

# YUKON WARBLER

*Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club*

Winter 2019-20



Cameron Eckert photo

*An immature Great Black-backed Gull, on 21 July 2018 at the Whitehorse dump, page 6*

## *In this issue:*

### ***Annual General Meeting***

*February 20, 7:00 pm - 9:00 p.m.*

*All welcome!*

*Come join us at the Sport Yukon boardroom*



*2019 Field Trips, pages 9 & 12*



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# Yukon Bird Club



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

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

## Membership fees

Individual	\$15.00
Family *	\$25.00
Senior/Student **	\$10.00
Institutional	\$50.00
Contributing	\$50.00
Supporting	\$100.00
Lifetime	\$200.00

\* Family memberships cover two or more people living at one address.

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

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

## For more information contact:

Yukon Bird Club  
4061-4th Avenue  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Y1A 1H1  
Canada  
[yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca)

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

## *We want your birding photos and stories!*

Thank you to all who contribute to make the *Yukon Warbler*. To make a submission, write to [newsletter@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:newsletter@yukonbirds.ca)

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

Go to:  
[yukonbirds.ca/join/](http://yukonbirds.ca/join/)

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

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# 25 Years of the Yukon Bird Club

*By Shyloh van Delft*

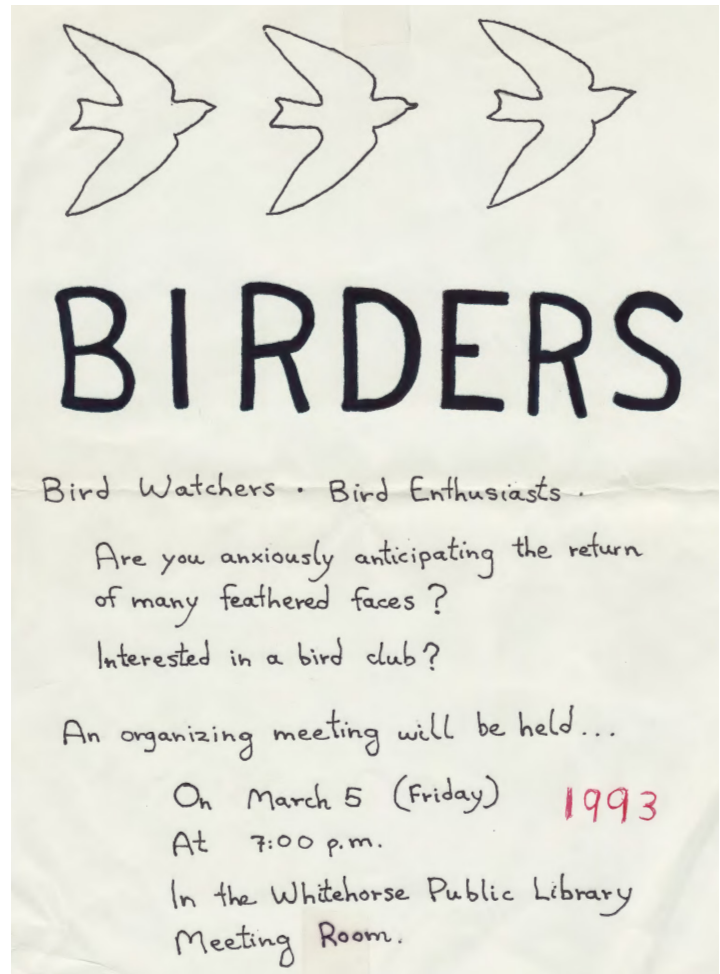
On a cold February day in 1993, Cameron Eckert, Pam Sinclair, Wendy Nixon and Helmut Grünberg gathered over hot coffees with a mission to fill a major gap in the Yukon. Although a birding community and strong body of knowledge already existed in the territory, no local bird club had yet been established. On March 5, 1993, these four people hosted the Yukon Bird Club's (YBC) founding meeting at the Whitehorse Public Library. "We were shocked – the library was just packed. Over 30 people, very keen on birds and wanting to form a bird club. It was pretty clear that people were wanting this to happen for some time" said Cameron Eckert. The YBC was officially formed that night with an 8-person board who got to work right away with the club's first newsletter and array of field trips, "and it's been an incredible ride ever since!" exclaims Eckert.

But what led to having 30 keen bird-lovers meeting in the library? People in the Yukon have had an interest in birds for a long time. First Nations and Inuvialuit living on the land in the Yukon have been monitoring and recording birds through oral tradition for more than 10,000 years. In the 1800s, fur traders, missionaries and gold seekers began documenting local birds along trap lines and travel routes. One famous historical icon, Martha Black, collected specimens and "made valuable contributions to our knowledge of Yukon birds" (Birds of the Yukon Territory, Sinclair et al. 2003).

However, the 1970s was a dynamic time within the Yukon in

regards to wildlife management and public interest in wildlife and the environment; in particular, birds took the spotlight. Interest in the Territory's petroleum resources spurred environmental assessments that included bird surveys; the creation of Kluane National Park triggered interest of and research into birds in that region; knowledge of the birds of central Yukon grew as Bob Frisch explored the remote areas around Dawson

and the Dempster Highway. Having just come through the Peregrine Falcon crisis of the 60s and been personally involved as a researcher, Dave Mossop not only continued his research into birds of prey but worked to enhance interest in birds by co-building the embryo of the Wildlife Viewing Program within the Yukon Government's Department of Environment. Around the same time, Mossop and a group of natural history enthusiasts approached the newly established Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) with the idea of creating a natural history chapter within the society. "We wanted something for people to get together and talk about enjoying the natural world," Mossop explains. The idea was to have monthly



meetings in which enthusiasts could gather to talk natural history and share experiences, as well as have a speaker come in to talk about their work. "Usually it was all about birds. Very quickly it just became all about birds. Probably the very first one, I gave a talk about birds."

Meanwhile, people from outside the Territory began moving in with an interest in birds.

"Helmut Grünberg was here at that time, and...at that point was not the bird person that he became ...He came out and helped me with my ptarmigan research one spring and he really turned on - he became this crazy man as we all know, interested in birds - which was wonderful to

*Continues on page 4*



### Continued from page 3

see," Mossop remembers. Helmut Grünberg played a prominent role in the YBC, and was a beloved birding icon in the Yukon. "[Helmut] was always such a smiling, friendly source of birding energy and wisdom. I never felt fully safe carpooling on birding trips with Helmut at the wheel, with his eyes always trained on the trees or sky rather than the road," Scott Williams (YBC Director) admits, laughing. Jim Hawkings, YBC Treasurer and Secretary, adds that "Helmut was definitely the driving of the YBC until Cameron and Pam arrived in the early 90s. Dave Mossop was also important in so many ways since the 70s...However there are scores of other people who have also made major contributions. To name a few: Bob Frisch, Wendy Nixon, Ted Murphy Kelly, Ben Schonewille, Shyloh van Delft, Mary Whitley. There are many more." Hawkings arrived in the Yukon in 1983: "I became involved with YCS almost immediately and organized the first Birdathon with YCS. I had previously organized similar Birdathons for Arctic Audubon Society in Fairbanks and thought it was a good idea for a fundraiser for YCS (and later the Bird Club)." However, it was the arrival of Pam Sinclair and Cameron Eckert from Ontario in the early 90s that triggered the critical step of structuring the club into a formal society. With the arrival of key players, the natural history club "...fairly quickly, as often happens because bird watching is so dominant in the natural history world...got hijacked by the bird freaks. And that's basically why it became a bird club" says Mossop.

Over the last 25 years, the YBC has hosted around a thousand field trips and events and many school talks in Whitehorse and the communities, advocated for several

bird-related conservation initiatives, published over 30 newsletters, and significantly enhanced knowledge of birds within the Territory. One of the YBC's earliest projects was the creation of a Yukon bird atlas, *Birds of the Yukon Territory*, originally started by Mossop through his work in the government and continued by the YBC. "It's a very valuable thing to the Territory, and that came about because of the birding crowd," says Mossop. "The book *Birds of the Yukon* was a landmark work," Hawkings verifies.

<b>THE YUKON BIRD CLUB</b>	
<i>1994/95 Board of Directors</i>	
<b>President:</b>	Cameron Eckert
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Jeremy Baumbach
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<b>Events Coordinator:</b>	Dave Mossop
<b>Sightings Coordinator:</b>	Helmut Grünberg
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*The goals of the Yukon Bird Club are to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Yukon birds and their habitats.*

Several YBC conservation initiatives stand out from over the years, particularly around the protection of McIntyre Creek from development activity, which was on the YBC's radar early on. "I remember making presentations in front of City Council [in 1994] and just having people look at us like we were from another planet for wanting to protect [McIntyre Creek] for birds," Eckert reflected. Before the establishment of Friends of McIntyre Creek, YBC members were the lone voices advocating to City Council the importance of the creek as an important wilderness wetland, watershed, and movement corridor for wildlife. Other YBC conservation advocacy involved Shallow Bay, Swan Lake, the Beaver and LaBiche Rivers, the Mayo area, Tagish

Narrows, and Ear Lake, among others. "And it's not always opposing some sort of development plan, it's also trying to work with people to make sure bird habitat concerns are taken into consideration," Eckert clarified.

But fundamentally, the club's biggest achievement has been getting Yukoners out to see and enjoy birds.

The most well-known YBC activities have been the public spring and fall field trips and events, which occur in every Yukon community where there is a birder willing to coordinate and lead a bird trip or event. One of the most popular YBC events has been the annual Yukon Birdathon in Whitehorse, a fundraiser event initially established by the YCS in the early 80s and organized by Hawkings for many of the last 35 years. "That's an amazing event, because it almost hasn't changed at all ...it's like a birding time capsule," describes Eckert.

Scott and Selena Williams moved to the Yukon in 2008, and getting involved with the YBC - particularly the 2009 spring field trips - was one of the first things they did. "It quickly became apparent to us that it was strong. There were an impressive number of field trip leaders and attendees who knew their stuff and who were eager to share their knowledge," says Scott. "I'm always impressed with Jukka Jantunen's ability to identify and tally waterfowl at Marsh Lake each April....I've enjoyed Boris Dobrowolsky's complaints (made in half-jest, apparently, but I think for at least two seasons running now) that he'd quit leading the bluebird and shrike field trip, given the almost selective absence of bluebirds and shrikes on these trips." Jennifer

Trapnell, YBC Director, author of the bird column "Time for Birds" in What's Up Yukon, and previous YBC Field Trip Coordinator, says the YBC has "always had wonderful trip leaders."

For Mary Whitley (YBC member and previously Board of Directors), events such as the Birdathon have played a significant role in her birding life. "I asked Jim Hawkings if I could do the Birdathon with him...I think I spent the 24 hours... chasing him around, and he was very patient. He would say over and over again, "that's a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. that's a Ruby-crowned Kinglet." Very patient. Which taught me to be patient with other people."

One of the things that I love the most about the YBC is that it isn't just a club. It's a community. The members have history together and care about each other. The older YBC generations are so good at mentoring newer members. Cameron took me under his wing when I first joined and has had such a positive influence in my life as a mentor. I remember attending my very first field trip when I was 14,

and Helmut and Cameron were both pointing out Northern Shovelers and American Wigeon and I felt so overwhelmed by the diversity... I remember wondering how anyone could memorize all of this, but those two and many others in the YBC have brought me a long way since then."

Every year brings something new, and the YBC has seen a lot of change over the last 25 years. "To me the greatest changes have come recently with the emergence of eBird as a wonderful means for all birdwatchers to contribute to knowledge on Yukon Birds. This has been helped by the advent of the internet, digital photography, GPS, smart phones, and social media, especially the Yukon Birds Facebook Group, which has offered an entire new forum for the exchange of bird information among enthusiasts and citizen scientists" reflects Hawkings. "Yukon is still a very big place with very few roads and a lot of remote places. It is still extremely important for as many people as possible to record what they see and hear as they travel around -- and to contribute it to the body of knowledge, for example via eBird."

In addition, despite the challenge many societies face in attracting the attention and participation of youth, recent years have seen a growing interest in birds by the Territory's younger generation. This is likely in thanks to Katie Aitken's Ornithology course at Yukon College, Julie Bauer's time mentoring youth through bird watching events in Haines Junction, Ben Schonewille, Ted Murphy-Kelly and Jukka Jantunen's efforts to train and mentor youth in bird banding, Shyloh's youth-targeted field trips, and many others. "I'm really hopeful and encouraged by the new generation of people getting involved in the club and I hope this trend continues" concludes Hawkings.

Over the last 25 years, the YBC has been a strong promoter of bird conservation, awareness, and appreciation, and is a local entity cared for by many Yukoners, young and old. This is a legacy the YBC intends to carry forward the next 25 years.



## Meet and Tweet Event

The Yukon Bird Club is hosting its annual Slideshow and Potluck Supper at Hellaby Hall on **Thursday January 23rd at 6:00pm**. Please bring a dish to share, as well as your five (maximum) favourite bird pictures on a memory stick for the slideshow. All YBC members and public are welcome to this free event!

**Shyloh van Delft photo**

*Northern Hawk Owl observed in Ibex Valley*





## Queen visits the Yukon

*By Cameron D. Eckert*

Well, not the British Monarch or the British band who created the Bohemian Rhapsody, but rather the grand and glorious Queen of Gulls. On 21 July 2018 I was at the Whitehorse dump to count Rusty Blackbirds, as part of monitoring this species of conservation concern. I counted the blackbirds and then waited for all large machinery to vacate the area to do a quick check of the gulls. Scanning the gull flock, the first bird I laid eyes on was an immature Great Black-backed Gull, as it utterly dominated a group of Herring Gulls. Great Black-backed is a gull I've searched for and dreamed of seeing since the day I

moved to the Yukon. It was a Great Black-backed Gull found by Rich MacIntosh at Kodiak, Alaska in February 1995 that made seeing one in the Yukon actually seem possible. Then in April 2016, Jukka Jantunen had a tantalizing observation of a potential Great Black-backed Gull at M'Clintock Bay. Now today, this large impressive gull stood just a few metres away, with ample opportunity for close study and photos. It dominated the Herring Gulls in size, being clearly larger, standing taller over the heads of Herring Gulls, with thicker legs, and a massive heavy bill. At one point, I watched the Great Black-backed grab a Herring Gull by the neck and pin it to the ground in a one-sided

battle over a scrap of food. Then the Great Black-backed smashed a Herring Gull for a cookie, and it was all the Herring Gulls could do but stand around in a retinue and watch the New Queen of the Dump enjoy her snack. And why a Queen and not a King? The head shape was angular and blocky when viewed from a variety of angles, but less so than I would expect of a male. I had a very good view of the mostly white rump, and mostly white tail with black sub-terminal barring forming a band – I also got good photos of this feature. The Great Black-backed called quite a few times – a deep resonant single-note long-call tossing its bill down and then to the sky, especially when

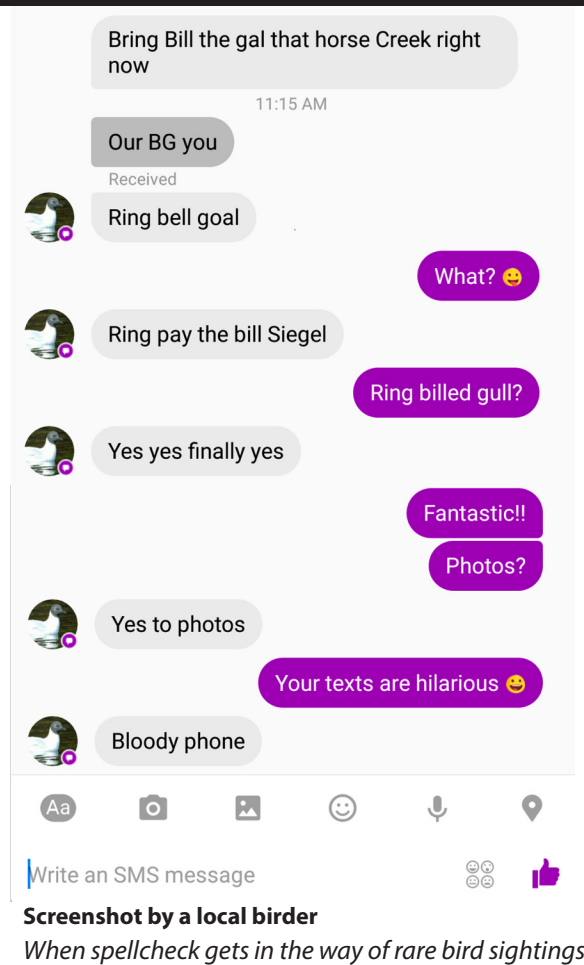




it had just thrashed a Herring Gull. The thick hefty bill was mostly black with a pinkish base to lower mandible, and at some angles and light I could see that the upper mandible was becoming pink towards the base; the very tip of the upper mandible was whitish. The thick legs were dull flesh in colour, with a bluish-flesh cast on the tibia. The overall impression of plumage was of a pale headed gull, with pale whitish underparts with scattered dark brown spots at the sides of the breast and undertail, and an overall dark back with a checkered black/white pattern on the mantle and scapulars. Tertials were medium-to-dark centred brown with a broad pale edge. The wing tips were a dark blackish-brown through the primaries and dark brown secondaries with a white trailing edge. It had newly moulted

P9 & P10 (counting in from outer primary) and these feathers were a solid dark grey with whitish tips. The greater covert were quite pale whitish-patterned grey with slightly darker brownish base which showed as a band across the folded wing. The photos show many finer plumage details which all serve to document this remarkable occurrence. What a cool gull – a long-held dream realized.

(for more photos, see [ebird.org/view/checklist/S47344031](http://ebird.org/view/checklist/S47344031))





# Birding with Kim Selbee

Photos submitted by Kim Selbee



## **Northern Harrier on the Hunt, above**

*Wheeling, hovering, swooping and diving, employing the element of surprise to flush out it's prey, the Northern Harrier is a skillful and beautiful hunter. I was able to capture this one in a marshy area near Haines Junction in May.*



## **Turkey Vulture Near Mayo, right**

*On a warm afternoon in July, just a few minutes drive from Mayo, a rather unusual silhouette from above caught my eye...was that a hawk? An eagle? What was that? I got as many photos as I could before it sailed out of sight.*

*On arriving at home in Whitehorse, I had a better look at it on my computer screen. It certainly appeared to be a Turkey Vulture, but I was confused as to why the skin on the head was not red, but black. A Black Vulture, maybe? I had never seen one, but quickly dismissed it after consulting my bird guides. Hmmm...then, I was surprised to read that the juvenile Turkey Vulture has a "pinkish-black" head that becomes red as it matures into an adult! Mystery solved, and my first sighting of this fascinating bird in the Yukon!*

## **Ptarmigan on Grey Mountain**

*While out hiking atop Grey Mountain this past May, my husband and I came across this very obliging Rock Ptarmigan, posing beside an inukshuk! it was one of a pair; the other one stayed hidden.*

*A very exciting day for me, as it was the first one I had ever seen outside of my guide books!*





# Field Trip Report: 2019 a season to behold!

From April 21 to November 20, nineteen awesome volunteers of the Yukon Bird Club lead twenty-two birding field trips in several communities and across Yukon, enabling birders to see a grand total of 119 species.

What percentage of all Yukon birds is that you may wonder? According to eBird data for 2019, Yukon had 247 bird species. Excluding bird data from Yukon's North and our Bird Observatories at Albert Creek and Teslin lake (approximately 25 species), that means participating in our field trips allowed birders to see over half of Yukon bird life!

This year we missed out on a YBC-led field trip to Tombstone's Weekend on the Wing, due to it being on the same day as our annual Helmet Grønberg Birdathon (which would have given us 2-3 more species such as Surfbird and Northern Weatear) but we're hoping to renew with that tradition in 2020.

In 2019, we added two new trips to our roster:

A May trip to the 911 pond in Mendenhall, which was very successful, with 34 birds species in a 1 km 40 minute walk, and produced

Yukon's only 2nd ever swift!

A July trip to the Copper Ridge Fen, with more of an entomological focus, because when birds are nesting, bugs are the next best thing to go searching for!

One of our most reliably spectacular outings is our annual beach walk to the mouth of Judas Creek on Marsh Lake. This year was no exception, seeing a total of 38 species and four glee-generating ones:

Black Tern, which only has 5 records outside of eastern Yukon

Red knot, which only has 10 Yukon records

Dunlin, a rare but annual shorebird

Black-bellied Plover, also a rare but annual shorebird

Also special thanks go to the Yukon Wildlife Preserve and their great staff for enabling and hosting

two special evening walks this year which were also very enjoyable!

In 2020 we'll be looking for a new trip leader in Watson Lake, and more generally, we're always looking for new guided adventures, so if you have time and/or suggestions, do share them with us!

Thank you to all the volunteers! D.Kemble, T.Allard, S.van Delft, S.Cameron, P.Sinclair, B.Dobrowolsky, J.Vigliotti, J.Bauer, J.Palezny, G.Brunner, C.Hunt, J.Trapnell, M.Guthrie, J.Hawkings, S.Drury, M.O'Donoghue, K.Aitken, S.Cannings, D.Mossop, C.Eckert



Jenny Trapnell photo

**College pond trip, 4 June 2019**



Cameron Eckert photo

**Black Tern, Marsh Lake, 23 May 2019**



Cameron Eckert photo

**Nares Mountain Dusky Grouse trip, 26 April 2019**

# 2019 Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon



*Multiple generations of Birdathon participants at the Saturday evening BBQ social event listen and chime-in during the always-enter-taining read-through of the Yukon Checklist. This is where everyone gets to see WHO saw anything unusual.....and WHERE they saw it!*



*Enviro-birding champions Malkolm Boothroyd and Knute Johnsgaard work hard to stay awake after a gruelling and largely sleepless 24 hours.*

**Beth Hawkings photos**

## **By Jim Hawkings**

The Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon is an annual 24-hour event that combines a lot of fun birdwatching with a bit of fundraising to support YBC programs. The first Yukon Birdathon was held in 1986 under the wing of the Yukon Conservation Society. The Yukon Bird Club was formed in 1993 and now runs the Birdathon, which was renamed to honour one of the Territory's pre-eminent bird enthusiasts, Helmut Grünberg, following his death in 2015. This year's Birdathon was held from 5 pm May 31 to 5 pm June 1.

Each year we highlight a noteworthy birdwatcher in the community who acts as our "Feature Birder" for the Birdathon. This year our feature birders were 3 individuals representing 3 generations from a family of very keen birders: Jean Piuze, Madeleine Piuze, and Raphael Langlois.

According to my records 24 people participated, some alone, some in groups of two or three. A larger group of 30 people attended the post-Birdathon BBQ potluck and social held at Robert Service Campground.

The weather cooperated (...it doesn't always!) and a healthy total of 151 species of birds were sighted across the Territory -- a bit less than half of the 329 species currently on the Yukon Checklist. In looking through the birds seen this year nothing stands out as being really odd. What wasn't seen is possibly more interesting: Nobody could find a ptarmigan, Rough-winged Swallow, Pine Grosbeak, or any owl (aside from a Barred Owl heard in southeast Yukon). And our Whitehorse Rock Pigeons remained extirpated.

The overall champion in terms of number of species sighted was repeat offender and birder extraordinaire Jukka Jantunen, this year teamed up with Julie Bauer. Together they sleeplessly notched 102 species in the bird-rich region of southeast Yukon around Watson Lake. A whole raft of boreal forest birds are found there at the extreme northwest corner of their continental range, making it the go-to place for the hard-core Yukon birding crowd. Another long-time Whitehorse birder, Adam Perrier, was a close second overall with 91 species.

Enviro-birding is a growing category in our Birdathon, requiring participants to complete the

event using only human power -- something that is challenging but also very rewarding. This year we had six participants in four teams in the enviro category. Malkolm Boothroyd and Knute Johnsgaard together put in a hard 24 hours and managed to see 74 species -- one more than Malkolm managed last year. Last year's enviro champion Boris Dobrowolsky was second with 63 species (last year he managed 87!) seen during his usual epic trek/boat/bicycle. His itinerary included the Swan Lake area which was the favourite haunt of Birdathon namesake and Yukon Bird Club stalwart the late Helmut Grünberg. Kudos to all our enviro-birders!

We love to encourage families and young people to participate in the Birdathon. This year we had 3 families (at least 2 generations birding together) take part. Congratulations to our youngest participants -- both out with their families: 12-year-old Raphael Langlois who saw 65 species as part of the feature birder team, and 15-year-old Alexander Boyce, who saw 41 species while birding with his parents Nancy and Ian.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2019 event, sponsored a participant, or provided the many prizes for participants.



# Birding on Social Media

This year the Yukon Bird Club has enhanced its social media presence by creating the Yukon Bird Club Facebook page. You may have first noticed our club page back in April when we celebrated the Yukon Bird Club's 25th anniversary. Over the course of spring and summer we used it to advertise our field trips.

## Yukon Birds "Group"

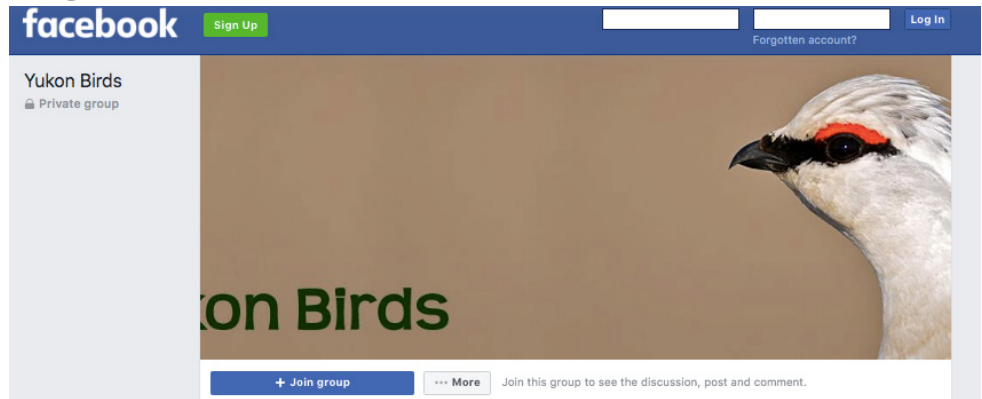
You might be wondering "But didn't we already have a Facebook presence?" If you are a member of the Facebook group called Yukon Birds, then you might have thought that was the official Yukon Bird Club space, but it's really a general space for ALL Yukon birding conversations, big and small, beginner to expert, photography and stories, and everything in between and beyond. It also functions as crowd-sourcing for ornithology questions allowing people to share their knowledge and help others progress in their love of birds.

To join the Yukon Birds Facebook group, type: "Yukon Birds" in the Facebook search box. Then request to "Join". You should get a response within 48 hours.

## Yukon Bird Club "Page"

The function of a Facebook page is more formal. It serves the purpose of official club messaging. We also hope to put our page to educational use with weekly knowledge kernels. Following the page over the course of fall/winter/spring, you can learn about:

- Yukon winter residents
- Yukon's most frequently misidentified birds
- Tips on local eBird use



## Yukon Birds Facebook group



## Yukon Bird Club Facebook page

- Links back to past interesting articles from the Yukon Warbler.
- and any other bird club communications within our mandate of: **"Promoting Awareness, Appreciation, and Conservation of Yukon birds and their Habitats"**

A Facebook "page" is "followed not joined". To follow us, type: "Yukon Bird Club" in the Facebook search box, and then click "Like". To ensure our posts have priority on your Facebook newsfeed, click the "Following" pull-down menu and select "See first" instead of "default".



# Whitehorse Spring Field Trips 2019



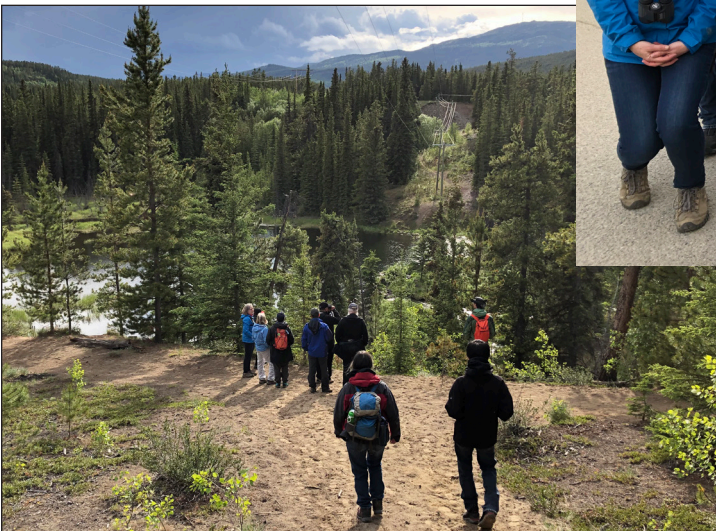
**Jenny Trapnell photo**

Millennium Trail evening birding. Here are some of the participants in the June 6 field trip on the Millennium Trail. One of the sightings was not a bird but a red fox hunting among the Herring Gull nests near the Whitehorse hydro facility.



**Jenny Trapnell photos**

Katie Aitken led a lovely field trip June 4 to the McIntyre Creek and ponds near the Takhini neighbourhood.





# My Introduction to Yukon Birds

*By Taylor Belanski*

“On a day like this, I can’t imagine anything better that might happen in a person’s life than for them to start paying attention to birds – to become aware of this magical world around us, unnoticed by many but totally captivating for those who know its secrets. This kind of spring day, with its bountiful myriads of colourful sprites just arrived from tropical shores, has got to be one of the greatest gifts of life on Earth” - Kenn Kaufman

As I glance out of my window, my eye catches on the flash of colour against the frigid white of my front yard. The bright red dress of a male Pine Grosbeak stands out in the snow like a cherry atop the whipped cream of a milkshake. My thoughts turn from the dread of leaving my warm

house to a sense of excitement of venturing outside to the crisp winter day. As I don my dull black jacket, I am grateful to share these winter days with such beautiful and bright creatures.

I have always loved wildlife, from the humble bees visiting my garden to the frogs singing to the setting summer sun, to the charismatic elephants on the Discovery Channel. I love spending time outside, learning about the life around me, from wild bleeding hearts signaling the arrival of spring in my backyard to the towering cedars in nearby forests. Growing up, I was used to being able to identify my surroundings, which plants I could eat, when to expect rain (often) and the names of the mountains at the horizon. I was comfortable and at ease in nature, but this familiarity was lost when I moved from the temperate

rainforests of BC to the sprawling boreal forests of the Yukon. I did not realize what sense of place I had, based on the plants, animals and landscapes around me, until I was stripped of this knowledge. Birds, however, became a comfort, a familiar face and song in an otherwise mysterious landscape. The laughter of the gulls transported me back to the coast, while the chickadees felt like family, calling me back home with their “tea’s ready!” announcement.

I have since gained familiarity with my surroundings here, especially since becoming aware of the diversity of bird life around me. To be able to put a name to my avian neighbours and to recognize their songs has been hugely impactful in my sense of belonging here. The creatures and spaces around me are no longer strangers, but friends who I can greet by name. My new awareness of birds has also provided me with a focused outlet with which to share my love of nature with others. However, not everyone is receptive to my enthusiasm and few of my family and friends share my fascination with fecal sacs and nest hygiene. But I won’t let my gross fun facts be shushed or my excitement dampened! I am very much looking forward to learning more about the birds and birding community of the Yukon this summer and beyond!

## **Jenny Trapnell photo**

A Robin’s nest was seen roadside near the McIntyre Creek on Pam Sinclair’s Birdsong Workshop on May 26.



# Yukon Christmas Bird Counts 2019

All are welcome – beginners, feeder-watchers, and seasoned field birders! Enjoy winter birding and contribute to a North American-wide bird monitoring and conservation program. To participate contact the **count compiler** before count day.

*Sponsored by the Yukon Bird Club.*

## **CBC Kids Haines Junction** – Sat 14 Dec

Compiler – Julie Bauer

E-mail: [bauerjulieann@outlook.com](mailto:bauerjulieann@outlook.com)

Phone: 634-2002

## **Dawson City** – Sunday 15 December

Compiler – Sebastian Jones

E-mail: [sebastian@northwestel.net](mailto:sebastian@northwestel.net)

Phone: 993-4430

## **Haines Junction** – Sunday 15 December

Compiler – Julie Bauer

E-mail: [bauerjulieann@outlook.com](mailto:bauerjulieann@outlook.com)

Phone: 634-2002

## **Teslin** – Sunday 15 December

Compiler – Ben Schonewille

E-mail: [teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com](mailto:teslin.bird.banding@gmail.com)

Phone: 334-2683

## **Carcross** – Saturday 21 December

Compiler – Dan Kemble

Phone: 821-3461

## **Kluane Lake** – Saturday 21 December

Compiler – Julie Bauer

E-mail: [bauerjulieann@outlook.com](mailto:bauerjulieann@outlook.com)

Phone: 634-2002

## **Tagish** – Sunday 22 December

Compiler – Shyloh van Delft

E-mail: [shyloh@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:shyloh@yukonbirds.ca)

Phone: 332-2470

## **Marsh Lake** – Sunday 22 December

Compiler – Jim Hawkings

E-mail: [jimh@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:jimh@yukonbirds.ca)

Phone: 668-2639

## **Whitehorse** – Thursday 26 December

Compiler – Jim Hawkings

E-mail: [jimh@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:jimh@yukonbirds.ca)

Phone: 668-2639

## **Watson Lake** – Thursday 26 December

Compiler – Jenny Skelton

E-mail: [jskelton@northwestel.net](mailto:jskelton@northwestel.net)

Phone: 536-7488

## **Johnson's Crossing** – Friday 27 December

Compiler – Minnie Clark & Ben Schonewille

E-mail: [timberpoint@northwestel.net](mailto:timberpoint@northwestel.net)

Phone: 334-2683 / 390-2824

## **Tombstone Territorial Park** – Friday 27 Dec

Compiler – Sebastian Jones

E-mail: [sebastian@northwestel.net](mailto:sebastian@northwestel.net)

Phone: 993-4430

## **Takhini-Laberge** – Sunday 29 December

Compiler – Cameron Eckert

E-mail: [cameron.eckert@gmail.com](mailto:cameron.eckert@gmail.com)

## **Mayo** – Sunday 29 December

Compiler – Mark O'Donoghue

E-mail: [mark.odonoghue@gov.yk.ca](mailto:mark.odonoghue@gov.yk.ca)

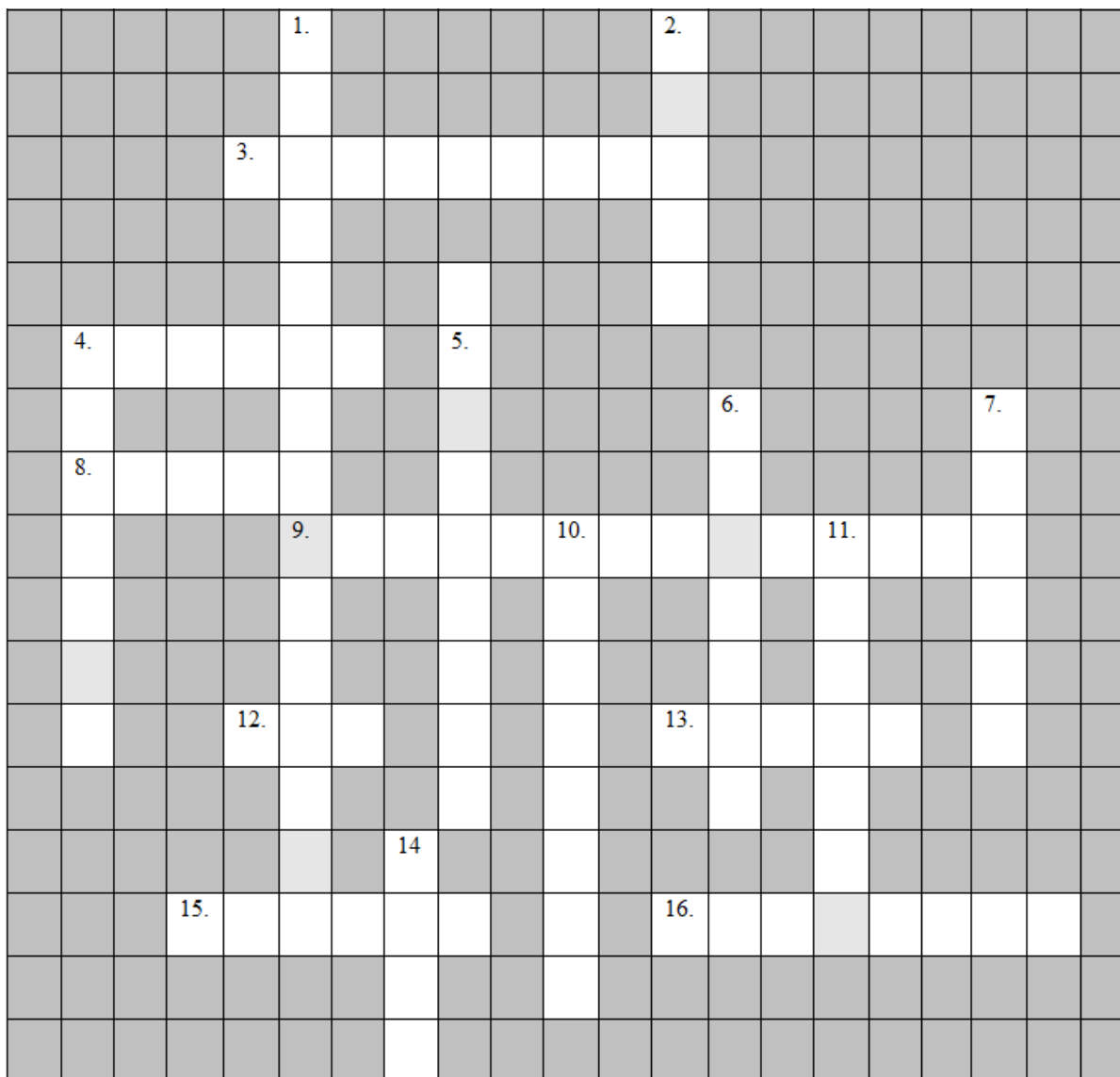
Text only: 334-5602

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**New Christmas Counts are welcome!** To organize a Christmas Bird Count in your community contact [yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca) to get started!



# Falltime Bird Crossword



**By Ruth McCullough**

## DOWN

1. Abundant in large flocks. Has a black mask, long crest and yellow fringe on the tail
2. This Owl is only common in the far north, has yellow eyes and no ear tufts
4. This gull is of a larger size, heavier build and pink legs than other gulls
6. The juvenile of this bird has short rounded wings, long rounded tail and lacks a crest
7. Very common, tame grouse

10. This tiny bird has a white stripe above and black stripe through the eye. Call is very nasal

11. Favorite food of 16. Across

## ACROSS

3. This is the only one of this species with a brown cap, back and sides
4. Only Thrush with the habit of slowly raising its tail several times a minute
5. Color of this Hawk's tail
8. This bird features prominently in First Nations legends

9. This Warbler reminds us of canaries

12. "Earless", this bird's call is a fast series of 7-8 whistles sounding like water dripping

13. This Woodpecker's call is a loud "Peek"; also a loud rattle

15. This bird has a long streaming tail, longer than its body and white wing patches

16. The male of this species looks like a large Purple Finch

The light grey squares spell another name for the tree that 1 Down like to feed on.

## The shaded squares spell Rowans

					1. B							2. G							
					0							R							
				3. C	H	I	C	K	A	D	E	E							
					E							A							
					M			C				T							
	4. H	E	R	M	I	T			5. R										
	E				A			O					6. G					7. S	
	8. R	A	V	E	N			S					R					P	
	R				9. W	I	L	S	O	10. N	S	W	A	R	11. B	L	E	R	
	I				A			B		U			Y		E			U	
	N				X			I		T			J		R			C	
	G			12. O	W	L		L		H		13. H	A	I	R	Y		E	
					I			L		A			Y		I				
					N		14. M			T					E				
			15. M	A	G	P	I	E		C		16. G	R	O	S	B	E	A	K
								C		H									
								E											

### For more information contact:

Yukon Bird Club  
 4061-4th Avenue  
 Whitehorse, Yukon  
 Y1A 1H1  
 Canada  
[yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca](mailto:yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca)

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

**Yukon**   
**Bird Club**