

# Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

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Spring  
2012



## 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
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Contributing	\$50.00
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\* Family memberships cover two or  
more people living at one address.

\*\* Including all for whom finances  
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Canadian dollar or money order.

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YBC Web Site:

[www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc](http://www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc)

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Nordenskiöld wetlands, Selena Boothroyd

**Yukon Warbler — Spring 2012**

## Submissions and Comments Wanted

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

[YBCnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:YBCnewsletter@gmail.com)

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

Suggestions for content are always welcome.

### IMPORTANT:

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

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**Yukon**   
**Bird Club**

## YBC News & Events

### Yukon Bird Club AGM: Board of Directors

The YBC held its annual general meeting on February 29<sup>th</sup> at Yukon College. All Board members in attendance reported briefly on their activities. An election of the Board of Directors was held, and the following people were reelected to their positions: Jim Hawkings (Secretary and Birdathon Coordinator), Pam Sinclair (Special Projects Coordinator), Betty Sutton (Events Coordinator), Cameron Eckert

(Sightings Coordinator and Checklist Coordinator), Devon Yacura (Youth Coordinator), Al Cushing (General Director), and Keith Williams (General Director). New Board members include Tracy Allard as Field Trip Coordinator and Scott Williams as Newsletter Editor. Helmut Grünberg takes on a new role as Treasurer. The position of President is being filled temporarily by outgoing President Helmut Grünberg until a permanent replacement is elected.

Outgoing Board members are Ted Murphy-Kelly, Jenny Trapnell, and Ben Schonewille. Everyone on the current YBC Board thanks these three for their time, energy and commitment to YBC!



**Yukon Bird Club**  
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March 1, 2012

#### Yukon Bird Club's Raven Award 2012 – Karen Baltgailis and Christina Macdonald

Dear Karen and Christina,

It is my sincere pleasure to announce that you have been awarded Yukon Bird Club's 2012 *Raven Award* for outstanding contributions to the Yukon birding community and bird conservation.

The spirit of the *Raven* reflects the goals of the Yukon Bird Club which are to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Yukon birds and their habitats; to act as an advocate for bird conservation; and to encourage and involve youth in these pursuits.

This year the *Raven* is being awarded to recognize your dedicated contributions towards the protection of the McIntyre Creek wetlands and watershed. The McIntyre Creek area is well-known for its vital importance to birds, wildlife, and the health of the greater ecosystem. It is a place that is loved by countless community members, and especially birdwatchers. The protection of the McIntyre Creek watershed would be a profound gift both to the birds and wildlife that depend on the area, as well as the present and future citizens of Whitehorse.

Your work on behalf of the Yukon Conservation Society and Friends of McIntyre Creek to protect this remarkable area also supports the core values of the Yukon Bird Club as an organization and our membership at large. We very much appreciate the considerable energy and enthusiasm you have brought to this conservation effort.

We look forward to continued collaborations with the Yukon Conservation Society and Friends of McIntyre Creek on issues related to wildlife and habitat conservation. Once again, thank you very much Karen and Christina.

Sincerely,

*Helmut Grünberg*

Helmut Grünberg  
President, Yukon Bird Club

### 2012 Raven Award

Karen Baltgailis and Christina Macdonald are this year's recipients of the annual *Raven Award*, which is given in recognition of outstanding contributions to Yukon birding and bird conservation.

Both women continue to play key roles in the protection of the McIntyre Creek watershed. This area is a unique ecosystem in Whitehorse that provides habitat to numerous species of birds, fish, amphibians and mammals. Its loss to development would have a particularly heavy and irreversible impact, so all decisions in this regard must be well informed and made with utmost care. Its preservation would represent a commitment to the future for countless species, *Homo sapiens* among them.

Congratulations to Karen and Christina! Their award notification letter says the rest.

## Field Trips 2012

*Trips are free and open to beginners and non-members! Carpooling from meeting points is encouraged. Contact Tracy at 334-2882 or [ybcfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:ybcfieldtrips@gmail.com) for more information.*

**Sunday, 15 April, 11:00 AM (Johnson's Crossing): *Swan walk*** — Walk with Adam Skrutkowski along the banks of the Teslin River and see the hordes of returning swans and other waterfowl at Johnson's Crossing. Bring lunch, and on the drive home stop at Swan Haven for more swan viewing and forest bird banding (~1.5 hours).

**Sunday, 15 April, 3:30 PM (Swan Haven): *Swan Haven's forest birds and bird banding display*** — The Society of Yukon Bird Observatories will have a mist net set up from 1:00–4:00 PM; banding demonstration at 3:30 PM.

**Sunday, 22 April, 6:30 PM: *North Alaska Highway shrike and bluebird tour*** — Meet Boris Dobrowolsky at Porter Creek Super A on the Alaska Highway at 6:30 PM (~3 hours).

**NEW! Saturday, 28 April (Tagish): *Catch early migrants at California Beach*** with birding aficionado Shyloh Van Delft. Meet at S.S. Klondike at 2:30 PM or at the Tagish Bridge rest area at 3:45 PM (~1.5 hours).

**NEW! Tuesday, 1 May, 5:30 PM: *Explore the various ecosystems at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve*** with Chris Wilkinson. This is Chris' 4<sup>th</sup> year at YWP, and during this period he's seen a great array of birds. Highlighted will be water and shore birds, but expect some raptors, and with luck we may even glimpse an owl. The normal YWP entry fee will be substituted by an educational group fee of \$7.00 for YWP non-members. Meet at Porter Creek Super A at 5:30 PM (~2 hours).

**Thursday, 3 May, 5:30 PM: *Ducks and shorebirds of Quartz Road Wetland*** with biologist Jim Hawkings. Bring your spotting scopes, as the distant gull colonies can reveal surprises. Meet at the Boston Pizza parking lot at 5:30 PM (~1.5 hours).

**Sunday, 6 May (Tagish & Carcross): *Tagish-Carcross Loop*** — This memorable yearly tour is led by Clive Osborne and is sure to add new birds to your life list! Bring a pencil and lunch. Call 667-6976 for details. Three meeting locations/times are possible: S.S. Klondike at 9:00 AM; Gazebo across from Montana Services in Carcross at 10:00 AM; Tagish Bridge rest area at 1:30 PM (~6–7 hours).

**Friday, 11 May, 6:30 PM (Carcross): *Dusky Grouse hike on Nares Mountain*** with Dan Kemble. Some hiking along the ridge is rewarded by spectacular views after we've stopped at Bear Camp and shared some nosh. Bring good hiking footwear and food. Phone Dan at 821-3461 for details. Meet at the Gazebo across from Montana Services at 6:30 PM (~3 hours).

**Friday–Sunday, 11–13 May (Faro): *Sheep and Crane Viewing Festival*** — Sponsored by the Town of Faro; visit <http://www.faroyukon.ca> for details.

**Sunday, 13 May, 10:00 AM (Faro): *Join the YBC field trip*** as part of this fun and informative weekend. Meet Mary Whitley at Faro's Recreation Centre on Campbell Street at 10:00 AM (~1.5 hours).

**Saturday, 12 May: *International Migratory Bird Day Spring Migration Count*** — Participate in this annual "spring roundup". For more details, contact [yukonbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:yukonbirdclub@gmail.com).

**Tuesday, 15 May, 6:00 PM: *Explore birds along Fish Lake Road*** with Ione Christensen. Meet either at the S.S. Klondike at 6:00 PM, or at Porter Creek Super A at 6:30 PM (~2 hours).

**Thursday, 17 May, 6:30 PM: *An evening river stroll with the birds on the Millennium Trail*** — Meet Jenny Trapnell at the Fish Ladder near Schwatka Lake dam at 6:30 PM (~2 hours).

**NEW! Thursday, 17 May, 7:30 PM (Haines Junction): *Discover birding in the best real estate in the Junction*** — Call trip leader Sarah Davidson at 634-2884 for details. Meet at the day-use area by the Dezadeash River at 7:30 PM (~2 hours).

**Saturday, 26 May, 8:30 AM (Mayo): *Bird identification walk*** with regional biologist Mark O'Donoghue. Call 996-2529 for details. Meet at Mayo's Five-Mile Lake campground at 8:30 AM (~2-3 hours).

**Sunday, 20 May, 7:30 AM: *Wake up with the birds!*** — Songs and calls of McIntyre Creek songbirds with Pam Sinclair. Meet at Porter Creek Super A at 7:30 AM (~3-4 hours).

**NEW! Wednesday, 23 May, 6:30 PM (Old Crow): *Discover the mountain road or the slough near the Crow River*** with Leila Sumi. Itinerary subject to weather; contact Leila at 966-3033 or [leilasumi@gmail.com](mailto:leilasumi@gmail.com) for details. Meet at house 950 at 6:30 PM and return for tea and sweets afterward (~1.5 hours).

**NEW! Wednesday, 23 May, 5:30 PM (Dawson City): *Bird walk and ferry ride to the Yukon River campground*** with Sebastian Jones. Contact [sebastian@northwestel.net](mailto:sebastian@northwestel.net) for details. Meet at the Dawson City Visitor Information Centre at 5:30 PM (~2-3 hours).

**Thursday, 24 May, 5:30 PM (Judas Creek): *Always one of the season's highlights – a migratory hotspot!*** Meet trip leader Jim Hawkings at the S.S. Klondike at 5:30 PM (~3 hours).

**Thursday, 24 May, 6:30 PM (Watson Lake): *Spring Birding at Wye Lake*** with Susan Drury. Call 536-2996 or e-mail Susan at [sdrury@northwestel.net](mailto:sdrury@northwestel.net) for details. Meet at the cabin at First Wye Lake Park at 6:30 PM (~1.5 hours).

**Friday-Saturday, 25-26 May, 5:00 PM to 5:00 PM: *ANNUAL YUKON BIRDATHON*** — Make this your first or favourite birding event! Learn about birds and raise funds for bird conservation and education. Watch for ads! Coordinated by Jim Hawkings: 668-2639.

**NEW! Saturday, 2 June, 8:30 AM: *Get acquainted with the unique habitats around Mary Lake*** with Wendy Nixon. Meet at the S.S. Klondike at 8:30 AM or at the mailboxes on Fireweed Drive at 9:00 AM (~2 hours).

**Monday, 4 June, 5:30 PM: *Paddy's Pond in Hillcrest*** — Join Mary Whitley on the annual field trip to this well-loved pond in Hillcrest. Meet Mary outside the SKKY hotel, across from the airport, at 5:30 PM (~1.5 hours).

**Friday, 8 June, 7:00 PM: *Explore the duck ponds near Yukon College*** with biologist Katie Aitken. Meet at the west end of the main student parking lot at Yukon College at 7:00 PM. Contact Katie at 668-8898 or [kaitken@yukoncollege.yk.ca](mailto:kaitken@yukoncollege.yk.ca) for details (~1-2 hours).

**Friday-Sunday, 8-10 June (Tombstone Park): *WEEKEND ON THE WING*** — A northern birding festival in this beautiful territorial park. Sponsored by Friends of Dempster Country. A fantastic opportunity to learn about and view Tombstone Park specialties such as the Surfbird, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Northern Wheatear. E-mail [friendsofdempster@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofdempster@gmail.com) for more information.

## Summer Trips

**NEW! Saturday, 16 June, 1:15 PM: *Alpine Butterflies on Grey Mountain's Ridge*** with butterfly aficionado André Langlois. Dress in layers and bring a snack and water. Register by sending an e-mail to [ybcfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:ybcfieldtrips@gmail.com), as it could be rain-checked (literally) to the 17<sup>th</sup>. Meet at the parking lot at the bottom of Grey Mountain road at 1:15 PM (~3 hours).



**NEW! Saturday, 30 June, 1:00 PM: *Get to know the birds, dragonflies, and aquatic insects of Hidden Lakes*** with entomologist Syd Cannings. Call Syd at 335-6633 for details. Meet at the Fish Ladder near Schwatka Lake dam in Riverdale at 1:00 PM (~2 hours).

## Fall Trips

**Sunday, 2 September, 9:30 AM: *Discover fall migration at Schwatka Lake and Hidden Lakes*** with Ione Christensen. Meet at the S.S. Klondike at 9:30 AM (~2–3 hours).

**Saturday, 8 September: *Swan Lake day trip*** — Scout for lingering residents and late-season migrants at this birding hotspot. Bring waterproof footwear, layered clothing, and lunch. This is a full day-trip with lots of walking. Register by e-mail ([ybcfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:ybcfieldtrips@gmail.com)) to coordinate transportation.

**Sunday, 9 September, 9:30 AM: *See waterfowl and shorebirds at the scenic (really!) Whitehorse Sewage Lagoons*** — Meet Devon Yacura at the S.S. Klondike at 9:30 AM (~3–4 hours).

**Sunday, 23 September, 9:30 AM: *Explore Lake Laberge*** with the one and only Ione Christensen. Dress warmly, wear boots, and bring lunch. Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 9:30 AM (~5 hours).

## Bird Observatories – Society of Yukon Bird Observatories (SOYBO)

**McIntyre Marsh Bird Banding Demonstration Project (junction of Fish Lake and Copper Haul roads):** Operating 23 April – 30 May. Open weekends and holidays, 7:00 AM to noon (possibly later if bird activity is sufficient). Contact Ben Schonewille at [teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com](mailto:teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com).

**Albert Creek Observatory (Upper Liard):** Operating 23 April – 7 June (may also be open in fall: late July to mid-September). Contact Ted Murphy-Kelly at 456-7431 for more information.

**Teslin Lake Observatory (Teslin, behind Teslin Lake Government Campground):** Operating 4 July – 21 September. Contact Ben Schonewille at [teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com](mailto:teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com).

## Birdathon 2012

by Jim Hawkings

This year's Yukon Birdathon will be held on May 26/27. For those unfamiliar with it, the Birdathon is a 24-hour fundraising event in which participants try to see as many birds in the Yukon as they can. Sponsors of each participant pledge a flat rate or so much per species sighted. Traditionally there is a well-attended outdoor barbecue at Robert Service Campground following the Birdathon where participants socialize, compare notes, and regain the calories they burned chasing birds for 24 hours. The Birdathon has traditionally been the Yukon Bird Club's major source of revenue, and thus it supports most of the Club's activities. Lately, however, the Birdathon has not raised as much money, and our expenses continue to increase each year due to the rising costs of things like

postage and printing, and the greater number of field trips, events, and projects that we now sponsor. Thanks to the tremendous efforts of Wendy Boothroyd, Ken Madsen, and Malkolm Boothroyd, we have had great participation in the Birdathon over the past few years, and I think everyone is really enjoying their Birdathons more as we encourage participants to just enjoy themselves and not get too swept up in an all-out competitive listing effort. We do have some serious birdwatchers however, and they have come up with some very impressive totals—over 100 species!

I do think that we can make the Birdathon a much better fundraiser for the Club by just putting a bit

more effort into the fundraising part of it. So please consider participating in this year’s Birdathon while lining up some sponsors to support your efforts. If you don’t participate, consider sponsoring a birdwatching friend or acquaintance, or this year’s feature birder (to be announced...). Further details of this year’s Birdathon will be available in early May. If you want to help or have questions in the interim, you can contact me at [hawkings@northwestel.net](mailto:hawkings@northwestel.net).

In the past year the Birdathon has also become a subject of discussion between the Yukon Bird Club (YBC) and the recently formed Society of Yukon Bird Observatories (SOYBO). Several of the most dedicated Birdathoners are mainstays of the SOYBO, and they would like to be able to put their Birdathon fundraising efforts—at least in part—toward supporting that organization. This is somewhat problematic, as Birdathon funds are traditionally split 50/50 between YBC and the Yukon Conservation Society. Any new arrangement would require some

sort of consensus between the three organizations on how to divide the work of organizing the Birdathon and splitting the proceeds. I think everyone agrees that all three organizations do very valuable, but different, work. And we all know that the Birdathon is an excellent and popular fundraising event.

Speaking as the founder of the Yukon Birdathon, and as a former and current Birdathon coordinator, I can tell you that this event has the unrealized potential to involve quite a few people and raise a significant amount of money while at the same time being a wonderful experience for all the participants. I know there is significant interest and energy in SOYBO for this event as a means of raising discretionary revenue, and there is also considerable public interest in supporting SOYBO. Personally, I think that if YBC were to agree to split the proceeds with SOYBO in some way, in return for its help in organizing the event, both organizations would likely gain from it.

We welcome YBC members’ thoughts on this matter.

## Yukon Christmas Bird Count Summary 2011

by Clive Osborne

Annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) were conducted in 11 Yukon communities in 2011. However, the data from only nine of these counts have been posted on the Audubon Society’s website at the time of writing (see <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>). The Audubon Society is the official sponsor of the CBC throughout North America. This article summarizes the information collected from all CBCs reported to the Yukon Bird Club in 2011 by field observers only (feeder watch counts excluded). A total of 6256 birds comprising 42 species were counted by 129 participants during the period December 17 – January 2. The location of the counts is shown in Figure 1, and the counts are summarized in Tables 1–3.

The most unusual species (as determined by showing low numbers in only one count) were Bufflehead (3 – Tagish), Bald Eagle (1 - Whitehorse), Rock Pigeon (5 – Whitehorse), Eurasian Collared Dove, (3 – Haines Junction), Great Horned Owl (2 – Mayo), Snowy Owl (1 – Johnson’s Crossing), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1 - Watson Lake), Steller’s Jay (1 - Whitehorse), Mountain

Chickadee (8 – Tagish), American Robin (8 – Whitehorse), Savannah Sparrow (1 - Whitehorse), Golden-crowned Sparrow (1 – Whitehorse), House Sparrow (3 - Whitehorse).

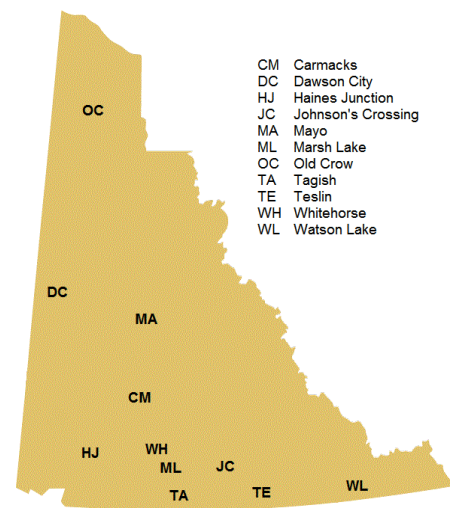


Figure 1. Locations of 2011 Yukon CBCs.

**Table 1. Summary of Yukon Christmas Bird Counts.**

Count	Date	Field Observers	Species Obsd.	Birds Obsd.
Whitehorse	26/12	41	27	3207
Haines Junction	28/12	19	16	758
Watson Lake*	26/12	18	11	395
Dawson	02/01	14	12	678
Tagish	26/12	13	13	246
Johnson's Crossing	26/12	7	10	38
Mayo	29/12	5	12	442
Marsh Lake	18/12	4	9	132
Old Crow	27/12	4	4	36
Teslin	17/12	2	12	113
Carmacks*	27/12	2	4	211

\*Count data not on Audubon Society website.

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

Species	# Birds	Rank
Common Raven	3058	1
Pine Grosbeak	851	2
redpoll sp. (Common Redpoll)	646 (574)	3
Bohemian Waxwing	461	4
Black-capped Chickadee	338	5
Black-billed Magpie	264	6
Boreal Chickadee	180	7
Gray Jay	113	8
Mallard	50	9
Red Crossbill	43	10

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

Species	# Counts
Gray Jay	11
Common Raven	11
Boreal Chickadee	10
Black-capped Chickadee	9
Pine Grosbeak	9
Black-billed Magpie	7
Common Redpoll	6
Hairy Woodpecker	6
Ruffed Grouse	6
Dark-eyed Junco	5
Red-breasted Nuthatch	5

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

Hoary Redpoll (Haines Junction), Common Redpoll (Marsh Lake).

## Highlights of the 2011 Whitehorse Count

*Jim Hawkings (Compiler)*

The 2011 Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count was a well-attended and successful event. There were some 41 participants, who saw 3,214 birds of 27 species (table below).

Species	Birds	Flags*	Max/Year	Counts
Mallard	50		60/2010	16
Common Merganser	2		5/2004	11
Ruffed Grouse	4		4/2011	14
Spruce Grouse	7		9/1996	17
grouse sp.	1		1/2011	3
Bald Eagle	8		15/2010	18
Rock Pigeon	5		47/2007	9
Downy Woodpecker	2		7/2010	17
Hairy Woodpecker	8		12/2009	18
American Three-toed Woodpecker	1		4/2006	6
woodpecker sp.	1		2/2001	7
Northern Shrike	0		1/2007	4
Gray Jay	5		33/2009	20
Steller's Jay	1		1/2011	4
Black-billed Magpie	191	HC	191/2011	20
Common Raven	2064	HC	2064/2011	20
Black-capped Chickadee	121		145/2009	20
Boreal Chickadee	18		96/2008	20
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4	HC	4/2011	14
American Dipper	6		12/2005	20
American Robin	8	HC	8/2011	6
Bohemian Waxwing	461	HC	461/2011	20
Savannah Sparrow	1	US	1/2011	1
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1	US	1/2011	1
Dark-eyed Junco	9		21/2007	9
Pine Grosbeak	168		280/1995	20
Red Crossbill	23		141/2010	13
crossbill sp.	2		10/2002	5
Common Redpoll	19	LC	681/2007	18
Hoary Redpoll	2		6/199	12
redpoll sp.	18		380/2010	14
House Sparrow	3		38/2009	6

\*US = unusual species; HC = unusually high count; LC = unusually low count.



The weather was extremely pleasant, with just a little light snow in the afternoon to keep it interesting. Several things stood out this year. We had an unusual "flock" of eight robins inhabiting the shore of the Yukon River just downstream from the Millennium Bridge. These were regular fixtures throughout December and early January, but sadly they did not survive the cold snap in the last two weeks of January. The relatively mild weather leading up to the Christmas count undoubtedly helped these robins get as far as they did, and also helped add four new species to our count: lone Savannah and Golden-crowned Sparrows were found downtown, a Steller's Jay in MacPherson, and a count-week Northern Shrike in Riverdale. The other notable phenomenon was the

low number of winter finches, particularly crossbills and redpolls; this was especially noticeable compared with the bumper crops of these birds throughout the area last winter (2010/11). The good weather and large crowd of participants likely helped us reach new heights for numbers of Magpies (191), Ravens (2064), Red-breasted Nuthatches (4), and Bohemian Waxwings (461).

A post-count gathering at the Hawkings residence was well attended and enjoyed by all. Thanks to all the participants in the 2011 event, and thanks to the Yukon Bird Club for once again covering the participant's fees for everyone!

## 2012 Duck Box Project: Whitehorse Sewage Lagoon

by Devon Yacura

The 2012 Duck Box Project at the Whitehorse Sewage Lagoon is a cooperation between the Yukon Bird Club, Vanier Catholic Secondary School (VCSS), City of Whitehorse, Community Development Fund, and Evergreen Homes and Construction. Devon Yacura, the Youth Coordinator for the Yukon Bird Club, is coordinating the project.

The duck box project is a follow-up to the study completed in 2010 titled *Bird Use of the*

*Whitehorse Sewage Lagoons — a 2010 Field Study and Review of Long-Term Data*. That study identified the fact that Bufflehead and Barrow's Goldeneye are common species that use the sewage lagoon during the breeding season (June), yet are not nesting there. The lack of dead standing trees on the lagoon property means there is no nesting habitat for them.

Devon is working with VCSS grade 11 biology students to build, install, and monitor 25 nest boxes at the sewage lagoon. The project is already underway, and the boxes were built by the students on March 30. The installation date for the boxes is set for April 13. The boxes will be placed on live trees around the long-term storage pond approximately 4–6 feet above ground. Posts may be used for box placement around

the secondary cells because of the lack of trees there. The boxes are built with a swinging door on the side that can be opened for viewing. This will allow personal observation of the nests.



The students will join Devon for two days of monitoring (one in May and one in June) to determine what type of activity the boxes are receiving. In the classroom, the students will develop their own hypotheses on the boxes that they install.

They will collect data on their boxes during the field trips and will write short technical reports for Mr. Gallant based on their observations. Devon will continue to monitor the boxes on a weekly basis from June to August. He will collect observations such as incubation dates, clutch size, hatch dates, fledging dates, and predation. In the fall, he will compile and analyze the data and write a technical report of his own that will be posted to the [Yukon Bird Club website](#). He will also give a public presentation in November on the results of the project.

For more information about this project, Devon can be reached at (867) 667-7597 or at [balancenvironmental@gmail.com](mailto:balancenvironmental@gmail.com).

## YBC McIntyre Creek Bird Values

by Cameron Eckert

*The YBC gave a brief presentation to the City of Whitehorse on December 12, 2011; below are the speaking notes for that presentation.*

The McIntyre Creek watershed is well known for its vital importance to birds, wildlife, and the health of the greater ecosystem. It is a place that is loved by countless community members. The Yukon Bird Club has provided the City of Whitehorse with information on the bird and habitat values in the McIntyre Creek area for over 15 years.

A number of species observed in the Middle McIntyre Creek area have larger habitat requirements that would not be protected by the proposed 350m corridor. In particular, this would impact birds of prey known in the area such as Northern Goshawk, Boreal Owl, and Great Horned Owl, which require larger areas of habitat for breeding. These raptors are sensitive around their nest sites, and require large areas of forest to hunt for prey. The protection of McIntyre Creek and surrounding forests is critical, not only to birds that migrate through the area, but especially to birds that breed there.

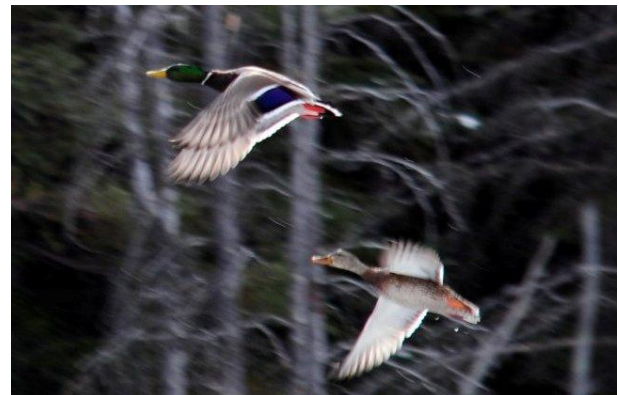
The construction of a road across McIntyre Creek would result in a serious negative impact to the McIntyre Creek ecosystem. The complex of habitats and wildlife communities adjacent to the creek are among the richest and most diverse in the city. A road through Middle McIntyre Creek would result in the degradation and loss of critical riparian habitats, disturbance and mortality to birds and wildlife, and a new source of pollutants to the creek.

Habitats required by birds of prey and the potential negative impacts on these habitats were not investigated in any way in the study by Environmental Dynamics Inc. (EDI). On November 24, the Yukon Bird Club identified these values, as well as concerns about the impacts of a new road and creek crossing, through a submission to the City as part of the Porter Creek D process. Yet there is no reference

to birds of prey or any serious consideration of bird habitat values in the City's subsequent administrative report of December 5. The process to date has entirely missed adequate consideration of bird habitat values in Middle McIntyre Creek and the negative impacts on bird populations.

The Yukon Bird Club urges City Council to put a hold on planning and pre-engineering for Porter Creek D. We strongly support the establishment of an independently facilitated consultation process that adequately addresses bird, wildlife, and habitat values, and the potential impacts to these values. The Yukon Bird Club would offer our participation in such a process.

The ecosystems of McIntyre Creek are an outstanding legacy to our citizens, but now and in the future. If the projected growth of Whitehorse does continue as anticipated, then this area will be all the more important to the quality of our lives, as well as the wildlife that inhabit this remarkable area. The protection of the McIntyre Creek watershed would be a profound gift both to the birds and wildlife that depend on the area, as well as the present and future citizens of Whitehorse.



Mallards at McIntyre Marsh, Winter 2010; photo: Ben Schonewille

## Observations from the Field

compiled by Cameron Eckert

e-mail: [yukonbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:yukonbirdclub@gmail.com)

### SUMMER 2011

As the frenetic anticipation of spring fades, summer is the season to take stock of the Region's breeding bird populations — their abundance, productivity, and long-term health. Nesting shorebirds and raptors appeared to have a productive season in northern Yukon. The quest to fill knowledge gaps continued with new nesting records for rare species such as Dusky Grouse in central Yukon.

### Waterfowl through Shorebirds

A migration flock of 16 King Eider flew past Pauline Cove at Herschel Island 6.Jun (ph. CE). A flock of 8 male Harlequin Ducks was on the Yukon River in Whitehorse 19.Jun (ph. HD). Two Hooded Mergansers, a species not yet confirmed breeding in the Yukon, were seen near Marsh Lake 28.Jul (EA). It had been so long since the last central Yukon report of a Dusky Grouse that it seemed doubtful they still existed in the area; that changed with the observation of 2 Dusky Grouse broods (3 & 9 chicks) in mixed Trembling Aspen / White Spruce forest on Mt. Hansen, southeast of the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon rivers 28.Jun (MOD). A bright breeding-plumage Eared Grebe, casual in southern Yukon, was in Whitehorse 19.Jun & 8.Jul (CE, JJ). The report of a Double-crested Cormorant at Nares Lake 13.Jun (TA, HG) was followed up by the discovery of a nearby breeding colony near Bove Island on Tagish Lake with 13 adults and 3 nests 10.Jul (JBo); a check of the colony 13.Aug recorded 3 breeding pairs with 1, 2, and 3 young, respectively (ph. BSI). A single Double-crested Cormorant was seen near the only other known Yukon breeding colony on Lake Laberge 7.Jul, though nesting activity was not observed (MBe, PB).

A pair of Greater Yellowlegs with a downy young at Army Beach 18–24.Jun (JJ, BSc; ph. CE) added to the few confirmed breeding records for the Yukon. A pair of Surfbirds, a very rare southern Yukon breeder, was seen on a ridge top in Kusawa Park 25.Jun (ph. JK). A migrant flock of 15 White-rumped Sandpipers at

Herschel Island 4.Jun (ph. CE) was perhaps the largest flock ever recorded in the Yukon.

### Gulls through Finches

A trickle of eastbound migrant Pomarine Jaegers past Herschel Island totaled 18 birds 30.May – 6.Jun (EM; ph. CE). A Parasitic Jaeger at Tagish 26.Jul (SVD) was unexpected in southern Yukon in summer. A pair of Long-tailed Jaegers was seen nesting on Angelcomb Mountain, Tombstone Park 10.Jul (CC). Thirty Arctic Terns (22 adults, 8 juvenile) were at Simpson Lake 29.Jul (JJ). A total of 25 adult Black Terns was recorded at the colony at Blind Lake 23.Jun (CE, MC, PF, DP) — this site continues to define the northwestern extent of the species' breeding range. The spring surge of Eurasian Collared-Doves into southern Yukon continued into the summer with reports of 1 at Lake Laberge 3.Jun (BL, ph. SR), a pair in Carcross through late Jun (ph. AW), 1 in Tagish 30.Jun – 1 Jul (ph. LH), 1 at Twin Lakes 5.Jul (AL), and up to 3 in Haines Junction through the season (*fide* JuB). A single Mourning Dove, a rare wanderer to the Region, was at Partridge Creek, central Yukon 4.Jun (DB, VB, ph. MBu). A Black-billed Cuckoo was seen at Watson Lake 9.Jun (SC, PM), though its rarity was not fully realized until the chance for a photo had passed. A Snowy Owl nest with 6 eggs was found along Water Creek, Herschel Island 3.Jun (ph. CE). Two Rufous Hummingbirds, rare but regular in southern Yukon, were seen in Teslin from late Jun through 6.Jul (JS, HS).

Black-backed Woodpecker can be elusive in southern Yukon; one was at the lower Smith River 25.Jun (SVD). An unfortunate Say's Phoebe, north of its normal range, at Herschel Island, 2.Jun died when it got trapped in a building (LJM). A **Western Kingbird**, a first for central Yukon, was at Henderson's Corner, south of Dawson 28.Jul (ph. GB, MBr, CH). An Eastern Kingbird, a rare but regular wanderer to the Region, was at Tagish 19–20.Jun (ph. SVD; JJ). Northern Rough-winged Swallow is very rare anywhere in the Region and has yet to be confirmed breeding in the Yukon; a pair seen at Porter Creek 3–10.Jul displayed



all the signs of breeding except for a nest (ph. CE, PS). A substantial flock of about 1000 Bank Swallows was at the Whitehorse sewage ponds 19.Jun (CE). A Varied Thrush, north of its range, was seen at Herschel Island 2.Jun (LJM); a pile of Varied Thrush feathers found the following day in a nearby Peregrine Falcon nest pointed to its demise (CE).

Cedar Waxing can be fairly common in southern Yukon in some years; 2 were at Teslin 18.Jun (ph. AS), 3 were at Watson Lake 21.Jun (SVD), 4 were at Porter Creek 26.Jun (CE), and 2 were at Faro 4.Jul (LG, JJ). Tennessee Warbler is a rare but regular wanderer to central Yukon; one was singing at Henderson's Corner, south of Dawson in mid-Jun (GB, CHu). Two singing MacGillivray's Warblers along Cosh Creek 23.Jun (ar. CE) established the Yukon's easternmost record for the species. A nicely documented male Western Tanager provided a rare record for Carcross 6.Jul (ph. AW). A singing White-throated Sparrow was a surprise at Henderson's Corner 17.Jun (GB, CHu).

**Observers:** Tracy Allard, Edward Allen, Julie Bauer (JuB), Mary Beattie (MBe), Pete Beattie, Eric Betsaka, Jim Borensenko (JBo), Greg Brunner, Marlen Brunner (MBr), Del Buerge, Michael Buerge (MBu), Virginia Buerge, Corey Cartwright, Steve Charlton, Matt Clarke, Helene Dobrowolsky, Cameron Eckert, Pierre Foisy, Laura Grieve, Helmut Grünberg, Linda Heynen, Cynthia Hunt, Jukka Jantunen, Jozien Keijzer, Andre Langlois, Brian Lendrum, Edward McLeod, Lee John Meyook, Peter Mitchell, Josan Moss, Mark O'Donoghue, Dan Paleczny, Susan Ross, Ben Schonewille (BSc), Henderien Schonewille, John Schonewille, Brian Slough (BSL), Pam Sinclair, Adam Skrutkowski, Shyloh van Delft, Anita Wetherall.

## FALL 2011

A heavy fly-by of 5789 Greater White-fronted Geese was recorded at Teslin Lake 29.Aug (SVD, JJ). High counts of Canada Geese included 600 at Nisutlin River Delta 10.Sept (CE, PSi), and 1000 were in Whitehorse 20.Sept (CE). A *minima* Cackling Goose, casual in southern Yukon in fall, was seen in Whitehorse 28.Sept (CE). South-bound Tundra Swan migration was noted with 2 flocks totaling 700 over Marsh Lake 9.Oct, and a flight of 745 over Whitehorse 11.Oct (CE). Three family groups totaling 25 White-tailed Ptarmigan, as well as 10 Willow Ptarmigan were seen

on Montana Mountain 8.Sept (BD, CE, GPi). The annual fall migration of Yellow-billed Loons through southern Yukon yielded 1 at Johnson's Crossing 8–22.Oct (AS; AH, JJ; CE), 4 on Teslin Lake 11.Oct and 1 there 12–13.Oct (JJ), and 1 at Marsh Lake 22.Oct (CE) & 5.Nov (CE, JJ). An impressive concentration of Red-necked Grebes on Marsh Lake numbered 477 on 17 Aug (JJ). Increased concerns about American Kestrels in the North have placed greater emphasis on getting good counts on migration; a total of 239 was recorded at the Teslin Lake banding station (BS, JJ). A flight of 1000 Sandhill Cranes passed over Watson Lake 28.Sept (SD). Rare Yukon shorebirds included a bright juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Whitehorse 1.Oct (ph. CE), a juvenile Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Herschel Island 22.Aug (CE), and a juvenile Red Phalarope at Whitehorse 6.Oct (ph. CE).



*Yellow-billed Loon, Johnson's Crossing, October*  
Photo: Adam Skrutkowski

A Long-tailed Jaeger was noted during an exploratory hike from Babbage Falls to Fish Hole Creek, Ivavik NP 31.Jul–6.Aug (LS). A juvenile **Little Gull**, casual in southern Yukon, was at Teslin Lake 24.Sept–9.Oct (ph. JJ, AH). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, the Yukon's 2<sup>nd</sup>, was seen in Whitehorse 24.Aug–2.Sept (JP, ph. JJ, HG, PSi; CE). Two adult **Black-legged Kittiwakes**, a rare fall migrant off the Yukon's North Coast, were flying west past Herschel Island 18.Aug (CE). The first hint of the winter invasion of Snowy Owls that gripped the South, was the report of one at Shallow Bay 21–22.Nov (ph. MB, PB, BD, CE). A fem-type Rufous Hummingbird was seen at km 2.4 along the Dempster Highway 22.Aug (TB).

A hatch-year Blue-headed Vireo was netted at the Albert Creek banding station, southeast Yukon 1.Aug

(ph. TMK). A significant invasion of **Steller's Jays** across southern Yukon began in mid-Sept and continued through the season with reports from Haines Junction, Marsh Lake, Carcross, Tagish, Teslin, and many locations around Whitehorse; similar fall invasions occurred in 1994 and 2006. American Crow continues to increase and expand along the northern edge of its range; record high counts included 14 in Watson Lake, southeast Yukon 27.Sept (ph. SD); and 19 in Whitehorse 7.Oct (CE). An impressive flock of about 1000 Common Ravens was seen flying in a line at dawn over Whitehorse 24.Nov (PSt). A **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, casual in southern Yukon, stopped in briefly at the Teslin Lake banding station 15.Oct (ph. JJ). Single Brown Creepers, rare in southern Yukon, were at Tagish 29.Sept (SVD), Teslin Lake 15.Oct (ph. JJ), and Johnson's Crossing 19.Oct (JJ). An immature Northern Wheatear, rarely seen on migration in northern Yukon, was at Herschel Island 23-24.Aug (ph. CE). A fly-by of 64 Mountain Bluebirds was recorded at Teslin Lake 23-24.Sept (JJ et al.). A late Hermit Thrush was at Wolf Creek 18.Oct (JH). Nearly 60 years has passed since the last Yukon report of **Brown Thrasher**; this season one was seen briefly in Whitehorse 8.Nov (JJ).



*Chipping Sparrow, Whitehorse, October*  
 Photo: Cameron Eckert

An immature Chipping Sparrow at Whitehorse 6.Oct (ph. CE) tied the previous late date. Single juvenile Brewer's Sparrows, rare in fall migration, were recorded at Teslin Lake 22.Aug & 8.Sept (SVD, JJ). A White-throated Sparrow, west of its range, was at Whitehorse 16.Sept (LC). The Yukon's 5<sup>th</sup> **Brambling** was a crowd pleaser in Whitehorse 31.Oct-1.Nov (HG, BD, ph. CE, BS, PS, m.ob.). A flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches was seen in the alpine above Shaneinbaw Lake, southern Yukon 16.Sept (ph. JK), while singles appeared at a Mayo feeder 17-21.Nov (MOD), and a Whitehorse feeder 30.Nov-1.Dec (HG). A total of 6515 migrant Common Redpolls along with 5786 small finch species were recorded at Teslin Lake 4-16.Oct (JJ, BS, et al.), although very few were seen at local feeders at the time.



*Brambling, Whitehorse, October/November*  
 Photo: Cameron Eckert

**Observers:** Mary Beattie, Pete Beattie, Tara Borin, Linda Cameron, Boris Dobrowolsky, Susan Drury, Cameron Eckert, Helmut Grünberg, Jim Hawkings, Abril Heredia, Jukka Jantunen, Jozien Keijzer, Ted Murphy-Kelly, Mark O'Donoghue, Glen Piwowar (GPi) Jarmo Pirhonen, Ben Schonewille, Pam Sinclair (PSi), Adam Skrutkowski, Penny Stuart (PSt), Leila Sumi, Shyloh van Delft.



## Your Pictures

*This is your space; we want your photos! Send them to the Editor at [YBCnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:YBCnewsletter@gmail.com)*



Harlequin Ducks, Yukon River, Whitehorse, 19.June.2011, Helene Dobrowolsky.



Northern Flicker, Teslin Cottages Lot 12, 18.June.2011, Adam Skrutkowski.



Steller's Jay, Slim Lake, 10.June.2011, Minnie Clark.



Eurasian Collared Dove, Bennett Beach, 19.June.2011, Anita Wetherall.



Cedar Waxwings, Teslin Cottages Lot 12, 18.June.2011, Adam Skrutkowski.



Western Tanager, Carcross, 6.July.2011, Anita Wetherall.



## 2012 Summary of the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory

by Ben Schonewille, Station Manager

The Teslin Lake Bird Observatory completed its fourth consecutive year of fall migration monitoring during the fall of 2011. This year, the field station operated for a total of 102 days from July 22 to October 31. The primary method of monitoring bird migration through the study site is the use of standardized mist netting and banding of birds captured. Mist netting was conducted from July 22 to October 13, and a total of 2,793 birds of 57 species were banded with 8,304 net hours (33.7 birds/100 net hours). Encountered in high numbers in previous seasons, Alder Flycatcher and Yellow Warbler were once again among the top-three species banded, accounting for over a third of all individuals banded. An irruption of Boreal Chickadees resulted in 235 individuals banded, second only to the record number of 831 banded in 2009.



Hatch-year White-crowned Sparrow

The visual migration counts aim to collect monitoring data for bird species not adequately sampled by mist netting. Between August 1 and October 31, 331 hours of visual migration watching resulted in the counting of 78,549 birds of 111 species. A primary target of the visual counts are diurnal raptors, of which 3,743 individuals of 12 species were counted, including regionally important species for monitoring: Swainson's Hawk and American Kestrel. Lake counts were conducted daily to collect monitoring data for a variety of waterbird species. On lake counts, all regularly occurring species of loons and grebes were counted in relatively high numbers, and there were also sightings of a number of gull species considered rare in the Yukon, including Sabine's Gull, Little Gull, and Glaucous Gull. In an effort to increase the

collection of monitoring data for waterfowl, a number of stationary counts were surveyed in southern Yukon, with an emphasis on regional species of interest including Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter, and White-winged Scoter.



Glaucous Gull

Interesting and notable observations at the station in 2011 included the following: Western Grebe, Bewick's Tundra Swan, Swainson's Hawk, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, Parasitic Jaeger, Little Gull, Thayer's Gull, Glaucous Gull, Sabine's Gull, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Pacific/Winter Wren, American Redstart, Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Western Tanager, Brewer's Timberline Sparrow, and Hoary Redpoll.



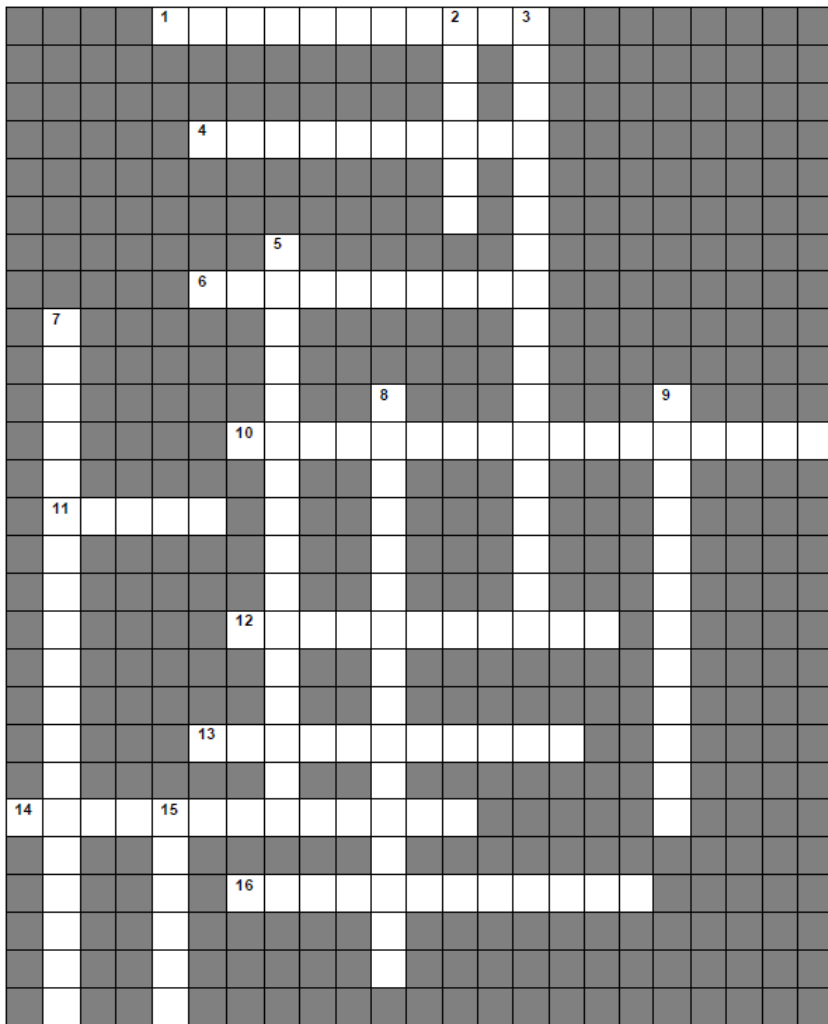
Snow Bunting

The data collected at the observatory in 2011 builds on the database of knowledge pertaining to the birds of the Yukon. Over the long term, these data will form a crucial step in the calculation of population trend analyses for numerous bird species including songbirds, raptors, waterbirds and waterfowl.

# Yukon Birds Crossword Puzzle

by Ruth McCullough

*Birds that appear in this crossword are rare to the Yukon, have only been sighted once, or have been sighted twice but not every year.*



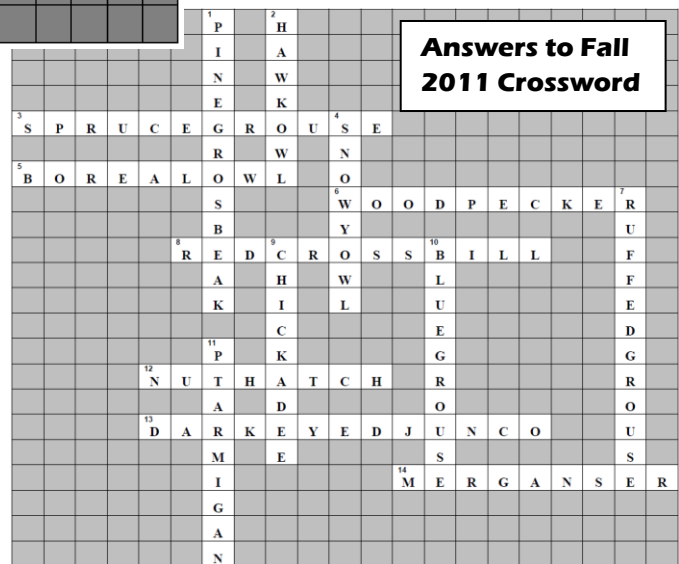
## Across

- 1. Has a long slightly rounded tail that "pumps" in flight, a heavily streaked breast with central "spot".
- 4. Head north to see the bold white eyebrow on both females and males.
- 6. Common on Canadian prairies, but is fast losing its habitat to farming.
- 10. Native to Asia; first Yukon sighting in 2002.
- 11. This Finch could easily be mistaken for the more common Purple Finch.
- 12. Its white-tipped tail and black breast spot identify this sparrow.
- 13. Nests and feeds on the ground, song is a rapid Junco-like trill.
- 14. Has a long keel-shaped tail, and song is a loud ascending squeak.
- 16. This bird's song is a caw rather than a croak.

## Down

- 2. This hummingbird is more common in western Washington and Oregon.
- 3. Usually found around farms, has white outer tail feathers and throat patch.

- 5. Identified by bluish-gray head, white eye ring, bright-yellow throat and wing bars.
- 7. Male has orange under parts, black head, and white wing patches.
- 8. Male of this species can be told by light eye, purplish sheen on head, and greenish tint on body.
- 9. Uses long tail feathers as props when working up and around tree trunks.
- 15. Two of this species have been sighted in the Yukon. Both are highly colorful birds from the southern U.S.



# Bird Identification Challenge

*Test your bird identification skills.*



Klondike Highway Rodeo Grounds – May 2009  
Photo: Selena Boothroyd



Tombstone Territorial Park – June 2010  
Photo: Selena Boothroyd



Alaska Highway / Kusawa Lake Road – April 2009  
Photo: Scott Williams



San Diego, California – July 2009  
Photo: Selena Boothroyd



Stuttgart, Germany – May 2009  
Photo: Selena Boothroyd



McIntyre Marsh, Whitehorse – May 2011  
Photo: Selena Boothroyd



## *Answers to the Fall 2011 Bird ID Challenge*

### **Pacific Loon (adult, non-breeding)**

Note the collar around the neck; the back is darker than those of other loons. Looks similar to the Arctic Loon, but lacks the white flanks, which are visible on Arctic Loons when resting in water. The Pacific Loon's head is quite a bit lighter than its back, which is not the case for the Arctic Loon.



**Teslin Lake, August 2011**  
Photo – Ben Schonewille

### **Baird's Sandpiper**

Back is not as dramatically patterned as that of the White-rumped Sandpiper, but wings are more brightly patterned than those of the Semipalmated Sandpiper. Another distinguishing feature is the length of the wing tips, which extends beyond the tail feathers.



**Horse Creek, May 2010**  
Photo – Ben Schonewille

### **Brewer's Sparrow**

Quite rare in the Yukon; most have a relatively conspicuous white eye ring. Perhaps this sparrow's most distinguishing feature is a lack of prominent distinguishing features.



**Teslin Lake, August 2011**  
Photo – Ben Schonewille

## **Feedback Welcome**

Just like the masthead says, we always welcome your comments and suggestions. Was the *Bird ID Challenge* too easy this time around? Have an idea for an article? Is there a new bird-related book hot off the press that you'd like to review (or have reviewed)? Were there any errors, glaring or subtle? We want to hear about it.

E-mail the *Yukon Warbler* editorial office at [YBCnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:YBCnewsletter@gmail.com)

Happy Birding!  
Till Fall 2012,  
Scott Williams, Editor

## Membership & Donations

Membership fees (Jan 1–Dec 31) – please circle one.

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Family	\$25.00
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Other donation:	\$ _____

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### Yukon Bird Club moves to e-memberships

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

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Names of additional Family members: \_\_\_\_\_

**Yukon Birds e!mail list:** Please add my e-mail to Club's e-mail list for meetings, events, issues, and rare sightings. Note: the distribution list is not visible on e-mails, and is not shared.

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**Long-tailed Jaeger,  
Tombstone, 04.June, 2010  
Photo: S. Boothroyd**



**Yukon  
Warbler**