

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

Spring 2009



• Sightings Reports • Bird Observatory Updates • Bird Quiz •

YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

The Yukon Bird Club is a registered non-profit, charitable organization.

Membership fees:

Individual	\$10.00
Family	\$15.00
Senior/Student	\$5.00
Contributing	\$25.00
Supporting	\$50.00
Institutional	\$20.00

Family memberships cover two or more people living at one address. Foreign members please pay with a Canadian dollar money order.

For more information contact:

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YBC BIRDS: A free email information flyway with updates of sightings, events and issues. To subscribe email yukonbirdclub@gmail.com with the message "subscribe YBC BIRDS". To cancel send "cancel YBC BIRDS".

Yukon Bird Club Web Site:

www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/

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Yukon Warbler editor: Ben Schonewille
Yukon Warbler - Spring 2009

Cover Photo

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, by Cameron Eckert
2008-07-05, Snafu Lake

Back Cover Graphic

From Jim Hawking Photo

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Yukon Bird Club Annual General Meeting was held on February 25th, 2009. The meeting was well attended; more detailed can be found on the following page.

Submissions and Comments Wanted

Please send us your articles and photos. You can email the newsletter editor at:

yukon.bird.club.newsletter@gmail.com .

Or send your regular mail to the Yukon Bird Club post box and put attention newsletter director.

Please include any additional information to accompany photographs including date and location.

We want your comments, good or bad !

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YUKON BIRD CLUB NEWS

Yukon Bird Club Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Yukon Bird Club held its annual meeting on February 25th, 2009. In addition to the general administrative tasks, the following items of interest were discussed/presented.

- President's Report - Helmut reported that 2008 was a normal year for the YBC. He reported that the club organized numerous field trips, evening events and a birdathon and its members participated in Christmas Bird Counts and festivals. The club was involved in conservation initiatives; submissions to the YESAB and provided support and information to other Yukon and Alaskan environmental societies.
- Field Trip Coordinator's Report - Jenny reported that her principal activity as coordinator was to schedule, advertise and recruit leaders for the numerous field trips sponsored over the past year. All trips reporting back had reasonable turn outs.
- Event Coordinator's Report - Four events took place over the year and were well attended, especially the Big Bird Year slide show.
- Newsletter Editor's Report – The editor is continuously accepting material for upcoming editions of The Warbler and club members are encouraged to submit photos, interesting stories, etc.
- Sightings Coordinator's Report - Cameron thanked everyone who submitted sightings over the past year and mentioned that while not all sightings get printed in various hard reports, all sightings are forwarded to the Canadian Wildlife Service for inclusion in their databases. Four seasonal sightings reports for 2008 were published in the Club's newsletter as well as the journal 'North American Birds'. Unusual or rare sightings are reported to the Club's membership by email which affords people the opportunity to observe the bird themselves.
- Special Projects Coordinator's Report - Pam reports on the BC Breeding Bird Atlas project for which she is an area coordinator. This is a 5-year imitative, beginning in 2008, to increase the documentation of breeding birds in BC. Pam encourages anyone traveling to BC during the bird breeding season to participate in the project.
- Executive Board Member Changes – The board would like to thank Lee Kubica and Nancy Hughes for their past contributors. New board members include; Wendy Boothroyd (Birdathon Coordinator), Judy Klein (Director) and Ted Muphy-Kelly (Director).

Awarding of "The Raven" – The Raven is a new award to be given by the Yukon Bird Club on a yearly basis to an individual who makes substantial contributions to the knowledge of birds and raising bird conservation in the Yukon. This year's recipient was chosen to be Malcolm Boothroyd based on his amazing Big Bird Year project.



Malcolm Boothroyd – 2009 Recipient of The Raven Award

YUKON BIRD CLUB UPCOMING EVENTS

Yukon Birdathon

Block off May 29 and 30th on your calendars! These are the dates for this year's Birdathon. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE AN EXPERT BIRDER TO TAKE PART – so please encourage your friends to join in. Bird Club members who do not usually participate in the Birdathon –maybe this is the time to start! Yukon Bird Club is raising money for the Bird Observatories this year. These observatories gather data about migrating birds that helps with bird conservation. Visitors are welcome to get a close look at birds as they are banded. If that is not enough reason to be involved, Yukon Conservation Society has challenged the Bird Club. The club/society which raises more money wins a prize.

The Birdathon is a fun event for everyone who loves birds, enjoys springtime outings and/or wants to help raise money. Some people try to see as many birds as possible during the 24 hours; others just spend a couple of hours on a walk, or looking at the birds that visit their yard. Some birders can identify every species in all plumages – others can barely distinguish a raven from a magpie. Or an Alder Flycatcher from a Least Flycatcher. It doesn't matter. The fundraising part of the birdathon is easy. Simply pick up a sponsorship form at YCS (3rd and Hawkins) – hopefully we'll have them ready by April 15th. Then ask your friends to sponsor you – the money will be shared by YCS and the Yukon Bird Club. If you don't like asking others to sponsor you, make a donation! We hope that this year's birdathon will raise significant funds for local conservation projects.



Wilson's Warbler – Macintyre Creek, Photo – Cameron Eckert

The birdathon is a 24-hour event beginning at 5 pm on Friday, May 29th and ending at 5 pm on Saturday the 30th. We'll wind down with a barbeque at Robert Service Campground.

Once again this year, we are encouraging participants to limit their use of fossil fuels during the birdathon. Walk, cycle, paddle, use public transport or car-pool. We will offer prizes for various categories – these will be announced closer to the event. Short bird identification walks will be offered before the birdathon and on the Saturday of the birdathon itself. For more information, contact Wendy Boothroyd at 668-7370.

2008 BIRDATHON SUMMARY

The 2008 Yukon Birdathon was held on May 30 -31st. This year we were pleased to have Jim Hawkings as the Feature Birder. To help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Yukon Conservation Society, Jim kindly wrote a history of the birdathon in the Yukon (see following page). We were pleased to have quite nice weather (not quite as warm as the Madsen/Boothroyd's enjoyed) for the event and the post-event BBQ at Robert Service campground. About a dozen souls exchanged tales and enjoyed barbequeables. Thanks to the Hawkings family for the generous use of their BBQ.

This year we tried a new approach regarding distributing the Birdathon information. YCS announced it in their summer newsletter with Jim's article (I'm not sure what the distribution date was), and the Bird Club executive decided to distribute the information electronically rather than paper copies going out in the mail. Perhaps the merits of these 2 methods could be discussed and a new action plan for the 2009 birdathon be developed.

Our esteemed treasurer reports that the 2008 Birdathon raised over \$400.



HISTORY OF THE YUKON BIRDATHON

Submitted by Jim Hawkings

The idea of the Yukon Birdathon is quite simple: Use the appeal of bird watching to raise funds for environmental education. Participants try to identify as many bird species as possible in a 24-hour period anywhere in the Yukon. Sponsors pledge a certain amount of money per species sighted.

The birdathon idea came first came to me (I think...) from the Jim Baillie Birdathon in Ontario which was established in 1976. I may have (we are talking way back in the fog of memory now...) participated in this inaugural event as I was just finishing up an undergraduate degree at the University of Western Ontario. I moved to Fairbanks, Alaska in the fall of 1977, and along with a bunch of other local bird enthusiasts, started up the Arctic Audubon Society Birdathon there. When I moved to Whitehorse in November 1983 I brought this idea with me...but it took a few years for it to bear fruit here. The first Yukon Birdathon was held in 1985. According to a pledge sheet I dredged out of my file, it was actually held on June 8/9, though I think every year since then it has been held on the last weekend of May. This time of year is late enough in the spring that almost all birds have returned from the south, but early enough that a good number of migrants breeding further north can (often...) still be found.

The first full set of results I have is from 1986, when there were 16 participants who raised over \$2,000. Helmut Grünberg was the champion birder with 80 species, while Don Russell raised \$516. This year's event was the 24th Yukon Birdathon....assuming no years were missed along the way. The Birdathon has had ups and downs over the years, but the involvement the Yukon Bird Club beginning in 1995 has lent a certain stability to the event, along with better promotional materials, and an annual "Feature Birder". Funds from the birdathon have helped finance a number environmental education projects, including bird checklists and information pamphlets which make the Yukon a very user-friendly place for resident and visiting birdwatchers.



Yellow Warbler – Marsh Lake, Photo – Cameron Eckert

A number of people have been crucial to the success of the Birdathon during the past 23 years. I could not possibly name them all, but here are some of the ones that come to mind: Wendy Nixon, Don Russell, Nancy Hughes, Marg Baltimore, Helmut Grünberg, Mary Whitley, Cameron Eckert, Pam Sinclair, Boris Dobrowolsky, Sheila Serup, Linda Cameron, Val Loewen, Phillip Merchant, Ken Madsen, Wendy Boothroyd, Malkolm Boothroyd, Jeannette McCrie, Lee Kubica, Greg Kubica, René Carlson. The heavy-hitter in terms of number of birds sighted and money raised over the years is likely Helmut Grünberg – a very familiar name in the Yukon birding community.

I believe the greatest number of birds sighted by an individual in the Birdathon is just over 100 species. For that type of performance, everything has to be just right: lots of lingering migrants, good weather, AND you have to cover quite a bit of ground. The Yukon Birdathon has attracted and influenced many enthusiastic young birdwatchers over the years, and some of these have gone on to be lifelong birdwatchers. The most recent and famous example of course is Malkolm Boothroyd, who is nearing the end of his enviro-birding big year. In the last ten years or so, there has been an increasing awareness of the fossil fuels burned up during 24-hour birdathons. Enviro-birding has been increasingly emphasized, with more and more participants discovering the joys of seeing fewer birds but doing so in a more sustainable manner by car-pooling, biking, or walking. We have moved the post-birdathon get-together from Wolf Creek to Robert Service Campground to make it easier for most people to attend.



Yukon Bird Club Field Trip Schedule - Spring, Summer & Fall 2009

Dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear, and bring binoculars if you have them. Non-members, visiting birders and beginners welcome! For more information, contact Jenny Trapnell tel. 668-3918

Saturday 18 April - Sunday April 26: Celebration of Swans at Swan Haven Interpretation Centre. Biologist Interpreter on staff. For information, contact Wildlife Viewing (667-8291) or environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca/wildlifebiodiversity/CelebrationofSwans.php

Monday 20 April: Whitehorse Public Library. Attention all birders and fledgling birders. Join this free Yukon Bird Club workshop and brush up your skills at identifying birds – from a bird bander’s perspective! Join Ted Murphy-Kelly and Ben Schonewille at 7 p.m. (2 hours)

Wednesday 22 April: North Alaska Highway Shrike & Bluebird tour with Boris Dobrowolsky. Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 6:30 pm. (~3 hours)

Friday 1 May: Carcross: Dusky Grouse hike at Nares Mountain with Dan Kemble. Meet at Montana Services in Carcross at 6:30 p.m. Some hiking involved. Please bring sturdy footwear. For info, phone Dan at 821-3461. (~3 hours)

Sunday 3 May: Carcross: Take the Tagish Birding Tour, led this year by Clive Osborne. Bring lunch and meet at the SS Klondike at 9:00 a.m. We will meet Carcross birders at 10:00 a.m. at Montana Services for two hours of birding. Then we will meet Tagish birders at 12:30 p.m. at the rest stop west of the Tagish bridge and enjoy one of the southern Yukon’s best birding areas. Time permitting, we will also check-out other areas en route (5-6 hours).



Semipalmated Plover – Tagish, Photo – Cameron Eckert

Thursday 7 May: Join Cameron Eckert in scoping out the ducks and shorebirds in the **Quartz Road Wetland**. Meet at Boston Pizza parking lot at 5:30 pm. (~1 hour).

Friday-Sunday, 8-10 May: Faro: Sandhill Crane and Fannin Sheep Viewing Week-end. For more information, contact the Faro Town Office, 994-2728.

Saturday 9 May: International Migratory Bird Day - Spring Migration Count. Participate in this annual “spring round-up” contact yukonbirdclub@gmail.com.

NEW! Tuesday 12 May: Take a **beginner’s bird identification walk** with Wendy Boothroyd and Ken Madsen, tel. 668-7370. Meet at 6:30 p.m. at the SS Klondike. (1-2 hours)

NEW! Thursday 14 May: Take a tour of **Horse Creek and Shallow Bay** (Lake Laberge) with Ben Schonewille, tel. 334-2683. Meet at Porter Creek Super A at 5:30 p.m. (~ 3 hours)

NEW! Tuesday 19 May: Explore the **Fish Lake Road** with Ione Christensen. Meet downtown at 6:00 p.m. the SS Klondike, or at Porter Creek Super A at 6:20 p.m. (~2 hours)

Thursday 21 May: Meander for birds along the **Millennium Trail** with new trip leader Malkolm Boothroyd, tel. 668-7370. Meet at the Fish Ladder near the dam, 6:30 p.m. (~2 hours)



Saturday 23 May: Mayo: Introduction to Bird Songs with Mark O'Donoghue. Meet at the Campground at 5-Mile Lake near Mayo at 8:30 am. (~3 hours). For more info, call 996-2529.

Saturday 23 May: Watson Lake: Bird banding at the Albert Creek bird observatory, Upper Liard with Ted Murphy-Kelly. Meet at the Upper Liard Lodge at 8 a.m. (~3-4 hours or until the station closes for the day). Please phone Ted tel. 867-456-7431 or 250-218-1169 before you set out, as the trip is weather-dependent.

Sunday 24 May: Start your morning with a song! **McIntyre Creek bird songs and calls trip** with Pam Sinclair. Meet at Porter Creek Super A at 7:30 a.m. (~3-4 hours)

Wednesday 27 May: Judas Creek. Check out this migratory hot spot with Jim Hawkings. Meet at the SS Klondike at 5:30 p.m. (~3 hours).

NEW! Wednesday 27 May: Haines Junction: Dezadeash River Trail Trip with Sarah Davidson. Meet at the Dezadeash River Trailhead at the Kluane RV Park at 7:00 p.m. (~ 2 hours)

Thursday 28 May: Hike around **Hidden Lake (Riverdale)** with Ione Christensen. Meet at 6:30 p.m. at the Fish Ladder in Riverdale. (~ 2 hours)

Friday 29 May at 5 p.m. to Saturday 30 May at 5 p.m.: ANNUAL YUKON BIRDATHON. Have fun finding birds while raising funds for bird conservation and education. Participate in the Birdathon or join us for the Birdathon BBQ on Saturday, 6:00 p.m. at Robert Service Campground. For more info from Birdathon Coordinator Wendy Boothroyd (668-7370).

NEW! Sunday 31 May: Dawson: Dome Road area. Help Julie Frisch and Maria Ledergerber spot who's back in town. Meet them at 10 a.m. at the bottom of the Dome Road (7th & King Street). Bring your field glasses and a bag lunch or snack. You'll walk up the road and on some of the trails looking and listening for spring arrivals (3 hours). Please leave your dogs at home. For more info, please phone Maria at 993-5509 or email friendsofdempster@gmail.com.

Tuesday 2 June: Participate in an amazing trip to **Paddy's Pond in Hillcrest**, with Mary Whitley. Meet outside the Skyway hotel opposite the airport at 6:00 p.m. (~2 hours)

Friday-Sunday 5-7 June: Dempster Highway: Weekend on the Wing: Northern Birding Festival at Tombstone Territorial Park. A fantastic opportunity to learn about and view Dempster specialties. For more information e-mail friendsofdempster@gmail.com

NEW! Wednesday 10 June: Come explore the duck ponds near **Takhini/Yukon College** with bird biologist Katie Aitken. Meet at the Yukon Arts Centre parking lot at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Katie at 335-0573 or kaitken@interchange.ubc.ca. (~2 hours)

NEW! Saturday 13 June: Explore a special wetland fen near **Copper Ridge** to look for birds and dragonflies. Meet at the Canada Games Centre on Saturday at noon. Bring high rubber boots – prepare to get your feet wet. *Involves a safe but steep ascent/descent down a rolling, grassy slope.* For info, contact Syd Cannings 393-7979 days. (~ 4 hours)

Fall Trips

Sunday 13 September: See over a thousand waterfowl and a few shorebirds at the **Whitehorse Sewage Lagoons** with Helmut Grünberg. Meet at the SS Klondike at 9:30 a.m. (~3-4 hours)

Sunday 27 September: Explore **Lake Laberge** with our mystery trip leader. Meet at the Porter Creek Super A parking lot at 9:30 am. (~5 hours)



Yukon Bird Observatories

As of 2009, the Teslin Lake and Albert Creek Bird Observatories are now projects of the Yukon Bird Club. This will allow the observatories to potentially access new funding sources under the hospice of the club. This arrangement will also allow businesses and members of the public to make financial donations to the observatories and receive charitable tax receipts.

Budget cutbacks are an ongoing challenge for the observatories, and this is likely going to cause a reduced scale of operation during 2009. Albert Creek (near Watson Lake, YT) will be in operation from approximately May 10th to early June and may be open during the fall season from late July to mid September. Teslin Lake (near Teslin, YT) will not be open during the spring season in 2009. Rather than operate at a reduced capacity during the spring and fall migration seasons, all effort (and financial resources) will be put towards the fall season which will cover the period of late July to mid September. If interested in visiting or volunteering at either observatory, please contact the following individuals (email preferred);

Albert Creek – Ted Murphy-Kelly (email: plus@northwestel.net phone: (867) 456-7431

Teslin Lake – Ben Schonewille (email: teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com phone: (867) 334-2683

Although Teslin Lake will not be in operation during the spring of 2009, plans are in the works to establish a demonstration banding site somewhere in the immediate area of Whitehorse. If interested, look for an email notification to this effect sometime in late April or early May or contact Ben at the above contact information.



Yellow-rumped Warbler – Albert Creek, Photo – Jukka Jantunen



Orange-crowned Warbler – Albert Creek, Photo – Jukka Jantunen



NEW TITLES AT THE WHITEHORSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Yukon Bird Club has purchased the following titles on behalf of the Whitehorse Public Library for both field and arm chair birders.

1. **The Ferocious Summer** by Meredith Hooper (2008)
This is the author's firsthand account of the effects of climate change on Antarctica while living and working with scientists observing the summer population of Adélie penguins nesting at Palmer Station.
2. **The Life of the Skies: Birding at the End of Nature** by Jonathan Rosen (2008)
Today, forty-six million Americans are bird-watchers. Jonathon Rosen sets out on a quest to discover the historical, literary, spiritual and scientific role of birds in a culture that is torn between a desire both to conquer and to conserve.
3. **Birding Essentials**, National Geographic (2007) by Jonathan Alderfer and Jon L. Dunn
This well-illustrated, comprehensive guide is very user-friendly and contains practical information to assist birders in building field-craft skills, which aids with the challenges of identification and species variation.
4. **Return of the Condor** by John Moir (2006)
This is an exciting and authoritative account which chronicles the difficult and politically fraught effort to bring the California Condor back from extinction.
5. **Fifty Places to Go Birding Before You Die** by Chris Santella (2007)
From the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Gambell on St. Lawrence Island in Alaska to The Highlands of Guatemala, Lake Erie, Spain and Venezuela, the author has collected recommendations about each specific area from a variety of birders, nature photographers and trip leaders. Information is included on getting there, guides/accommodation and the best time to visit.
6. **The Owl and the Woodpecker** by Paul Banrick (2008)
The author-photographer has created a beautifully illustrated and informative work on all 41 North American species of these two birds as they feed, mate and nest. It reveals the remarkable relationship between them and their impact on our natural habitat.
7. **Owls of North America** by Frances Backhouse (2008)
Great photographs and engaging text examines facts about these fascinating birds, including anatomy and adaptations, mating behaviors, egg laying, chick rearing, feeding habits, communication and more. Detailed range maps are also included.
8. **Birds of British Columbia**, Volume Four
This is a companion to Volumes One, Two and Three, which are also in the Public Library's collection. It is on order but has not arrived at the time of the newsletter's publication. Watch for it this spring.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

A total of nine Christmas Bird Counts were completed during the 2008/2009 count period including two new counts; Kluane Lake and Johnson's Crossing. A total of 4,374 birds of 36 species/forms were counted (including count week species). See the following table for a breakdown of birds observed during all 2008/2009 Yukon Christmas Bird Counts.

Species	Whitehorse	Haines Junction	Carcross	Teslin	Watson Lake	Mayo	Marsh Lake - Yukon River	Kluane Lake	Johnson's Crossing
Trumpeter Swan									cw
Mallard	25		1						
Common Goldeneye	5						cw		
goldeneye sp.									1
Common Merganser	3								
Ruffed Grouse		cw		1		3			
Spruce Grouse	3	2		3				2	
Willow Ptarmigan								9	
Northern Goshawk		2				2			
Bald Eagle	9								
Rock Pigeon	39								
Great Horned Owl		cw							
Northern Hawk Owl	1	1		1					
owl sp.			1						
Downy Woodpecker	4	3	5	cw	cw	3	2		
Hairy Woodpecker	6	7	22	cw	3	3	3		
American Three-toed Woodpecker		2	2	1			1	1	
Black-backed Woodpecker					cw				
Gray Jay	6	15	5	cw	13	6	8	4	
Black-billed Magpie	129	47	22	7	3		12		
Common Raven	1934	201	55	124	30	115	14	2	6
Black-capped Chickadee	74	71	67	9	35	15	16	1	2
Boreal Chickadee	96	32	6	6	6	3	17	12	4
Mountain Chickadee			6						
Red-breasted	2	15							
American Dipper	3	1	1						
Bohemian Waxwing	174				cw		12		
American Tree								1	
Dark-eyed Junco	2	3	6			cw	1		
Snow Bunting		cw							
Pine Grosbeak	115	229	111	62	43	5	63	2	10
Red Crossbill	38								
White-winged		cw							
Common Redpoll		13		4					
redpoll sp.		1			25				
House Sparrow	14								
Total Individuals	2635	644	310	218	160	155	149	34	22
Total Species	21	21	14	13	12	10	11	6	6



Whitehorse (submitted by Cameron Eckert)

The 2008 Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count was held on 26 December 2008. Forty people (more or less) participated, one more than the previous record of 39 in 2005. The weather was overcast, and snowing, with temperatures ranging between -13 and -18. The wind was rather fickle, blowing rather strongly from the south in the morning, and switching around to the north in the afternoon. Fortunately (but unbeknownst at the time), this turned out to be one of the warmest days we experienced during the three week window in which the count must be done! All told, 2,705 birds of 22 species were counted. The number of species is fourth lowest in the past 10 years (which have ranged from 18 to 28). The sizable army of observers no doubt helped achieve the third highest number of birds ever counted, and set new count records for some of our common winter residents: Common



Boreal Chickadee – Photo Jukka Jantunen

Raven (1,934), Black-capped Chickadee (74), and Boreal Chickadee (96). The 25 Mallards shivering at Icy Waters were just shy of the record 29 seen in 1999, and Black-billed Magpies were also the second highest ever at 129. Other highlights of the day (aside from the wonderful fresh snow) included a northern hawk owl in the Mountainview Drive area, two Red-breasted Nuthatches near Schwatka Lake, a pair of Dark-eyed Juncos toughing it out in Hillcrest, and 14 House Sparrows downtown. (Where else would house sparrows create such excitement?)

Rock pigeons continued to hold their own in modest numbers after their near extinction four or five years ago. Bald eagles continue to increase, almost doubling the previous high of five set last year – perhaps not surprising when you consider that eagles were a common sight along the river downtown this fall until the really cold weather hit in mid-December. Notable in their absence were Mountain Chickadees, Three-toed Woodpeckers, White-winged Crossbills, and Ruffed Grouse. Redpolls were also fairly scarce and seen by only two parties. A lone American Robin which had been frequenting the river near Robert Service Campground was nowhere to be found on count day -- likely retired to the great lawn in the sky during the cold snap. There were a good slug of bohemian waxwings around, but numbers definitely seemed to be down from the hordes that descended on the city a week or two earlier -- most of the mountain ash trees were already stripped clean by Boxing Day. The après-count event was an appetizer/desert affair held at the Hawkings household in Pineridge. About twenty people attended, not a bad turnout considering the weather – and general fatigue from the combined demands of birding and Boxing Day sales.

Marsh Lake – Yukon River (submitted by count compiler Clive Osborne)

It was great to see nine hardy souls brave the minus 36°C weather to count birds at Marsh Lake this past winter solstice (Dec. 21). It was a beautiful sunny day with virtually no wind but we had considerable fog above long distances of open water on the Yukon River. Parties made counts lasting from 2 – 4.5 hours and everyone had participated in this count in previous years. There were 3 two-person parties and 2 one-person parties traveling traditional routes / areas around the various subdivisions located around Marsh Lake and up the McClintock River valley. A total of 11 species was observed on count day with nothing really exciting. It was nice to see Bohemian Waxwings again this year and a lone Dark-eyed Junco. Participants were generally aware of the absence of redpolls and crossbills this year. Two Common Goldeneye were observed on the Yukon River downstream of the Yukon Energy control structure near the Alaska Highway crossing during count week but the open water area was reduced substantially due to the cold weather.



Carcross (submitted by count compiler Dan Kemble)

Despite a bitter -30°C all day, five parties ventured out and experienced fairly successful winter birding. The morning feeder watching produced the usual species, although no redpolls were seen all day. We gathered at “The Hanger”, a wonderful aviary in the shoreline willows. While toasting to our prospects and our determination, another new species for the day, a Downy Woodpecker came into view, in mid-toast! For Nancy, Rick and myself the high point of our day was finding and photographing a Mallard and an American Dipper using the same pool of water on Choutla Creek. The lone male duck was a first for our CBC circle. For some of the participants, a new adventure, getting the vehicle un-stuck, was added to the never ending list of challenges of winter birding.

In the evening we thawed out at the Luet’s place and over snacks, drinks and good cheer we recounted and checked our day’s efforts and results. Much debate occurred over the identification of an owl seen by Jim and Noreen, however; without any further documentation it was not possible to arrive at a possible identification. Although no records were broken, we were delighted with our count total of 290 individuals of 13 species (plus one unidentified species). We were also very pleased that our parties were able to maximize travel by foot and minimize the amount of driving. The CBC has become one of our favourite Christmas rituals for myself and Nancy as it provides a much needed break from the usual holiday hysterics. As compiler, I would like to thank out team of stalwarts – The Hanger Crew of Ed & Dot, Jim & Noreen (from Crag Lake), Good Ol’ Rick H., our good friend Dan P. and my partner in birding (and everything else), Nancy. Also, thank you to Joel and Trish Luet who hosted this year’s post count soiree which is always risky business. We also appreciate the efforts of Dick Cannings, Bird Studies Canada and the Yukon Bird Club for sponsoring our event.

Kluane Lake / Haines Junction (submitted by Sarah Davidson)

This year, the Kluane area had two counts; one circle was centered at Christmas Creek near Kluane Lake and another in the Haines Junction area based around the "muffin" as its epicentre. On both days, the bird counters endured -30°C temperatures! What dedication! Many usual species were encountered and some unusual as well. One American Tree Sparrow, whose relatives have long since migrated to Southern Canada and the U.S., was counted at a feeder at Silver City. What a tough little bird!

Fifteen Red-breasted Nuthatches and two Goshawks were seen and or heard in the Haines Junction area. These are considered high counts for both these species. Common Redpolls, seen in high numbers in some years, were notably scarce this year. Other birds that were counted during the count week (3 days prior and post count day) were Great Horned Owl, White-winged Crossbill, Snow Bunting and Ruffed Grouse.

Mayo (submitted by count compiler Mark O’Donoghue)

The Mayo Christmas Bird Count was done on December 29th, as it's been done each year for the past 10 years It was a fairly cold day (temperatures ranging from -39 C to -37 C), but it was calm and partly cloudy, so all in all it was a beautiful winter day to be outside. We did cancel our scheduled skidoo trip up Janet Mountain to look for ptarmigan though because of the cold. We had one field party and four feeder watchers this year—our numbers were diminished by two regular participants moving away and a couple of deaths during the past year. All four of our feeder watchers noted that we managed to pick the quietest day at the feeders all week, so the birds apparently knew we were counting them. We saw a total of 9 species. The highlight of the count was the observation of two Northern Goshawks, only the second time we've seen goshawks on our CBC. We had a lone junco coming to our feeder each day until December 26th, so it slipped into count week, but it didn't make count day. One very notable no-show was redpolls. Unlike in the southern Yukon, redpolls are usually just as abundant at feeders early in the winter as they are in late winter here, and they're usually our most common CBC bird after ravens. Redpolls just are not around here this winter though.



OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Sightings Report – Summer 2008

Compiled by Cameron D. Eckert

Please report your observations to the Yukon Bird Club via the sightings coordinator, Cameron Eckert phone: 667-4630; email: cdeckert@northwestel.net. Include important details such as date, location, number, and observer(s). Please provide as much detail as possible for breeding records, and descriptions of rare sightings. Abbreviations indicating supporting documentation are used in this report for photo (ph) and written description (wd). All observations will be forwarded to the Canadian Wildlife Service for inclusion in the comprehensive Birds of the Yukon Database.

Extreme and unpredictable weather continues to dominate conditions in the North. Southern Yukon experienced the coldest and wettest summer on record complete with early-June snow storms, whereas the Beaufort Coast had a sizzling hot early summer with a rapid retreat of sea ice. Once again we very much appreciate the contribution to the summer season report made by visitors to the North and researchers in remote locations who took the time to organize and submit their observations.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A record-high count of 350 Gadwall was recorded at the Whitehorse sewage ponds, s. Yukon 30 Jul (CE). A Hooded Merganser, rare in the Yukon, was reported from Coot L., s. of Pelly Crossing 4 Jul (GD). Double-crested Cormorants were reported well nw. of their normal range with one at Five Mile L., near Mayo, cen. Yukon 14-15 Jun (MoO, LH, ph. MOD), and another 400 km due n. at Midway L., along the Dempster Hwy, NWT 14 Jun (DB). An ad. Ruddy Turnstone, a very rare migrant in s. Yukon, was at the Whitehorse sewage ponds 28 Jul (ph. BD, HG). An ad. Surfbird apparently a late migrant and highly unusual anywhere other than their nesting grounds, was seen on the shore of Kluane L., sw. Yukon 6 Jun (GK, LK).



Surfbird – Kluane Lake, 2008-06-06
Photo – Greg Kubica

Tombstone Territorial Park in cen. Yukon is perhaps the best place in the world to see Surfbirds on their nesting grounds; reports this season included 2 at Goldensides Mt. 10 Jun (DB), a flock of 5 at Charcoal Mt. 14 Jun (ph. CE), and 2 at Surfbird Mt. 15 Jun (ph. CE). Two ad. Sanderlings

and a flock of 110 Red-necked Phalaropes kicked-off the fall shorebird migration at the Whitehorse sewage ponds, s. Yukon 19 Jul (CE, HG, CO).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

Rare summer gulls in s. Yukon included a Little Gull with 3 Sabine's Gulls reported from Kluane L. 5 Jun (KT), a 2-cy California Gull in Whitehorse 28 Jul (ph. CE), a 2-cy Glaucous-winged Gull at Little Atlin L. 3 Jul (ph. CE), and an ad. Sabine's Gull in Whitehorse 21 Jul (HG, JP). Highly unusual was an ad. Thayer's Gull at Pickhandle L., sw. Yukon 17 Jun (wd. HG). A flock of **9 Ivory Gulls** was a delightful fly-by at Herschel I., n. Yukon 7 Jun (AK, PM, MN). The same Whitehorse yard that hosted the Region's first Lesser Goldfinch in 2006 produced the Yukon's first and Canada's second **Oriental Turtle-Dove** 30 Jun (ph. HG); unfortunately, this Asiatic mega-rarity lingered only a minute before taking off never to be seen again. A **Eurasian Collared-Dove**, the Yukon's second, frequented a Teslin yard in early Jun (ph. BC). Five Snowy Owl nests found at Herschel I., n. Yukon in Jun were indicative of the abundant Brown Lemming population on the island this year (FD, SG). A Great Gray Owl was a nice find on a Parks interpretive walk along the Dezadeash R. trail, sw. Yukon 6 Jul (LF). An early Jun snowfall in the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon accounted for the record-low number of Dusky Flycatchers (just 1) recorded on the Mt. McIntyre BBS route 22 Jun (CE). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers are scattered and scarce across the nw. portion of their range; reports this year included 1 singing at Snafu L., s. Yukon 3-5 Jul (ph. CE), and another at Long L. in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 22 Jul (JP). A singing **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was reported from Rancheria Falls, se. Yukon 30 Jun (GD). An amazing concentration of about **2000** Bank Swallows was observed at the Whitehorse sewage ponds 19 Jul (CE, HG, CO). A small flock of about 3 Gray-headed Chickadees was reported from Sheep Cr.,



Yukon Warbler

Vuntut NP., n. Yukon 16 Jul (BB). Northern Wheatear observations from the Dempster Hwy., cen. Yukon included a pair at km 462 in the Richardson Mts. 14 Jun (DB), a male on Charcoal Ridge, in Tombstone Park 14 Jun (ph. CE), a pair at Surfbird Mountain in Tombstone Park 15 Jun (CE), and a fem. on Goldensides Mt. also in Tombstone 16 Jun (CE, PS). Cedar Waxwing is a rare breeder in s. Yukon; 4 were seen at L. Laberge 16 Jun (DB), and a nest found in Whitehorse 4 Jul held 5 nestlings 21 Jul (ph. AB, JP). Four Cedar Waxwings (1 ad., 3 juv.) reported from Faro 16 Jul (TJ, CJ) provided the first cen. Yukon record. Two Tennessee Warblers, at the n. edge of their range in cen. Yukon, were heard near km 140 along the Dempster Hwy. 2 Jul (TG).



Tennessee Warbler (male) – Albert Creek
Photo – Ben Schonewille

Herschel Island's first-ever warbler records were a long time coming and bird surveys on the island this year produced two; a male Yellow-rumped Warbler first seen 30 May was seen most days through mid-Jun (SG, ph. AK), and a fem. Yellow Warbler was there in early Jun (SG, ph. AK). An ad. male American Redstart, rare in sw. Yukon, was seen along the Dezadeash R. trail in Haines Junction 5 & 16 Jun (DB; MH); rarer still was an Ovenbird, about 500

km w. of its range, singing at the Dezadeash R. trail 5 Jun (DB). A singing White-throated Sparrow provided the first record for Herschel I., n. Yukon 12-17 Jun (SG, ph. AK). A White-throated Sparrow, w. of its normal range was singing at Snafu L., s. Yukon from late Jun through 11 Jul (PS; ph. CE; TG; RR).



White-throated Sparrow – Snafu Lake, 2008-07-05
Photo – Cameron Eckert

Efforts continue to learn more about Rusty Blackbird breeding habitat; in sw. Yukon a nest with 4 young was found at Lloyd Keith Ponds 29 Jun, and a pair of ads. with 3 flying young were seen the same day at the Jarvis R. (JB).

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Sightings Report – Fall 2008

Compiled by Cameron D. Eckert

The job of compiling observations from across the region comes with an inspired sense of awe for the remarkable nature of our native birds – not only for their diversity and beauty, but also for the enormous survival challenges they face in an often harsh and changing environment. Consider our migrating shorebirds which have only just begun a long journey that will take them many thousands of kilometres south to their wintering grounds. Then there are the inexplicable forces that drive unpredictable movements of birds such as the waves of Alder Flycatchers and irruptions of chickadees that were observed at the Teslin Lake and Albert Creek bird observatories in southern Yukon this year. Our birds need every possible advantage they can get in order to breed, migrate, return each year, and thrive. The responsibility is ours to make sure that happens by protecting important habitats, conserving wetlands, eradicating marine pollution, reducing our ecological footprint – especially plastics and greenhouse gasses – and by ensuring a safe environment for birds around our homes and communities.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

The season's high count of 2000 American Wigeon at the Whitehorse sewage ponds, s. Yukon was recorded 10 Sept (HG). A large flock of about 1000 Mallards was at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon 1 Oct (IC, HG). The waters around Herschel Island, n. Yukon are known for their importance to moulting and staging diving ducks; a count of 1000 Surf Scoters was recorded there 16 Aug (CE). An ad. male Black Scoter, casual in s. Yukon, was on Schwatka L. 25-26 Aug (ph. HG; CE); another ad. male Black Scoter was shot by duck hunters at Marsh L., s. Yukon 12 Sept (ph. MaP, MiP). Four Hooded Mergansers, rare in the Yukon, were at Chadburn L. 21 Sept (PS). Red-throated Loons were observed migrating s. on Teslin L., s. Yukon in good numbers with 32 on 4 Sept and 17 on 5 Sept (JJa); a count of 17 Red-throated Loons, also high for s. Yukon, was recorded at L. Laberge 12 Sept (HG). An Eared Grebe, casual in s. Yukon, was at Whitehorse 8 Aug (wd. HG, BSu).

Swainson's Hawk is a casual fall migrant in s. Yukon; visual migration watches at Teslin Lake Bird Observatory recorded 2 on 30 Aug, 1 on 2 Sept, and 1 on 24 Sept (JJa). Unusually low numbers of American Coots were present at the Whitehorse sewage ponds this fall; the high count was just 14 on 1 Sept (BD, HG). Highlights of an unusually weak shorebird migration in Whitehorse, s. Yukon this year were an ad. Ruddy Turnstone 11 & 22 Aug (HG), a Black Turnstone 22 Aug (ph. HG), and another Black Turnstone on the Yukon R. 26 Aug (wd. JeB, YL). Elsewhere in the Region coverage of fall shorebird migration is thin; noteworthy observations were 12 Sanderlings at Avadlek Spit, Herschel I., n. Yukon 16 Aug (ph. CE); single juv. Sanderlings at Teslin Lake, s. Yukon on 19 & 21 Aug, and 7 Sept (JJa); and 2 juv. Western Sandpipers Herschel I., n. Yukon 18 Aug (ph. CE).



Sanderling – Teslin Lake, 2008-08-19
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

Teslin Lake Bird Observatory, s. Yukon produced an interesting series of Parasitic Jaeger observations; the species was observed on 28 days from 7 Aug - 24 Sept with a high count of 8 on 6 Sept; all but two were light morph (JJa). A second-year California Gull, a rare fall s. Yukon migrant, was at Whitehorse 26 Aug (ph. CE). An ad. Glaucous-winged Gull present on Herschel I., n. Yukon for the fourth consecutive year was noted daily during 15-21 Aug (ph. CE). Sabine's Gull is a very rare interior fall migrant; observations from the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory, s. Yukon were a juv. 8 Aug, 2 (ad. & juv.) on 2 Sept, and an ad. 4 Sept (JJa). The Black Guillemot population on Herschel I., n. Yukon now numbers about 40 adults, similar to that recorded since 2006 but still well below counts of over 100 guillemots recorded in the mid-1980s; nest surveys this year recorded 17 nests with 25 chicks which was the highest in the past 4 years (CE, DA, LJM, EM). A family of Snowy Owls (2 ad. & 2 juv.) was seen daily at Pauline Cove, Herschel I., n. Yukon 15-21 Aug (ph. CE, MM, EN). Snowy Owls are rarely seen elsewhere in the Yukon in fall; one was reported from Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 29 Oct (LP; CO; DO), and another was at Mayo, cen. Yukon 29 Oct – 5 Nov (MOD). A Great Gray Owl, rare in the Yukon Southern Lakes region, was seen near Mendenhall 12 & 20 Nov (RS; SB). Short-eared Owl reports included 3 at Mayo



Yukon Warbler

21 Oct (BSc), one at the Takhini burn, s. Yukon 27 Oct (JuB), 6 along the Alaska Hwy. between Haines Junction and Whitehorse, s. Yukon 28 Oct (WR), one near Carcross, s. Yukon 1 Nov (RS), and one just s. of Steward Crossing, cen. Yukon 4 Nov (MOD). Alder Flycatchers outnumbered every other migrant at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory, s. Yukon this fall with an amazing total of **811** banded (JJa); the Observatory also netted 9 Yellow-bellied, 2 Least, 6 Hammond's, and 1 Dusky Flycatcher during 7 Aug to 24 Sept (JJa).



Dusky Flycatcher – Teslin Lake, 2008-09-13
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

A wave of Alder Flycatchers was also recorded at Albert Creek Bird Observatory, se. Yukon with **202** banded along with 11 Least, 7 Hammond's, and 2 Yellow-bellied during 24 Jul – 20 Sept (JJo). A Philadelphia Vireo was seen but not netted at the Albert Creek Bird Observatory, se. Yukon 3 Aug (JJo, AR). A Black-billed Magpie, very rare in se. Yukon, was seen at Albert Cr. 18 Sept (JJo); another at Mayo, cen. Yukon 6 Oct provided the first local record (MOD). An exceptional southbound movement of chickadees was recorded at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory, s. Yukon 7 Aug – 27 Sept during which banders netted 138 Boreals, 57 Black-capped, 16 Mountains, 1 **Chestnut-backed** (the Yukon's second) on 17 Sept, and a **hybrid Boreal x Mountain** chickadee on 25 Sept (ph. JJa).



Chestnut-backed Chickadee – Teslin Lake, 2008-09-17
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

Northern Wheatear is only casually reported in fall in the Yukon; one was seen at the headwaters of Skookum Cr., s. Yukon 27 Aug (GW, MW), and 4 could still be found in breeding habitat on Mt. Hare, cen. Yukon 27-29 Aug (LG, JH). Cedar Waxwing is a rare breeder in s. Yukon; a pair of ads. with 5 fledglings at Teslin L. observed as they departed the nest during 27 July – 1 Aug (ph. AS); two ads. and a recently-fledged juv. were still near their nest site in Whitehorse 6 Aug (HG). Seven Cedar Waxwings were noted at Albert Cr., se. Yukon 15 Sept (JJo).



Cedar Waxwing nest – Teslin (Cottage Lots), 2008-08-31
Photo – Adam Skrutkowski

A record-late Orange-crowned Warbler was clinging to life and facing an impending cold snap to -20C in Whitehorse, s. Yukon 30 Oct (ph. TMK). The Yukon's second well-documented **Nashville Warbler**, a hatch-year fem., was banded at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory 23 Sept (ph. JJa).



Nashville Warbler – Teslin Lake, 2008-09-23
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

Southern Yukon fall banding totals from Albert Creek Bird Observatory (JJo, TMK) located near Watson Lake, se. Yukon and Teslin Lake Bird Observatory (JJa, BSc) located about 200 km due w. provide a nice comparison of warbler migration across the western edge of the range for a number species as shown in the accompanying table.



Total number of warblers banded at Albert Creek and Teslin Lake Bird observatories, southern Yukon		
Species	ACBO	TLBO
Tennessee Warbler	28	-
Orange-crowned Warbler	87	101
Nashville Warbler	-	1
Yellow Warbler	93	486
Magnolia Warbler	38	1
Cape May Warbler	2	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler	106	50
Blackpoll Warbler	19	47
American Redstart	90	10
Northern Waterthrush	195	46
MacGillivray's Warbler	-	1
Common Yellowthroat	191	66
Wilson's Warbler	143	113



MacGillivray's Warbler – Teslin Lake, 2008-09-06
Photo – Jukka Jantunen

Rare sparrows seen in the Whitehorse area, s. Yukon were a Song Sparrow at Porter Creek 17-20 Sept (ph. CE, PS), and a juv. White-throated Sparrow at the Takhini

hotsprings 28 Sept (ph. CE). A streaming flock of about 300 migrant sparrows, mostly White-crowned, was noted at Porter Creek, Whitehorse, s. Yukon 29 Aug (PS). Lapland Longspur migration peaked at Herschel I., n. Yukon 16 Aug with a count of 500 (CE); Herschel's last Lapland Longspur of the season was seen 20 Sept (EH, AK).

An ad. male **Common Grackle**, the Yukon's fifth, in Whitehorse 9 Oct – 15 Nov was ultimately found freshly dead of cold and starvation (ph. CE; BD; HG; PS). Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch is rarely seen during fall migration in the Yukon; a flock of 9 were at a feeder 10 km n. of Mayo, cen. Yukon during the last week in Oct (*fide* MOD); two were seen at Destruction Bay, sw. Yukon 1-4 Nov (MF), an "interior race" bird visited a Faro feeder, cen. Yukon 17 Nov (ph. TJ), and one was at L. Laberge, s. Yukon 21 Nov (KO). The fledgling population of House Sparrows in Whitehorse, s. Yukon didn't exactly explode last summer; the highest count of the season, 22 on 3 Nov (CE), was quite similar to that recorded in 2007.

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Tombstone Birds

Tombstone Territorial Park on the Dempster Highway, north of Dawson City, is truly an excellent birding location. Opportunities abound to view unique bird species such as Surf-bird, Northern Wheatear, Smith's Longspur and many more typical boreal and tundra breeding bird species. The following series of photos submitted by Cameron Eckert illustrate some of the avian treasures from this area.



Rock Ptarmigan – Charcoal Mountain, 2008-06-14
Photo – Cameron Eckert



Horned Lark – Charcoal Mountain, 2008-06-14
Photo – Cameron Eckert



Harlequin Ducks – Tombstone, 2008-06-10
Photo – Cameron Eckert



Gray Jay – Tombstone, 2008-06-14
Photo – Cameron Eckert



American Golden Plover – Surf-bird Mountain, 2008-06-15
Photo – Cameron Eckert



American Golden Plover nest – Surf-bird Mountain, 2008-06-15
Photo – Cameron Eckert



YOUR PICTURES

This is your space. We want your photos !

Send them to the newsletter editor at yukon.bird.club.newsletter@gmail.com



Spotted Sandpiper – Yukon River, 2008-07-10
Photo – Murray Munn



Common Yellowthroat – Quartz Road Wetland, 2008-08-28
Photo – Murray Munn



Olive-sided Flycatcher – Quartz Road Wetland, 2008-08-28
Photo – Murray Munn



Blackpoll Warbler – Whitehorse, 2008-08-29
Photo – Clive Osborne



Rufous Hummingbird – Tustles Lake, 2008-09-14
Photo – Elfie Lanzin



Trumpeter Swans – Long Lake, 2008-10-10
Photo – Murray Munn





Mountain Chickadee – Tagish, 2008-03-10
Photo – Shyloh Van Delft



Mountain Chickadee – Tagish, 2008-03-10
Photo – Shyloh Van Delft



Red-breasted Nuthatch – Tagish, 2009-02-13
Photo – Shyloh Van Delft



Red-breasted Nuthatch – Tagish, 2009-02-13
Photo – Shyloh Van Delft



Common Redpoll – Tagish, 2009-03-10
Photo – Shyloh Van Delft



Gray Jay – Tagish, 2009-03-10
Photo – Shyloh Van Delft





Boreal Owl with prey – Canyon Creek, 2009-02-13
Photo – Robyn Rufiage-Holoway



Boreal Owl – Whitehorse (downtown), 2009-03-03
Photo – Cameron Eckert



Northern Goshawk with prey – Tustles Lake, winter 2008
Photo – Elfie Lanzin



The following photos were submitted by Julie Bauer and Terry Skjonsberg of Haines Junction, YT from their recent trip to Mexico. Please feel free to submit photos to the newsletter editor from your birding adventures, even if they are outside the Yukon!



Orange-breasted Bunting – Mexico, winter 2008
Photo – Julie Bauer



Pale-billed Woodpecker – Mexico, winter 2008
Photo – Julie Bauer



Green Jay – Mexico, winter 2008
Photo – Julie Bauer



Mountain Trogon – Mexico, winter 2008
Photo – Julie Bauer



Magnificent Frigatebird – Mexico, winter 2008
Photo – Julie Bauer



Military Macaw (caged) – Mexico, winter 2008
Photo – Julie Bauer



YUKON DOVES

For most Yukon birders, doves are not a family of birds which are typically associated with the territory. This is for good reason, however; as they truly are a rare sighting in the Yukon. As of the summer of 2008, three (wild) species have been recorded in the territory. Mourning Dove has been the most frequently encountered dove species to date. There are a number of scattered records from the southern Yukon including Tagish, Carcross, Haines Junction, Canyon Creek (near Aishihik) and Whitehorse. Local records from British Columbia also include individuals seen at Log Cabin on the south Klondike Highway and one at Como Lake (near Atlin). Most records include single birds, however; a record of two birds in Tagish during late May/early June of 2007 suggested possible breeding but a nest or breeding activity was not observed. Most records are from the late spring/ early summer; this species is currently considered 'rare' in the Yukon, as each year typically yields one or two confirmed records (usually photographed).



Mourning Dove - Tagish, 2007-06-xx
Photo – Charles Turner



Mourning Dove - Carcross, 2007-09-21
Photo – Laurie Lamm

During early June of 2008, a Eurasian Collared Dove frequented a yard in Teslin. Although not the first well documented record for Yukon, this individual further confirmed the presence of this species in the territory. The Yukon's first record of this species was a single individual in Haines Junction during June 2006. There is also a record of a caged African Collared Dove (a close relative of the Eurasian form) in Carcross during November 2007. First introduced to North America in the Bahamas during the 1970s, the species now has an established population in the southeast portion of the United States. This species appears to be colonizing the remainder of the continent at an alarming rate as individuals have been observed throughout North America. Never found far from human development, this species typically frequents urban, suburban and agricultural areas.



Eurasian Collared Dove - Teslin, 2008-06-01
Photo – Bonar Cooley



Eurasian Collared Dove – Haines Junction, 2006-06-17
Photo – Wolf Reidl



Even more impressive was an Oriental Turtle Dove seen (and photographed) by Yukon Bird Club President, Helmut Grunberg as described below.

On June 30, 2008, I was looking at the computer screen doing some work. The big window in front of me was to my left. All of a sudden something flew in. It caught my attention because it was bigger than a sparrow or finch. I looked up, and there was something big sitting on a branch above the bird feeders. What was that?

I looked and saw a dove. The only one I know in the Yukon is the Mourning Dove, but this one was different. The next reaction was to jump for my camera, and luckily it was ready. Within seconds I rushed to the window. The screen was down. So I quickly took two "insurance photos" through the spaces between the screen and through triple glass window panes. Then I carefully pulled the screen up to take more photos and the dove flew off, never to be seen again.

Then the hard part began, and luckily my first two photos turned out: I had seen and photographed an Oriental Turtle-Dove! This species has been seen in North America only seven times before, four times in Alaska, once in British Columbia and twice in California. The other problem was to decide whether this was the sighting of a wild Turtle-Dove or an escape. I have asked one person in southern Yukon, and he never had any Turtle-Doves. There is a lady in the Yukon who bought pigeon feed at a pet store, but that's as far as I got. I haven't found out who she is. So for now we can only say that I saw an Oriental Turtle-Dove, the first one for the Yukon.

The whole observation seemed pretty amazing. Just think about it: A dove flies into a yard in Whitehorse, and a birder sits by his computer, notices a movement, gets up, realizes the bird is special, dives for the camera (which happens to be ready), takes a couple of shots... and the bird is gone ... and the photos turn out half way decent. What a coincidence!



Oriental Turtle Dove – Whitehorse (downtown), 2008-06-30
Photo – Helmut Grunberg



INTERESTING SIGHTINGS & ACCOUNTS

On August 27, 2008, a Northern Wheatear was spotted by Mary Whitley near the headwaters of Skookum Creek (a tributary of the Wheaton River) in the south-central Yukon. Mary describes her account in the following narrative.

The bird was about robin sized and acted like a flycatcher, flying from a perch on a rock to the ground and back to a rock. This area was maaaaay above treeline. The bird's body was pale tan and it had black wings when perched, and seemed to have a dark line across the face through the eye and a bold black and white pattern on the tail. The black was in an inverted T shape. It flicked its tail and pumped it down and up after alighting.

Although Mary was unable to get a photo, her detailed description of her account allowed this record to be accepted. Northern Wheatears in the Yukon are a highly migratory species, however; they differ from the majority of migratory Yukon bird species. Whereas most migratory bird species in the Yukon migrate to the southern United States or central / south America for the winter months, Northern Wheatears from the Yukon, Alaska, NWT and even Greenland migrate across the Atlantic Ocean or Eurasia to wintering areas in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Yukon, this species is most often seen in appropriate breeding habitat (rocky mountainsides above treeline) along the Dempster Highway and there are only a small number of records from similar habitats in the southern portion of the territory. Breeding in the southern Yukon is possible, particularly in the southwest; however, there is a lack of observer coverage in suitable habitats during the breeding season.



Northern Wheatear – Charcoal Mountain (Tombstone Territorial Park), 2008-06-14
Photo – Cameron Eckert



YUKON BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATES

Teslin Lake Bird Observatory Fall 2008 Update

Written by Ben Schonerville

This fall, this Teslin Lake Bird Observatory (TLBO) completed its first fall season of full scale operation. Over the course of 48 days of operation (August 7 – September 27) a total of 2,319 individuals of 48 species and observed 126 species in total. The daily operation of TLBO involved mist netting / banding and also daily migration watches to collect migration data on a diversity of bird species.

Three species of loon (Common Loon, Red-throated Loon and Pacific Loon) were a relatively common sight at TLBO this fall. Many of the birds were observed feeding on the lake, however; a number were also observed in migration. Pacific Loon was most frequently observed with a high total of 40 individuals on September 17. Red-necked Grebe was a daily occurrence as well, with 65 individuals seen daily. Horned Grebes were also seen, albeit in much lower numbers than the more common red-necked.

Three species of geese were observed, including (in order of observation occurrences) Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose and Snow Goose. A wide variety of ducks were observed, most of which were seen in migration. In terms of total numbers, the most common species were Lesser Scaup, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Surf Scoter, Common Merganser, Mallard and American Green-winged Teal. Some notable observations included Canvasback (5 on 16 Sep, 8 on 19 Sep and 1 on 22 Sep) and **Harlequin Duck** (1 on 20 Sep).

Raptors were once again well represented at TLBO; a total of 12 species were encountered. The three most common raptor species observed included Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Northern Harrier. Two notable flights of raptors were observed; 192 individuals on 30 Aug and 265 individuals on 24 Sep. A total of 4 **Swainson's Hawks** were seen between 30 Aug and 24 Sep. American Kestrel, a species of special interest in the Yukon due to a possible conservation concern were seen frequently; 77 individuals on 14 days including a high count of 28 on 24 Sep. With respect to banding, the lone raptor banded was Sharp-shinned Hawk, of which 10 were banded.



Sharp-shinned Hawk – Photo Jukka Jantunen



Solitary Sandpiper - Photo Jukka Jantunen

TLBO is not situated in a highly suitable site for monitoring shorebird migration, however; a number of species were observed in small numbers. The most common species seen was the Spotted Sandpiper, followed by Semi-palmated Plover and Solitary Sandpiper (including 2 banded). The most notable shorebird observed was **Sanderling**, of which single individuals were observed on 3 days (19 Aug, 21 Aug and 7 Sep). Given the vast influence of Teslin Lake, the substantial numbers of gulls observed was to be expected. Early in the season, up to 100 Herring Gulls were observed milling about the nearby nesting colony. As the season progressed and the local breeders departed, smaller numbers were seen on a daily basis, many of which appeared to be migrating. Mew Gull was also a daily occurrence throughout much of the season, however; the numbers seen were typically less than 10. When first observed on 7 Aug, a lone **Parasitic Jaeger** was very exciting, but as the season progressed this species was seen regularly (28 days) and up to 8 individuals were seen on some days. Other notable gulls observed included **Sabine's Gull** (1 on 8 Aug, 2 on 2 Sep and 1 on 4 Sep), **Glaucous Gull** (1 on 27 Aug, 19 Sep) and **Thayer's Gull** (1 on 17 Sep, 20 Sep). Up until August 15th, up to 15 Arctic Terns were seen daily.



Yukon Warbler

Belted Kingfisher was a common sight with up to 4 individuals seen daily. A total of 8 were banded during the season, which is a relatively high number as this species is not typically captured in such numbers. Woodpeckers were not very frequent at the site this fall; the most common species was Northern Flicker with less than 5 individuals seen on 18 days. During mid September, small numbers of American Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers were seen. This suggests there may have been a southward migration of this species.

The number of species banded this fall was Alder Flycatcher with an astonishing 811 individuals banded. This species was ever present during much of August and early September with a high daily banding total of 87 on 19 Aug. A lone **Dusky Flycatcher** banded on 13 Sep was a notable capture as was a total of 9 **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** between 11 Aug and 22 Aug. Other flycatchers banded in low numbers included Western Wood-Pewee, Say's Phoebe, Hammond's Flycatcher and Least Flycatcher.



From left to right; **Dusky Flycatcher**, **Alder Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, **Say's Phoebe**, **Western Wood-Pewee**
Photos – Jukka Jantunen

Warbling Vireo was seen only during the early part of the season (latest date 18 Aug). A variety of swallow species were encountered, however; there were no notable movements or sightings. The chickadees were the all-stars of this fall season with all Yukon species captured. Chickadees are typically year round residents, but in some years they have been known to stage southward irruptions. This was the case in the Teslin region this fall with Boreal Chickadees leading in numbers. A total of 138 were banded including a high daily banding total of 18 on 11 Sep and 24 Sep. Black-capped Chickadee was second in line, with a total of 57 banded. Previously thought to be quite rare in the south-central Yukon, an astonishing 15 **Mountain Chickadees** were banded between 3 Sep and 26 Sep including a high daily banding total of 6 on 24 Sep. Even more “rare” was a **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** banded on 17 Sep. Typically a coastal species, there was one previous Yukon record of this species from a lone bird in Haines Junction. Perhaps the most interesting bird banded all season, was a **Hybrid Chickadee** which based on a variety of plumage characteristics, appeared to be an intergrade between a Boreal Chickadee and Mountain Chickadee. A similar individual was banded at TLBO during the spring of 2006 and aside from these two records, an extensive review of banding records and published literature has failed to locate a second of such a hybrid. Although not a chickadee, the closely related Red-breasted Nuthatch also appeared to be moving during the fall, although there were earlier in the season than the chickadees.



From left to right; **Boreal Chickadee**, **Black-capped Chickadee**, **Mountain Chickadee**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, **Hybrid Chickadee (Boreal x Mountain)** Photos – Jukka Jantunen



Yukon Warbler

Ruby-crowned Kinglets failed to show up in high numbers this fall; a modest 29 were banded. A variety of thrush species were both observed and banded, although the numbers were not exceptionally high. In terms of observations, there were some notable movements of American Robin (85 on 24 Sep) and Varied Thrush (49 on 5 Sep). In terms of mist net captures, the most common species was Swainson's Thrush with single Hermit and Gray-cheeked thrush also banded. A few Varied Thrush in the mist nets were also a welcome capture.

A trickle of American Pipits were observed later in the season (26 Aug onwards) and a single individual was also banded. Bohemian Waxwings were also on the move late in the season with a high count of 200 observed on 14 Sep. Typically constituting the majority of birds banded, the warblers lived up to expectations once again and accounted for 40% of all birds banded. The most common warblers banded included; Yellow Warbler (486), Wilson's Warbler (113), Orange-crowned Warbler (101), Common Yellowthroat (66), Yellow-rumped Warbler (49), Blackpoll Warbler (47) and Northern Waterthrush (46).



From left to right; **Yellow Warbler**, **Common Yellowthroat**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **Blackpoll Warbler**, **Northern Waterthrush** Photos – Jukka Jantunen

The number of Yellow Warblers was quite high and an individual banded on 27 Sept was a relatively late surprise. The high daily banding total for this species was 65 on 29 Aug. In the case of Yellow-rumped Warbler, the numbers banded were surprisingly low, however; it is possible that a number of birds passed following the closure of the observatory. The capture of 10 American Redstarts was notable as this species is typically an uncommon Yukon bird species (aside from the southeast). Other notable warblers included; 1 **MacGillvary's Warbler** banded on 6 Sep, 1 **Magnolia Warbler** banded on 19 Aug and 1 **Nashville Warbler** banded on 23 Sep. The capture of the Magnolia Warbler provided the second record for TLBO and the Nashville Warbler was a new species for TLBO and constituted the second confirmed record for the Yukon.



From left to right; **American Redstart**, **MacGillvary's Warbler**, **Magnolia Warbler**, **Nashville Warbler** Photos – Jukka Jantunen

Dark-eyed Junco was the most common sparrow species banded (193) and also observed. Similar to many of the other later migrating passerines, the sparrows failed to show up in notable numbers. Due to the relatively mild fall, it is very likely that substantial numbers of sparrows passed through the site following the closure of the station in late September. Although not in high numbers, a variety of sparrows were encountered including Savannah Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Fox Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow.





From left to right; **Dark-eyed Junco, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow**
Photos – Jukka Jantunen

Rusty Blackbird, a high priority species for TLBO was seen in modest numbers this fall. All 11 were banded with light blue colored leg bands in addition to the standard, numbered aluminum band. This species was observed on 33 days from 11 Aug to 27 Sep including a high daily observation total of 28 on 11 Sep. Given the number observed, the number captured was relatively low. This is likely due to the fact that “rusties” often escape from the mist nets prior to being extracted.

Modest numbers of finches were observed this fall, however; banding totals were restricted to 2 White-winged Crossbill and 1 Pine Siskin. Species observed but not banded included Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, Red Crossbill and Purple Finch. Nearly all of the finches encountered this fall were seen in migration.



From left to right; **White-winged Crossbill, Rusty Blackbird (hatch year female), Rusty Blackbird (hatch year male)**
Photos – Jukka Jantunen

In addition to the success of the observatory’s operation during the fall of 2008, there were a number of visitors and volunteers who visited the site this season. In total, approximately 175 visitor / volunteer hours were tabulated including a visit from the Experiential Science class from Wood Street School in Whitehorse.

Bander In Charge duties this fall were shared between Jukka Jantunen and Jillian Johnston. The skill of the banders/observers allowed for some extraordinary sightings this fall and their hard work is greatly appreciated. Jukka also provided a number of high quality photos, many of which are included in this article.



Albert Creek Bird Observatory Fall 2008 Update

Written by Ted Murphy-Kelly

Albert Creek Bird Observatory's fall 2008 season got under way on July 23rd after 4 days of preparing the site which involved a lot of weed whacking. The first few days saw many local breeders such as Alder Flycatcher, Tennessee Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart and Swamp Sparrows being banded. Work on the much-needed boardwalks commenced on the 25th thanks to help from John Phelan and Jeff Cowie who were very generous in volunteering their time to do this very dirty work. After four days of slogging through the marsh we made all net lanes accessible without the need of hip waders. Higher water levels in recent years have made access to the net lanes an ongoing challenge and there has been an increasing need for boardwalks.



Constructing board walks along net lanes



Male Common Yellowthroat

As is typical during the early portion of the fall season, we received many visitors from various parts of Canada. The close proximity to the Alaska Highway and an advertisement at the local visitor reception definitely help to advertise the observatory. Banding totals were very low until Aug 10th. There weren't any noticeable movements until Aug 12th when 70 birds were banded after a shift in the weather. A low-pressure system had moved in and gave us a bit of fallout of birds. Albert Creek also received a keen crew of Y2C2 students on this day. The team of 5 got fast to work on vegetation management, net mending, trail improvement, scribing and learning about Yukon birds.

After Julie Bauer and the Y2C2 crew left Jillian on the 14th, our Bander in Charge was left to go it alone again for a week. During this time migration was very slow without any noticeable movements of birds. The next large movement of birds was on Aug 21st when Gwen Baluss (a long time volunteer from Juneau, AK) arrived at the station. Gwen and another volunteer from Juneau banded 67 birds; 37 of which were Alder Flycatchers. On the 23rd the banding crew grew when Jukka and myself showed up for a few days to lend a helping hand. We did a couple of nights attempting to band owls during this time but were unsuccessful.



Alder Flycatcher



Orange-crowned Warbler



Yukon Warbler

By Aug. 30th our daily numbers were still rather low but species like Orange-crowned Warbler and Blackpoll Warbler were obviously on the move while our first American Tree Sparrow showed up spelling the beginning of the end. The first day of September marked the busiest day of the season with 83 individuals banded of 14 species. For the most part, September and the last part of the fall migration was very uneventful. There was some indication of a chickadee irruption occurring, as our observations on a few days were unusually high. It was not as pronounced as movements observed at Teslin Lake however. This is probably due to the very different characteristics of the study site. Some other highlights were the occurrence of Cedar Waxwings again this year (3 individuals banded). This species has only been recorded on two other years since 2001.

American Redstart was a species encountered in record numbers this fall; 90 were banded as compared to the 2003 – 2008 average of 51 banded. It was another good year for Magnolia Warbler (38 banded) tying last year's total and exceeded the 2003 – 2008 average of 31 banded. Cape May Warbler continues to gain a foothold on the area with an additional 2 banded this fall, bringing the all time banding total for the site to 13 individuals. The White-throated Sparrow was one species which showed a marked decrease in the number banded this fall (10 banded; 2003 – 2008 average of 21 banded). Blue-headed Vireo, another southeast Yukon specialty is normally in low numbers during the fall season; however, this species was not recorded during the 2008 fall season. We continue to color band Rusty Blackbirds this fall although we had a rather poor showing this fall with only 9 banded. The 2008 fall total was 1664 birds banded of 41 species and 89 species observed.



American Redstart



Cape May Warbler



White-throated Sparrow

This fall's operation would not have been possible without the dedication and assistance to all the volunteers and our Banders in Charge (Jillian Johnston).



Albert Creek Marsh during early September



Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Bird Identification Challenge

Time to test your bird identification skills ! A rationale for the identification will be provided in the next edition of *The Warbler* (see the following page for answers to the previous challenge). The goal is to provide a variety of difficulty levels. If you have suitable (difficult) photos for future challenges, please email the newsletter editor. Good Luck !



Quiz Bird #1 – Whitehorse (Hidden Lakes), 2008-08-??
Photo – Malcolm Boothroyd



Quiz Bird #2 – Whitehorse (Hidden Lakes), 2008-08-??
Photo – Malcolm Boothroyd



Quiz Bird #3 – Watson Lake, 2008-05-??
Photo – Jukka Jantunen



ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS BIRD ID CHALLENGE

Prepared by Malcolm Boothroyd and Ben Schonewille



Least Sandpiper (Whitehorse Sewage Lagoon, 2007-09-15, Photo Cameron Eckert)

Aspects of its structure; such as its long wings, short tail and longish bill show it to be a shorebird, specifically a sandpiper. Even though this photo clearly shows the bird's plumage detail, it's important to recognize the bird's structural clues. Structure is crucial for identifying shorebirds that are distant, or in bad light. The bird appears stocky and has a crouching posture. Various sandpiper species feed in a variety different niches, and the shapes of shorebird bills vary likewise. The bird in question has a fairly short, drooping bill. This bird appears to be shorter legged than, let's say a Pectoral Sandpiper; a closer examination of the leg's and their reflection shows the tarsus (below the joint) to be quite short. The bird's wingtips project the same distance as its tail. The tertials extend very far; you can't see the primaries projecting beyond the tertials. These clues rule out most shorebirds; the ones left to consider are: Western, Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. The bird's yellow legs clinch its identification; even if you're looking at the black and white printout you can tell that the bird's legs are pale. Semipalmated and Western both have black legs; the Least Sandpiper is the only small sandpiper with yellow legs.



Lapland Longspur (Herschel Island, 2007-08-07, Photo Cameron Eckert)

This bird has a stubby, conical bill. The only Yukon birds present on Herschel Island that have this characteristic are sparrows, finches and buntings. Hoary and Common Redpolls, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches and Snow Buntings can be ruled out by obvious plumage characteristics. This bird must be a sparrow. Only a few sparrow species can be found on Herschel Island. (Herschel is a magnet for out-of-range birds. Something unexpected could always show up, but we'll only consider regular species.) The bird's primary feathers protrude far beyond the tertials; this is unique to the longspurs. Plumage details can also rule out the other sparrows. This bird has whitish underparts with some markings on its breast and a few streaks down its flanks. This can rule out plain breasted sparrows such as American Tree, and heavily streaked sparrows like Savannah. This is a (female/juvenile) Lapland Longspur.



Northern Harrier (Teslin Lake, 2008-05-??, Photo Jukka Jantunen)

Judging by the overall shape of the bird, we can narrow down the identification to a bird of prey. The overall size and wingspan of the bird rules out eagles and buteos. The bird does not appear to be a falcon, as the wing tips are too broad. Accipiters (Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Goshawk) and Northern Harrier are regular Yukon species which are smaller raptors with a rounded wing shape. Upon close examination, we can see the bird has an owl like face which is a distinguishing characteristic for Northern Harrier. The checkered auxiliaries (the 'arm pit') and the strongly barred secondary flight measures confirm this identification.



Orange-crowned Warbler (Florida, fall 2008, Photo Malcolm Boothroyd)

Songbirds can be easily classified by their beak shape, but a leaf obscures this bird's bill. It is possible to narrow down the field in other ways, using the bird's structure and posture. The bird is sitting fairly horizontally on the branch, flycatchers tend to perch upright. In comparison with the leaves, the bird seems fairly small. It has a relatively short tail. These clues are consistent with vireos, kinglets, warblers, and some finches. This bird is very non-descript, it has no wing-bars, streaking or any bold patterning and no eyebrow. The bird is pretty uniformly toned; its back may be slightly darker than the rest, and its throat is slightly pale. Its wings are also uniformly toned, whereas many species have contrasting tertials and secondaries. The species left to consider are: Tennessee, Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warbler or Common Yellowthroat. This bird has an eye-ring that is broken behind the eye. Tennessee and Wilson's Warblers have no eye-ring and can be ruled out. The final two options are Orange-crowned Warbler and female /juvenile Common Yellowthroat. While male Yellowthroats are distinctive, the females and immature of this species are drab. The easiest way to differentiate between these species are by details of the eye-ring. Yellowthroats have



a weak eye-ring that is complete. The bird in our photo's eye-ring stands out, and is broken at the rear. This is consistent with the Orange-crowned Warbler. This was photographed in the Florida panhandle.



Blackpoll Warbler (California, fall 2008, Photo Malcolm Boothroyd)

This is another songbird. We can see a little of its bill, which is thin. This rules out all conical billed songbirds, such as sparrows and finches. The bird, like the Orange-crowned Warbler in the previous photo, has a horizontal posture. This alone cannot rule out flycatchers and other upright perching songbirds, but we should start by focusing on those other songbirds. This bird has distinctive patterning, with wing-bars, contrasting tertials, a streaked back and an eye-ring and very faint streaking on its flanks. The only two Yukon songbirds that this could be are Bay-breasted and Blackpoll Warblers. I apologize...this bird is pretty much impossible to identify in black and white. It isn't available in colour online either. This may have been more appropriate for an April Fools edition of the Warbler! This is an out of range Blackpoll Warbler in southern California.



Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (Teslin Lake, fall 2009 Photo Jukka Jantunen)

Based on the size and general appearance of this bird, we can decide that it is some sort of a songbird. The overall grayish green coloration, wide flat bill and presence of obvious wing bars suggest this bird is a flycatcher of the *Empidonax* genus. Perhaps the most diagnostic feature of this bird is the yellowish throat which suggests that this individual is a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. The very similar Alder Flycatcher has a mostly white throat.

The quiz bird also has a relatively large round head and a yellowish eye ring which is slightly shaped like a tear drop. These are all distinguishing characteristics of a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.



Pine Warbler (Florida, fall 2008, Photo Malcolm Boothroyd)

We may have to consider songbirds from beyond the Yukon border for this one... This bird is way too hard to ID from the black and white version; you'll have to look at the colour version online. This bird is short tailed with white under-tail coverts. It has a yellow underparts, the yellow extends close to its feet. The yellow does not extend further back in its flanks. Only warblers fit this description. This bird has an olive green back, and

a white wing bar/ patch. The warblers to consider are: Cape May, Magnolia, and Pine. Magnolia's tail tip looks like its dipped in ink, and can be ruled out. The bird in our photo has gray wings, whereas a Cape May Warbler would show olive in the wings. Cape May Warblers also have streaked flanks and back. This Pine Warbler was photographed in the Florida Panhandle.



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