



Yukon Bird Club
4061 4th Ave.
Whitehorse, Yukon
Canada Y1A 1H1
Email: yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca

MEDIA RELEASE
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37th Yukon Birdathon takes wing at the end of May

WHITEHORSE - The Yukon Bird Club is inviting new and experienced birders to get outdoors and celebrate spring by taking part in the upcoming Helmut Grünberg Yukon Birdathon.

The 24-hour birdfest encourages Yukoners everywhere to look and listen for as many bird species as they can identify, for prizes, fun and to support bird conservation.

The 37th annual Birdathon kicks off this year at 5 p.m. on Friday May 27 and ends 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 28.

You can do it solo or with a group, in a family or with a friend and for as long as little time as you want. Some people try to see as many birds as possible during the 24 hours while others just spend a couple of hours on a walk, or looking at the birds that visit their yard.

The Birdathon is the annual fundraiser for the Yukon Bird Club, a non-profit charitable organization whose aim is to promote the awareness, appreciation and conservation of Yukon birds and their habitats.

Participants are encouraged to raise funds through sponsor pledges per species or a flat rate, or donate as individuals. Donations, which are tax-deductible, support the Club's many programs including education and research.

Those who want to support the event but can't take part themselves can sponsor Lena Ware, the Birdathon's designated Feature Birder. A waterfowl biologist, Lena is relatively new to the Yukon but has been involved in ornithology and bird conservation for over a decade. She says she's keen to identify up to 90 species, including her favourite, the Yellow Warbler, during the one-day event.

Over 300 bird species have been observed in Yukon, from large Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans to the tiny Rufous Hummingbird. About 87 per cent of Yukon's bird species are migratory, returning in April and May from places as far away as Antarctica.

Yukon's diverse habitats including marshes, mountains, meadows, wetlands, forests, and waterways offer a multitude of "hotspots" to enjoy Yukon's birds.

Popular spots in the Whitehorse area include the McIntyre Creek Wetlands, Yukon River trails, Hidden Lakes, Swan Haven and M'Clintock Bay, Lewes Marsh, Wolf Creek, Mary Lake, Schwatka Lake, the Quartz Road Wetland, and Paddy's Pond in Hillcrest.

Other hotspots are identified in Yukon Bird Club bird checklists showing bird species for Yukon, Whitehorse, Dawson City, Faro, and Watson Lake, and on eBird, an online checklist and birding tool.

The Birdathon also raises awareness about climate change – participants are encouraged to limit their use of fossil fuels during the Birdathon by walking, cycling, e-biking, using the bus or car-pooling. Over the years, many participants have discovered the joy of birding from their home, yard or neighborhood.

Prizes will be awarded in several categories, including most species seen, oldest and youngest birders, and most successful "enviro-birder". Draw prizes will also be awarded at the wrap-up pot luck BBQ, slated for 6 p.m. at Rotary Peace Park.

Last year, a total of 23 participants reported a total of 147 species, or eight more than the previous year but less than the 151 observed in 2019. Veteran birder, Jukka Jantunen identified the most with 111 species, while Adam Perrier recorded 102 species, followed by Haines Junction birder, Julie Bauer, with 92.

For more details or to take part in the Birdathon, go to yukonbirds.ca/birdathon and download a pledge sheet. Or email yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca.

For more information, contact:
Jenny Trapnell,
Birdathon Coordinator, Yukon Bird Club
(867) 335-3918
email: yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca
Web: yukonbirds.ca/birdathon