

YUKON WARBLER

Newsletter of the Yukon Bird Club

Fall-Winter 2017



Cameron Eckert photo

The Yukon's third Anna's Hummingbird, a hatch-year bird photographed here on 28 September 2016, visited a Porter Creek yard from 24 August through 10 October 2016.



Blackburnian Warbler

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2017 Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon

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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.

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We want your birding photos and stories!

Thank you to all who contribute to make the *Yukon Warbler*. To make a submission, write to:

YBCnewsletter@gmail.com

Our next deadline is April 30, 2018.

Yukon Warbler Editor: Liz Hargreaves:

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Betty Sutton - Events Coordinator

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Liz Hargreaves - Newsletter Editor/Website

Rare sightings reports

All sightings of rare or notable birds should be sent directly to the Sightings Coordinator:

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Yukon Bird Sightings Fall 2015

By *Cameron D. Eckert*

This season brought interesting sightings and noteworthy rarities throughout the territory. A flight of 6,686 **Greater White-fronted Geese** was tallied at Teslin Lake 28 Aug (JJ). The season's high count of 255 **Bufflehead** was recorded at Lewes Marsh 13 Oct (TA). Seaduck counts at Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk included totals of 995 **King Eiders** flying w. 10-18 Aug, and 500 **Long-tailed Ducks** at Orca Cove 13 Aug (CE). A trek up Montana Mountain produced 169 **Willow Ptarmigan** 27 Sept (BD, CE, SVD, PS). A remarkable 108 **Swainson's Hawks** were tallied from Teslin Lake Yukon 28 Aug to 3 Sept (JJ, et al), while a single was noted in Whitehorse 30 Sept (ph. CE, SVD). **American Golden-Plover** can be a scarce fall migrant and so a count of 80 at Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk 15 Aug (CE) was notable. **Pacific Golden-Plover** is casual in fall in southern Yukon; 1-2 juvs were



Karen Anderson photo

Black Turnstone. *This turnstone was observed in a backyard on a lakefront property in Judas Creek Subdivision, Marsh Lake. It was a sunny but cool morning and the bird was observed turning over gravel rocks in the driveway for an hour on Septemeber 2, 2017 at 10:30 a.m. Turnstones are most commonly found along coastlines.*



Cameron Eckert photo

This juvenile Red-throated Pipit in Whitehorse 17-24 (here 22) September, 2015, established the second documented fall record for southern Yukon.

at Whitehorse 19-22 Sept (ph. CE, BD). A **Black Turnstone**, casual in the Yukon, touched down at Teslin Lake 12 Aug (JJ). A juv. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was at Whitehorse 24 Sept (ph. CE). A juv. **Red Phalarope**, casual in southern Yukon, was seen in Whitehorse 20 Sept (CE, TA). Monitoring of the **Black Guillemot** colony at Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk recorded a high count of 31 adults, with 7 nests producing just 12 young (CE). A noteworthy count of 4 **Snowy Owls** was recorded west of Dawson 17 Oct (MS). A migration count of 37 **American Kestrels** was recorded at Teslin Lake 2 Sept (JJ). Teslin Lake Bird Observatory recorded high numbers of **Alder Flycatchers** with season a peak counts 87 & 85 on 25 & 27 Aug (JJ, JAB). Ever-growing numbers of **American Crows** saw a count of 35 at Watson Lake 19 Sept (SD). A **Brown Creeper**, rare in southern Yukon, was seen in Whitehorse 18 Oct (KA). A total of 1,652 **American Robins** along with 271

Varied Thrushes, and 1,193 thrushes flew past Teslin Lake 23-26 Sept (JJ). A long-staying juv. **Red-throated Pipit** was seen daily in Whitehorse 17-24 Sept (ph. CE, BD). A juv. **Smith's Longspur**, seldom seen in fall, was at Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk 19 Aug (CE). A **Palm Warbler**, remarkably the first documented for southern Yukon, was seen briefly in Whitehorse 22 Sept (ph. CE, BD). Rarer still, the Yukon's first **Blackburnian Warbler** was banded at Teslin Lake 15 Sept (JJ, TMK). American **Tree Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** turned up in high numbers with counts of 300 and 250 respectively in Whitehorse 26 Sept (CE), and 240 and 200 respectively in Carcross 27 Sept (BD, CE). A count of 150 **White-crowned Sparrows** was recorded at Mary Lake 2 Sept (TA). High counts of **Rusty Blackbirds** included one flock of 140 at the Whitehorse sewage ponds 19 Sept (CE). A flock of 40 **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** was well seen at Watson Lake airport 24 Sept (SD).

Observers: Katie Aitken, Tracy Allard, Julie-ann Bauer, Boris Dobrowolsky, Susan Drury, Cameron Eckert, Jukka Jantunen, Jean-Francois Jette, Pam Sinclair, Mike Suitor, Shyloh van Delft.



Cameron Eckert photo

This Palm Warbler in Whitehorse on September 22, 2015 established the first documented record for southern Yukon.

Yukon Territory's Christmas Bird Counts 2016

By Clive Osborne

Christmas Bird Counts were conducted in Yukon by birder citizen scientists in 2016. Twelve counts were conducted this year with Whitehorse, Watson Lake and Haines Junction leading the way in turn out. The few souls who come out in the smaller communities seem to encounter a lot of birds. This article summarizes the information collected from the 12 Yukon Christmas Bird Counts conducted in 2016 as posted to the Audubon Society's website, the official sponsor of the Christmas Bird Count throughout North America. A total of 7630 birds comprising 40 species were counted by 133 participants from the first counts on December 17 to the last

count on December 29. Several sightings of unusual species of ducks and sparrows along with record high counts of common ravens and mallard ducks in Whitehorse were registered. The location of the counts is shown in Figure 1 and the counts are summarized in Tables 1-3.

This year's Audubon designated unusual sightings were: **Bufflehead** (2 – Carcross, 1 – Whitehorse), **Common Goldeneye** (5 – Tagish), **Glaucous Gull** (1 – Whitehorse), **American Crow** (2 – Watson Lake), **American Robin** (1 – Carcross), **Fox Sparrow** (2 – Haines Junction), **White-crowned Sparrow** (1 – Haines Junction, 1 – Takhini – Lake Laberge), **Dark-eyed Junco** (3 – Haines Junction), **Snow Bunting** (3 – Carcross).



Figure 1. Locations of 2016 Yukon

Species	No. of birds	Rank
Common Raven	3,530	1
Common Redpoll (redpoll sp)	1,181	2
White-winged Crossbill	786	3
Pine Grosbeak	620	4
Black-capped Chickadee	343	5
Boreal Chickadee	228	6
Black-billed Magpie	205	7
Mallard	111	8
Gray Jay	108	9
House Sparrow	102	10

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

Record high numbers for some species were observed again this year: **Mallard** (111 – Whitehorse), **Barrow's Goldeneye** (2 – Whitehorse), **Common Merganser** (16 – Tagish), **Gray Jay** (23 – Tagish), **Black-billed Magpie** (26 – Tagish), **Common Raven** (3,007 – Whitehorse), **Mountain Chickadee** (21 – Tagish, 3 – Marsh Lake), **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (11 – Tagish, 5 – Whitehorse), **American Dipper** (16 – Whitehorse, 4 – Carcross), **White-winged Crossbill** (407 – Tagish, 202 – Mayo), **House Sparrow** (102 – Whitehorse).

With a rapidly changing environment, we should be aware of record low numbers reported for some counts: **Downy Woodpecker** (1 -Whitehorse), **Red Crossbill** (4 - Marsh Lake).

A few sightings were made during count week but not counted on count day: Whitehorse (**Common Goldeneye**), Kluane N.P. (**Great Horned Owl**, **Northern Hawk Owl**, and **White-winged Crossbill**), Haines Junction (**Willow Ptarmigan**), Mayo (**Spruce Grouse**, **Downy Woodpecker**, **Hairy Woodpecker**).

Species	No. of counts
Common Raven	12
Pine Grosbeak	12
Boreal Chickadee	12
Gray Jay	12
Black-capped Chickadee	11
Common Redpoll	9
Black-billed Magpie	9
Spruce Grouse	8
White-winged Crossbill	7
Ruffed Grouse	7

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

Count	Date	No. of Field Observers	No. of Species Observed	No. of Birds Observed
Whitehorse (WH)	26/12	33	28	4,313
Watson Lake (WL)	26/12	27	12	516
Haines Junction (HJ)	17/12	20	20	673
Tagish (TA)	18/12	11	16	733
Carcross (CA)	18/12	10	21	209
Kluane N.P. (KL)	18/12	6	10	33
Dawson (DC)	18/12	6	8	123
Marsh Lake (ML)	18/12	4	15	197
Takhini – Laberge (TL)	20/12	4	14	102
Tombstone (TS)	27/12	4	4	15
Mayo (MA)	29/12	2	8	583
Marge of Lk. Laberge (LB)	29/12	1	11	133

Table 1. Summary of 2016 Yukon Christmas Bird Counts.



Jukka Jantunen photos

The Yukon's first documented Blackburnian Warbler was banded at Teslin Lake on September 15, 2015.

2017 Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon

By Jim Hawkings

This year's Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon was held on 26-27 May 2017. About 17 people actively participated, and 20+ enjoyed the BBQ and social gathering afterwards at the Robert Service Campground. For those who aren't familiar with it, the Birdathon is an annual fun and social event which combines bird-watching with a little bit of fundraising to support the Yukon Bird Club's conservation and education activities. Participants try to see/hear as many bird species as possible in the Yukon during a 24-hour period on the last weekend of May.

The weatherman cooperated fairly well this year, giving us high temperatures of 17 and 12 degrees for Friday and Saturday, and there was no rain to contend with. The species count was down a bit at 136 total species observed. This compares to 143, 141, 154, 143 species seen in 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013 respectively. Jukka Jantunen, well-known in the Yukon birding community (and who doesn't require sleep it seems...), found the most birds with 103 species seen or heard over the 24-hour period from 5 pm Friday to 5 pm Saturday. Another heavy-duty local birder, Adam Perrier, was not far behind with 95 species.

The Enviro-birding category was popular once again this year with 4 parties participating. Topping the list there was the family team of Cameron Eckert and Pam Sinclair, who managed 83 species while traveling solely under human power. Running a close second with 82 species (or more...) was Boris Dobrowolsky. Boris appeared at the post-event BBQ looking rather played out, a result



Jim Hawkings photo

Hungry Birdathoners try to make up a serious calorie deficit on Saturday evening after 24 hours of feverish birdwatching.

of his heroic effort to duplicate the sleep-deprived exploits of Birdathon namesake Helmut Grünberg, who passed away in early 2015. Jesse Vigliotti was the 3rd place enviro-birder with 67 species.

In the youth (under 25) category, Shyloh van Delft was the winner with 59 species.

Helen Slama, relatively new to birdwatching, and in her first ever Birdathon, notched 17 species.

This year our Feature Birders were Scott Williams and Selena Boothroyd. They managed a very respectable 58 species, and were helped in their efforts by the last-minute addition of an extremely young new birdwatcher --- less than a year old!

Fundraising is also part of the Birdathon, and this year lots of people chipped in, led by the outstanding efforts of our Feature Birders Scott and Selena, as well as Mary Whitley.

My own birdathon was an enviro-affair conducted mostly by bike. I went with a couple of other keen bird-bikers on Friday evening around

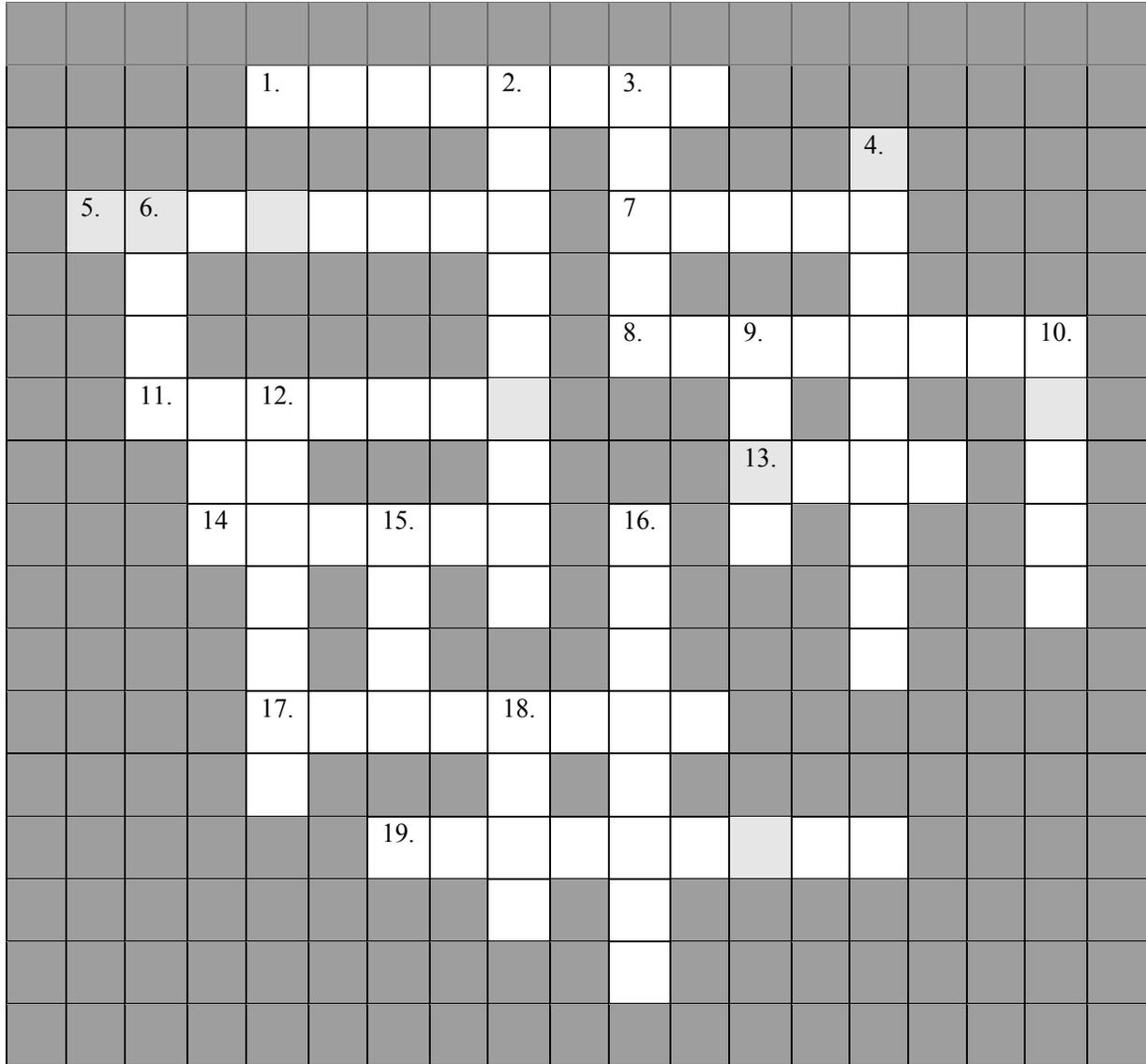
downtown Whitehorse, and stayed a bit closer to home (Pineridge) on Saturday. Strangely, I find I enjoy (and need...) sleep a lot more now than I did 25 years ago so I may have missed out on quite a bit of action in the wee hours of Saturday morning.

I want to extend my warmest thanks to all the people who participated in the 2017 Birdathon or sponsored participants. And a special thank you to Betty Sutton who once again managed to round up a fabulous collection of prizes. See you all in 2018!

YBC annual Potluck Social and Slideshow

Join us for the annual Potluck dinner and slideshow 6 pm on 18 January 2018 at Hellaby Hall. Bring some food to share and up to 10 photos highlighting your past year of birding or other natural history adventures. We will have a computer and TV so you can bring photos on a USB stick. Contact Jim Hawkings or Betty Sutton for more details.

Crossword



By Ruth McCullough

The lightly shaded squares will spell the name of one of the duck family.

Across

- 1. This bird is often associated with happiness.
- 5. This Oriole is a rare resident near Brownsville, Texas.
- 7. Noted for its red iris and prominent eye stripe.
- 8. Noted for its white stripe above and black stripe through the eye, this bird often migrates in alternate years.
- 11. The smallest and most common falcon.
- 13. Small, rare and extremely shy, this bird's yellow plumage is interrupted by black striping on

the back.

- 14. This arctic bird preys on other birds and rodents.
- 17. This bird will flock with Horned Larks and Snow Buntings.
- 19. Common in the far north, this bird has a black back, white foreparts and a heavily shielded bill.

Down

- 2. This bird is a rare migrant in the Aleutians and is a casual visitor to Alaska and the Northwest.
- 3. This common bird can do somersaults in the air and can even fly upside down.
- 4. First part of the Latin name for this bird that breeds in coastal Alaska and winters in Asia or Africa.
- 6. This bird walks and run in flocks

in large open fields looking for seeds.

- 9. This bird has very pointed wings and a black head.
- 10. Common name of the Buteos, the largest sub family of the Accipitridae.
- 12. Common name given to a very large family of Larinae.
- 15. First part of the Latin name for the Snow Goose.
- 16. This is the only blue-backed, white throated Warbler.
- 18. Where you might expect to find the nests of this Australian Gull.

- SEE ANSWERS ON BACK PAGE

