erschel Island–Qikiqtaruk lies just off the Yukon's Arctic Coast and its Inuvialuit name, pronounced <kee keek ta ruk>, means *It is island*. Qikiqtaruk was given its English name in 1826 by Sir John Franklin in honour of the Herschel family who were British astronomers. By 1890, the island hosted 1500 whalers who were followed by Anglican missionaries in 1893 and the Northwest Mounted Police in 1903. By 1907, the whaling era was over and the non-native population dwindled. The R.C.M.P. bred sled dogs on the island until 1964 when they permanently closed the post. Qikiqtaruk is now a Yukon territorial park where the Inuvialuit continue to hunt and fish, and visitors from around the world travel to experience its very special natural character and cultural history.

This checklist summarizes the occurrence and breeding status of 121 species of birds which have been recorded on Herschel Island. Breeding has been confirmed for 46 species. Frequency codes indicate relative abundance from spring through fall.

## FREQUENCY and BREEDING CODES

- C Common: expected in appropriate habitat.
- U Uncommon: expected but not always seen.
- **R Rare**: expected annually, but easily missed.
- CA Casual: at least 2 records but not seen every year.
- AC Accidental: recorded only once.

**Confirmed Breeding (\*):** Observations of an active nest or dependent, flightless young.

## DOCUMENTING BIRD SIGHTINGS

The Yukon is a place where true discovery is possible and much remains to be learned. Contribute to our knowledge of the Yukon's bird life by sending written or photo documentation of rare species, and details of breeding observations to:

#### Yukon Bird Club

Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5P7, Canada e-mail: yukonbirdclub@gmail.com



A pair of Black Guillemots at Pauline Cove, 23 June 2007.

#### Checklist of the Birds of Herschel Island–Qikiqtaruk

**Territorial Park, April 2015.** A Yukon Bird Club publication; compilation and photos by Cameron D. Eckert. Cover – an adult Semipalmated Plover surveys its breeding territory at Simpson Point on 20 June 2010.

✓ SPECIES	Α	В	С	D
Greater White-fronted Goose * c				
Snow Goose * U				
Brant * U				
Canada Goose * c		1		
	1	1		
Trumpeter Swan AC				
Tundra Swan * c				
Whooper Swan AC				
Gadwall AC				
American Wigeon U				
Mallard * U				
Northern Shoveler * U				
Northern Pintail * c				
Green-winged Teal * U				
Greater Scaup U				
Lesser Scaup U				
King Eider U				
Common Eider * c				
Harlequin Duck CA				
Surf Scoter C				
White-winged Scoter C				
Black Scoter CA				
Long-tailed Duck * C				
Common Goldeneye CA				
Barrow's Goldeneye AC				
Red-breasted Merganser U				
Common Merganser CA				
Willow Ptarmigan CA		1	1	
Rock Ptarmigan * U				
		1	i	
Red-throated Loon * c				
Pacific Loon U				
Common Loon R				
Yellow-billed Loon R				
Horned Grebe CA				
Red-necked Grebe CA				
Pold Faula of	1	1	1	1
Bald Eagle CA				
Northern Harrier * U				
Sharp-shinned Hawk AC				
Rough-legged Hawk * c Golden Eagle cA				
Golden Lagie CA				
Sandhill Crane * c				
Black-bellied Plover R	I	1	1	1
American Golden-Plover * U				
Common Ringed Plover CA				
Semipalmated Plover * c Spotted Sandpiper CA				
Lesser Yellowlegs CA				
Wood Sandpiper AC Whimbrel * R				
Hudsonian Godwit AC				
Ruddy Turnstone * CA				
Stilt Sandpiper R				
Red-necked Stint AC				
Sanderling R				
	1	I	I	I

$\checkmark$	SPECIES	Α	В	С	D
	Dunlin CA				
	Baird's Sandpiper * c				
-	Least Sandpiper * R				
	White-rumped Sandpiper R				
	Buff-breasted Sandpiper * R				
	Pectoral Sandpiper * c				
	Semipalmated Sandpiper * c				
	Western Sandpiper CA				
	Long-billed Dowitcher U				
	Wilson's Snipe * R				
	Red-necked Phalarope * U				
	Red Phalarope R				
	Neu i nalarope k				
	Pomarine Jaeger U				
	Parasitic Jaeger * U				
	Long-tailed Jaeger * C				
		1	1	1	
	Thick-billed Murre CA				
	Black Guillemot * U				
	Horned Puffin CA				
	Black-legged Kittiwake CA				
-	Sabine's Gull CA				
	Bonaparte's Gull CA				
	Ross's Gull AC				
	Mew Gull CA				
	Herring Gull R				
	Thayer's Gull CA				
	Glaucous-winged Gull CA				
	Glaucous Gull * c				
	Arctic Tern * R				
	Snowy Owl * U				
	Northern Hawk Owl CA				
	Short-eared Owl * U				
	Northern Flicker AC	1	l	1	1
	American Kestrel AC				
	Merlin R				
	Peregrine Falcon * c				
	Gyrfalcon R				
	Soula Phoobe 04	1	1	1	
	Say's Phoebe CA	L			
	Common Raven * U				L I
	11	i		1	
	Horned Lark * U				
	Tree Swallow CA	1			
	Bank Swallow CA				
	Cliff Swallow CA				
	Barn Swallow CA				
-					ı
	Northern Wheatear * CA				
	American Robin * R	L			
	Varied Thrush CA				
	Eastern Yellow Wagtail CA	1			
	American Pipit * c	<u> </u>			
	•		I	· · · · ·	
	Lapland Longspur * c				
	Smith's Longspur * R				
				_	-

✓ SPECIES	Α	В	С	D
Snow Bunting * U				
McKay's Bunting AC				
Northern Waterthrush AC	1	1		
Yellow Warbler CA				
Yellow-rumped Warbler CA				
American Tree Sparrow U	1			
Savannah Sparrow * c				
White-throated Sparrow CA				
Harris's Sparrow CA				
White-crowned Sparrow U				
Golden-crowned Sparrow AC				
Dark-eyed Junco CA				
Red-winged Blackbird CA	1			
Western Meadowlark AC				
Yellow-headed Blackbird AC				
Rusty Blackbird CA				
Common Redpoll * U				
Hoary Redpoll * U				

#### Notes:

# **A Sensitive Environment**

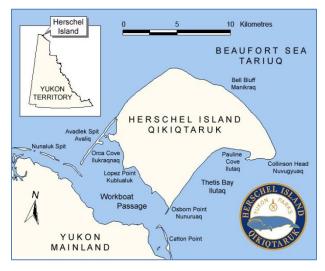
Arctic environments are sensitive with fragile habitats.

- ✓ Observe birds and wildlife from a responsible distance, and avoid nesting areas.
- ✓ Leave plants, animals, and cultural and ecological artifacts untouched.
- ✓ Practice no-trace camping. Take out all that you bring in and keep a clean camp.

# **Further reading**

- Herschel Island–Qikiqtaryuk A natural and cultural history of Yukon's Arctic Island. Burns, C.R. 2012. Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope). Whitehorse, Yukon. 242 pp.
- Birds of the Yukon Territory. Sinclair, P. H., Nixon, W. A., Eckert, C. D., and N. L. Hughes. 2003. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, BC. 595 pp.

# A Unique Arctic Island



Perschel Island–Qikiqtaruk is unique in the Beaufort Sea region. Separated from the Yukon mainland by Workboat Passage, the island supports a diverse mosaic of terrestrial and marine habitats with remarkable wildlife, plants, and bird life. Grizzly Bears, Muskox, Arctic and Red foxes, and Porcupine Caribou occur on the island, while Beluga and Bowhead whales, Bearded and Ringed seals, and Polar Bears frequent the shores and ocean. In summer, a rich floral carpet blooms over the island, and the coastline hosts Arctic beauties such as Seashore Chamomile, Sea Lungwort, and Seabeach Sandwort.

The Island is a special place to view Arctic breeders such as Common Eider, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Roughlegged Hawk. It is home to one of the largest breeding colonies of Black Guillemots in the Western Arctic. Workboat Passage is a key migration corridor and staging area for scoters and Long-tailed Ducks. This birding hotspot has seen such rarities as Whooper Swan, Ross's Gull, Common Ringed Plover, Red-necked Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Horned Puffin, and McKay's Bunting.

Today, Herschel Island is facing serious challenges. Climate change has accelerated coastal erosion, with loss of shoreline and rapid changes to the island's vegetation; and birds such as American Golden-Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, and Red-necked Phalarope have declined sharply in recent decades. Conservation of Arctic ecosystems and strong measures to fight climate change are critical to the island's ecological integrity.





# YUKON BIRD CLUB

# Checklist of the BIRDS of HERSCHEL ISLAND QIKIQTARUK TERRITORIAL PARK



**OBSERVERS:** 

#### LOCATIONS & DATES:

Α		
В		
С		
D		

Awareness – Appreciation – Conservation