

Yukon Warbler

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club – Fall 2006



Red Knot – Judas Creek, Yukon on 30 May 2006. Photo by Cameron D. Eckert

INSIDE: Steller's Jay Invasion ♦ Bird banding reports 2006 ♦ Shorebird fallout

Editor's note

After creating and producing 25 editions of *The Warbler*, Cameron Eckert has stepped aside as editor of the *Yukon Warbler*. Over the last 13 years Cameron has worked tirelessly to produce an amazing journal of Yukon Birds. You will continue to see pictures and articles from Cameron but for the moment he has stepped aside and left the *Warbler* in the less capable hands of others. We are committed to producing a fall and spring edition each year and mailing it our members. Please send contributions or comments to: Yukon Bird Club, Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 5P7.

Yukon Bird Club Annual General Meeting

**7:00 pm February 1, 2007
Whitehorse Public Library**

There are several vacancies on the executive board. If you are interested in volunteering for a position on the Yukon Bird Club executive board, contact Mary Whitley at 668-2903

Looking for colour-banded birds

Rusty Blackbirds

The Canadian Wildlife Service along with the Albert Creek bird banding station has colour banded upwards of 200 Rusty Blackbirds during 2005-2006. This boreal forest breeder is now a species of "special concern" due to serious population declines throughout its range. The blackbirds are banded with an aluminum band on the right leg, and a coloured plastic band on the left leg. Please report your sightings (date, location, band combinations) to Pam Sinclair, Canadian Wildlife Service, Whitehorse (pam.sinclair AT ec.gc.ca).



Photo C. D. Eckert

Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls

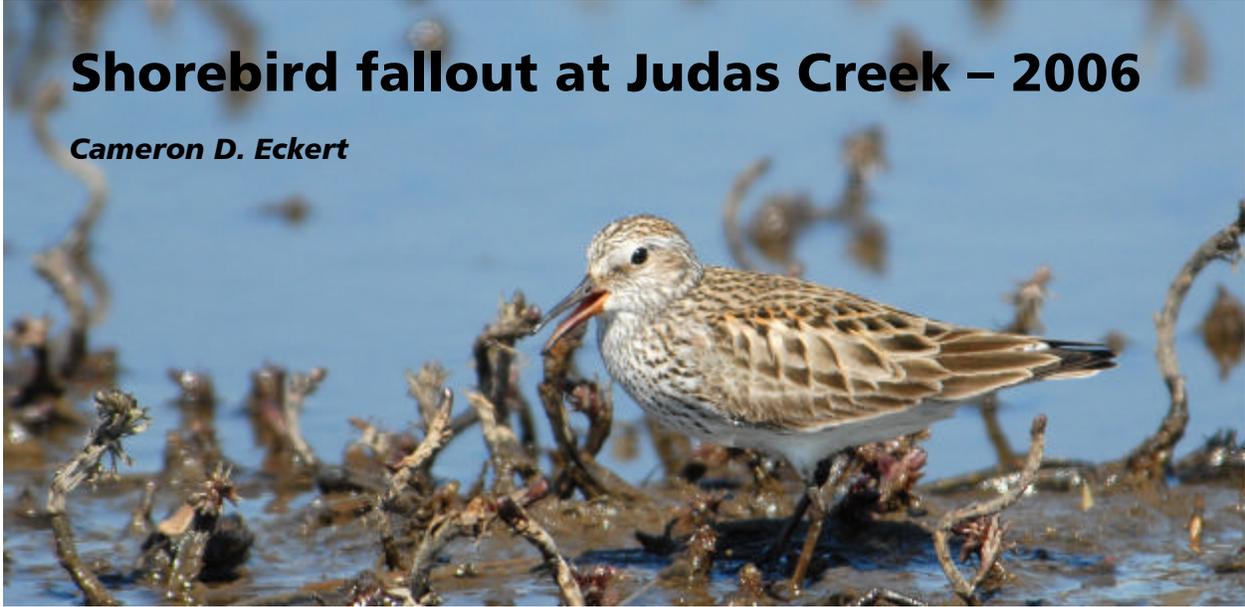
Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls were banded during 2003-06 in the Canadian high Arctic. Thayer's are banded with a yellow leg band that marked with a black alphanumeric code (e.g., B1). Glaucous Gulls are banded with a red or white leg band marked with a white or dark blue alphanumeric code. Adults have additional solid colour bands on one or both legs. Please record location, date and the alphanumeric code and report sightings to: Cindy Anderson, Wildlife Biology Program, University of Montana (cindy.anderson AT mso.umt.edu). Your help is appreciated!



Photo C. Anderson

Shorebird fallout at Judas Creek – 2006

Cameron D. Eckert



Judas Creek never fails to amaze. Just when migration seemed over, this rich lakeside wetland served up an unprecedented shorebird bonanza. The last week of May saw a host of late migrants that couldn't quite contain their breeding urge. It was a remarkable opportunity to hear the bizarre songs of high Arctic breeders such as Stilt and White-rumped Sandpipers, and Red Knot. As well, the Buff-breasted Sandpipers were engrossed in their frenetic trance-like breeding displays.

Photos by Cameron Eckert

Above: A **White-rumped Sandpiper** on 31 May in full song – sounding like a twisted remix of a Rufous Hummingbird and a donkey.

Clockwise from below: A stunningly beautiful breeding plumage **Stilt Sandpiper**, one of many seen this spring, on 30 May. A **Short-billed Dowitcher**, likely a local breeder, on 30 May. A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, a rare southern Yukon migrant, on 30 May.





Steller's Jay – Carcross, Yukon. 25 September 2006. Photo Cameron D. Eckert

Cameron D. Eckert

The 2006 Steller's Jay invasion has proven to be a sensational birding phenomena! So far we have received 119 reports by 137 observers of birds at 62 different locations. The number of reports accompanied by photographs has been astounding. The photos have been very useful in tracking the invasion. The invasion began in the first week of September around Carcross and spread over the Whitehorse area north to Lake Laberge by September 16, east to the Atlin Road and Atlin by September 26, west to Haines Junction by September 28, and north to Ethel Lake (an amazing 430 km north of Skagway) by October 14. It seems likely that hundreds of birds are involved in this invasion.

Where did they come from? The fact that the highest numbers of jays have been seen in Carcross, and that the first recorded sighting was at Tutshi Lake indicates that the birds came over the White Pass from Skagway, Alaska where this species is common. This is consistent with the fact that all birds are of the Coastal subspecies.

Has this happened before? The only previous Yukon Steller's Jay invasion was in fall 1994 when jays were recorded at about 8 locations from Carcross to Lake Laberge. Prior to 1994, there had only been 9 reports in total for the Yukon. So this type of invasion is not unprecedented, but the scale of this year's event is well beyond what was recorded in 1994.

What is driving the invasion? That is a good question! Steller's Jays are known to stage periodic invasions out of their core range. It usually happens in fall, and the birds involved are usually hatch-year (i.e. born this past summer). Most of the jays showing up in the Yukon do appear to be hatch-year birds. Higher numbers of Steller's Jays have been recorded this fall in parts of southeast Alaska, but numbers in south-coastal Alaska (Anchorage-area) are apparently normal. Some of the theories offered to explain these periodic invasions include i) a lack of food supply in the home range; ii) a productive breeding year with an excess of hatch-year birds;

iii) southern Yukon's climate has reverted to a southeast Alaska climate (i.e. moist and cool) due to La Nina-like conditions in 2006; as a result, Steller's Jay is not distinguishing political boundaries, only meteorological ones; or iv) a major wind event carries a large roving flock of jays over the mountains. None of these explanations seems entirely satisfactory. There is no evidence to suggest a fall food shortage on the coast this year. If there was a productive breeding season, it is not obvious what would compel flocks of young birds to fly north over the mountains. There have also been productive breeding years with no Yukon invasion. The La Nina theory may be robust, but only time will tell. And the great wind storm theory? Well, maybe.

Will the jays migrate back to the coast? It seems unlikely that the Steller's Jays that have arrived in the Yukon will turn around and head back to the coast. Many of the birds have now settled in at bird feeders and show no signs of leaving. They are spending their days stashing food and appear to be getting set for the winter. Will they survive? There is no reason why these jays wouldn't survive a relatively mild Yukon winter with a steady food supply - as the magpies do. However, with their long bare legs and big feet, Steller's Jays do not appear to be "cold adapted" so a prolonged cold spell in the -40C range could be a problem for these birds.

Where exactly have Steller's Jays been seen?

The list of major locations includes Atlin, Alaska Hwy (mile 928 & 930), Burma Rd, California Beach, Carcross, Carcross Rd (mile 9), Cowley

on Carcross Rd, Cowley Creek subdivision, Crestview, Dezadeash Lake, Echo Valley Rd, Ethel Lake, Fish Lake, Gentian Lane, Goldenhorn, Granger, Haines Junction, Hidden Valley, Hillcrest, Horse Creek, Kookatsoon Lake, Lake Laberge (southeast), Lake Laberge (Fossil Point), Lake Laberge (northwest), Lewes Marsh (Sawmill Rd), Lewes Marsh (Yukon River bridge), Little Atlin Lake (Atlin Rd, km 6 & 19), Lobird trailer court, Marsh Lake (Army Beach), Marsh Lake (Mitchie Place), Marsh Lake (M'Clintock Bay), Marsh Lake (Judas Creek subdivision), Marsh Lake (Old Constabulary), Marsh Lake (New Constabulary), Marsh Lake (Scout Bay), Marshall Creek, Mary Lake subdivision, Mayo Rd (5 mile Rd), Mayo Rd (Mile 6), Mayo Rd (10 Mile Rd), Mendenhall subdivision, Mount McIntyre, Old Alaska Highway, Pineridge subdivision, Policeman's Point Rd, Porter Creek, Riverdale, Robinson (Carcross Rd), Shallow Bay, Six Mile River (east side, at Tagish), Spruce Hill subdivision, Tagish, Takhini Hotsprings Rd, Takhini subdivision, Tatchun Creek, Teslin, Teslin Lake (cottage lots), Tutshi Lake, Whitehorse (downtown), Wolf Creek subdivision.

Please continue to report your Steller's Jay sightings including date, number seen, exact location (e.g. street or lot address), and send any digital photos. We are interested in all sightings, but **especially if you have seen one at a new location** (not listed above), or if you have seen more than one bird at a time. Email sightings to (yukonbirdclub AT gmail.com) or call 667-4630. Thanks to everyone who has reported sightings!



A flock of 5 Steller's Jays was attending this Carcross feeder on 25 September 2006.

Photo by Cameron Eckert

Albert Creek Bird Banding – 2006

Ted Murphy-Kelly



male Black-and-white Warbler – May21

Albert Creek completed its sixth year of bird banding and migration monitoring on September 23 2006. This study site continues to prove itself as an exceptional place to band birds, monitor migration of birds, and provide the public with a unique experience through banding demonstrations. School groups from Watson Lake viewed banding demonstrations and talks on bird migration. Tourists, birders and naturalists from Canada, the U.S., Whitehorse and local Watson Lake residents continue to visit the station and learn about the many bird species that inhabit the boreal forest of the Liard Basin.

The spring season started on April 23 and ended on June 10. The station operated for 44 days. We banded 2601 birds of 51 species adding Belted Kingfisher and Say's Phoebe to our all time list. Albert Creek banded its third Black-and-white Warbler this spring, a rare visitor to the Liard Basin.



Yellow Warbler – May21

Some species were banded in record numbers such as Blackpoll Warbler which tripled the previous record. Yellow Warbler (313) was only outnumbered by Wilson's Warbler and more than tripled it's previous record. The star bird of the season was the Ruby-crowned Kinglet with an incredible 246 banded which is almost 5 times the previous high.

On April 25, 73 Ruby-crowned Kinglets made up the majority of 104 total birds banded. Northern Waterthrush, Savannah Sparrow, Alder Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Tennessee Warbler, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, Gray-cheeked and Hermit Thrush, Common Yellowthroat and Hammond's Flycatcher all broke previous records. Two Yellow-rumped Warblers exhibited a yellow wash on their throat feathers suggesting possible hybridization between Myrtle and Audubon's races.



Hollie, Cora and Brenna (baby) Murphy-Kelly



male Blackpoll Warbler

A number of the species of birds banded at Albert Creek are rarely banded at other North American stations. For example, we were amazed with the season total of 12 Solitary Sandpipers and 5 Olive-sided Flycatchers. Once again, we color banded Rusty Blackbirds this year and managed to band a record 80 individuals. Once again we proved that the site is a great place to monitor migration and band a wide variety of species.



Solitary Sandpiper



Rusty Blackbird

Weather conditions often produce many challenges. Operating the station is not always easy and this was a spring to remember. We started off the season with snowshoes strapped to our feet and quickly switched them for hip and chest waders. Water levels were at an all time high and instead of gradually lowering throughout the season they actually rose. I was forced to wear hip waders for the entire season. Freezing temperatures were also a problem. Some mornings saw a low of -10C even well into the month of May. We woke up to 2 inches of snow on May 13. This was also the weekend that CBCs "On the Road Again" was at Albert Creek filming. Luckily they were able to extend their stay and get

all the footage they needed. The show is scheduled to air on January 11. We saw record precipitation and rarely a sunny day. This had an effect on the breeding success of the local Wood Frog population as there was a noticeable decrease in egg masses.

Predators and large mammals also kept us on our toes. One of the nets was destroyed by a moose that walked through it one night. Predation by Northern Harriers was a problem for about a week and we were often forced to close nets to ensure bird safety. We once again welcomed Johnson Elementary school groups at the station. Banding demonstrations were given to kindergarten through grade seven. Volunteers provided 432 hours of help this spring. Carlo Acuna of New Westminster, BC deserves special mention as he helped out for nearly 5 weeks. Furthermore a total of 353 visitor hours were tallied this spring.

Fall Season

The fall season was July 27 to September 23 for a total of 57 days. Banding numbers were similar to last fall with 2577 birds of 46 species with a slightly lower net effort. Downy Woodpecker and Pine Grosbeak were added to our all time banding list for a total of 78 species banded since 2001. Our number one species banded this fall was Ruby-crowned Kinglet with an impressive 412 banded. Our second Ovenbird and our third Bay-breasted Warbler were banded this season. Record numbers for a fall season included American-tree Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and Rusty Blackbird. An impressive six Sharp-shinned Hawks and four Northern Shrikes were also banded.



Ovenbird

Inclement weather continued to be problematic as we were rained out on four days but overall the lower water levels and the better weather made for an easier time running nets. However, the clouds of mosquitoes and blackflies made for very challenging working conditions, primarily early in the season.



Ted and Brenna on a net run



Swamp Sparrow (left) & Lincoln's Sparrow (right)



immature Northern Shrike

Once again three crews of Y2C2 workers helped at the station over a three week period during the fall season. A total of 374 volunteer hours and 115 visitor hours were tallied. Other workers at the station included Sarah Davidson (Canadian Wildlife Service) and Michelle Christensen. Albert Creek's longest standing volunteer, Julie Bauer returned again this year to volunteer one week of her time. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Gwen Baluss of Juneau, Alaska who ran the station for a whole week while I was away in Quebec. Furthermore, a well deserved thank you goes to Jan Adamczewski of Watson Lake for volunteering when help was most needed at the end of the season. The coming months will be busy as we look for funding sources for the coming year. Ben and I plan to give a presentation to the Yukon Bird Club sometime in the new year.

Acknowledgements

Volunteers: Jan Adamczewski, Carlo Acuna, Ben Schonewille, Jukka Jantunen, Milada Pardovicova, Kim Melton, Jen Talerico, Reid Kennedy, Hollie Murphy-Kelly, Cora Kelly, Hazel & Dale Ireland, Reiner Rembe, Riley Brodhagen, Jean Legare, Julie Bauer, Don & Sharyl Hultgren (Tuluca, IL), Aaron Haiman (Berkeley, CA), Gwen Baluss (Juneau, AK), Christopher Coxen, Cynthia Onions, Judy Klein, Christian Klein, Cameron Svensrui, Debbie Coxen, Marina Milligan, Kyle Russell, Martin Owen, Adriana Bacheschi, Shirley Hill, Todd Powell, Shannon Barker.

Student programs: Y2C2; Brodie Smith, River Walton, Meagan Grabowski, Alex Jessup, Raphael Roy-Jauvain, Andrew Craigen, James Walton, Adria Collins, Lars Hartling, Holly Enns, Corey Melchior, Jaime Wintemute, Ashley Fischer, Frank Annau. STEP student; Jesse Walchuk. Watson Lake Elementary School.

Banders in charge: Ted Murphy-Kelly, Gwen Baluss, Ben Schonewille. **Banders:** Jukka Jantunen, Michelle Christensen, Sarah Davidson, Julie Bauer, Gwen Baluss, Ben Schonewille, Marina Milligan, Hollie Murphy-Kelly, Carlo Acuna.

Colleague and data manager: Ben Schonewille
Logistical help: Todd Powell (Yukon Environment) Shannon Barker (YEnv), Shirley Hill (Forestry), Miles Thorpe (Forestry), Pat Macdonell (Forestry), Pam Sinclair (CWS), Cameron Eckert (YEnv), Tom Jung (YEnv), Hazel Ireland (YEnv), Mark Brodhagen (YEnv), Theresa Gulliver, (CPAWS), Karen Baltgailis (YCS).

Funding: Yukon Environment, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environmental Awareness Fund (YTG), Lotteries Yukon, Yukon Bird Club, Northern Research Institute, Southeast Yukon Proper Land Use Society, Y2C2. Trailers provided by Yukon Environment and forestry. Lodging provided by Yukon Environment – Liard Region program.



**Happy banders at Albert Creek
(L to R):**

Ian Kickbush, Jesse Walchuk,
Carlo Acuna, Ben Schonewille,
Julie Bauer, Hollie Murphy-Kelly

Totals for all species banded at Albert Creek in 2006					
SPECIES	Spring	Fall	SPECIES	Spring	Fall
Sharp Shinned hawk	2	6	Yellow-rumped Warbler	266	113
Solitary Sandpiper	12		Townsend's Warbler		1
Wilson's Snipe	4	1	Blackpoll Warbler	62	32
Belted Kingfisher	1		Black-and-white Warbler	1	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	16	18	American Redstart	15	47
Downy Woodpecker		1	Ovenbird		1
Northern Flicker		1	Northern Waterthrush	92	95
Olive-sided Flycatcher	5		Common Yellowthroat	62	228
Western Wood-pewee	4		Wilson's Warbler	396	218
Alder Flycatcher	78	174	Western Tanager	1	1
Least Flycatcher	3	10	American-tree Sparrow	196	222
Hammond's Flycatcher	14	8	Chipping Sparrow	8	1
Say's Phoebe	1		Savannah Sparrow	42	13
Northern Shrike		4	Fox Sparrow	28	53
Blue-headed Vireo		2	Lincoln's Sparrow	23	125
Warbling Vireo	9	22	Swamp Sparrow	4	40
Gray Jay	1	2	White-throated Sparrow	18	22
Black-capped Chickadee		15	White-crowned Sparrow	14	22
Boreal Chickadee	3	8	Golden-crowned Sparrow	2	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	246	412	Dark-eyed Junco	70	180
Gray-cheeked Thrush	23	16	Lapland Longspur	35	
Swainson's Thrush	43	93	Red-winged Blackbird	9	
Hermit Thrush	6	6	Rusty Blackbird	80	35
American Robin	30	2	Pine Grosbeak		2
Varied Thrush	3	7	Purple Finch	8	
American Pipit	5		White-winged Crossbill	16	
Bohemian Waxwing	9		Common Redpoll	46	1
Tennessee Warbler	61	15			
Orange-crowned Warbler	214	151	TOTAL SPECIES BANDED	51	46
Yellow Warbler	313	121	TOTAL BIRDS BANDED	2601	2577
Magnolia Warbler	1	29	TOTAL NET HRS	4376	6002
Bay-breasted Warbler		1	BIRDS / 100 NET HRS	59.4	42.9

Teslin Lake Bird Banding – 2006

Ben Schonewille



male American Redstart

Teslin Lake Bird Banding Station began its second year of operation this past spring. The station continues to be supported financially by the Teslin Renewable Resources Council, Yukon Environment, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), and Yukon Bird Club. One goal of the Teslin Lake Banding Station is to be a sister station to the Albert Creek Banding Station near Watson Lake and compliment the to the ever growing knowledge base of bird migration in the southern Yukon. A secondary goal is to continue to collect baseline information on the bird life found in the Teslin region.

For 2006, the Teslin Lake Banding Station was operated in a different location from 2005. The study site used in 2005 (located on Nisutlin Bay) was found to be very biased in terms of catching a diverse group of birds due to the habitat types found there. The new site used in 2006 consisted of a small wetland surrounded by various shrubs and was located on the shore of Teslin Lake in close proximity to the Teslin Lake Government Campground (approximately 12 km NW of Teslin). When choosing this site it was hoped that the abundance of low level shrubs would allow a greater number of birds to be captured in the mist nets used to capture birds. The site chosen did not come within its drawbacks however, for example the close proximity to Teslin Lake made for windy conditions on a number of days. Windy conditions can greatly reduced the number of birds captured as the mist nets do not work effectively in such conditions. Furthermore, the rapidly rising waters

of Teslin Lake during June resulted in a large portion of the study site becoming flooded. While this hampered day to day operation of the station, it appeared to draw a large number of wetland dwelling species to the area.

During the spring season, the station was operated for 26 days over the period April 16 to June 11. Due to poor weather, a portion (6) of these days were not considered full days of operation. While it would have been optimum to run the station continuously during the spring migration, this was not possible due to logistical and primarily financial constraints. During the spring season a total of 2,050 net hours was tabulated resulting in 802 birds of 48 species being banded. This resulted in 39 birds banded per 100 net hours. The fall season was not run officially; however, 6 days were operated sporadically between July 14 and September 3. During this period 155 birds of 21 birds were banded.



male Orange-crowned Warbler – April 30

April 16-30

The season started off prior to start of any major migration movement as the station was setup during the middle of April. During this time the vast majority of birds at the study site were species which are year round residents in the Yukon or are very early migrants to the area. During the month of April (8 days), the most common species banded was Common Redpoll with Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Juncos and Ruby-crowned Kinglets also being banded in relatively higher numbers. The number of many species of

sparrows such as Fox, American-tree and White-crowned Sparrows were banded and observed in lower than expected numbers. During the final few days of April, the first warblers (Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) were also banded.

May 1-7

The banding station was operated for 3 days during this period. There was a significant increase in the number of birds passing during this time. May 1 was a particularly busy day with 112 birds banded. The majority of birds banded were the common and widespread Dark-eyed Junco and Yellow-rumped Warbler. A large flock of Bohemian Waxwings were in the area during this week feeding on left over berries from the previous season. These birds provided an interesting opportunity for aging and sexing birds caught as plumage characteristics such as the number and length of waxy appendages can be used in determining age and sex.

May 11-14

During this period, the station was operated for four days. However, the inclement weather (wind, rain) greatly reduced the capture rate of birds during this time. Despite the poor weather, new species banded during this period included Wilson's Warbler, Say's Phoebe and Olive-sided Flycatcher. The number of the common Ruby-crowned Kinglet appeared to be much less common during this time period.



Olive-sided Flycatcher – May 14

May 20-28

The station was operated for 5 days during this time period. This week of operation was all about quality rather than quantity. A mere 156 individual birds were banded; however, these birds were made up of 27 species. One of the most intriguing birds banded was an Eastern Phoebe which

constituted the only Teslin record for this species and is one of only a handful of Yukon records outside of the extreme southeastern portion of the territory. Another truly exciting capture was a hybrid chickadee which appeared to be a cross between a Boreal and Mountain Chickadee.



hybrid Boreal x Mountain Chickadee – May 20



Eastern Phoebe – May 27

June 1-11

The station was operated for 6 days during this time period. The majority of birds banded during this period were species which can be referred to as "late spring migrants". Alder Flycatchers were the most common species banded during this time with Swainson's Thrush and Yellow Warbler also being very common. A number of species at the margins of their breeding are were also banded during the first few days of June. For example, 6 American Redstarts made for exciting captures as this number of individuals of this species were unexpected in the Teslin region. Other exciting captures during this time included a male MacGillivray's Warbler, a female Western Tanager, four Tennessee Warblers and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.



male MacGillivray's Warbler – June 4



female Western Tanager – June 4



Yellow-bellied Flycatcher – June 11

Fall Season: July 14 - September 3

The fall season was operated very sporadically with the following 6 days being covered; July 14, 30, 31, August 5, 6, and September 3. As is typically the case during the fall season, the majority of birds banded were young birds (HY-

Hatch Year). Furthermore, a number of the adult birds banded during the spring season were recaptured during the fall season (particularly in July).



juvenile Brewer's (Timberline) Sparrow – September 3



juvenile Northern Waterthrush – July 31

In summary, the 2006 season at the Teslin Lake Bird Banding Station can be considered a success. Despite prolonged periods of inclement weather and only a moderate amount of effort (net hours), a significant number of birds of a wide variety of species were banded. This season provided a valuable learning experience for the newly chosen study site which supports the fact that the future operation of a banding station at this location is feasible. In closing, a big thank you to all of those who visited the station to provide support and volunteer your time in making this season a success. For more information or to volunteer at the Teslin Lake Bird Banding Station next spring please feel free to email; bschonewille@ATdynamics.com.

Totals for all species banded at Teslin Lake in 2006							
SPECIES	Spring	Fall	Total	SPECIES	Spring	Fall	Total
Solitary Sandpiper		2	2	Yellow Warbler	50	19	69
Spotted Sandpiper	2		2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	63	5	68
Belted Kingfisher		8	8	Blackpoll Warbler	21	4	25
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2		2	Northern Waterthrush	14	10	24
Olive-sided Flycatcher	11		11	MacGillivray's Warbler	1		1
Western Wood-pewee	2		2	American Redstart	6	4	10
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1		1	Common Yellowthroat	17	4	21
Alder Flycatcher	38	18	56	Wilson's Warbler	54	5	59
Least Flycatcher	4		4	American-tree Sparrow	13	1	14
Hammond's Flycatcher	5		5	Chipping Sparrow	3		3
Say's Phoebe	2		2	Brewer's Sparrow		1	1
Eastern Phoebe	1		1	Savannah Sparrow	2	2	4
Warbling Vireo	1	4	5	Fox Sparrow	3		3
Horned Lark	3		3	Lincoln's Sparrow	6	1	7
Black-capped Chickadee	4	3	7	White-crowned Sparrow	13		13
Boreal Chickadee	3		3	Dark-eyed Junco	137	5	142
Hybrid Chickadee	1		1	Red-winged Blackbird	1		1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	51	3	54	Rusty Blackbird	3		3
Gray-cheeked Thrush	2		2	Pine Grosbeak	2		2
Swainson's Thrush	35	10	45	Purple Finch	3		3
Hermit Thrush	1		1	White-winged Crossbill	5		5
American Robin	35	5	40	Common Redpoll	107		107
Varied Thrush	1		1	Pine Siskin	1		1
American Pipit	2		2				
Western Tanager	1		1	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	802	115	917
Bohemian Waxwing	40		40	TOTAL SPECIES	48	21	51
Tennessee Warbler	4		4	TOTAL NET HOURS	2050	.	.
Orange-crowned Warbler	25	1	26	BIRDS / 100 NET HRS	39.1	.	.



male Common Yellowthroat – May 30



Tennessee Warbler – June 2

Field Notes: Observations from the field

Please report your observations to YBC sightings coordinator, Helmut Grünberg (phone 667-6703; email: grunberg AT yknet.ca), or Cameron Eckert (phone: 667-4630; email: cdeckert AT northwester.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. All observations will be forwarded to the Canadian Wildlife Service for inclusion in the comprehensive Birds of the Yukon Database.

Winter 2005/06 (December, January, February)

compiled by Cameron Eckert and Helmut Grünberg

Northerners put up with the cold but love the snow. The same is true for northern birds that use snow to their advantage to survive intensely cold conditions. The delight that greeted southern Yukon's copious late-fall snow turned to disbelief when an early December melt set in. The remainder of the winter saw little snow, with one nasty cold snap at the end of the season. Our appreciation goes to the diligent contributors who seek out signs of life during the long dark season.

The traditional wintering flock of **Mallards** at McIntyre Creek wetlands numbered 22 on 26 Dec (CE). A male **Lesser Scaup** at Carcross 9–17 Dec (CE; HG, RH; DK; PS) provided a rare Yukon winter record. The waters below the Whitehorse dam are the Yukon's winter hotspot for **Barrow's Goldeneye**; an adult male was there 29 Dec – 31 Jan (BB; HG).

The Yukon's ever-reliable wintering pair of **Bald Eagles** was right on cue at McIntyre Creek for the 26 Dec Whitehorse Christmas Bird Count (CE). Individual birds were seen at the Whitehorse escarpment 9 Dec (JT) and at the Whitehorse landfill 13 Dec (HG). After coming back from the brink of extinction in Whitehorse, the **Rock Pigeon** population remained steady at ten birds throughout the season (LP, HG, m.ob.) Southern Yukon seemed poised for a strong showing of **Northern Hawk Owls** until the massive melt in early December severely reduced the snow cover; as snow conditions slowly improved, a few were seen in the Whitehorse area (PR, AS, KO, GW, MW), and three were recorded on the Haines Junction Christmas Bird Count 27 Dec (*fide* DH).

A **Northern Shrike**, scarce in winter, was noted at Shallow Bay, Lake Laberge 2 Dec (CM). A **Steller's Jay** at Tagish from 14 Feb on (CA, CR) may be the same one that has been seen in the area for the past few years. Whitehorse reported 1075 **Common Ravens** during the Christmas

Bird Count on 26 Dec, the highest count since 1997/98. **Mountain Chickadee** occurs only in southern Yukon; Christmas Count totals this year included five in Carcross 17 Dec (*fide* DK), one at Marsh Lake-Yukon River 18 Dec (*fide* HG), three in Whitehorse 26 Dec (*fide* WN), and one in Haines Junction on 27 Dec (*fide* DH). It has been just over 10 years since the last winter report of **Golden-crowned Kinglet**; this year, a count of five was made on the Carcross CBC 17 Dec (*fide* DK), and five were noted on the lower slopes of Montana Mountain at Carcross 28 Feb (CE).



*Golden-crowned Kinglet – Montana Mt, 28 February 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert*



*Northern Mockingbird – Whitehorse, 19 December 2005
Photo Cameron Eckert*

The Yukon's winter prize, a **Northern Mockingbird**, first spotted 13 Nov, was seen again 11 Dec (MG), 16 Dec (AH), and on 19 Dec it finally stayed in one place long enough for a photo (CE, PS, HG); it was seen infrequently through 14 Jan (CE; GP; ASi, CS) but not thereafter. Large flocks of many hundreds of **Bohemian Waxwings** seen in Whitehorse from late fall through early winter had all but disappeared by the 26 Dec Christmas Bird Count; a late winter flock of 30 in Dawson 28 Feb (ML) may have been a vanguard of spring. Rare sparrows in Whitehorse were a **Song Sparrow**, first reported in late fall, that survived through the winter (CE; HG, CO, SM, DM, BR) and a **White-throated Sparrow** 26 Dec–18 Jan (MW; HG; AR; HS). A **Fox Sparrow** wintered at the Old Alaska Highway west of Whitehorse (BA). **White-crowned Sparrow** reports, all from southern Yukon, included an immature in Whitehorse from 8 Dec on (BaS, BoS; HG), an adult near Shallow Bay from 1 Dec on (CM, KO), and an adult in Whitehorse 26 Dec (CO, HG). **Dark-eyed Juncos** were reported in small numbers in the Whitehorse area and in Teslin; one was recorded on the Mayo Christmas Bird Count 29 Dec (*vide* MOD); and most impressive was one that survived all winter in Dawson, where temperatures got down to -46°C (ML). Small numbers of **Snow Buntings** were reported across southern Yukon through the season.

A **Pine Grosbeak** was picked from the top of a spruce tree and eaten by a Common Raven in Whitehorse 16 Feb (MW). **Red Crossbills** were seen in higher-than-normal numbers through the season in Whitehorse east to Teslin. The abundant White Spruce cone crop in southern Yukon attracted high numbers of **White-winged**

Spring 2006 (March, April, May)

compiled by Cameron Eckert and Helmut Grünberg

Spring is *the* season for birders in the Yukon and connecting with observers throughout the territory reveals the profound excitement that greets the wave of diversity that washes over the landscape. The weather folks described the spring as “average”, but to most Yukoners it felt cold. However, deep and lingering snow in the alpine areas and a few spring blizzards produced excellent birding.

In southern Yukon, unusually high numbers of **Greater White-fronted** and **Cackling Geese**, and numerous flocks of **Snow Geese** were noted

Crossbills. **Redpoll** numbers were very low throughout much of the Yukon, and the typical late-winter build-up never materialized. It is not clear if two **Pine Siskins** seen 26 Feb in Teslin (BeS) were wintering birds or early spring migrants.



*Pine Siskin – Teslin, banded 11 March 2006
Photo Ben Schonewille*

Contributors: Clay Anderson, Bob Atkinson, Brian Bell, Cameron Eckert, Mike Gill, Helmut Grünberg, Rick Halladay, Alice Hartling, David Henry, Dan Kemble, Maria Ledergerber, Sharone Maldaver, Clay Martin, many observers (m. ob.), Diana Mulloy, Wendy Nixon, Mark O'Donoghue (MOD), Clive Osborne, Katie Ostrom, Gerry Perrier, Luigi Pivetta, Claudia Rector, Arla Repka, Pat Roach, Barbara Robertson, Ben Schonewille (BeS), Alex Simmons (ASi), Carolyn Simmons (CS), Pam Sinclair, Adam Skrutkowski (ASK), Helen Stuart, Barbara Studds (BaS), Bob Studds (BoS), Jennifer Trapnell, Gerry Whitley, Mary Whitley.

through the season (m. ob.). The Yukon's long-awaited first **Ross's Goose**, an adult, was with 16 **Snow Geese** at Shallow Bay, Lake Laberge 4-11 May (CE, m. ob.). A single **Brant** at Shallow Bay 15 May (CE) was record early; as usual, small flocks were seen at various wetlands in the Whitehorse area through late May (m. ob.). At M'Clintock Bay, Marsh Lake, swan numbers peaked 20 Apr at 1001 **Trumpeters** and 515 **Tundras** (JJ). A female **American Black Duck** “wannabe” at Shallow Bay 5 May showed perhaps just a little too much “**Mallard**” to qualify as a Yukon first (CE). A hybrid male **Mallard x**

Northern Pintail was at Judas Creek wetland, Marsh Lake 24 May (JHa *et al.*). “**Eurasian**” **Green-winged Teal** sightings, all single males, included one at Shallow Bay 7 May (BD, HG, YS), one at M'Clintock Bay 13 May (CE), and one at Tagish 17 May (CE, JJ). A rare **Hooded Merganser**, a male, was seen at Shallow Bay during the Yukon Birdathon 26 May (HG).

The YBC field trip in search of **Dusky Grouse** (till recently called **Blue Grouse**) at Nares Mountain near Carcross 28 Apr was successful with five birds seen including one male displaying (DK).



Ross's Goose (2nd from left) – Shallow Bay, 5 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert



Cackling Geese of the minima race (front) – Shallow Bay
15 May 2006. Photo Cameron Eckert



Brant – Horse Creek/Shallow Bay, 15 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert

An **Osprey** is always a nice sight; one was flying over Tagish Lake during a Yukon Bird Club trip 30 Apr (HG *et al.*). **Bald Eagles** are fairly common, but seeing one going down in a lake and taking a **Northern Pintail** out of the water was quite a sight; this happened during a Yukon Bird Club trip to Tagish 30 Apr (HG *et al.*). A **Golden Eagle** was seen perched near a nest at the Yukon Wild Road during a Yukon Bird Club trip west of Whitehorse 20 Apr (BD *et al.*). Seven calling **Soras** at Swan Lake north of Whitehorse on 26 May was a high number (HG).

A fantastic shorebird migration in the Whitehorse area in May yielded an impressive 30 species. A sensational late-May fallout at Judas Creek wetland provided a remarkable opportunity to hear the bizarre songs of high Arctic breeders such as **Stilt** and **White-rumped Sandpipers**, and **Red Knot**. As well, **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were engrossed in their frenetic trance-like breeding displays. Southern Yukon shorebird highlights included nine **Pacific Golden-Plovers** during 5-20 May at Shallow Bay, M'Clintock Bay and Carcross (CE); a loose flock of 26 **Spotted Sandpipers** at Lewes Marsh near Marsh Lake 20 May (CE, PS); a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Shallow Bay 14 May (CE); three **Red Knots** at Judas Creek wetland 30 May - 2 Jun (CE, PS, DM); 600 **Semipalmated** and 900 **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Judas Creek wetland 29 May (CE); higher than normal numbers of **White-rumped Sandpipers** with high counts of six on 29 & 31 May at Judas Creek wetland (CE, PS); higher than normal numbers of **Stilt Sandpipers** with 19 at Shallow Bay 28 May, and 12 at Judas Creek wetland 29 May (CE); four **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** at Judas Creek wetland 29 May, nine there 30 May (CE), and six at the Whitehorse airport 31 May (WN); and a high count of 25 **Wilson's Phalaropes** at Swan Lake 26 May (HG). Four **Wandering Tattlers** were seen at the species' favourite spring location on Lake Laberge near Jackfish Bay 18 May (CE, PS, SD); one was seen there the same date (HG, TH) and again 26 May (HG). A **Hudsonian Godwit**, rare in southwestern Yukon, was at Haines Junction 6-7 May (CD, LD, JB), and five were observed at Slim's River 12 May (LF). Two leucistic shorebird species seen this spring were a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Tagish 17 May (CE, JJ), and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Judas Creek wetland 29 May (CE). A **Black-bellied Plover** and a **Dunlin**, both rare, were reported from Jarvis Creek, sw Yukon 8 May (LF).



Red Knots (3) – Judas Creek, 30 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert



White-rumped Sandpiper – Judas Creek, 31 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert



Long-billed Dowitcher – Judas Creek, 29 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert



Semipalmated Sandpiper – Judas Creek, 30 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert

A wet blizzard in the Whitehorse area on 13 May grounded high numbers of **Bonaparte's Gulls** with ~2000 at M'Clintock Bay (CE), ~760 at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons (HG), and ~1000 at Carcross (CE). **Mew Gulls** staged a strong migration in southern Yukon with flocks of ~2000 at Shallow Bay 11 May (CE, PS), ~800 at M'Clintock Bay 13 May (CE), ~1000 at Carcross 13 May (CE), and 620 on the Yukon River in Whitehorse 13 May (MB). A nest-building pair of **Ring-billed Gulls** in Whitehorse 19 May (CE, PS) provided the first sign of breeding in the territory; however, the pair apparently did not fulfill their nesting endeavors. **Herring Gull** migration peaked in southern Yukon in late April with high counts of 850 at M'Clintock Bay 19-20 Apr (JJ), and ~2000 at the Whitehorse landfill 26 Apr (CE). **Glaucous-winged Gulls** were thin this spring in southern Yukon; a 1st-yr bird was in Whitehorse 25 Apr (CE); and another was in Carcross 2 May (CE). **Arctic Tern** migration was still under way late in the season with ~150 on Marsh Lake 29 May (CE).



Ring-billed Gull pair – Quartz Rd marsh, 19 May 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert

Whitehorse **Rock Pigeons** increased to 12 by 29 May (LP). A pair of **Great Horned Owls** and two young were seen on a nest at Swan Lake north of Whitehorse 10 May (BD, HG); in 2004 this nest was occupied by **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawks**. Five **Short-eared Owls** were noted between Haines Junction and Beaver Creek, southwestern Yukon 18 Apr (KA); around the same date one was seen at the Alaska Highway west of Whitehorse during a Yukon Bird Club trip 20 Apr (BD *et al.*); and one was seen flying high and gliding near Shallow Bay 7 May (BD, HG, YS); one was also reported from the Dezadeash River, southwestern Yukon, 29 Apr (LF). Casual in southern Yukon was a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** heard near Marsh Lake 12 Apr (JJ).

A pair of **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** at Dawson from 24 Apr (FB, PB) was at the edge of the species' range. Two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were frequenting a suet feeder at Haines Junction and were vigorously defending the food against **Gray Jays** by chasing them away and even against a **Hairy Woodpecker** 3-9 Apr (RJ). Observations of sapsuckers at Shallow Bay during May found that hybrid **Yellow-bellied x Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were far more frequent than pure **Yellow-bellieds** (CE). A female **Three-toed Woodpecker** sporting a pristine ivory-coloured bill was a curious sight at M'Clintock Bay 17 May (CE, JJ).



hybrid Red-breasted x Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Shallow Bay, 5 May 2006. Photo Cameron Eckert

An **Eastern Phoebe** banded at Teslin 27 May (BS, JHa, WN) provided the first local record. In southern Yukon, heavy snow conditions in alpine areas resulted in high numbers of migrant **Horned Larks** in the lowlands (m. ob.). A nice find was a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** during a Yukon Bird Club trip to the McIntyre wetlands (CE *et al.*). A hybrid **Boreal x Mountain Chickadee** was banded at Teslin 20 May (BS). The two Yukon banding stations provided a concise account of warbler migration; the most common warblers at the Albert Creek banding station during 22 Apr - 4 June were **Wilson's Warbler** (387), **Yellow-rumped Warbler** (364), **Yellow Warbler** (306), **Orange-crowned Warbler** (214), **Northern Waterthrush** (89), **Blackpoll Warbler** (62), and **Tennessee Warbler** (53) (TMK); the most common warblers at the Teslin banding station during 22 Apr - 11 June were **Yellow-rumped Warbler** (63), **Wilson's Warbler** (54), **Yellow Warbler** (50), **Orange-crowned Warbler** (25), **Blackpoll Warbler** (21), and **Northern Waterthrush** (14)

(BS). A 2nd-yr male **Black-and-white Warbler** banded at the Albert Creek banding station 21 May provided the 3rd record for the station (TMK). An **American Tree Sparrow** at Mayo 8 Apr was early (MOD). A "**Sooty**" **Fox Sparrow** frequenting a Whitehorse feeder 22-23 Apr (CE, PS) provided the Yukon's first record away from its limited breeding grounds in the Coast Mountains. A wintering **Song Sparrow** in Whitehorse disappeared between 1-19 April (HG). A male "**Oregon**" **Dark-eyed Junco** frequented a Whitehorse-area feeder from 25 Apr through the season (LK, JHy, BD, HG). Massive flocks of thousands of **Lapland Longspurs** were in the Shallow Bay area, Yukon 4-5 May (CE; BD, HG).



"Sooty" Fox Sparrow – Porter Creek, 22 April 2006
Photo Cameron Eckert

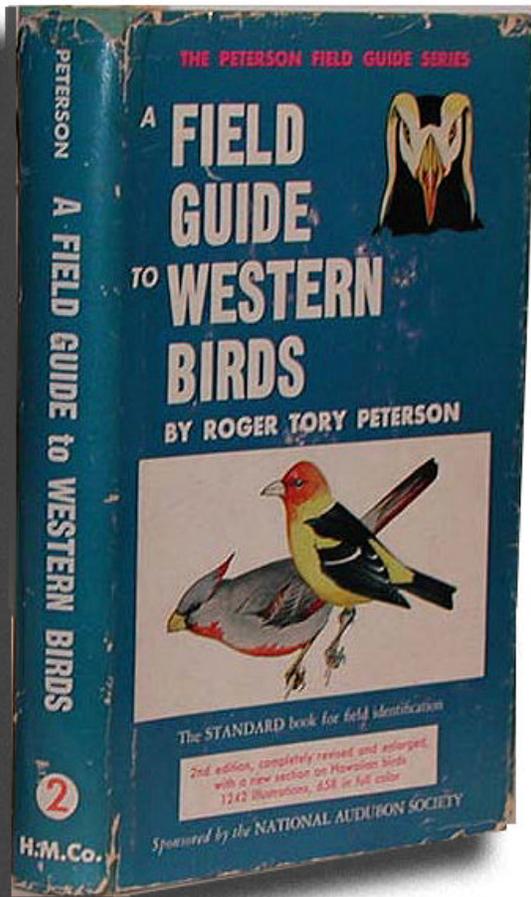
A male **Brewer's Blackbird** at M'Clintock Bay 13 Apr (JJ) provided the season's only report. A flock of up to 80 **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** were noted in Dawson 9 Apr (ML, JF). A male **Purple Finch** at Mayo 29-30 Apr provided a first local record (MOD). Numerous newly fledged **Common Redpolls** seen in Whitehorse and further east indicated widespread breeding in lowland areas resulting from heavy snow conditions in the sub-alpine this spring.

Contributors: Ken Anderson, Julie Bauer, Fred Berger, Palma Berger, Malkolm Boothroyd, Boris Dobrowolsky, Sarah Davidson, Claude DuLac (CD), Libby DuLac (LD), Cameron Eckert, Jack Fraser, LLOYD Freese, Helmut Grünberg, Thomas Hafen, Jim Hawkings (JHa), Jim Hyash (JHy), Jukka Jantunen, Rita Jux, Dan Kemble, Lee Kirkpatrick, Maria Ledergerber, Doug McRae (DM), Ted Murphy-Kelly (TMK), Wendy Nixon, many observers (m. ob.), Mark O'Donoghue (MOD), and others (*et al.*), Luigi Pivetta, Ben Schonewille, Pam Sinclair, Yammy Stote.

Bird name changes

Helmut Grünberg

I looked at an old 1966 Golden Guide recently and realized how many names have changed since then. Name changes are often the result of “lumping” two or more species into a single new species and “splitting” two or more subspecies of a species into two or more new species. Some name changes are done to distinguish a North American species from a European species that has the same name. You will find a few name changes that just add “Northern” or “American” to the older name. This table shows name changes since the old Golden Guide. It only lists species that have been recorded in the Yukon. While most are correctly named in the recent Yukon Checklist of May 2005, this list includes the one change since then (i.e. Dusky Grouse).



CURRENT NAME	FORMER NAME
Greater White-fronted Goose	White-fronted Goose
Cackling Goose Canada Goose	Canada Goose
Tundra Swan	Whistling Swan
American Wigeon	American Widgeon
Eurasian Wigeon	European Widgeon
Northern Shoveler	Shoveler
Northern Pintail	Pintail
Black Scoter	Common Scoter
Long-tailed Duck	Oldsquaw
Dusky Grouse	Blue Grouse
Pacific Loon	Arctic Loon
Great Egret	Common Egret
Northern Harrier	Marsh Hawk
Northern Goshawk	Goshawk
Red-tailed Hawk	Harlan's Hawk Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel	Sparrow Hawk
Merlin	Pigeon Hawk
American Golden-Plover Pacific Golden-Plover	Lesser Golden Plover
Upland Sandpiper	Upland Plover
Red-necked Stint	Rufous-necked Stint
Red Knot	Knot
Wilson's Snipe	Common Snipe
Red-necked Phalarope	Northern Phalarope
Rock Pigeon	Rock Dove
Northern Hawk Owl	Hawk-Owl
Northern Pygmy-Owl	Pygmy Owl
Northern Saw-whet Owl	Saw-whet Owl
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Red-breasted Sapsucker	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
American Three-toed Woodpecker	(Northern) Three-toed Woodpecker
Black-backed Woodpecker	Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker
Northern Flicker	Yellow-shafted Flicker Common Flicker
Alder Flycatcher	Trail's Flycatcher
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Western Flycatcher
Blue-headed Vireo	Solitary Vireo
Gray Jay	Canada Jay
American Crow	Common Crow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Rough-winged Swallow
Gray-headed Chickadee	Siberian Tit
Marsh Wren	Long-billed Marsh Wren
American Dipper	Dipper
Northern Mockingbird	Mockingbird
American Robin	Robin
Northern Wheatear	Wheatear
European Starling	Starling
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	Yellow Wagtail
American Pipit	Water Pipit
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Myrtle & Audubon's Warbler
Common Yellowthroat	Yellowthroat
American Tree Sparrow	Tree Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco	Slate-colored & Oregon Junco
Baltimore Oriole	Northern Oriole
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	Rosy Finch

YUKON BIRD CLUB

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

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

2006/2007 Board of Directors

- Mary Whitley, president
- Boris Dobrowolsky, treasurer
- Jenny Trapnell, secretary
- Malkolm Boothroyd, youth
- Pam Sinclair, special projects
- Patti Nash, field trips
- Helmut Grünberg, sightings
- Sarah Davidson, events
- Lee Kubica, checklist
- Nancy Hughes, Birdathon
- Jeanette McCrie, director at large
- Betty Sutton, director at large
- Cameron Eckert, director at large

Membership fees: Individual (\$10), Family (\$15), Senior/Student (\$5), Contributing (\$25), Supporting (\$50), Institutional (\$20). Family covers two or more people living at one address. Foreign members please pay with a Canadian dollar money order.

Yukon Bird Club

Box 31054, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 5P7
 E-mail: yukonbirdclub AT gmail.com
 www.yukonweb.com/community/ybc/

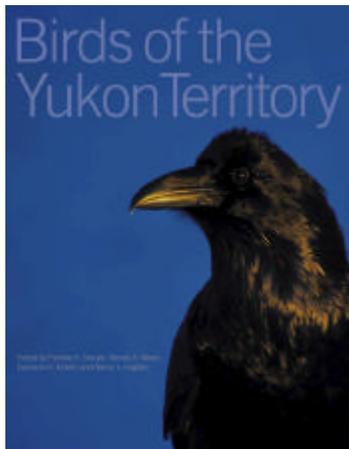
Yukon Warbler is published by the Yukon Bird Club. Copyright © 2006 Yukon Bird Club. All rights reserved. Printed material, artwork or photographs may not be reproduced by any means without permission from the author, artist or photographer. All other material may not be reproduced without the Editor's permission.

Long-eared Owl nest at Sulphur Lake, Yukon



Long-eared Owl – Sulphur Lake, Yukon. 21 September 2005
 Photo Cameron D. Eckert

One of the most amazing reports of summer 2005 was of a Long-eared Owl nest, about 700 km northwest of its range, at Sulphur Lake in sw Yukon. The discovery was made by “Squirrel Camp” biologists Mark Andruskiw, Adi Boon, and Christina Sobol. A downy fledgling was first seen at its nest on 9 July, followed by many sightings of 2 adults and the fledgling through 31 July. A check of the nest site by Cameron Eckert and Adi Boon on 21 September turned-up two owls still in the area. Unfortunately a pile of feathers found the next day indicated that one of the owls had been nailed by a Northern Goshawk.



on sale at Mac's Fireweed Books
 203 Main Street, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2B2
 Phone: (800) 661-0508



Long-eared Owl nest site at Sulphur Lake. Photo C.D. Eckert