

YUKON WARBLER

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

Winter 2020-21



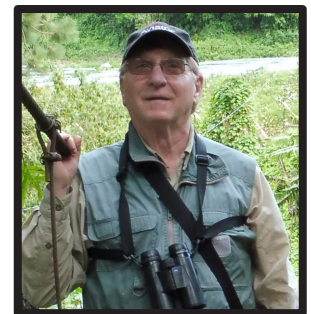
Cameron Eckert photo

Following hot on the heels of the Yukon's second Gray Catbird at the Teslin Lake banding station on 16 September 2020, another was discovered by Syd Cannings along the Yukon River in Whitehorse on 23 September. It posed for this photo the following day and delighted many birders during its two-week stay.

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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

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YBC Twitter: [yukonbirds](https://twitter.com/yukonbirds)

We want your birding photos and stories!

Thank you to all who contribute to make the *Yukon Warbler*. To make a submission, write to newsletter@yukonbirds.ca

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What's Inside and a Holiday Message

By Jenny Trapnell

Last spring, we faced many dark days when the pandemic hit, and Covid affected YBC's activities, too. We had to cancel all but one of our popular free field trips with our amazing volunteer leaders.. But the annual Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon went ahead in a modified way, and successfully raised money for the Whitehorse Food Bank. As Betty Sutton notes, birders have found their way outside again to (safely) enjoy our feathered friends.

This winter edition of the Yukon Warbler highlights a few other YBC activities and birding news. Cameron Eckert writes about the exciting "second wave" of the Steller's Jay (the first was in 2006). The YBC's written submission to the Yukon Water Board's hearing on placer mining

in wetlands, advocating for wetlands conservation, is included here. There's an item on the fun, new bird colouring sheets created by youth director, Taylor Belansky. We also welcome Freiya, new baby daughter to past president Shyloh van Delft and Warbler editor, Ulrich Trachsel. (Freiya joins Tegryn, director Scott Williams and Selena Boothroyd's son, as the youngest YBC members.) And we remember the late Gerry Whitley, a YBC friend and conservationist. As always, several members have contributed generously to our newsletter. Enjoy Kim Selbee's cool photos, Ruth McCullough's seasonal birders' crossword puzzle, and Cat Millar's piece on woodpeckers.

And, saving the best news for last: check out the 2020 Christmas Bird Count schedule! The counts are held throughout Yukon, sponsored by the Yukon Bird Club

with help from committed community compilers. They will be a wonderful Covid-compliant way to bird with your "bubble" or family to support bird monitoring and conservation. (See last year's results report by Clive Osborne.)

Thanks to a great board of directors, our members and volunteers for your work and support this past difficult year. We'll be announcing the February date for our AGM (probably by ZOOM) soon.

Now, in this Covid winter, let's connect with neighbours, loved ones and friends in whatever ways we can. Enjoy the outdoors every day. It's Solstice time, with a promise of the brighter new year ahead. So, best wishes, everyone. Happy Holidays! Happy Birding!

Birding during 2020

By Betty Sutton

As the world is adjusting to the continuing situation (COVID 19)... I sit back in my seniors chair and try to find things that will keep me level headed! In other words, try not to go nuts!

And the answer for me is Birding!! If I am anxious about family and friends far away, all I have to do is step outside, or glance outside now that the

weather is inclement and watch the activity at the bird feeders.

These feathered creatures are not bothered with statistics, or detailed information which is dispatched 24-7 on every device imaginable.... No... they just show up looking for food and maybe a little socialization. Just like us humans... I think... remembering when we used to have gatherings at our house. Our friends loved the socializing and the food.

As well, sometimes I hop in my vehicle and head to open water for further entertainment... Ravens never disappoint...

Have a safe Winter everyone.

Woodpeckers + Trees



What's this?

Catherine Millar Photos

By Catherine Millar

In the middle of May my husband pointed out one of the birch trees in our garden. There is a very odd, distinctive pattern on the bark. Rob had seen the same type of damage on a smaller birch a couple of years ago and that tree eventually died. We thought it might be some kind of insect so we sent a couple of pictures to Yukon Government's Ag Branch to see if they might be able to shed some light on this. Maybe you, the reader, already know the answer –

Here is what the Ag Branch had to say –

“What you're seeing is feeding damage from woodpeckers. I'm sure that you've heard the term “sap-suckers” and now you can see why. They peck those patterned holes into the bark in the spring. You've probably heard them knocking away and just didn't notice where the sound was coming from.”

Yes, we had heard something but hadn't been paying much attention. Then I recalled an earlier sighting at the bird feeder in February and wondered if I had in fact captured an image of our alleged “perp” – getting by on suet until the sap started running ... looks suspicious.

In trying to put two and two together, would a woodpecker – or a flicker - be a sapsucker given the opportunity? Or do we have a sapsucker in the neighbourhood that we haven't yet seen? I would love to hear the experiences of other readers – along with any hints as to how to

protect our trees next spring!

Happy Birding!

Catherine Millar

Hairy Woodpecker

Raven

Colour in the Hairy Woodpecker!

My head has a red patch.	My beak and feet are grey.
My eyes are black.	My belly is white.
My wings and tail are black with white patches.	
My back has a white patch.	

Yukon Bird Club

Hairy Woodpecker colouring sheet by Taylor Belansky

New Bird(er) Alert



Paige Savard Photo

Yukon Bird Club members Shyloh van Delft (past president) and Ulrich Trachsel (newsletter editor) are excited to announce the birth of their baby girl, Freyia Maze Trachsel. Freyia was born October 5, 2020, weighing in at 7lbs 11oz and measuring 19.25 inches long. Her proud parents are looking forward to bringing her out to bird club events and field trips in the future as one of the club's newest little members.



Shyloh van Delft Photo

Birding with Kim Selbee

Here is a pretty little gem (Wilson's Warbler) I photographed, near the Logan/Arnell wetland! **Kim Selbee Photo**



Wetlands are vital for Yukon's birds, and much more

By Jenny Trapnell

Wetlands are important habitats for Yukon's birds, for biodiversity and in reducing global warming. The Yukon Water Board, which licences water use in the territory, held a virtual public hearing Oct. 27-29, 2020 into placer mining activities in wetlands. During the hearing, First Nations, mining organizations, and conservations groups voiced their concerns and perspectives on the impacts of placer mining in wetlands and ways to address them.

Yukon Bird Club, an advocate for bird conservation, has also submitted its comments (below) to the Yukon Water Board. YBC shares the view that a Yukon wetlands policy and regional land use plans are among the tools needed to help better recognize the many assets, including birds and their ecosystems, that a diversity of wetlands sustain. Wetlands must be protected.

Yukon Bird Club submission to the Yukon Water Board's public interest hearing on Placer Mining in Wetlands

The Yukon Bird Club appreciates this opportunity to provide comments, suggestions and recommendations regarding the Yukon Water Board's efforts to support the Board's Wetland Information Guidelines and to hear views about placer mining activities in wetlands.

The membership of the Yukon Bird Club, established in 1993, includes professional and citizen scientists, and those who simply have a passion for birds. Yukon Bird Club is a non-profit charitable organization that promotes awareness, appreciation and conservation of Yukon birds and their habitat.

The Yukon Bird Club board recently adopted a statement of acknowledgement that it operates within the traditional territories of Yukon First Nations, Inuvialuit and other indigenous peoples. The Yukon Bird Club affirms its respect for indigenous peoples and their

fundamental relationship with the land and wildlife, and seeks to inspire and include the full diversity of our Yukon community.

Wetlands provide numerous ecosystem services. They help manage water flows and prevent flooding, and they help restore water quality, and downstream water sources as well. They also support species diversity, and are an integral part of the boreal ecosystem that sustains all life in our territory.

Consistent with its mandate to advocate for bird conservation, the Yukon Bird Club wishes to emphasize the vital importance of wetlands to a wide diversity of Yukon birds. While there is continuing research about how and where these species breed and live, it is fair to say that wetlands are among the most important habitats for Yukon's birds. Wetlands must be protected.

One of our core programs involves hosting free field trips to Yukon birding hotspots, many of which are found in wetlands: fens, bogs, marshes, swamps, and ponds. The scrub willows and alders along

rivers and creeks in valley floors provide vital riparian habitat enjoyed by warblers and sparrows and other migratory species. Where there is water, there are birds.

Birds eat pests, provide food, and help disperse seeds and pollinate plants. More Canadians engage in bird watching than gardening. The Festival of Swans near Whitehorse and the Crane and Sheep Festival in Faro are two examples of economic activities that respond to our love of birds.

There has been a catastrophic loss of birds over the last 50 years. A 2019 report published by Bird Studies Canada on the State of Canada's Birds reported some improvement in waterfowl populations, but the status of more than half of our wetland species are in decline or have unknown status due to their remote distribution. In other words, baseline data upon which to assess the health of northern wetlands is limited. North America has lost almost three billion birds since 1970, a drop of 29 percent, according to a report in the journal Science. ["Decline of the North American Avifauna", Science

04 October 2019, Vol. 366, Issue 6461, pp 120–124] Habitat loss and climate change are taking their toll. The loss of wetlands is a part of this problem.

According to the Yukon government, only 40 species of birds spend the winter in Yukon. Each spring Yukon's migratory bird populations, which make up 87 percent of our bird species, travel here from continents as far away as Antarctica and Africa to breed and rear their young. They rely on clean water and a broad diversity of habitats over a short but intense season of regeneration. Proper management of their winter ranges is important, and we can also play a vital role here in conserving bird species and habitat.

Many of these migratory birds sing only in their northern ranges as they set up territories and seek mates. We cannot take their songs for granted. Addressing climate change and preserving habitat are two key ways we can conserve our bird populations and their vital place in our lives. As such, they align with priorities for consideration in decisions around wetlands.

The life cycles of birds and wetlands show the interconnections with other habitats and ecosystems that help to keep us healthy, both mentally and physically. Bird population trends are said to mirror those of other species. Birds — the canaries in the coal mine — are important indicators of ecosystem health, whether in decline or in recovery.

We encourage all parties to work together to help shape our shared future through land claims implementation and reconciliation, including land use planning processes, inventories and research

that consider traditional knowledge, finding and adapting best practices in restoration and reclamation technologies, or creating and implementing important policy for wetlands and biodiversity. As global citizens, we have a responsibility to act locally. All of these steps must be done to scale and through a lens of fighting climate change and habitat loss, enhancing social equity and well-being. We have obligations right here to reduce climate change and to safeguard, if not enhance, biological diversity. Conserving wetlands is one way to do this.

The Arctic is among the regions most affected by climate change, and these effects are considered to be one of the primary causes of bird population declines. Disturbing local peatlands and wetlands through mining or any development activities will accelerate the destruction of permafrost and the release of massive amounts of carbon stored in them. The permitted loss of 60 percent of fens within each mining operation block is also the loss of unassessed critical insects, plants and small mammals, along with the ecosystem services and cultural foundations diverse wetlands provide. Bogs and fens are hard to replicate and reclaim.

The challenges of weighing the impacts and benefits of development are made more difficult by the lack of information around many aspects of Yukon wetlands. As one participant told the YWB at the hearings in October, there is not a wealth of research to draw upon. According to a recent World Wildlife Fund evaluation of Canada's freshwater environments, there is limited monitoring, and ecosystem data are available for only one-third of Canada's 167 watersheds.

Yukon Government officials

stated at the YWB hearings that the goal of the wetlands policy is to ensure the benefits of Yukon's wetlands are sustained all across the territory. Assessing and assigning value to the full diversity of wetlands should reflect the costs and benefits locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, given the value of wetlands to biodiversity and their value in sequestering carbon. Shallow water and marshes, swamps, bogs and fens each have value to their local environment and communities already threatened by development and climate change. Efforts to protect wetlands are gaining support throughout the world as a way to support local resilience to global-scale threats to our planet.

The Arctic Council's Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group is, for the first time, conducting a major study to support policy work and management strategies to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services provided by wetlands. Its findings and recommendations from across the circumpolar world may be helpful in moving forward Yukon wetlands protection and management.

Financial compensation may be an option to address habitat and other value losses, but as a recent online workshop hosted by CAFF on Arctic wetlands heard, with respect to compensating the loss of reindeer habitat, birds cannot eat money. As the Yukon Environmental Socio-economic Assessment Board has noted, ecological services can be forever lost.

Additional work on regulatory processes that will affect mining in wetlands are underway as a result of the Mining Memorandum of Understanding between the Yukon

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Remembering Gerry Whitley

By Jenny Trapnell

A Yukon conservationist, scientist, avid pilot, and more, William “Gerry” Whitley passed away on November 11, 2020 in Whitehorse. He was the husband of Mary Whitley, past YBC president.

Raised in Trail, BC, Gerry met the love of his life, Mary, from Maine, in the late 60s and also fell in love with the Yukon. He and Mary made a lifetime of Yukon memories together and as a family, raising daughters Moriah and Rebecca.

In his professional life, Gerry worked as an assayer for four years in Faro for Cyprus Anvil before joining the federal government in Whitehorse. There he worked on pollution prevention in the water resources branch of Indian and Northern Affairs and also managed the Yukon River Basin Study. “He took on the mantle of protecting clean water in the Yukon, and he wore that mantle very closely,” said Mary. After his retirement, he combined his passions as an environmentalist with a new passion, flying –becoming the “eye in the sky” with conservation groups and others (see Jim Hawkings’ article p. 9) to monitor environmental change and other areas of concern. In recognition of this work, his activism on the Peel River protection campaign, and on the YCS Mining Committee, Gerry was awarded the Yukon Conservation Society’s Gerry Couture Stewardship Award, in



2019. In recent years, Gerry became enthralled in the search for the American military airplane, Skymaster, which went down in the Yukon in 1950. “We did a lot of flying looking for that, said Mary. “I was trained as a spotter and Gerry (who flew as a volunteer for the search and rescue group, CASARA), could do a grid search pattern.” A documentary about the missing plane and the search for it is nearing completion. Gerry happily joined Mary (who is a former YBC president) on birding adventures, especially when they went to hot-weather locales – Costa Rica, Hawaii, and Australia, to name a few. Mary and Gerry took one final trip together across Canada in 2019, enjoying the wonders of bird migration.

The Yukon Bird Club extends its deepest condolences to Mary Whitley, and daughters Moriah and Rebecca. Rest in peace, Gerry. You will be missed.



Photos courtesy of Mary Whitley

Gerry Whitley: Friend of Swans and the Southern Lakes

By *Jim Hawkings*

Gerry Whitley passed away earlier this fall. I didn't know him well, but I will be forever grateful for the enthusiasm, kindness, and generosity he showed me in the last 5 years. I wish I had known him better.

A little background. I have an intense interest in, and passion for, Trumpeter Swans and the places they live. I have pursued this during my entire working career – 28 years as a biologist with Environment Canada here in Whitehorse. For six years in the late 80s I even lived on the shore of the Yukon River at the Lewes Marsh – a place that lives and breathes swans from late March to mid May each spring.

Early in my career here, in 1986, I began a routine of keeping track of the swans and the places they live during spring migration in the Southern Lakes. A central part of that was two aerial surveys each spring (on or about 24 April and 8 May) to document the ice conditions at those special places where the swans gather on their northward migration: especially M'Clintock Bay, Tagish River, and Johnson's Crossing. I would climb into a small airplane with an experienced commercial pilot and take a tour for a couple of hours during which I would count birds and take hundreds of photographs through the window. Various colleagues from Environment Canada, Yukon Environment, or



Jim Hawkings photo

Gerry Whitley and his trusty steed C-FXJJ. Gerry was a fantastic companion in the cockpit: capable, friendly, and enthusiastic. It doesn't get any better.

Ducks Unlimited came with me from time to time to help. In the early days I would take photos on slide film...and frantically fumble to change film several times in mid-flight. After each flight there would always be a bit of head-scratching as I tried to recall exactly where some of the photos were taken. I breathed a sigh of relief around 2003 when digital cameras capable of handling this type of mission came on the scene. Then another big advance soon after allowed me to use a GPS to automatically tag each digital photo with its exact location.

I continued this routine of two aerial surveys each spring as part of a government-funded program throughout my career, occasionally supplemented with support from Ducks Unlimited. I retired in June 2014, and with funding very tight, Environment Canada decided not to continue with these surveys in subsequent years. I still believed in

the value of this long-term photo-record of ice and other conditions at these special places, especially given the pace of climate change in this part of the north. I was willing to do these surveys on my own time with my own camera gear and computer to process and store photos – but what about an airplane? Charter aircraft cost several hundred dollars an hour and only certain ones are suitable for this type of photo mission because of the need for an opening window for the front passenger.

Enter Gerry Whitley and his Cessna 172, C-FXJJ. I knew Gerry a bit from casual meetings – I was aware he had a keen interest in science and conservation, and I discovered he was a veteran flyer as well! Somehow, we got talking about my wish to continue these photo flights. He was very eager to help by donating his aircraft, time,

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Jim Hawkings photos

The earliest spring (25 April 2016) and the third latest spring (25 April 2018) in a 31-year time series of photos of M'Clintock Bay (Swan Haven) on Marsh Lake – both made possible by Gerry's generosity.

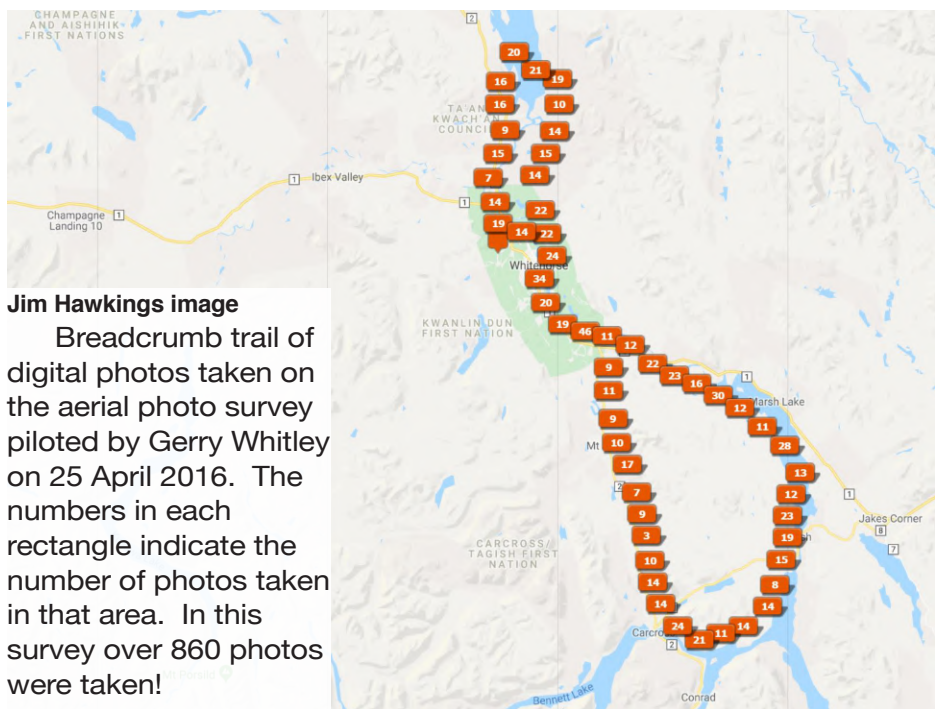
and fuel to the cause. I was elated...it seemed too good to be true. It turns out Gerry was associated with an organization called LightHawk, whose mission is to match up private pilots who want to contribute to conservation projects with scientists who have conservation projects that involve the type of flying those pilots are comfortable with. LightHawk covers the insurance for the mission, while the pilots donate their time, aircraft and fuel. For four years (2015-2018) Gerry and I were able to carry on these photo-surveys with the support of LightHawk. Photos from these four years have shown the earliest spring in 35 years (2016) as well as the 3rd latest spring (2018). In 2019 Gerry was on a road trip and unavailable but offered up his plane. His equally capable partner-in-plane, Dave Downing, volunteered his services as pilot.

Sadly, this continuous record of photos was interrupted in spring of 2020 – a casualty of Gerry's illness combined with the severe disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope to resurrect these surveys in 2021 and the years beyond.

You can see the full record of photos at:

<https://jimhawkings.smugmug.com/Aerial-survey-photos/Spring>

Thank you, Gerry, from the bottom of my heart.



Government and Council of Yukon First Nations. Many submissions on the Mineral Development Strategy call for greater environmental protection and socio-economic benefits.

In the interim, the recommendations made to the Yukon Water Board to not permit mining in undisturbed wetlands should be respected; there should be a “pause” to address required land use planning as Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation, First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun and other participants have recommended.

The Yukon Bird Club commends and thanks the YWB for the

opportunity to virtually attend the hearings on placer mining in wetlands. The participants’ perspectives, opinions, knowledge and experience about places like the Indian River Valley reflected different values and needs, and raised questions of rights and responsibilities.

Wetlands degradation and destruction in any landscape cannot continue. In moving forward, there must be a thoughtful process of identifying the diversity and values of wetlands, and as part of land use planning processes. One cannot assign a cost to maintaining wildlife and its habitat. What is valuable today for economic development in

the short term (and for whom) may not align with the values critical for the long-term sustainability for the environment and First Nations cultures. In going forward we must have our eyes wide open as to the implications of loss. The precautionary principle, and consideration of cumulative effects are essential. There must be a full assessment of all viable options for adaptive management, and continued monitoring and compliance tools to ensure the solutions chosen benefit future generations. It is important that birds continue to sing, and that we listen to them.

e-Birding with Kim Selbee

“Why do I do this?” This was the question I would often ask myself, or my husband, as we’re out hiking or otherwise exploring the great outdoors. “Why do I notice every bird, how many there are, and find everything about them so incredibly fascinating, while many others don’t see a thing? Why do I write it down in a journal, that no one else I know would ever care to even glance at?” Little did I know that this would be the year that all these questions would be answered, and many years of longing to share my observations with those like-minded fulfilled, with my introduction to e-Bird! For someone who would be considered computer ‘illiterate’, it was a challenge initially... but with my husband’s knowledgeable help, and Cameron Eckert’s encouragement, I submitted my first checklist in May — and was hooked! I can’t say enough about how enjoyable it has

become — especially in light of all the travel plans we had to cancel, all the isolating, avoiding meetings altogether... the list goes on. But one thing we have been encouraged to do during this pandemic was to get outdoors, alone preferably, and enjoy nature! What could be better?

And I can share my observations — no matter how small; nothing is insignificant—including photos, with a world-wide community of interested people! How very satisfying to feel your notes and photos are contributing to the



Blackpoll Warbler in Summer 2020

Kim Selbee Photo

understanding and appreciation of the birds in one's own area.. even backyard. It encourages me to take more time to look at, search for, and listen to those wonderful, fascinating and oftentimes very surprising feathered friends that help make this world a more beautiful place!

Yukon's Christmas Bird Counts 2019

By *Clive Osborne*

This article summarizes the information collected from the seven Yukon Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) conducted in 2019 as posted to the Audubon Society's website, the official sponsor of the CBC's throughout North America. A total of 8,165 birds made up of 37 species were counted by 109 participants from the first Count on December 15 to the last Count on December 29, 2019. The location of the Counts is shown in Figure 1 and the Counts are summarized in Tables 1-3.

It is apparent that several Counts, conducted in recent years in the communities and rural areas, were not reported in 2019 (e.g. Dawson, Teslin, Watson Lake, Johnsons Crossing, Tombstone). Climate change may be resulting in significant increases in numbers of birds such as Bald Eagle and House Sparrow and a bountiful cone crop sees high numbers of White-winged Crossbills.

Figure 1. Locations of 2019 Yukon CBCs



A few observations were designated by Audubon as unusual species sightings for a particular Count: Song Sparrow (1 – Whitehorse), Purple Finch (1 – Whitehorse), Dark-eyed Junco (2 – Tagish), Merlin (2 – Marsh Lake).

Record high numbers for some species for various Counts were flagged again this year: Bald Eagle (130 – Whitehorse), Eurasian Collared Dove (6 – Whitehorse), American Crow (3 – Whitehorse), Black-capped Chickadee (152 – Whitehorse), Mountain Chickadee

Table 1. Summary of Yukon Christmas Bird Counts.

Count	Date	No. of Field Observers	No. of Species Observed	No. of Birds Observed
Whitehorse (WH)	26/12	31	27	3377
Haines Junction (HJ)	15/12	28	20	2298
Marsh Lake (ML)	22/12	17	13	458
Carcross (CA)	21/12	11	21	412
Kluane N.P. (KL)	21/12	9	13	465
Tagish (TA)	22/12	8	16	897
Mayo (MA)	29/12	5	11	258

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

Species	No. of Birds	Rank
Common Raven	2620	1
White-winged Crossbill	2594	2
Common Redpoll (redpoll sp.)	564(69)	3
Pine Grosbeak	550	4
Black-capped Chickadee	397	5
Boreal Chickadee	186	6
Black-billed Magpie	183	7
Bald Eagle	134	8
House Sparrow	130	9
Red Crossbill	130	10

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

Species	No. of Counts
Gray Jay	7
Common Raven	7
Boreal Chickadee	7
Black-capped Chickadee	7
Pine Grosbeak	7
Common Redpoll	6
Black-billed Magpie	6
White-winged Crossbill	6
American Dipper	5

(14 – Tagish), White-winged Crossbill (6/7 – Tagish) and Bald Eagle (2 – Marsh Lake).

Only one Count recorded one record low number: Boreal Chickadee (2 - Tagish).

Some species were observed, but not counted, during count week: Whitehorse (Northern Shrike), Haines Junction (Great Horned Owl, Northern Goshawk), Carcross (Downy Woodpecker), Kluane National Park (Dark-eyed Junco) and Mayo (Boreal Owl).

Yukon Christmas Bird Counts 2020

All are welcome – beginners, feeder-watchers, and seasoned field birders! Enjoy winter birding and contribute to a North American-wide bird monitoring and conservation program. To participate contact the *count compiler* before count day.

Sponsored by the Yukon Bird Club



Dawson City – Saturday 19 December
Compiler – Sebastian Jones
E-mail: sebastian@northwestel.net
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Haines Junction – Saturday 19 December
Compiler – Julie Bauer
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Carcross – Saturday 19 December
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Kluane Lake – Sunday 27 December
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Takhini-Laberge – Sunday 27 December
Compiler – Cameron Eckert
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Mayo – Tuesday 29 December
Compiler – Mark O'Donoghue
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Text only: 334-5602

Steller's Jay Invasion 2020

By **Cameron D. Eckert**

The headliner event of the Yukon's 2020 fall birding season was the phenomenal Steller's Jay invasion. Steller's Jay is a common coastal species of southeast Alaska, but is very rare in the Yukon. This year was different. The first Steller's Jay reports came in mid-September with five birds roving along the Carcross waterfront – and quickly swelled to hundreds of sightings throughout the Yukon Southern Lakes region west to Haines Junction and east to Teslin. While many birdwatchers had never before seen a Steller's Jay in the Yukon, this invasion was not unprecedented. A major invasion was also observed in fall 2006 with 119 reports from 62 different locations centred on the Yukon Southern Lakes; and smaller incursions were recorded in fall 1994 and 2011. So many questions – Where did they come from and why? Will they survive?

This year, as with previous invasions, all

the Steller's Jays were of the coastal subspecies, and appeared to be immature birds (i.e. young of the year). These were dispersing juveniles from their coastal breeding grounds which could have been as near as Haines and Skagway, or much further south along the coast. It's unlikely that the invasion was caused by a storm or a big wind that blew them in from the coast. Rather, it seems that this was an unusual northward dispersal of juveniles following a productive breeding season, the mechanism for which we may never understand.

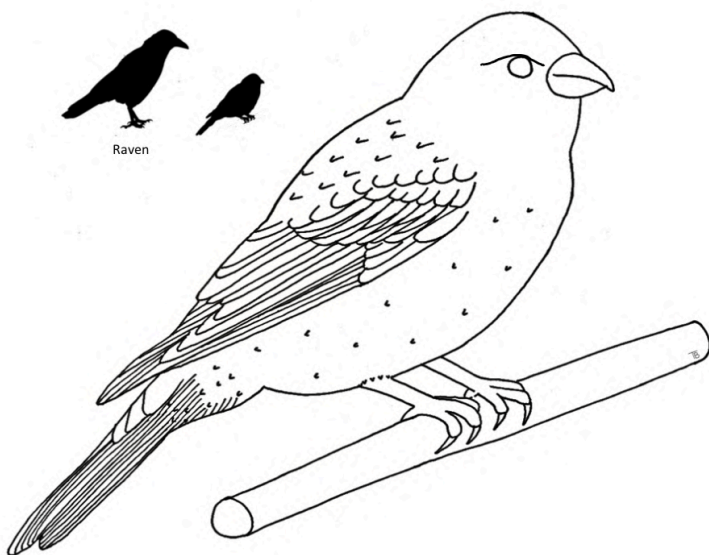
The Steller's Jay is robust and built like a Black-billed Magpie. An opportunistic omnivore, they love peanuts at birdfeeders, but can eat just about

anything, and being a jay, stash food to get through the lean times. So the birds will likely have no problem surviving a normal Yukon winter. Will they return to the coast? Perhaps, though in previous invasion years, the jays stayed right through the winter into the following spring. The dispersal of young birds can sow the seeds for expanding populations, and so it will be fascinating to see if this invasion produces the Yukon's first breeding Steller's Jays.

Cameron D. Eckert Photo



Pine Grosbeak



Colouring Sheets by Taylor Belansky

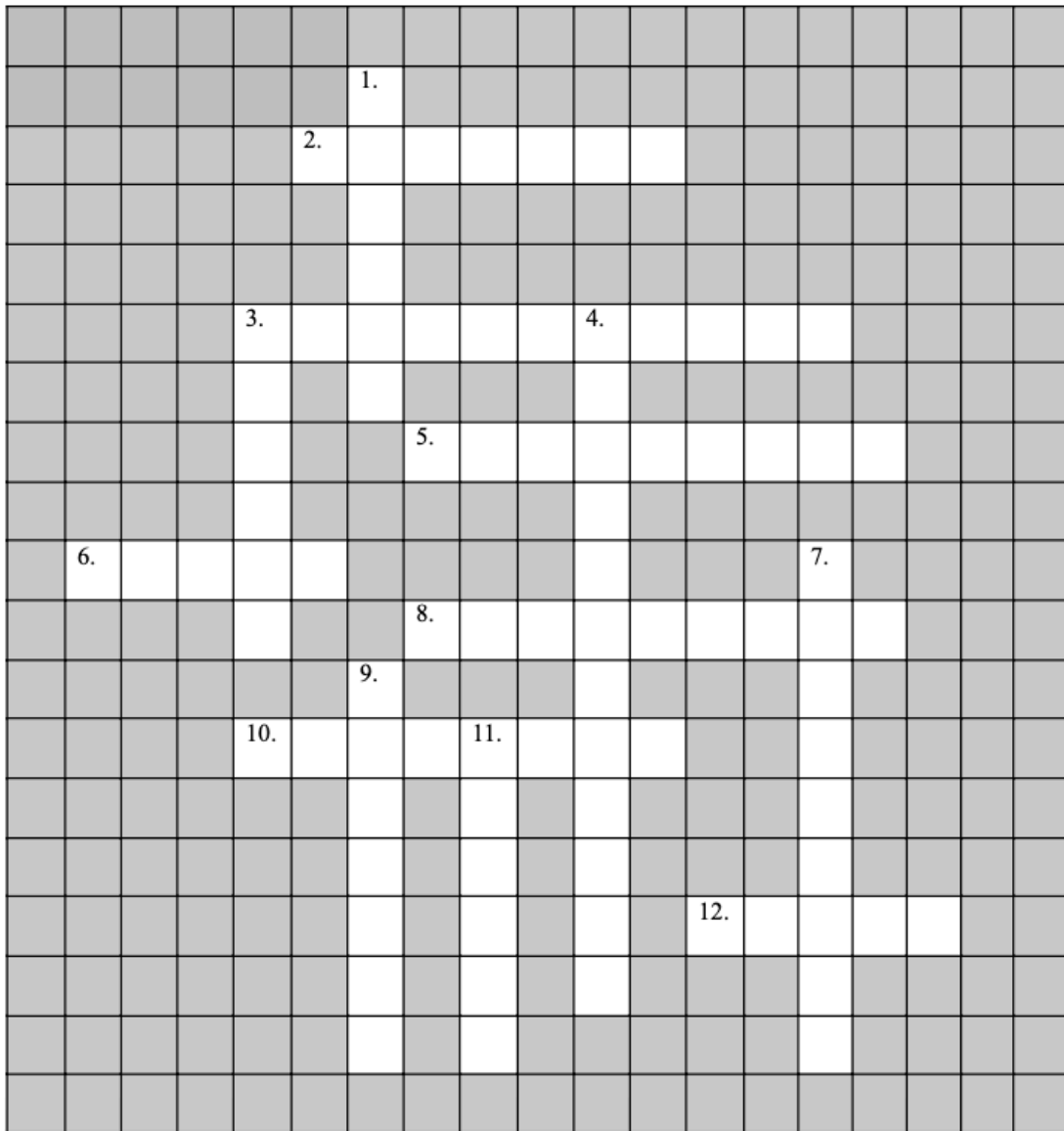
You'll find colouring sheets throughout this publication. Yukon Bird Club youth director Taylor Belansky has perfected a wonderful set of these. Challenge yourself to colour them in correctly over the Holidays!

Colour in the Pine Grosbeak!

- My head and belly are red.
- My eyes and feet are black.
- My beak is grey.
- My tail is black.
- My wings are black with grey and white patches.

Yukon Bird Club

Wintertime Bird Crossword



By Ruth McCullough

ACROSS

- 2. This Flycatcher's name could be related to an organ
- 3. A recent immigrant to Whitehorse
- 5. An Arctic bird seldom seen wandering South of Canada
- 6. A large subfamily of water birds
- 8. Formerly endangered, still rare, these distinctive large birds like to hang around the dump

- 10. A streaked breast and black stripes on the crown separate this common ground walking species from all other warblers
- 12. Most of these adult owls are pure white.

DOWN

- 1. This Thrush is common in moist coniferous woods
- 3. A bird with heavy hooked bill black mask, black wings with white patches
- 4. Fairly common bird, male attracts females by "drumming"
- 7. This warbler's song is a series of high thin separate notes, "sit sit sit sit sit"
- 11. This owl is the only Eastern owl with dark eyes, a heart faced barn owl

