

== The Yukon Bird Club's 1995 ==

Summer Flyer



Wetlands of Whitehorse

by *Dennis Kuch*

The City of Whitehorse has initiated an inventory and assessment of wetlands within the city limits. Based on the premise that we can't know what we're losing until we know what we have, the intent of the project is to assemble and expand basic information on our local wetlands so that their values can be considered in planning decisions.



Photo-illustration by Cameron Eckert

While many places in southern Canada have lost substantial areas of wetlands - as much as 70 % in southern Ontario, 71% on the prairies, and 80% in British Columbia's Fraser River delta - Whitehorse still has much of its original wetland habitat intact. There have been major losses to filling, draining, and flooding as in other jurisdictions, but many wildlife rich areas

still remain and face similar fates unless identified and protected.

In order to protect these places, and expand public appreciation for their value to our community and the broader biotic community of which we are a part, the Yukon Bird Club is assisting in efforts to document the existence and

wealth of Whitehorse wetlands.

If you have any information about these special places in the city - including bird sightings, threatened areas, nesting evidence, historical uses - please contact Dennis Kuch at 24 Marion Crescent, Whitehorse Y1A 5S4; phone and fax 633-2377.

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Summer Field Trips and Events

WEEKDAY and WEEKEND OUTINGS: Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and wear appropriate footwear. For more information or to arrange a ride call Pam (667-4630).

Thursday 8 June. *Birds along the Yukon River Trail!* Breeding songbirds, Arctic Terns, Spotted Sandpipers and perhaps a Bald Eagle with interpretation provided in French and English will make for an enjoyable outing.. **Meet at the SS.Klondike at 7:00 pm.** Leader: Julie Lefebvre.

Sunday 18 June. *Breeding Birds of McIntyre Creek!* Explore the Fish Farm area at the peak of the breeding season, when it hosts a myriad of nesting songbirds as well as all of the Yukon's swallow species! **Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 9:00 am.** Leader: Rene Carlson.

Sunday 25 June. *Birds of Hidden Lake!* Tour Hidden Lake (the one behind Riverdale) in search of breeding Barrow's Goldeneye, Hammond's Flycatchers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and more! **Meet at the SS Klondike at 9:00 am.** Leader: Jeremy Baumbach.

Saturday 22 July. *In Search of the Alpine Birds of Montana Mountain!* This day trip hike will explore the high alpine habitat of Montana Mountain near Carcross in search of White-tailed Ptarmigan, Brewer's Sparrow, Dusky Flycatcher, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch and Blue Grouse. Wear sturdy footwear and bring a lunch. **Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 8:30 am.** Leader: Cameron Eckert

Sunday 30 July. *Hidden Lakes Revisited!* Explore this rich site during "baby season", when broods of young birds are about, hounding their parents for food. **Meet at the SS Klondike at 10:00 am.** Leader: Jeremy Baumbach.

Saturday 12 August. *Songbird Migration at Fish Lake!* Are they leaving already?! Watch the early migrants on their way to warmer places, and perhaps some hungry raptors chasing them on their way. **Meet at the Porter Creek Super A at 9:00 am.** Leader: Pam Sinclair.

1995 Birdathon a Soaring Success!

This year's Birdathon, held on May 26th - 27th, was an unparalleled success with the best ever participation! Over 45 people turned out for the post-Birdathon Bar-B-Que at Wolf Creek Campground to enjoy a cornucopia of good food and share their Birdathon highlights. It was clear that not many species go unnoticed when such an enthusiastic group of birders take to the field for all or part of the 24 hour Birdathon. This year's cumulative total set a new record at 137 species! Lee Kubica and Gordon Sutton had the highest total at 110 species. And the other good news is that over \$2000 was raised for conservation education in the Yukon!

All species seen by all participants on the 1995 Birdathon

Red-throated Loon	Sora	Gray Jay
Pacific Loon	American Coot	Black-billed Magpie
Common Loon	Black-bellied Plover	Common Raven
Horned Grebe	Semipalmated Plover	Black-capped Chickadee
Red-necked Grebe	Killdeer	Boreal Chickadee
Double-crested Cormorant	Greater Yellowlegs	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Tundra Swan	Lesser Yellowlegs	American Dipper
Trumpeter Swan	Solitary Sandpiper	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Gr. White-fronted Goose	Spotted Sandpiper	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Brant	Whimbrel	Mountain Bluebird
Canada Goose	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Townsend's Solitaire
Green-winged Teal	Least Sandpiper	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Mallard	Baird's Sandpiper	Swainson's Thrush
Northern Pintail	Pectoral Sandpiper	Hermit Thrush
Blue-winged Teal	Short-billed Dowitcher	American Robin
Cinnamon Teal	Long-billed Dowitcher	Varied Thrush
Northern Shoveler	Common Snipe	American Pipit
Gadwall	Wilson's Phalarope	Bohemian Waxwing
Eurasian Wigeon	Red-necked Phalarope	European Starling
American Wigeon	Bonaparte's Gull	Warbling Vireo
Canvasback	Mew Gull	Orange-crowned Warbler
Redhead	Herring Gull	Yellow Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Arctic Tern	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Greater Scaup	Rock Dove	Blackpoll Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Great Horned Owl	Northern Waterthrush
Harlequin Duck	Boreal Owl	Common Yellowthroat
Surf Scoter	Belted Kingfisher	Wilson's Warbler
White-winged Scoter	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	American Tree Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	Downy Woodpecker	Chipping Sparrow
Barrow's Goldeneye	Hairy Woodpecker	Savannah Sparrow
Bufflehead	Three-toed Woodpecker	Fox Sparrow
Common Merganser	Northern Flicker	Song Sparrow
Red-breasted Merganser	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Lincoln's Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Western Wood-Pewee	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Osprey	Alder Flycatcher	White-crowned Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Least Flycatcher	Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Harrier	Hammond's Flycatcher	Lapland Longspur
Northern Goshawk	Dusky Flycatcher	Red-winged Blackbird
Swainson's Hawk R	Say's Phoebe	Rusty Blackbird
Red-tailed Hawk	Horned Lark	Brown-headed Cowbird
Golden Eagle	Tree Swallow	Pine Grosbeak
American Kestrel	Violet-green Swallow	Purple Finch
Merlin	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Red Crossbill
Spruce Grouse	Bank Swallow	White-winged Crossbill
Willow Ptarmigan	Cliff Swallow	Pine Siskin
Ruffed Grouse	Barn Swallow	



Spring Field Trip Report

by Pam Sinclair

The early spring was late and the late spring was early. But whatever the weather, the Bird Club was out in force this season! Escaping the -30°C weather of late March by only a few days, Helmut Grunberg managed to produce a Great Horned Owl on the annual Owl Prowl; Boreal Owls were very scarce this year. Lee Kubica dealt with the cold by changing the venue of his Mouth of McIntyre Creek trip (still frozen, no ducks!) and instead headed out to the Takhini Ponds. His group was well rewarded with great views of (among other things) an astounding number of Northern Shrikes - seven in one evening!

The season was in full swing by late April, and waterfowl were in abundance for Wendy Nixon's outing to Shallow Bay. Cavorting with 300 Tundra Swans were a dozen duck species, including the uncommon Redhead. Confirming the arrival of spring were a drumming Ruffed Grouse, and a male Northern Harrier patrolling the shore.

Helmut Grunberg's "Tagish Tour" was a highlight - the participants who bravely showed up on a cold, dreary morning were richly rewarded with sunny afternoon weather and 70 species! One exciting moment occurred on the Tagish Road when a Golden Eagle and an immature Bald soared low over the group at the same time, while a harrier, kestrel, and redtail were also in view! Tagish Narrows was crowded with 1500 ducks, along with two American Coots and some very cooperative Yellow-rumped Warblers flitting around so close we couldn't use binoculars!

Songbirds were fairly quiet for Pam Sinclair's South M'Clintock outing, but other birds made up for that. Greater White-fronted Geese, a Common Loon, and a flock of Oldsquaw were seen, in addition to the more usual waterfowl in the bay. A special treat was the discovery of a Ruffed Grouse on its drumming log - 10 feet away!

The sheep were a highlight of Lee Kubica's Sheep Mountain trip, especially the very close group of rams that were far more concerned with feeding than any fear they might have had of us. In spite of the many birds seen, including many firsts-of-the-year and great looks at Golden Eagles, mammals continued to take centre stage when a gorgeous Grizzly Bear lumbered across the highway in front of us, and disappeared into the willows!

Eight species of shorebirds astonished the crowd led by Cameron Eckert at Lewes Marsh on May 10th. Well, ten species if you count the hundreds of pipits and longspurs which were acting like shorebirds on the mudflats. Participants were treated to great looks at a great variety of waterfowl, and an interesting view of an immature bald eagle bringing down a duck.

Participants on Dave Mossop's Shallow Bay trip had an opportunity to help out with the duck banding operation. There were a good number of ducks to view in the bay as well, including the uncommon Gadwall, which continued to turn up in unusually high numbers later in the spring.

Paddy's Pond is an area rich in songbirds, and Mary Whitley's outing there was no exception. Breeding records are always hard to come by for warblers, but this group managed to spot a Yellow-rumped Warbler's nest!

Spring Field Trip Report *continued*

The annual Songbird Workshop at the Fish Farm is designed for volunteers who participate in the North American Breeding Bird Survey which takes place in June, but it is useful for anyone interested in learning songs or brushing up. Participants on this outing will never forget the Ruby-crowned Kinglet song, which was repeated about a thousand times for them! A number of other species were also heard and discussed, or not heard and discussed!

Participants on Wendy Nixon's trip to Mary Lake enjoyed great looks at Barrow's Goldeneye vying for nest boxes, as well as a close flock of Lesser Scaup, and a huge beaver lodge. Another treat was a Red-necked Grebe on a nest among the reeds in the lake, and a lone Red-necked Phalarope bobbing in the waves whipped up by the evening's vigorous wind.

Judas Creek is always an interesting spot to visit, as it is rich in songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl, and so often turns up birds which are seldom seen in the Whitehorse area. Jim Hawkings' outing here on May 30th followed this pattern; a rare Song Sparrow was spotted by some observers in the marsh beside the beach, and a late-lingering Black-bellied Plover graced the shore in its handsome spring plumage. As well, a Killdeer nest with four eggs was spotted by sharp eyes.

Many thanks to all leaders and participants for making this a very successful and enjoyable spring season!



Photo by Cameron Eckert



FieldNotes: *Observations from the Field*



Please send your sightings to YBC's sightings coordinator, Helmut Grünberg, (807 Wheeler, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2P8). This report contains both documented and undocumented sightings. Please include details such as date, location, number of birds, sex and age, and observers' names. Highlight interesting observations and include descriptions of rare species. For next season's report please send your sightings according to the following schedule:

Spring: March 1 - May 31

Fall: Aug. 1 - Nov. 30

Summer: June 1 - July 31

Winter: Dec. 1 - Feb. 28

The Spring Season

Spring sightings will be reported in the Yukon Warbler this fall, and will be forwarded to American Birds in June. If you haven't yet submitted your sightings for March, April, and May, please send them to Helmut as soon as possible! The following is a report on this spring's Birdathon:

THE 1995 BIRDATHON, May 26-27

This year's birdathon was a very exciting event for the 30 participants. From 5 pm on Friday to 5 pm on Saturday we scanned the lakes for ducks and the marshes for shorebirds and listened for songbirds in the forests. Some saw and heard 15 different species near their tent by the lake; others compiled 110 species in their quest to improve their own record from previous years. The total number of birds observed was 137 species, a new record! When I asked birdathoners what their highlights of this 24 hr period were, there were as many different answers as people. So I decided to list the ten top observations for each team or individual. A "top observation" may be an overall rare species for a person or just an interesting aspect of a more common species. All observations will be collected and compiled; the birdathon results give a fairly accurate "snapshot" of the birds that occur in the Whitehorse area at this time of year.

The only **Red-throated Loon** of the birdathon was found at Jackfish Bay, Lake Laberge (CE,PS). Pacific Loons were spotted at Shadow Lake (D&SR) and at Marsh Lake (RiM). At close proximity the amazingly beautiful **Horned Grebe** can be studied in detail; nests were found in a few locations (LC, D&SR,OBBC), and the "Mohawk hairstyle" of these birds could be admired (LB). After Boris Dobrowolsky had pointed out the exact location of the rare **Double-crested Cormorant** at Jackfish Bay, several teams managed to find it during the birdathon (BB,HG,CE,PS,RoM). Several **Trumpeter Swans** were spotted at Judas Creek (SF,SS). **Greater White-fronted Geese** were seen at Judas Creek, M'Clintock Bay, Hidden Lakes by Riverdale, and Shallow Bay (JB; RC,TH,AS; JH). The appearance of relatively large numbers of **Brant** was surprising: two were seen at Judas Creek, up to 14 at M'Clintock Bay, and one rather tired one on the dock at Schwatka Lake (BB,HG;RC,L&TH,AS;SF,SS;JH; LK,GS;RoM;D&SR).

Dabbling ducks are with us from spring to fall, and with a close look, most of them are very pretty birds. Highlights were the elegant **Northern Pintail** (LC), the shy **Blue-winged Teal** (SF,SS;RoM), the rare **Cinnamon Teal** (BB,HG), the shovel-billed **Northern Shoveler** (SF,SS)

and the hard-to-find **Eurasian Wigeon** (BB,HG). Among the diving ducks, an unusually high number of **Redhead**, seven, were counted at Jackfish Bay (CE,PS); up to 16 "ring-billed" **Ring-necked Ducks** were encountered at the Fish Lake Rd and at Marsh Lake (RC,L&TH,AS;OBBC;WN); at least one "round-headed" **Greater Scaup** was discovered at Lewes marsh (SF,SS); three pairs of beautiful **Harlequin Ducks** were swimming and diving in the Yukon River in Whitehorse (JB,LB,LC,RoM); several "sickle-spot-faced" **Barrow's Goldeneye**, the favourite duck of some birders, were observed in a few places (LB,LC,RC,L&TH,AS); single "rusty-headed" **Common Mergansers** were reported from the Fish Lake Rd and from Mary Lake (OBBC); a few shaggy-crested **Red-breasted Mergansers** were encountered in several places (KH,DK;RiM;WN); and an obscure female **Ruddy Duck** was discovered among some scaup at Shallow Bay (BB,HG).

The only **Osprey** of the birdathon was seen at Squanga Lake (LK,GS). **Bald Eagles** were regularly observed in the Whitehorse area; it is always a pleasure to watch these majestic birds glide seemingly motionless over the lakes and marshes (TA;LB) or to see one bring nesting material and then settle down on the nest with its mate (KH,DK). The unsteady flight of the **Northern Harrier** was intriguing for some observers (RC,TH,AS). An obviously perfect Great Horned Owl call caused a **Northern Goshawk** to swoop down on the imitator who quickly ducked (CE). A rare **Swainson's Hawk** was found at Drury's Farm (LK,GS), and a **Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk** was spotted in the Whitehorse area (WN). A **Golden Eagle** was observed on the Tagish Rd (D&SR), and one was seen near its nest site in the Takhini River area (OBBC). **American Kestrels** were observed at the Seed Farm, at the Hunter Rd potholes, and in Crestview (OBBC,RoM). A **Merlin** was seen along the Alaska Hwy east of Whitehorse (LK,GS). A pair of **Willow Ptarmigan** was encountered on Mt McIntyre (BB,HG). A **Sora** was calling at Rat Lake (CE,PS), and the uncommon **American Coot** was seen along the Tagish Rd (D&SR).

Among the 17 (!) different shorebirds observed by all participants the **Black-bellied Plover** at Judas Creek was perhaps the rarest; as it was feeding along the shoreline, it was seen by many observers. The **Killdeer** is a delightful bird and was also encountered by many observers. The uncommon **Greater Yellowlegs** was seen at the Seed Farm (OBBC). A **Whimbrel** was "strolling" along the shore of Nares Lake by Carcross (D&SR). Two **Baird's Sandpipers** were identified at Judas Creek (BB,HG;JH). A few **Short-billed Dowitchers** were spotted in several areas (RC,TH,AS,RoM,D&SR), and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** was seen at Fish Lake (LC). As usual, the **Common Snipe** livened up the marshes with its repertoire of sounds (TA). Five **Wilson's Phalaropes** were observed at Drury's Farm (CE,PS,OBBC), and two **Red-necked Phalaropes** were spotted at Judas Creek (JH).

It is a most satisfying experience for an observer when he realizes that the **Mew Gull** is just a small edition (almost) of a **Herring Gull** (LB). A close encounter with an **Arctic Tern** at Fish Lake was quite a surprise; bravely looking around, the observer found the nest (LC) as did the observers at Ear Lake (KH,DK); at Marsh Lake, one tern was hovering, then diving for a fish and feeding it to its mate (TA).

An unusual daytime call of a **Boreal Owl** near Lewes Marsh was the only evidence of this species during the birdathon (LK,GS). **Belted Kingfishers** were observed at Marsh Lake (TA,RiM) and at McIntyre Creek (KH,DK). **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were reported as well (LK,GS). A **Hairy Woodpecker** was observed at Hidden Lakes by Riverdale (JB), and one was



seen and heard drumming at Judas Creek (BB,HG).

Western Wood-Pewees were identified in a few areas (KH,DK,LK,GS). Three **Hammond's Flycatchers** were singing at the Fish Farm (RC,TH,AS) and one at Hidden Lakes by Riverdale (JB). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was heard in the subalpine scrub of Mt. McIntyre (BB,HG), and a **Say's Phoebe** was observed at M'Clintock Bay (SS,SS,RoM) and at Marsh Lake (RiM). A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was noted at its usual spot at the Fish Farm (CE,PS,JH,LK,GS); A **Barn Swallow** was also here and at McIntyre Creek (RC,TH,AS,D&SR). The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** is a favorite of many birders and was seen or heard several times (JH,KH,DK,LK,GS,RoM,RiM,D&SR). An American Dipper was seen at the Fish Farm and the adjacent McIntyre Creek (RC,L&TH,AS,CE,PS). The tiny bird with the big voice, the **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, was identified in many areas (RC,TH,AS,LC,RoM). The bird with the gentle call and the striking plumage, the **Mountain Bluebird**, was seen in downtown Whitehorse (RC,L&TH,AS). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was noted at Hidden Lakes by Riverdale (JB). A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** sang in concert with a **Swainson's Thrush** at Lewes Marsh (BB). The beautiful **Bohemian Waxwing** was seen at Paddy's Pond, the Copper Haul Rd (LC), at Schwatka Lake and at Hidden Lakes by Riverdale (JB). The only **European Starling** was reported from Lewes Marsh (SF,SS).

A sure sign of summer approaching is a **Warbling Vireo** singing unseen from an aspen tree (WN). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was singing near Crag Lake along the Tagish Rd (D&SR). The spirited song of the **Northern Waterthrush** was heard in a few places (RoM,KH,DK), and the **Common Yellowthroat** appeared in many marsh areas (RoM,KH,DK). The little yellow warbler with the black cap, the **Wilson's Warbler**, was spied between the leaves in several areas (LC,KH,DK,WN). The rusty sparrow with the loudest voice of all sparrows, the **Fox Sparrow**, was identified in a few places (WN). The **Song Sparrow**, one of the rarest sparrows in the Yukon, was identified with varying degrees of certainty by a few observers at Judas Creek (TA,LK,GS). The **Brown-headed Cowbird**, often disliked because of the damage it does to other songbirds, was found at Judas Creek (TA,JH). **Purple Finches** were detected in many areas of Whitehorse (KH,DK). The elusive **Pine Siskin** was heard between sounds of the wind at Shallow Bay Rd (CE,PS) and at the Yukon River in Whitehorse (JB).

Observers: Tannis Atkinson, Jeremy Baumbach, Bruce Bennett, Lauren Bradley, Linda Cameron, Rene Carlson, Cameron Eckert, Scott Frazer, Helmut Grunberg, Louise Hardy, Tytus Hardy, Jim Hawkings, Katie Hayhurst, Lee Kubica, Dennis Kuch, Jeanette McCrie (OBBC), Elaine Monaghan (OBBC), Richard Mueller (RiM), Bob Murkett (RoM), David Narins, Patty Nash (OBBC), Wendy Nixon, Don Russell, Sharon Russell, Sheila Serup, Pam Sinclair, Alex Somers, Linda Stratis, Gordon Sutton, Heather Thompson (OBBC).

Have a great summer!
