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Boreal and Arctic birds of many species are in decline throughout the Region, and researchers are searching for ways to monitor populations in the North. The Yukon is fortunate to have a relatively long-running banding station at Albert Creek on the Liard River: this is the heartland for boreal songbirds in the Territory, and Albert Creek offers an ideal opportunity to understand migration for a wide variety of species. In Whitehorse, biologists have begun to monitor the annual fall staging of Rusty Blackbirds, with small numbers being color-banded. Additionally, species such as Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, and Rusty Blackbird are now being recorded on long-term waterfowl surveys. Shorebird breeding surveys are being expanded across the boreal, taiga, and Arctic in Northwest Territories and the Yukon. In Nunavut, ongoing population studies have focused on seabirds, including recent surveys of Ivory Gull breeding colonies on Ellesmere Island. Our special essay here reports on continuing increases in Trumpeter Swan populations. It is our greatest hope that we can one day make such positive reports for the many other boreal and Arctic species that are currently in decline.

Weather throughout the Region was fairly typical, with freeze-up on smaller lakes by mid-October and on larger lakes and rivers by the end of November. In Northwest Territories, temperatures during the fall period were close to seasonal norms, but precipitation was above average, especially in September, keeping water levels high in the region's rivers.

Abbreviations: Albert Cr. (Albert Creek banding station, se. Yukon), N.N.P.R. (Nahanni National Park Reserve).

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Upwards of 1000 Canada Geese were staging

at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon in early Sep (MB, PB); among them was a leucistic Canada Goose, sporting a white head, pinkish bill, orange legs, but normal body—reminiscent of a “Blue Goose.” The American White Pelican colony at Slave R., NWT, which had a high number of nests (568) this spring, experienced low chick survival, with only 153 live chicks recorded during Aug surveys (JM, JVP, DJ). The total numbers of ducks banded at Willow L., near Tulita, NWT was down this summer, but the high proportion of hatch-year birds suggests good local production (RP). Southward migration of ducks along the Mackenzie R. at Ft. Simpson, NWT was in full swing on the morning of 21 Sep, with several flocks totaling over 350 birds in 30 minutes of observation (DT). An estimated 4000 ducks, including upwards of 2800 American Wigeons, were recorded at the Whitehorse, Yukon sewage lagoons 11 Aug (HG); Gadwall numbers peaked there 9 Sep at an estimated 200 (HG).

Both Spruce Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse appeared to have low productivity in the Norman Wells/Tulita, NWT area this year (RP). Willow Ptarmigan were relatively common around Norman Wells, NWT by the 2nd week of Nov (RP) but were still not reported at Ft. Simpson, NWT by the end of the month. The only Yellow-billed Loon report of the season was one at the s. end of L. Laberge, s. Yukon 2 Oct (BD, HG). The Yukon's first fall record for Eared Grebe was a hatch-year bird in Whitehorse 26 Oct (HG, ph. CE).

A spontaneous hawkwatch at Ft. Simpson, NWT on the afternoon of 15 Oct recorded 2 eagles, 3 Red-tailed Hawks, and 15 Rough-legged Hawks in 1.5 hours (DT, LM, SCam, SOK); thick, low overcast and rain caused the raptors to travel at relatively low levels as they headed southward along the Mackenzie R. Two observations of Broad-winged Hawk near

Ft. Simpson, NWT were reported from the summer but without specific dates: one along the Enbridge pipeline just n. of the Mackenzie R. crossing (PE) and another from the Mackenzie Hwy. several km n. of town (MC). The annual fall build-up of American Coots at the Whitehorse, Yukon sewage lagoons peaked at 261 on 9 Sep (HG). Whooping Cranes had a successful breeding year in Wood Buffalo N.P., NWT; 58 recorded nests resulted in 62 chicks surviving until the Aug census (SM). A juv. Baird's Sandpiper, clearly not up to the trek south, lingered at the Whitehorse, Yukon sewage lagoons until freeze-up 17–26 Oct (BD, CE, HG) to provide a record-late date. A count of 124 Red-necked Phalaropes was made at the Whitehorse, Yukon sewage lagoons 28 Aug (HG).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

An ad. California Gull, rare but regular in fall, was at Whitehorse, Yukon 3 Aug (ph. CE). An estimated 800 Glaucous Gulls hanging around Frobisher Bay, Nunavut in late Nov was an unusually large and late gathering (MM). Two Caspian Terns flying northward past Ft. Simpson, NWT 20 Aug was unusual (SCat, DT). High numbers of Red-backed Voles in the Sahtu region, NWT were likely responsible for an increased number of owl sightings, including a Great Horned Owl 12 Nov at Prohibition Cr. (RP), 2 Snowy Owls 2 Nov at a burn near Little Bear R. (RP) and a Northern Hawk Owl at the Vermillion Cr. burn (RP). Despite the Yukon's position in the far north, very few Snowy Owls are seen anywhere in the Territory apart from Herschel I., so singles seen at Whitehorse 3 Nov (RR) and at Shallow Bay near Whitehorse 30 Nov (MB, PB) were noteworthy. An influx of Northern Hawk Owls was observed in s. Yukon in Oct–Nov, with at least 3 at Whitehorse (CE; HG; WN; PS); reports from Haines Jct. included 2 on 27 Oct (JB) and 5 between Kluane L. and Haines Junction 29 Oct (LF). A check of the Long-eared Owl

SA Jim Hawkings of the Canadian Wildlife Service (Whitehorse) conducts the Yukon Trumpeter Swan survey as part of the larger North American Trumpeter Swan survey, which is conducted every five years. This year was the 5th time the survey has been run, marking the 20th year of the program. The survey counts swans on a sample of 1:50,000 topographic maps throughout the cen. and s. Yukon and nw. British Columbia and produces an estimate of the total population. This year, 68 maps were surveyed over 11 days in mid-Aug. The estimated population in the Territory is now 2693 swans, 1015 in the Pacific Coast Population, which winters on the Pacific Coast from southeastern Alaska to Oregon, and 1677 in the Rocky Mountain Population, which winters in the Tri-state (Idaho, Wyoming, Montana) area of the United States. These figures represent continued increases from the 2000 survey, as Trumpeters further expand their range in Yukon. Whitehorse appears to be more or less on the line dividing the two populations. Concentrations of nesting swans can now be found in many parts of the Territory, for example, Scottie Cr., Pickhandle Lakes, Nordenskiöld R., lower Nisutlin R., and Tuchtua R. In Northwest Territories, the survey showed numbers in that part of the range (Rocky Mountain Population) to be stable or somewhat up, at about 400+ birds; however, relatively low production of cygnets was noted this year (PL, DM, SH).

nest site at Sulphur L., sw. Yukon 21 Sep turned up 2 owls still in the area (AB, ph. CE); unfortunately, a pile of feathers found there 22 Sep indicated that one of them had been nailed by a Northern Goshawk (AB). Observers at Shallow Bay, s. Yukon recorded 6 Short-eared Owls through the fall, with a high one-day count of 3 (MB, PB); singles were seen at the s. end of L. Laberge 2 & 16 Nov (BD, HG).

Late-departing Common Nighthawks in the Ft. Simpson, NWT vicinity included singles at Four-Mile 1 Sep (DT, SCat) and in town 12 Sep (DT). At the very limit of the species' range, a high count of 4 Pileated Woodpeckers was made at Albert Cr. 22 Aug; 2 were banded there 7 Sep (TMK). Two Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were netted at Albert Cr. this season, one on 7 Aug and a hatch-year bird 15 Aug (TMK). Although Eastern Kingbird is seldom seen in summer in Ft. Simpson, NWT, there is an annual southbound passage in late summer; this year, a peak of 25 birds was seen 18 Aug (DT). A lone Say's Phoebe was noted 18–19 Aug in Ft. Simpson, NWT (DT). The Northwest Territories' northernmost Black-billed Magpie survived another summer in Norman Wells, returning to local bird feeders again this fall (RP). Two leucistic Common Ravens in Tulita, NWT were described as having "scarves" of white feathers on their necks and chests (JS). Three Barn Swallows at Ft. Simpson, NWT 21 Sep represented late departures (DT).

Banders at Albert Cr. this season enjoyed the windfall generated by the "chickadee effect"—whereby a few highly vocal Black-capped Chickadees would lead an incredible entourage of vireos, kinglets, and warblers through the woods and occasionally into the nets (TMK). A tardy Swainson's Thrush was noted at Whitehorse, Yukon 21 Oct (HG). The Yukon's first Northern Mockingbird was seen briefly bounding through a yard at Whitehorse 13 Nov (AP, GP) but then eluded observers (and a photograph) until it was seen again in winter. A flock of 7 European Starlings frequented the compost pile at the Whitehorse, Yukon dump through Sep (CE; HG; PS); at least 10 were noted among blackbird flocks in Ft. Simpson, NWT 21 Sep (DT). Once again, the banding station at Albert Cr. provided a unique win-

dow on songbird migration in se. Yukon; banding totals for the fall season's warbler migration (24 Jul–23 Sep) included 30 Tennessee Warblers, 122 Orange-crowned, 149 Yellow, 19 Magnolia, 2 Cape May, 185 Yellow-rumped, 3 Townsend's (16 Aug), 30 Black-poll, a hatch-year Black-and-white (4 Aug),



California Gulls are known to wander northward along the coast of southeastern Alaska each fall, and one or two are seen every fall at Whitehorse, Yukon as well. This adult was photographed there 3 August 2005. Photograph by Cameron D. Eckert.

54 American Redstarts, 157 Northern Waterthrushes, 199 Common Yellowthroats, and 105 Wilson's (TMK). Albert Creek's fall season banding totals for 2005 compared to 2004 (corrected for total net-hours) were dramati-



This male Common Grackle, the Yukon's fourth, spent much of September and early (here 8) October 2005 in a Teslin yard. Photograph by Dorothy Cooley.

cally lower for Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers, lower for Alder Flycatcher and Yellow Warbler, and slightly up for Yellow-rumped Warbler (TMK).

Migrant American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos were abundant along the Mackenzie R. trail at Ft. Simpson, NWT 21 Sep, with a combined total of over 100 birds seen in a 10-minute walk (DT). A remarkable but troubling sight on 8–9 Oct, following a fall snowstorm, was thousands of passerines (jun-

cos, sparrows, and redpolls) circling the Esso flare-stack in Norman Wells, NWT at night (DW). Song Sparrow is rare in the Yukon, with very few fall sightings; 3 seen this year all appeared to be quite dark, possibly the coastal subspecies; they included one banded at Albert Cr. 16 Aug (ph. TMK), one at a Porter

Creek, Whitehorse feeder 3–6 Sep (ph. CE, PS), and another at Whitehorse 1 Nov through the season (ph. HG, ph. CE). Two Le Conte's Sparrows were observed counter-singing at Ft. Simpson, NWT in early summer (MC, PE). Rare for Whitehorse, Yukon was a White-throated Sparrow 13 Oct (HG). In Northwest Territories, late Dark-eyed Juncos included 4 at a Norman Wells feeder 20 Nov (RP) and one at Ft. Simpson 21 Nov (DT). The annual fall staging of Rusty Blackbirds at the Whitehorse, Yukon landfill offers an opportunity to monitor this declining boreal species: This year, a flock of up to 200–300 was recorded there

in late Aug–early Sep, with small numbers captured and color-banded (PS, CE, WN). If observers in other regions see color-banded Rusty Blackbirds, we would appreciate hearing about it. On 31 Aug, a female Brewer's Blackbird, rare in the Yukon, was spotted among the Rusties at the Whitehorse landfill (ph. PS). An estimated 150 blackbirds, primarily Rusty Blackbirds, were noted at Ft. Simpson, NWT 21 Sep (DT). The Yukon's 4th Common Grackle spent much of Sep and early Oct at Teslin (BC, ph. DC).

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