

The new Northern Canada Region is awesome in size, over 3,700,000 km² (2,330,343 mi²)—four times the size of Alaska), with tremendous ecological diversity: lush lowland boreal forests, vast wetlands, mighty river systems, and desolate High Arctic barrens. This is landscape on the grandest scale, with a population of fewer than 100,000 people. Through these reports, we will try to share what is known of the Region's bird life in this most remote part of the continent. The advance of spring and associated bird migration was variable across the Region, although a number of record-early migrants were recorded. In the Yukon, spring came early and was generally warmer and drier than normal. Northwest Territories experienced seasonal norms in March and early April but cooler-than-average temperatures in the late April and much of May, with a late spring reported throughout that territory.

Abbreviations: A.C.B.S. (Albert Creek Banding Station, se. Yukon), Whse. (Whitehorse, Yukon).

LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Large numbers of waterbirds awaiting ice break-up, including approximately 300 Pacific Loons, were noted on open water leads of the Liard R. and Mackenzie R. at Ft. Simpson in mid-May (DT). An impressive movement of grebes totaling 1507 Horned and 327 Red-necked was recorded at various lakes in the Whitehorse area 7 May (JJ). Nesting by American White Pelicans at colonies near Ft. Smith was delayed by ice conditions on the Slave R. (MB). A migrant Double-crested Cormorant was noted at the Whse. sewage lagoons 6 May (HG); 2 showing wispy white head plumes were seen near their nesting site at Jackfish Bay, L. Laberge 10 May (CE). A small incursion of Great Blue Herons in the Whse. area included 3 at Jackfish Bay, L. Laberge 7 May (ph. BD, HG), 2 at M'Clintock Bay 7 May (JJ), and 6 at Kookatsoon L. 16 May (CD, BS).

A flock of 79 Snow Geese, uncommon migrants in s. Yukon, was at Carcross 15–18 May (CE, RH, DK). The first Canada Geese at Ft. Simpson were 3 on 7 Apr (HP), with the peak numbers of Greater White-fronted, Snow, and Canada Geese noted about the 2nd weekend of May. Goose numbers peaked during the following week in the vicinity of Norman Wells (RPO): on 15 May, one pilot reported thousands of swans, geese, and ducks along the Mackenzie R. in the stretch from Grand View to Little Chicago—more waterfowl than on any other reach of the river (GT). Swan migration peaked at M'Clintock Bay, s. Yukon on 21 Apr with a total count of 1854 swans, including 734 Trumpeters and 1060 Tundras (JJ). A male Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal, rare in s. Yukon, was at M'Clintock Bay 5 May (CE, BD, HG).

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Bald Eagles were seen as far n. as Tulita 6 Apr (T. Conkell) and Inuvik on the Easter weekend (*vide* A. Fehr). An imm. Peregrine Falcon was in hot pursuit of shorebirds at Judas Cr., Marsh L. 20 May (CE). Willow Ptarmigan numbers remained very low this winter and spring in the Deh Cho region (DT), although Sahtu populations seem to be starting to increase; Norman Wells's winter flocks departed in early Apr (RPO). The Sandhill Crane migration along the Tintina Trench through the Yukon is one of North America's great avian spectacles; observers at Faro noted the first flock on 23 Apr (KR), with many thousands of cranes passing overhead at least through 10 May (KR), including a total of 23,000 counted 8–9 May (JJ). Aerial surveys for nesting Whooping Cranes in Wood Buffalo N.P. were hindered by unseasonably late snow patches on the breeding grounds this year, and nest initiation appeared to be delayed (MB).

North winds and rain produced an impressive fallout of shorebirds at Ft. Simpson 26–29 May; highlights included an estimated 250 American Golden-Plovers, high numbers of Hudsonian Godwits and Short-billed Dowitchers, and a single Red Knot, which is rare in the area (DT et al.). Two males and a female Wilson's Phalarope, rare in the Northwest Territories, were e. of Checkpoint at km 381, Mackenzie Hwy. 16–17 May (TH, GK). In the Yukon, Pacific Golden-Plover is now being recorded annually in low numbers; a breeding-plumaged

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male was at Horse Cr., L. Laberge 10 May (CE), and a female was there 18 May (CE). In s. Yukon, shorebird migration peaked during the 3rd week in May: a flock of 500 Pectoral Sandpipers was at Nares L., Carcross 17 May (CE), and 450 Long-billed Dowitchers were noted at Lewes Marsh and M'Clintock Bay 20 May (CE). Rare shorebirds in the Whse. area included a Stilt Sandpiper at M'Clintock Bay 22 May (CE, HG, PS) and a White-rumped Sandpiper at Judas Cr. 29 May (HG).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

Rare gulls included 2 Franklin's Gulls at Ft. Simpson 16 May (DT), an ad. Ring-billed Gull at Marsh L., s. Yukon 20–21 May (CE), an ad. Glaucous-winged Gull in Whse. 8–10 May (CE), and a first-year Glaucous-winged Gull at Judas Cr. 26 May (CE, Y.B.C.). Herring Gull migration peaked at M'Clintock Bay on 23–25 Apr, with daily counts of 800 (JJ); about 1000 were present at the Whse. landfill 3–8 May (CE).

The Yukon's only established Rock Pigeon population appears set to wink out; fewer

than 4 now survive in downtown Whse. (LC, CE, HG). Reports of rare owls included a Northern Saw-whet Owl, the Yukon's 3rd, along the Kusawa L. Rd., sw. Yukon 15 Apr (BD, HG), a Barred Owl at Ft. Simpson 21 Apr (DT), and a Long-eared Owl at Ft. Simp-

ish in early Mar but subsequently disappeared (AS); it returned on 30 Mar and was closely studied (ph. CE, HG), and careful measurements of its footprints exactly match measurements of Northwestern Crow tracks from nearby Skagway, Alaska, and

A sudden chill and snow produced a dramatic fallout of American Tree, Fox, and White-crowned Sparrows, as well as Dark-eyed Juncos at A.C.B.S. 4–8 May (TMK). Single Vesper Sparrows, uncommon in the Northwest Territories, were reported sw. of Checkpoint 18 May (TH, GK) and at Ft. Simpson 25–29 May (DT). A White-crowned Sparrow nest with 3 newly hatched young and one egg at Dawson 31 May (DC) was indicative of an early breeding season there. Two early Lapland Longspurs were at Ft. Simpson 3 Apr (DT), and during the late-May fallout in the area, longspurs were abundant for several days (m.ob.). Reports of migrant Smith's Longspurs included a female at Faro, cen. Yukon 20–21 Apr (KR), and singles, both males, at Ft. Simpson 26 & 28 May (DT).

A Yellow-headed Blackbird was observed in Ft. Simpson 24–28 May, with a 2nd individual noted on 28 May (DI, HP). Unusually high numbers of migrant Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, including both coastal and interior races, were seen across s. Yukon from 30 Mar into Apr, reports included 3 coastal birds on the Tagish Rd. 30 Mar (CE, HG), one coastal bird at Destruction Bay 3 Apr (MF), 3 (2 interior, one coastal) at Watson Lake 2–3 Apr (JS, TMK), 50 coastal birds at Morley Bay, Teslin L. 13 Apr (CA, DH), up to 3 at Whse. 13–15 Apr (B & BS), and up to 100 at M'Clintock Bay in mid-Apr (DP). A singing Purple Finch at Ft. Smith 11 Mar (MB) was the earliest on record for the Region. Although most winter redpoll flocks had departed by early Apr, for a few days in late May Common Redpolls were the most abundant bird seen in Ft. Simpson, with hundreds foraging on the ground during the rain (DT).

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Often overlooked on spring migration, in southern Yukon Territory as elsewhere, Gray-cheeked Thrush was detected on several occasions in spring 2004, here at Porter Creek, Whitehorse 21 May. Photograph by Cameron Eckert.

son 31 May (DT). Crusty snow conditions may have been the cause of the many Boreal Owls seen out of the woods and near homes across s. Yukon through Mar (m.ob.). Boreal Owls heard on the Ft. Simpson owl survey route in late Apr declined from 8 in 2003 to none in 2004 (DT); the cause of their disappearance is not known.

An unprecedented influx of Red-breasted Sapsuckers in sw. Yukon yielded singles in downtown Whse. 31 Mar (ph. HG, FF CE), on the Takhini Hotsprings Rd. 1 Apr (MA), at Cowley Cr. on about 7 Apr (DS), at Marshall Cr. 9 Apr (KA), at Valleyview 10 Apr (DVW), and at Shallow Bay 17 Apr (SH). An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Tagish 2 May (HG, Y.B.C.) bettered the Yukon's earliest date for the species by four days. A Say's Phoebe at Enterprise on 22 May (DI, HP) was far e. of the mountains. A singing Warbling Vireo at Porter Cr., Whse. 15 May (CE, PS) set a record-early date for the Yukon. A Black-billed Magpie nest at Norman Wells 6 May (DW) provided the most northerly breeding record known for that species in the Northwest Territories.

The Yukon's first well-documented Northwestern Crow was first reported from Tag-

were obviously smaller than American Crow tracks measured at Kinaskan Lake Provincial Park in nw. British Columbia (CE). Single distant crows were seen at M'Clintock Bay 7 May (JJ) and Carcross 17 May (CE, RH). A Steller's Jay, rare in the Yukon, was at Carcross 27 Apr (RH). Tree and Cliff Swallows were considered to be in lower numbers and later arriving than usual at Norman Wells (DW). Likewise in the Yukon, many observers commented on a general lack of Tree Swallows. Inclement weather produced a fallout of up to 1500 Violet-green Swallows at McIntyre Cr., Whse. 8 May (CE). A relatively strong flight of migrant Mountain Bluebirds through Ft. Simpson area was reported during the 2nd and 3rd weeks of Apr (SC, KD, RPi, BB, CB, DT). Gray-cheeked Thrush is a stealth migrant in s. Yukon; 2 were singing at Porter Cr., Whse. 21–22 May (CE, PS), and an impressive 15 were banded at A.C.B.S. at Upper Liard in the last week of May (TMK).

Two European Starlings were noted in Ft. Simpson 28 May (DT). Single Western Tanagers were banded at A.C.B.S. 25 & 29 May (TMK). The season's first American Redstart was noted at A.C.B.S. 29 May (TMK).