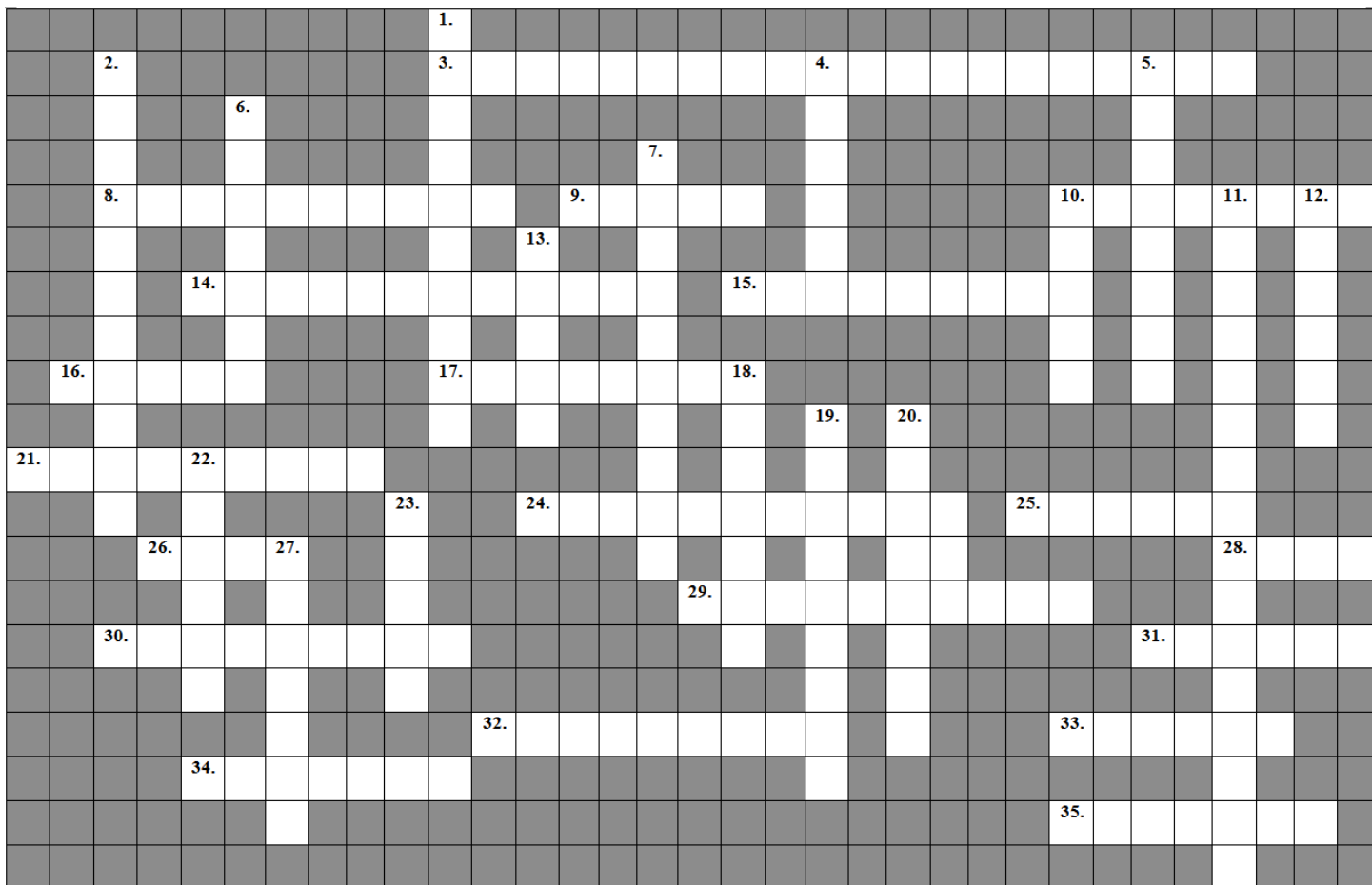
Across

3. This large bird has a flat rounded plate on the bill, only seen in breeding season.
8. This goose's bill is black at base and tip with an orange band across the middle
9. Identifying wing patch color of this scoter.
10. The female of this species can be told by its distinct narrow eye ring, ringed bill and broad gray wing stripe.
14. Largest and most northern of the loons.
15. This Grebe's stockier appearance & heavier bill distinguish it from others of this species.
16. This Grebe is small with an upturned bill and high rounded back
17. There are up to 5 subspecies of Cackling Goose, of varying sizes and plumage details.
21. This bird is easily identified by its unusual silhouette in flight.

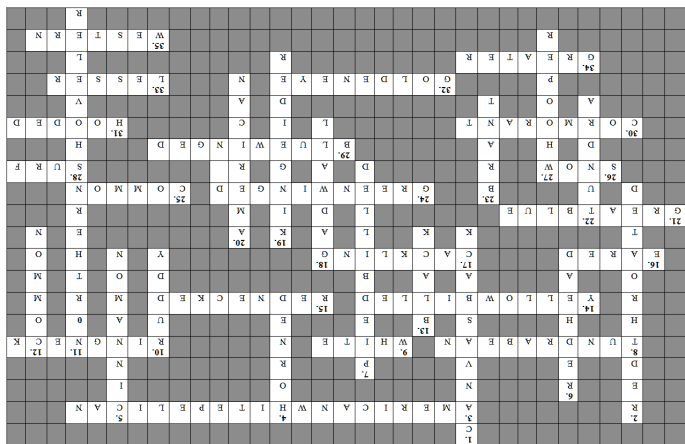
24. Smallest North American surface feeding duck.
25. This bird is easily identified by its yodel like "laugh" frequently heard at night.
26. Largest of our white geese, it has black wing tips.
28. The male has a long thick-based, multicolored bill and prominent white markings on nape and forehead.
29. A small shy duck with pale blue area on forward edge of wing.
30. The throat pouch of this large bird is orange. It slants its bill upward while swimming.
31. The female is told by its bushy crest, dark face and body and merganser bill.
32. There are two of this species of duck, one common, one scarcer. One has a glossy green head, the other with glossy purple or bluish head.
33. Very distinguishable from the other species of this duck, it will sometimes show a purple iridescent head, never found in the other.
34. This bird prefers sea water and is larger than the other species of this duck
35. The bill of this Grebe is longer and more needle like than the other Grebes.

Down

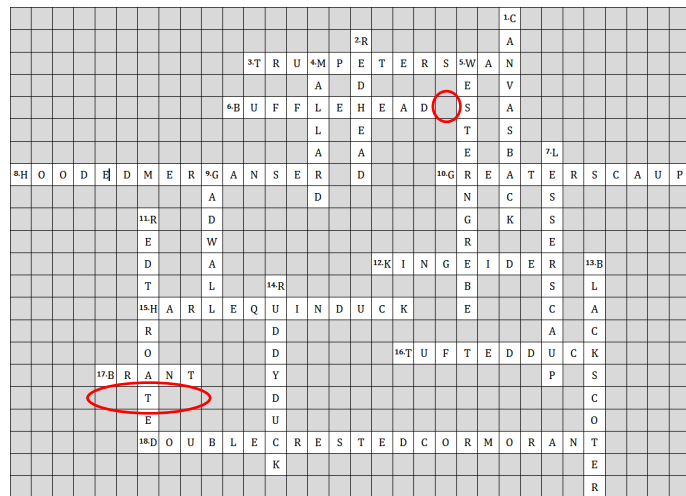
1. This duck has a distinctly flattened head profile.
2. This loon can be identified by its light colored, up-turned bill.
4. This grebe is distinguishable from the other smaller Grebes by its white face and neck.
5. This duck is identified by its Cinnamon red coloring on head and body.
6. The male has a large round head, a light bill, dark breast and white under-parts.
7. This Grebe is small, solitary and stocky with a chicken like bill.
10. Both sexes of this duck are identified by white cheeks under a dark cap and by a long up-tilted tail.
11. This duck has a flat head, long spatulate bill and large blue wing patches.
12. A large diving duck with a long thin bill that has toothy projections along its edges to help it hold on to slippery fish.
13. An uncommon Scoter, it has a swollen orange yellow knob on the base of the upper bill, divided by black along the middle of the upper surface.
18. This duck is uncommon. The male has a plain head, dark bill, gray body and dark tail coverts.
19. Black body, white chest, light blue crown and nape, greenish face, and bright red-orange bill with large round orange knob outlined with black distinguish this bird.
20. The female of this species has a pale head and bluish bill. These birds fly in tight flocks, not a long open V.
22. During the breeding season this Swan sleeps almost entirely on land, but in the winter it sleeps more often on water.
23. This goose is small and dark with a short neck, lacking white cheeks.
27. These swans require large bodies of water to live in because their legs cannot support their body weight for extended periods of time.



Answers to this issue's puzzle (inverted):



Answers to the Fall 2012 puzzle:



Errors:

- 17-Across appeared here, and
- this cell was white.