

YUKON WARBLER

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

Spring 2021



In this issue:

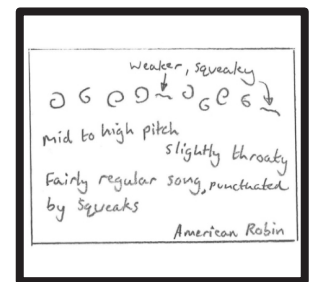
Malkolm Boothroyd photo

What risks do you associate with cross country skiing? Frostbite? Wiping out on a twisty hill? But there was a new danger on the Mount Mac ski trails this spring: a male Spruce Grouse.

More on page 8



Wintering Trumpeter Swans
pages 4, 6 and 7



Birdsong for Beginners
page 10

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.

** Also includes those for whom finances are limited. Foreign members please pay by Canadian dollar or money order.

Membership fees are based on the Calendar Year (Jan 1 to Dec 31). The end of the year is a good time to renew your membership. If you have paid for multi-year memberships in the past and are unsure of your current status, feel free to contact us for clarification. If you receive a paper copy of "The Warbler" your mailing label will indicate the latest year for which your membership is paid up, i.e. 2019 or 2020.

For more information contact:

Yukon Bird Club
4061-4th Avenue Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1H1
Canada
yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca

YBC Website: yukonbirds.ca
Yukon Birds Facebook group: [facebook.com/groups/212509148852262/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/212509148852262/)
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

Board of Directors

Shyloh van Delft - President/Chair
Jim Hawkings - Secretary/Treasurer
Cameron Eckert - Sightings & Checklist Coordinator
Pam Sinclair - Special Projects Coordinator
Vacant - Field Trip Coordinator
Betty Sutton - Events Coordinator
Becky Striegler - Birdathon Coordinator
Taylor Belansky - Youth Coordinator
Ulrich Trachsel - Newsletter Editor
Syd Cannings - Director
Glenn Rudman - Director

NEW PAYMENT OPTION: You can now join the Yukon Bird Club or renew your membership online thanks to our non-profit charity partner Canadahelps.org.

Go to:
yukonbirds.ca/join/

You can also print the membership form and mail with your payment.

Yukon Warbler is published by the Yukon Bird Club. Copyright © 2021 Yukon Bird Club. All rights reserved. Printed material, artwork, or photographs may not be reproduced by any means without permission from the author, artist, or photographer. All other material may not be reproduced by any means without the Editor's permission.

24-Hour Birdathon Coming!

Get ready to take part in the 36th annual Helmet Grünberg Yukon Birdathon from 5 p.m. Friday, May 28 to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 29. This is a great

opportunity to immerse yourself in watching and listening for as many birds as you can, during the peak of Yukon spring, and help the Yukon Bird Club fundraise.

Save the dates and stay tuned to yukonbirds.ca, Facebook and Twitter for details.

Birding with Kim Selbee

Snow Buntings visiting in Mayo this Spring



Wintering Trumpeter Swans: Where and Why?



By Jim Hawkings

Most people are well-acquainted with the huge gatherings of swans at M'Clintock Bay, Tagish River, and Johnson's Crossing in the early spring (late-March through early May). You can find a previous Yukon Warbler article describing Swan Haven at M'Clintock Bay here: <https://yukonbirds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ybcwarbler2017-1.pdf>

There is also increasing awareness of the small but rising numbers of Trumpeter Swans that are regularly wintering on the Teslin River at Johnson's Crossing in recent years under the watchful eyes of local residents like Adam

Skrutkowski, Tip Evans, and Jim and Minnie Clark. Over the past 10 years, winter sightings at Johnson's Crossing reported in eBird have generally ranged from 10 to 30 birds, but as high as 56. They are difficult to count on this stretch of river because of limited access and frequently foggy conditions.

Like it or not, our winters are warming, so this increasing trend is bound to continue into the foreseeable future as more open water allows these hardy birds survive the coldest months. A continued steady increase in the size of the Pacific Coast Population of Trumpeter Swans for at least 60 years is also likely playing a role.

Aerial photo of Teslin Lake outlet looking north on 8 May 2013. The bridge at Johnson's Crossing is visible in the background and the Alaska Highway is on the right.

Photo provided by Jim Hawkings

Did you ever wonder why swans aren't wintering at our highest-profile spring gathering areas, M'Clintock Bay and Tagish River, in addition to Johnson's Crossing?

Of course, the swans can only feed in areas that are not ice-covered, so their feeding in any location is limited by the ebb and flow of ice cover as the winter progresses. All three locations are at the outlets of large lakes, where slightly warmer water flowing

Continues on page 6

YUKON BIRD CLUB

Field Trips & Events – 2021

All are welcome!

For info email yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca yukonbirds.ca

#learntobird – outings for beginner birdwatchers!



Yukon Bird Club's covid-safe field trips – to keep participants safe, there will be no formal carpooling (ride with your bubble); no sharing scopes (personal scopes are ok); distancing encouraged; masks not required outdoors.

Kids & parents learn to bird spring series! Meeting weekly on Wednesdays 5-26 May at 11am for a one hour easy-paced stroll. Please pre-register with shyloh@yukonbirds.ca. See schedule for details.

Spring

Wednesday 5 May – Kids & parents learn to bird on the Millennium Trail. Meet at Whitehorse Fish Ladder 11am. Pre-register shyloh@yukonbirds.ca. **#learntobird**

Friday 7 May: Carcross – Nares Mtn **Dusky Grouse hike** with Dan Kemble. Meet at the gazebo opposite Montana Services 6:30pm. Sturdy footwear for steep climb. (3 hrs)

Saturday 8 May: Tagish – **Early spring migrants** with Shyloh van Delft. Meet at Tagish Bridge rest area at 1pm. (2 hrs) **#learntobird**

Fri/Sun 7-9 May: Faro – Birding at the **Crane and Sheep Festival**. Meet at the Campbell Regional Interpretive Centre for information and events.

Wednesday 12 May – **Kids & parents learn to bird** at Quartz Rd Marsh. Meet at Boston Pizza at 11am. Pre-register shyloh@yukonbirds.ca. **#learntobird**

Thursday 13 May: **Waterbirds of the Quartz Rd wetland** with Jim Hawkings & Boris Dobrowolsky. Meet at Boston Pizza at 5:30pm. (1.5 hrs) **#learntobird**

Sunday 16 May: Upper Liard – **Songbird migration at Albert Creek** with Ted Murphy-Kelly. Meet at the Albert Creek Bird Observatory at 7:30am (2 hrs)

Tuesday 18 May: **Yukon Wildlife Preserve** with Jake Paleczny and friends. 6pm. \$11 entrance fee for non-YWP members. (2 hrs) **#learntobird**

Wednesday 19 May: Haines Junction – **Spring migration** at the scenic lagoons with Julie Bauer. Meet at the Frosty Freeze at 6pm. (2 hrs)

Wednesday 19 May – **Kids & parents learn to bird** at Whistle Bend Trail Aksala Park at 11am. Pre-register shyloh@yukonbirds.ca. **#learntobird**

Thursday 20 May. **Judas Creek Migration Spectacular** with Jim Hawkings. Meet at the SS Klondike at 5:30pm, or Marsh Lake Community Centre at 6:15pm. (3.5 hrs)

Saturday 22 May: **Birding the Takhini Salt Ponds** with Shyloh van Delft. Meet at the corner of the Alaska Hwy & Elk Road. 10am. (1.5 hrs) **#learntobird**

Saturday 19 May: Dawson – **Spring birds of the Klondike** with Greg Brunner & Cynthia Hunt. Meet at Henderson's Corner north entrance at 8am. (2 hrs)

Wednesday 26 May – **Kids & parents learn to bird** at McIntyre Marsh. Meet at McIntyre Marsh Gazebo 11am. Pre-register shyloh@yukonbirds.ca. **#learntobird**

Thursday 27 May: Birds of the **Millennium Trail** with Jenny Trapnell. Meet at the Whitehorse Fish Ladder 6:30pm. Wheelchair accessible. (2 hrs) **#learntobird**

Saturday 29 May: Mayo – **A spring bird walk** with Mark O'Donoghue. Meet at 5-Mile Lake campground at 8:30am. (3 hrs)

Sunday 30 May: McIntyre Creek **Birdsong Workshop** with Pam Sinclair. Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 7:30am. (3 hrs) **#learntobird**

The Helmut Grünberg –

Yukon Birdathon!

Friday-Saturday, May 28-29 (5pm to 5pm)

Sharing the passion – a conservation fundraiser!

For more info email yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca

Continued from page 4

from deeper layers of the lake creates open water that persists most of the winter. At first glance they look much the same.

A look at some satellite images this past winter tells part of the story. Yukoners may recall we had a rather nasty cold spell during the first two weeks of February 2021. From 2 to 16 Feb. the warmest temperature at the Whitehorse Auto station was -17.1 C and the coldest was -41.9 C; mean daily temperatures ranged from -21.3 C to -36.4 C. It was cold. Satellite images (Figure 1) show that M'Clintock Bay was virtually completely frozen over on 10 Feb., and the open water at Tagish was severely reduced and restricted to the southern 2 km of the river immediately downstream of Tagish Lake. On 12 Feb. Teslin River also had greatly reduced open water but there was still about 5km stretching from Teslin Lake downstream. That cold snap was the "bottleneck" for swans this winter, as images from later in February (Figure 2) and March show open water expanding at all three sites.

The other twist in this story is that swans not only need open water to survive, but they also need to find enough food in that open water to keep them going through the cold weather. They eat submergent aquatic plants that grow on the bottom of various waterbodies, so the water has to be shallow enough for them to reach the bottom in areas that have the right kind of vegetation. This is a problem at both Swan Haven and Tagish during the fall and winter because the water is too deep just about everywhere for the swans to reach their preferred plant foods. Figure 3 shows water levels in Teslin Lake and Marsh Lake from Jan 2020 to April 17, 2021. (Note that

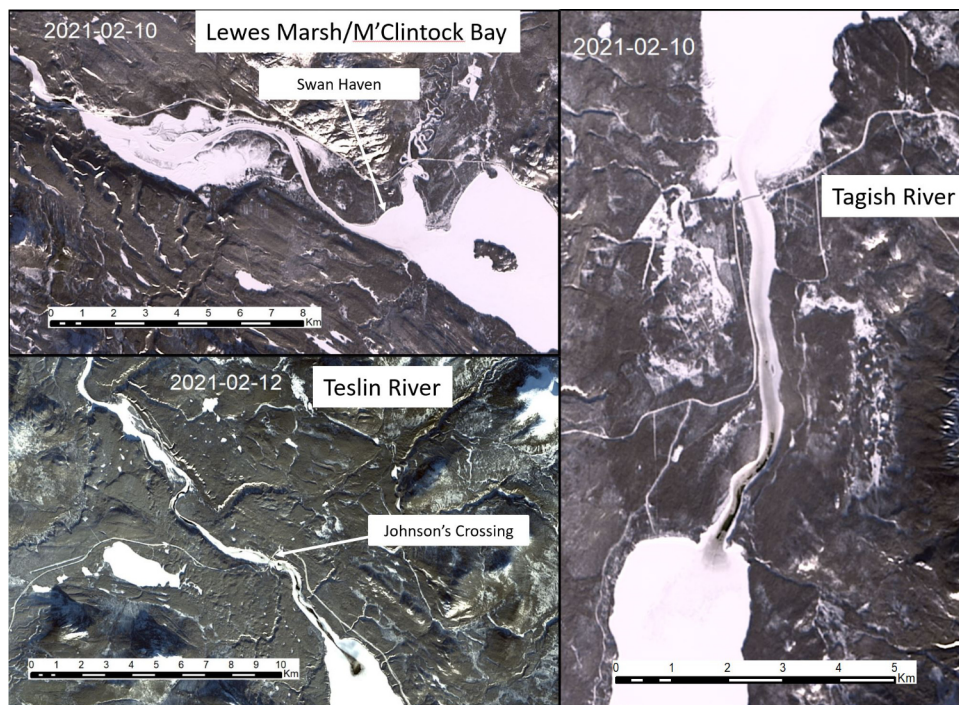


Figure 1: Satellite images showing ice conditions at Tagish River, Teslin River, and Lewes Marsh/M'Clintock Bay on 10-12 Feb. 2021 during a cold snap. Open water shows as black.

Image provided by Jim Hawkings

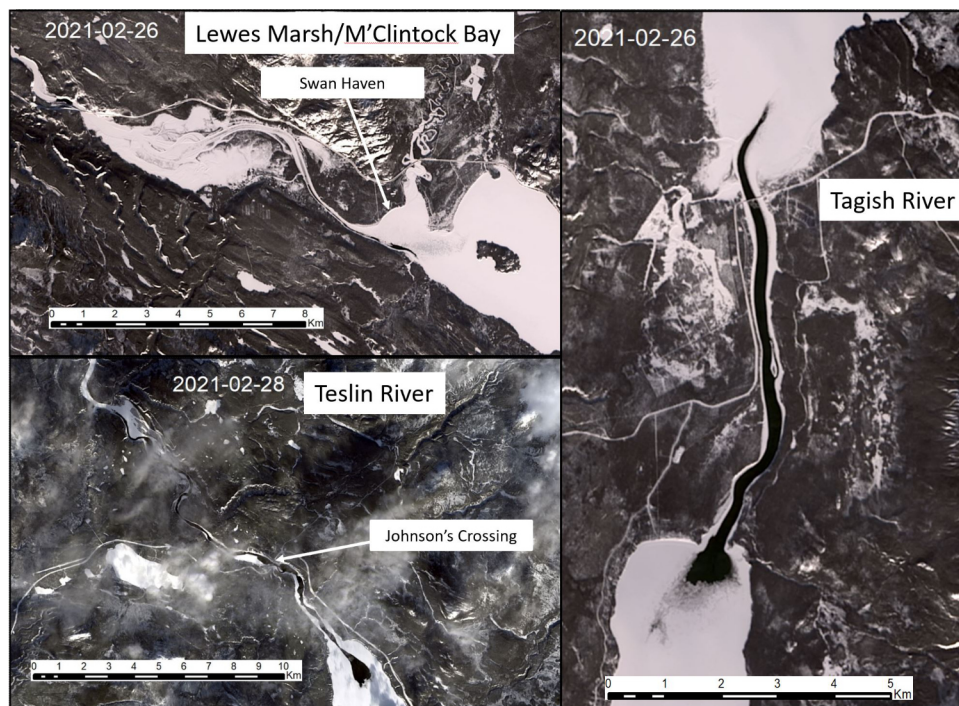


Figure 2: Satellite images showing ice conditions at Tagish River, Teslin River, and Lewes Marsh/M'Clintock Bay on 26-28 Feb. 2021 during milder weather following a cold snap. Open water shows as black.

Image provided by Jim Hawkings



Wintering Trumpeter Swans in the mist at Johnson's crossing, 26 December, 2012. The temperature is approx -25 C.

Photo Adam Skrutkowski

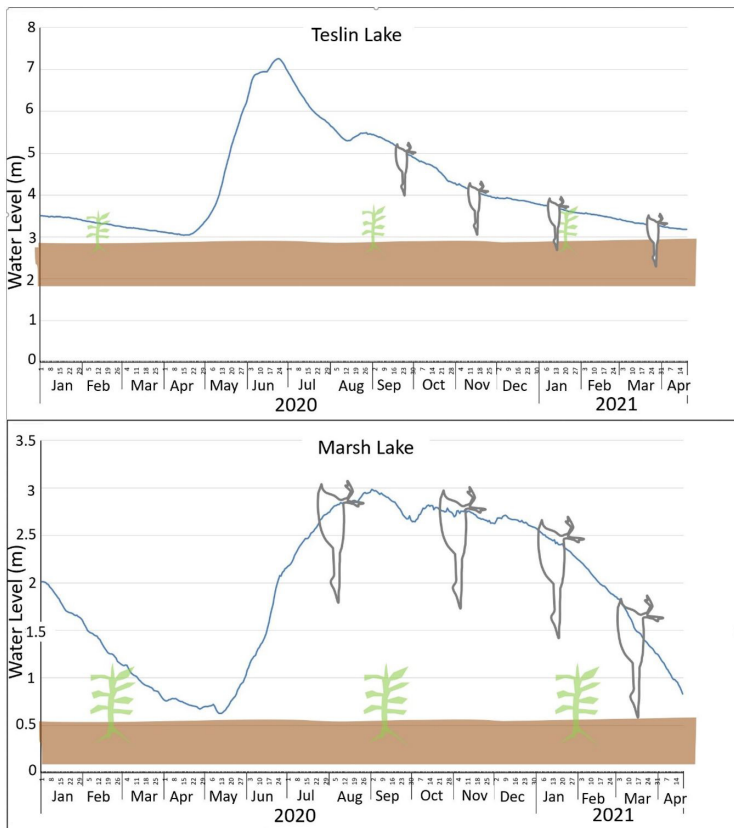


Figure 3. Daily water levels (blue lines) in Teslin Lake and Marsh Lake from Jan 2020 to April 17, 2021. Brown polygons and plant icons show the approximate elevation of submerged beds of aquatic plants which are the main swan foods. Swan icons show how deep feeding swans can reach at various water levels, assuming swans can reach up to 1 m below the surface to feed.

Image provided by Jim Hawkings

Johnson's Crossing has water levels that are almost identical to Teslin Lake, and both Tagish River and M'Clintock Bay have the same water levels as Marsh Lake). As you can see, water in Marsh Lake is too deep for swans to reach their food all through the fall and winter until sometime in March. By contrast, in Teslin Lake water levels drop during the fall and there is lots of vegetation close to the surface by December.

So, to summarize, Trumpeter Swans cannot winter at Lewes Marsh/M'Clintock Bay because the water is too deep and it freezes over in cold snaps, and they cannot winter at Tagish because the water is too deep. That leaves Johnson's Crossing currently as the only location that does not freeze completely AND has shallow enough water where there is food. What will happen over the coming years as winters continue to warm and precipitation patterns change?




Spring watercolour painting of a Warbler

By Kim Selbee

Mount Mac Spruce Grouse

By Malkolm Boothroyd

What risks do you associate with cross country skiing? Frostbite? Wiping out on a twisty hill? But there was a new danger on the Mount Mac ski trails this spring: a male Spruce Grouse.

The grouse had established a territory at the intersection of three trails, and was willing to defend his territory against any skiers who might have entertained stealing his real estate. His crimson eyebrows flared as he launched himself at the ankles of skiers, fluttering to clear the snow and then pecking, and sometimes clinging to spandex ski pants with his beak. For scale, a 450 gram grouse attacking a person is like a 12 year old kid going after a six tonne elephant. 



Malkolm Boothroyd photos

Red Crossbills: Crazy or Just Weird?

By *Jim Hawkings*

It happened this spring on March 25, earlier than I am aware of in previous years. Evan Warren saw a male Red Crossbill accompanied by a fledged juvenile at his feeder near the Takhini Hotsprings Road. He photographed this and reported it on iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/72070478>) and on eBird (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S84106847>). Syd Cannings knew I was interested in these early nesting crossbills and sent me a link to the sighting. The same day another juvenile Red Crossbill was reported at Policeman's Point by Leslie Mackenzie-Grieve.

I had noticed a pair of Red Crossbills at my feeder in Pineridge regularly earlier in this March and heard them singing near my house occasionally, so I knew these reports of recently fledged birds would surface. It was just a question of when. I've been watching my own feeder pretty carefully and finally saw a juvenile on 17 April.



Adult male and recently fledged juvenile Red Crossbill near Policeman's Point on 25 March 2021.

Leslie Mackenzie-Grieve Photo



So what is the big deal – what's so exciting about a drab-looking juvenile Red Crossbill? Well, let's do a bit of bio-math on this. According to the online authority [Birds of the World](#), the incubation period for Red Crossbills is 12-16 days, averaging 14 days. Young birds fledge (leave the nest) at 15-25 days. Working backwards from 25 March, this juvenile must have hatched before 10 March, and the egg it came from was laid before 26 February. All of which means this nest was being incubated literally in the dead of winter – at the latest from 26 February to 10 March, with temperatures ranging from 1.5 to -24 C. Incubation might have started earlier, possibly even during the two-week cold snap that ended on 17 February.

Checking back in some eBird records, fledged Red Crossbills have been seen very early in previous springs as well, for example 31 March 2019 and 9 April 2016, at Pilot Mountain Subdivision; 8 April 2014, 2 April 2016, and 22 April 2018 in Porter Creek; and 13 April 2011 in Pineridge.

Male Red Crossbill feeding a female on 23 Feb, 2021. This is a normal part of courtship in Crossbills, and the male will also feed the female while she incubates the eggs.

Steve Wilson Photo

This is remarkable: A small bird that builds a nest, lays eggs, hatches them, and keeps delicate youngsters fed, warm, and growing in brutally cold weather when the only food available is seeds. Most of our migrant songbirds don't even arrive here until mid-May, and they nest in June when the temperature is 20 degrees warmer than it is in March.

I've known this weird feature of crossbills ever since my days living in Fairbanks back in the late 70s. I heard from a biologist friend that he had seen crossbills nesting above the Arctic Circle in the Brooks Range in March. I was shocked to think this was possible. It turns out that Red Crossbills in North America normally nest in late-winter to early spring (January-May), or mid-summer to autumn (July-October). Maybe some do both in the same year?

Continues on page 11

Birdsong for Beginners

By Glenn Rudman

When we first learn to identify birds by what we see we're often encouraged to sketch a rough outline of the bird we're looking at and note details such as colours, the size and shape of the beak or the length of the tail. Once we've gotten over any artistic inhibitions we soon recognize the benefit of our efforts. It forces us to focus on the bird's characteristics and that will help us with identification and it provides us with a record of what we actually saw rather than what we thought we saw. When we have a bunch of basic sketches in our notebook we can also compare our own notes, amend our entries if we want to and keep building our knowledge about why one species looks different from another.

We can take a similar approach to identifying birds by their songs and calls. The following method focuses on three elements: pitch, rhythm and association.

To get started, you'll need a small notebook or cards such as index cards. You'll use these to 'visually' record the birdsong or call that you are listening to.

1. Pitch – is the pitch high, mid-range or low? Does the pitch vary? Make a note (e.g., high and scratchy, mid-pitch and throaty, screechy, flute-like).

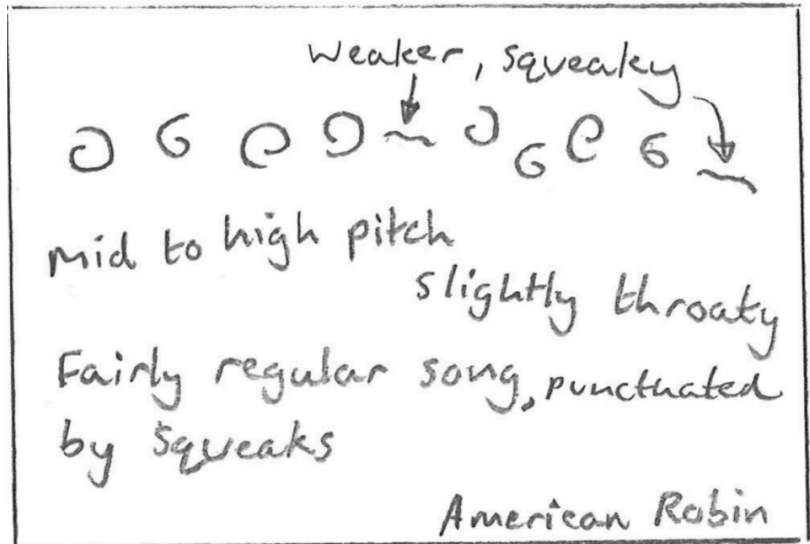
2. Rhythm – are the individual notes long, short, staccato, steady,

rushed, grouped or spread out? Use lines, dots, dashes and squiggles to represent the rhythm as you hear it and use text to provide descriptive detail (e.g., erratic, even, speeds up, slows down).

Perhaps you can make up a phrase that fits the rhythm. For example, many people associate the song of the White-crowned Sparrow with, "poor Willie peed his pants" – a phrase that mimics the rhythm of the song.

3. Association – what do you think of when you hear the song? Something silly, funny, serious, melancholic or weird? Make a note. If you were asked to name the bird based on its song, what would you call it? Examples could be, "very thin high tone at start descending into a bouncing ball rhythm"; "Sounds like a mini laser gun from Star Wars!"; "Sounds like the bird is singing Oh, dear me". The point here is to keep it personal so you connect with the sound so you're more likely to remember it (you don't have to share your notes!).

If you're new to learning bird songs and calls then it's a good idea to start with the simpler songs you hear around you.



One person's representation of an American Robin's dawn song
Image provided by Glenn Rudman

Learning from others who know bird songs is very useful but you can also pick a few common bird songs from your bird app or from a website, make notes about them and then listen out for those birds in your area. Focus on a handful of common songs during each season (around late April to early July).

Remember to keep your notes with you for reference when you're birding. When you tune into the songs and amend your notes or add information this is a sign you're thinking about what you're listening to and sharpening your skills. Once you get familiar with some of the more common and less complex bird songs you'll start to notice other sounds that don't quite fit with what you know and you'll likely have a new song to investigate.

Remember that many bird songs vary by individual birds and

by region. Not all the songs you hear sound exactly like the recordings on your app!

Here's a selection of birds to get you started.

- Alder Flycatcher ("free beer!")
- American Robin
- Black-capped Chickadee (the song and call – they are very different)
- Chipping Sparrow (can sound very similar to Dark-Eyed Junco)
- Dark-eyed Junco (can sound very similar to a Chipping Sparrow)
- Golden-crowned Sparrow ("Oh dear me")
- Olive-Sided Flycatcher ("quick, free beer")
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Savannah Sparrow
- Say's Phoebe
- Varied Thrush
- Western Wood-Pewee
- White-crowned Sparrow ("poor Willy peed his pants")
- White-throated Sparrow (southern Yukon but has been detected in central Yukon. "oh Canada-da-da-da")
- Wilson's Snipe (winnowing in flight using its tail feathers)
- Yellow Warbler **f**

Crossbills - Continued from page 9

Some of our other winter finches breed pretty early as well. In the spring of 2011, after one of the warmest summers on record in 2010, hordes of Common Redpolls were found nesting around Whitehorse. I found a nest under construction on 3 April and it had 3 eggs on 10 April!

But wait, there's more oddness about crossbills. Turns out they are the only birds which normally have crossed bills – that is, overlapping upper and lower mandibles. The crossed bill is thought to help them extract seeds from the various conifer cones they eat – in Yukon that would be primarily Spruce and Pine. Young crossbills are not hatched with crossed bills; the bill allegedly crosses sometime after they fledge. Note the young bird in the 25 March iNaturalist photo has a bill that fairly prominently crossed – does that mean it fledged a good while before the photo was taken?

The intriguing question that comes to mind is: Which way do their bills cross, lower mandible to the right or to the left? The answer is both ways, usually in about equal proportions. For more on bill "crossing" read this interesting article: [crossbills: which way to turn?](#) Are pairs of crossbills usually composed of a lefty and a righty? Will two righty parents have righty youngsters?

The flight calls (known as Contact calls) of Red Crossbills are a subject of intense study. It seems there are a numerous "Types" which have distinctive calls and are associated with local and regional variations in bill and body size. The Finch Research Network is engaged in [The Crossbill Project](#) to learn more about Contact calls and other aspects of the Red Crossbill. Here is an 2017 eBird article that talks about



Adult male and recently fledged juvenile Red Crossbill on 23 April 2020. **Steve Wilson Photo**

the various calls and even has examples of each that you can listen to: <https://ebird.org/news/crossbills-of-north-america-species-and-red-crossbill-call-types>. There should soon be more information about our Yukon "types" as some recordings of them have been gathered over the past year or so.

Think about all this next time you get a good look at a crossbill! They may be small and a bit drab, but they're definitely interesting! **f**

Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count Trend Through Time

By Clive Osborne

I thought that it might be of interest to those club members who have participated in the Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count over the years to look back and see how the numbers have changed. The following table covers 40 years that the count was conducted during the period 1973 to 2019. The data reported in the Maximum, Minimum and Mean columns is numbers per party (observer group) hour. This statistic allows the data to be comparable among years and, if one chooses, among other counts. The downside of using this statistic is that not all participants have an equal opportunity to observe a species occupying limited habitat within the count circle (e.g. open water habitat, landfill site). For these species, the statistic generally decreases as the number of participants increases.

The spreadsheet used to create this table shows a more complete and in-depth picture of population changes. It was interesting to see the rise of species such as Bald Eagle, Mallard, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, House Sparrow and the fall of species such as Rock Pigeon, Boreal Chickadee, Gray Jay and Red Crossbill. Whitehorse, the wilderness city, is changing, with a rapidly growing human population and climate change affecting its boreal forest nature of the past.


I am thinking of submitting future articles with similar compilations for other Yukon counts. If you found this table of interest, please let me know at cosborne@northwestel.net. 

Table 1: Number of Birds Observed per Party-Hour for the Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count from 1973-2019.

	No. of Years Observed	Max.	Min.	Mean
Number of Participants	40	45	2	20
Number of Party Hours	40	93.5	5.5	38.6
Number of Species Reported	23	33	16	25
Common Raven	40	72.36	4.38	26.86
Bohemian Waxwing	29	32.17	0.04	5.73
Common Redpoll	28	25.22	0.05	3.76
Rock Pigeon	27	11.75	0.01	2.97
Pine Grosbeak	38	10.65	0.26	2.54
redpoll sp.	24	8.73	0.10	2.54
Black-billed Magpie	40	3.82	0.34	2.00
White-winged Crossbill	25	10.14	0.03	1.67
finch sp.	1	1.67	1.67	1.67
Black-capped Chickadee	40	2.57	0.09	1.27

Boreal Chickadee	40	3.46	0.20	1.06
Snow Bunting	3	1.56	0.41	0.85
House Sparrow	14	2.39	0.03	0.79
Mallard	25	1.84	0.11	0.68
Red Crossbill	19	2.27	0.03	0.53
Gray Jay	37	3.00	0.09	0.46
crossbill sp.	11	0.72	0.03	0.31
Willow Ptarmigan	6	0.78	0.01	0.28
Bald Eagle	24	2.20	0.03	0.27
American Dipper	32	1.44	0.05	0.22
chickadee sp.	14	0.73	0.01	0.16
Pine Siskin	4	0.19	0.02	0.12
Dark-eyed Junco	23	0.78	0.01	0.12
Hairy Woodpecker	26	0.37	0.02	0.10
Spruce Grouse	26	0.30	0.02	0.10
Hoary Redpoll	14	0.27	0.02	0.08
Northern Goshawk	17	0.27	-0.14	0.07
Ruffed Grouse	17	0.44	0.01	0.07
Downy Woodpecker	25	0.19	0.01	0.07
Common Goldeneye	15	0.20	0.02	0.06
Boreal Owl	1	0.06	0.06	0.06
Harlequin Duck	1	0.06	0.06	0.06
Common Merganser	16	0.13	0.02	0.06
Eurasian Collared Dove	3	0.10	0.02	0.05
Great Horned Owl	9	0.11	0.02	0.05
Black-backed Woodpecker	2	0.07	0.03	0.05
American Robin	10	0.16	0.01	0.05
Mountain Chickadee	14	0.11	0.02	0.05
Am. Three-toed Woodpecker	21	0.18	0.01	0.05
Red-breasted Nuthatch	20	0.08	0.02	0.05
European Starling	1	0.04	0.04	0.04
Green-winged Teal	1	0.04	0.04	0.04
American Crow	2	0.05	0.03	0.04
woodpecker sp.	6	0.07	0.02	0.04
Bufflehead	2	0.06	0.01	0.04
Northern Shrike	5	0.06	0.01	0.03
Barrow's Goldeneye	10	0.07	0.01	0.03
grouse sp.	6	0.09	0.01	0.03
Rusty Blackbird	1	0.03	0.03	0.03
Northern Mockingbird	2	0.04	0.02	0.03
Golden Eagle	5	0.05	0.01	0.03
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch	1	0.03	0.03	0.03
Northern Pintail	1	0.03	0.03	0.03
Red-breasted Merganser	2	0.03	0.02	0.02
Stellers Jay	3	0.03	0.02	0.02
White-crowned Sparrow	4	0.03	0.01	0.02
woodpecker sp.	2	0.03	0.02	0.02
White-throated Sparrow	2	0.02	0.02	0.02
Horned Lark	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
Northern Hawk Owl	2	0.02	0.02	0.02
Song Sparrow	2	0.02	0.02	0.02
eagle sp.	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
Savannah Sparrow	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
Golden Crowned Sparrow	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
falcon sp.	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
Purple Finch	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	0.02	0.02	0.02
House Finch	1	0.01	0.01	0.01
Glaucous Gull	1	0.01	0.01	0.01
Trumpeter Swan	1	0.01	0.01	0.01
Northern Pygmy Owl	1	0.01	0.01	0.01
Common Loon	1	0.01	0.01	0.01
Fox Sparrow	1	0.01	0.01	0.01

Ingrid Janzen and Élise Brown-Dussault win the YBC Student Award

We congratulate Ingrid Janzen and Élise Brown-Dussault on winning our YBC Student Award. Following are the essays which they submitted with their successful applications.

Yukon Bird Club Award Application Essay

Earlier this summer, I was eating breakfast on the porch. An American Robin flew above and landed in the tree beside me. Between the branches and new leaves, was a nest. Five blue eggs were nestled in tight. Over the course of the next couple weeks, the eggs hatched into fuzzy, hungry chicks. A couple weeks later the nest was empty and five more robins flitted amongst the trees. It's incredible to think those little chicks and I were eating breakfast in the same place although I preferred my pancakes to regurgitated insects.

Currently I am enrolled in the Environmental and Conservation Science Program through the U of A at the Yukon University. This program intersects hard science with First Nation's history, economics, and policy. Tailored to the Yukon, the Northern Systems major focuses on landscapes, wildlife, and cultures that I have grown up alongside. It took me a couple tries to find the right school and program, but I am thrilled to be studying the natural history and ecosystems in

the Yukon. I look forward to continuing into graduate school and contributing to the body of knowledge within environmental conservation through research and fieldwork. I am particularly interested in ecology. I was compelled to study in this field for several reasons. Firstly, to feed my curiosity for plants, animals,



mountains, and waterways as well as to learn how to best support Indigenous voices. Ultimately, I hope to further develop my ability to think critically and advocate for environmental conservation.

I first became interested in Northern ecology during my time as a YCS trail guide at Miles Canyon. I loved learning about the cultural and geological histories as well as the biodiversity of the Whitehorse region. Although learning about

the subject was part of the job, it became a newfound passion.

In my past work as an Outreach Assistant for Zero Waste Yukon, I delivered classroom presentations to students by educating and encouraging them towards environmentally conscious action. I enjoyed this work and hope for other opportunities to promote stewardship and habitat preservation. The awareness that I am developing through my program will enable me to be a better informed advocate for environmental conservation.

I really look forward to continuing my studies at Yukon University. I have begun to bird after my father gave me a pair of binoculars for Christmas. I have enjoyed getting out on the trails near my home to see many species throughout the seasons. Birds play an integral role in our ecosystem, and I hope to continue my studies in ornithology throughout the rest of my career as a hopeful biologist.

Ingrid Janzen

Continues on page 14

Continued from page 13

Yukon Bird Club Award Application Essay

My name is Élise Brown-Dussault. I am in my final year of the Northern Environmental and Conservation Science offered at Yukon University via the University of Alberta. One candid fact about me: it has only been two years since I discovered I really like birds. That said, a lot has changed in two years.

One night recently, my mind saturated with news – of wildfires, record heat, cruel injustices, a global pandemic – I covered my face with a pillow and asked no one: what is left to cling to in all this? So often it feels like the weight of the world, and the possibility of contributing a net positive, seems impossible to carry. I was surprised to feel an answer come back to me: the sadness you feel is an energy that you can use towards protecting something you love.

Learning the names and songs of birds has completely transformed the practice of walking. It seems to me that before, when in nature, I neither looked nor listened. It means something to me now, to commiserate with chickadees in the winter, to celebrate the coming of trumpeter swans in the spring, to hear explosions of song in early summer, and to

see the ravens re-conquering Whitehorse in autumn after the seagulls have finally left town. It means something to go for a walk and look for familiar faces.



There are some practical things I do to advance the plight of birds. I have a Cornell membership. I buy their classes and challenge myself to improve my knowledge. Gaining confidence in my knowledge of birds helps me advance their plight by collecting accurate data at work. Collecting accurate data helps to produce knowledge (in this case, about Yukon wetlands) that can help to protect declining species. It is a way of bearing witness to what's there and what's changing, even if it's through the convoluted lens of science.

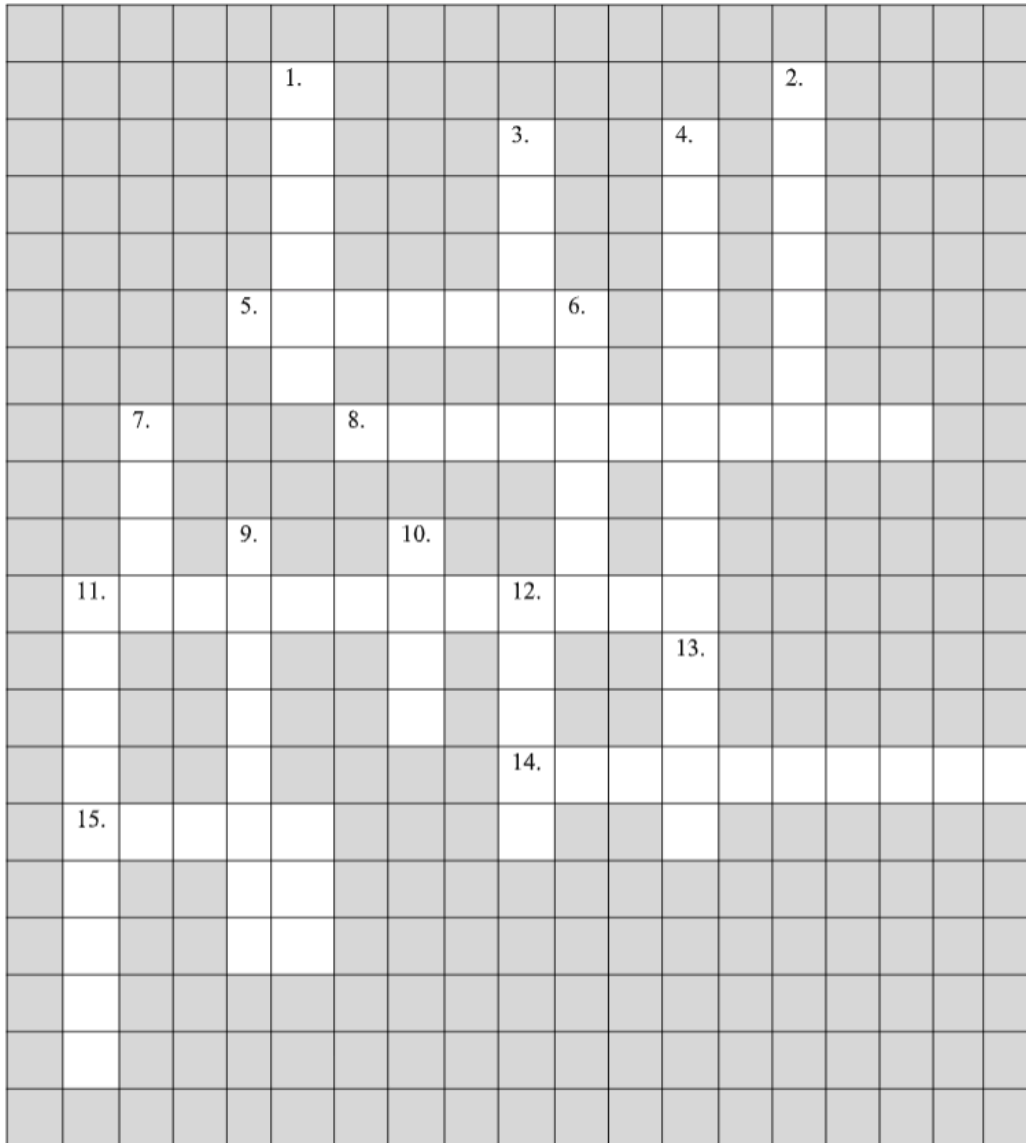
There are less 'practical' things I do to advance the plight of birds. Like any new convert, I am always looking for other people to brainwash. I incorporate it into lesson planning when I tutor. I interrupt my friends to make them observe the red-breasted merganser through my binoculars. I force fun facts upon unsuspecting loved ones (who did not know male Wood ducks went 'zip, zip'). It is critical to support birds with scientific evidence, for it translates to policy, but I think that garnering care and love for birds is equally crucial – and that it can only be achieved by speaking and acting from the heart. In the ceremonial disentanglement of an owl pellet, or in the sharing of an anecdote.

I try to advance the plight of birds by reminding myself and others that caring for the environment is not a burden: it is a gift.

Thank you for considering my application, and for all the work you do in caring and advocating for birds.

Élise Brown-Dussault 

Springtime Bird Crossword



By Ruth McCullough

ACROSS

- 5. ours is Ruby crowned
- 8. this nuthatch likes to flock with chickadees and warblers
- 11. our latest immigrant with a vocal repertoire that includes one that sounds like a scalded cat
- 14. less common and more irregular than its red relative
- 15. ours is American, nests on tundra and alpine meadows.

DOWN

- 1. this species has a tail longer than its body
- 2. male of this species is recognized by its green head
- 3. this male grosbeak is like the Purple Finch but has white wing bars
- 4. this species is common in northern deciduous woods and suburbs
- 6. his swan used to be called Whistling
- 7. what birds do in the spring
- 9. fairly common mountain bird with blue plumage
- 10. what spruce grouse do in the spring
- 11. this species is solitary, found along streams, lakes & swamps
- 12. the head, back and breast of this bird is uniformly slate grey
- 13. one of the species from clue number 4

