

# Northern Canada



## Cameron D. Eckert

An ongoing surge of extralimital species across the North continues to fascinate and trouble northern birders. Reports of Magnolia Warbler, Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and Western Tanager added to the ever-growing list of Neotropical migrants appearing well beyond their ranges in the northwest. Two firsts for Nunavut this season were Piping Plover and Turkey Vulture, while Yukoners saw their first American White Pelicans. Two southern invaders bred for the first time in the Yukon this summer; an influx of American Crows in Watson Lake, Teslin, and Whitehorse culminated in the territory's first confirmed breeding record for this northward-expanding corvid. While the crows were greeted with only modest interest, the territory's first nesting House Sparrows inspired even less excitement. The Yukon's summer weather was warmer than average; glacial melt, heavy winter snow pack, and rain made for record flooding in the Yukon Southern Lakes. In the Fort Simpson region of Northwest Territories, June was dry for much of the month but saw heavy rainfall during the latter days of June. The Arctic regions were again increasingly warmer than usual this summer. On 21 June 2007, 15-year-old Yukoner Malkolm Boothroyd and his parents cycled southward to begin a year-long, fossil-fuel-free journey in search of birds. It's an inspiration to see a great birding adventure launched to raise awareness of bird conservation and climate change (<www.birdyear.com>).

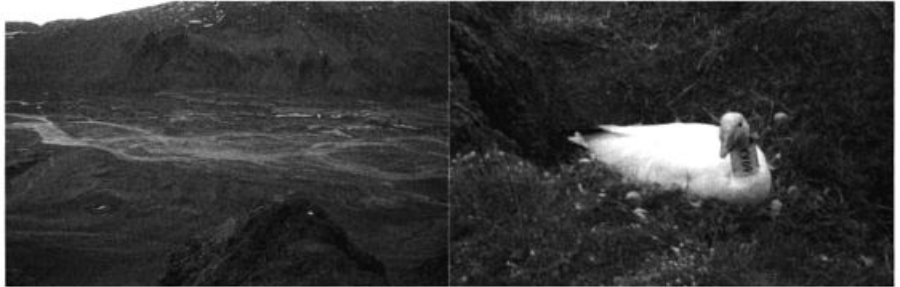
## WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A nesting Snow Goose at St. Patrick Bay on the n. end of Ellesmere I., Nunavut 1 Jul enjoyed an absolutely awe-inspiring view: perched adjacent a Gyrfalcon nest on the tip of a 270-m

rocky spire overlooking the Nares Strait to the icecaps of Greenland (ph. DS). Brant are regular late May–early Jun migrants at Akimiski I., Nunavut; this year, daily totals were in the 2000–3000 range until 1 Jun, when there was a major departure on the full moon. Smaller numbers (<500 per day) lingered until 10 Jun. A later movement of birds presumed to be from s. James Bay staging areas was noted 6 Jun, when small flocks were seen crossing Akimiski I. from the s. on a northeasterly path and continuing over the James Bay ice pack (KA et al.). A few late Brant were seen at Nares L., s. Yukon 6 Jun (CE, HG). A late but noteworthy spring report was of a Barnacle Goose in the company of Canada Geese and possibly paired with one at Akimiski I., Nunavut 26–28 May (KA et al.). A pair of Trumpeter Swans

mark the southernmost breeding location for this species in James Bay. A casual stop to check a group of seemingly out-of-place swans at Nares L., s. Yukon 6 Jun yielded the Yukon's first American White Pelicans (DP); a quick call to other birders ensured that the 4 pelicans were photographically documented (ph. CE, HG). In response to subsequent media coverage of the pelicans, it was learned that they had been seen at nearby Tagish for about a week (ph. LG). An aerial survey of islands in Akimiski Strait, Nunavut 5 Jun found 60 ad. Double-crested Cormorants and 30 nests (KA et al.). A Turkey Vulture, Nunavut's first, was an unexpected find in Arviat 23 Jul (ph. LR, MP).

An imm. Bald Eagle at Herschel I., n. Yukon 20 Jun (ph. CE, DA, PF, LJM) established just the 2nd record for the island. The connection between the northern and the southern hemisphere's bird populations was beautifully demonstrated this year by the in-



A Snow Goose on its nest at St. Patrick Bay, Nunavut on the north end of Ellesmere Island 1 July 2007 overlooks a true Arctic wilderness. Photograph by Doug Stern.

was again noted nesting this year in Tombstone Park, cen. Yukon 28 Jun; 4 Tundra Swans were seen on the same day at Chapman L., just n. of Tombstone Park (BM et al.). Three Redheads (2 males, one female), n. of their normal range, were seen on the Mackenzie R., NWT 18 Jun (ph. AL). Heavy snow delayed the return and subsequent nesting chronology of Common Eiders and other species on Southampton I., Nunavut this year (MM). Eiders were also delayed by up to two weeks at High Arctic locations, primarily due to heavy ice conditions along the migration route as opposed to breeding sites (MM). A male Hooded Merganser, very rare in cen. Yukon, was seen near Dawson 26 Jun (LD, KR). A noteworthy summer concentration of 77 Ruddy Ducks was recorded at the Whitehorse sewage ponds, s. Yukon 27 Jul (BD, HG). A female White-tailed Ptarmigan with a brood of at least 5 chicks was seen on Keno Hill, cen. Yukon 6 Jul (ph. MOD).

A pair of Pacific Loons observed on Akimiski I., Nunavut 10 Jun (KA et al.) may

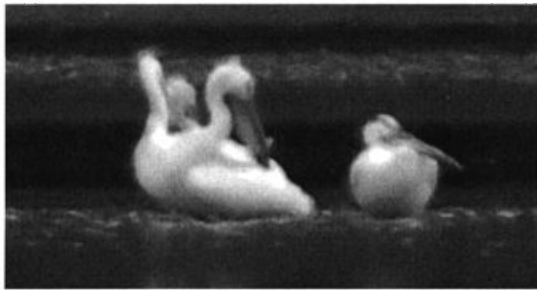
tercontinental migration of marked Peregrine Falcons. The Falcon Research Group put satellite transmitters on 7 falcons in Chile in Feb 2007; on 21 Jun, the ad. male known as "Seven" arrived n. of the Arctic Circle in Tuk-tut Nogait N.P., near Paulatuk, NWT. Two other marked birds, named "Linda" and



This trio of Redheads on the Mackenzie River, Northwest Territories 18 June 2007 were north of the species' typical breeding range; however, they may be post- or non-breeders. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

"Sparrow King," traveled to the Wager Bay and s. Ballin I. areas of Nunavut, respectively, to spend the summer months.

Two ad. Whooping Cranes seen 28 Jun at Loche L., Tulita District, NWT (RO) were sev-



This photograph, taken through a shimmering heat haze, nicely documented the Yukon's first American White Pelicans on Nares Lake at Carcross on 6 June 2007. Photograph by Cameron D. Eckert.

eral hundred kilometers away from the species' known breeding grounds. A Black-bellied Plover at Wright Pass (Yukon/Northwest Territories border) 8 Jun (SF, DM) may have provided the first record for the Dempster Hwy. A survey of tundra near Mary R., n. Baffin I., Nunavut turned up good numbers of American Golden-Plovers, with 8 (including 3 local young) on 28 Jul and 52 (including 12 local young) the next day (WR et al.). The bird of the season was Nunavut's first **Piping Plover** discovered 3 Jun during shorebird surveys at Akimiski I. and seen through 10 Jun (ph. CL, AF, BO et al.). A Killdeer at Tuktoyaktuk, NWT 7 Jun (SF et al.) had overshoot its breeding grounds. A Canadian Wildlife Service (C.W.S.) shorebird breeding survey near Ft. Simpson, NWT found Wilson's Snipe to be the most abundant bird species during 1-19 Jun; Lesser Yellowlegs were much less common than expected (PSm, SD). Nesting Wandering Tattlers are rarely reported and always noteworthy; a pair of ad. tattlers with a small chick were found in an alpine wetland along the upper Ketzar R., s. Yukon 2 Jul (ph. BS). Late migrant shorebirds at Herschel I., n. Yukon included a Black-bellied Plover and 3-4 White-rumped Sandpipers 8-9 Jun (AK); also passing through at Pauline Cove on Herschel I. were 4 Buff-breasted Sandpipers 21 Jun (CE) and 3 Red Phalaropes 18 Jun (ph. CE). An Arctic Fox made short work of most of the nesting Baird's and Semipalmated Sandpipers during nighttime forays at Pauline Cove, Herschel I. on 21-23 Jun; however, it seems that the broken-wing distraction display works on foxes, as the nesting Semipalmated Plovers survived (CE). Red-necked Phalaropes were noted breeding at Mary R., on the n. end of Baffin I., Nunavut, with one ad. male with 2 local young seen 28 Jul and 3 local young seen 5 Aug (WR et al.); this is beyond the species' known breeding range, which reaches the s. half of Baffin I. Nesting Red Phalaropes were also noted near Mary R., with one ad. male with 2 local young 29 Jul (WR et al.).

## GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

An estimated 45 Franklin's Gulls were seen at the Mackenzie R. crossing near Ft. Providence, NWT 8 Jul (ph. GV), a remarkable gathering North of 60 for this predominantly prairie species. A late but noteworthy report of spring gulls from Akimiski I., Nunavut included an ad. Little Gull 31 May and an ad. Iceland Gull 26 May followed by a second-cycle Iceland 28 May (KA et al.). A concentration of 300 Bonaparte's Gulls on Drury L., s.

Yukon 6 Jun (PSi) seemed odd for the date. Highlights of an aerial survey of islands in Akimiski Strait, Nunavut 5 Jun included the first nest record for Great Black-backed Gull (10 ads.) and an estimated 140 Caspian Terns; other nesting species included Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, and Arctic Tern (KA et al.). Glaucous, Thayer's, and Sabine's Gulls, as well as Arctic Terns, in Nunavut's High Arctic nested about 10 days later than usual this year (MM). Black-legged Kittiwake sightings near the Mary R., n. Baffin I. included 3 each day 30-31 Jul (WR et al.). Low numbers of Ivory Gulls (68) were recorded at the Seymour I. and Brodeur Pen., Nunavut colonies this season (MM); the former site also suffered significant nest loss to predation. Two pairs of nesting Ross's Gulls were found near Bathurst I., Nunavut in Jul (MM).

A Great Gray Owl near Eagle Plains, cen. Yukon 8 Jun was a highlight for a couple of Dempster Hwy. travelers (SF, DM). A Short-eared Owl nest with two eggs was found at Pauline Cove, Herschel I., n. Yukon 21 Jun (ph. CE, DA, PF, LJM). Common Nighthawk, now a Species at Risk in Canada, was noted to be in low numbers in the Yellowknife, NWT area (JB). Reports of Barn Swallows well beyond their ranges included singles at Akimiski I., Nunavut 28 May (KA et al.), Herschel I., n. Yukon 23 Jun (CE), and Bylot I., Nunavut 26 Jul (LJ, LM, FR). A Bank Swallow was also unusual at Akimiski I., Nunavut 15 Jun (KA et al.). Early Jun saw a few migrants still arriving at Albert Cr., s. Yukon, such as a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher banded 4 Jun (TMK); 4 were heard on the Mayo L. Rd. cen. Yukon B.B.S. 12 Jun (MOD). Eastern Kingbird reports from Nunavut included a pair at Akimiski I. 10 Jun (KA et al.) and one at Rankin Inlet 8 Jul (SS). A Blue-headed Vireo just beyond its regular range was recorded for the 3rd consecutive year on the Ingraham Trail B.B.S.

near Yellowknife, NWT 8 Jun; and another was seen in town a few weeks later (JB). A Warbling Vireo singing at Tombstone Park, cen. Yukon 9 Jun (HG et al.) provided the first Dempster Hwy. record for the species. A Red-eyed Vireo, rare but apparently regular in the Watson L. area, was seen at Albert Cr 4 Jun (TMK). A pair of Eastern Yellow Wagtails carrying food and giving alarm calls provided a good indication that young were somewhere nearby at the Firth R. delta, n. Yukon 11 Jul (HM).

American Crows are steadily gaining a foothold in the Yukon. Small numbers were seen in Watson L. and nearby Albert Cr through the summer (ph. CE; TMK); one was in Teslin 10 Jun (BS); in Whitehorse, 2-3 were seen through the summer, and breeding was confirmed 16 & 26 Jul when recently fledged crows were seen being fed by ads. (BMu; ph CE, PSi). A single American Crow, only the 2nd recorded in the area, was at Norman Wells, NWT through the period (RP, ph DW). A displaying Northern Wheatear was right on cue for a group of birders on Goldensides Mt. in Tombstone Park, cen. Yukon 29 Jun (BMa et al.) A total of 10 Northern Wheatear nest sites (ads. carrying food to nests) was recorded around Iqaluit, Nunavut during 27 Jun-14 Jul (DH). A male Northern



The shores of James Bay at Arviat, Nunavut was an unlikely location for this Turkey Vulture, the territory's first, on 23 July 2007. Photograph by Lynne Rollin.

Wheatear was seen carrying food to young calling from a nest cavity near Mary R. on n. Baffin I., Nunavut 28 Jul (WR et al.). An American Robin was rare on Herschel I., n. Yukon 8-9 Jun (AK, DR), and a female Varied Thrush provided a first island record there 20 Jun (ph. CE, DA, PF, LJM). Single American



Nunavut's first Piping Plover was a startling find at Akimiski Island in southern James Bay 3-10 (here 9) June 2007. Photograph by Carmen Lishman.

Robins, possibly one bird involved, were noted in Iqaluit, Nunavut 28 Jun and 2 Jul (DH). Swainson's Thrush and Tennessee Warbler were the most abundant non-shorebird species recorded on C.W.S. shorebird surveys in the Ft. Simpson area, NWT 1-19 Jun (PSm). Tennessee Warbler numbers have increased in the Yukon in recent years; this species was reported in relatively high numbers across s. Yukon; farther n. in cen. Yukon, 2 were singing at Mayo 5 Jun (MOD), 2 were on the Wareham L. B.B.S. 12 Jun (MOD), and one was at Tombstone Park 27 Jun (BMA et al.). A Magnolia Warbler, well w. of its Yukon range, was seen in Whitehorse 5 Jun (LC). A Cape May Warbler was observed near Ft. Simpson, NWT in early Jun (PSm). A Bay-breasted Warbler, rare but apparently increas-

ingly regular, was seen at Albert Cr., s. Yukon 2-4 Jun (TMK).

Western Tanagers seen w. of their normal Yukon range included singles in Haines Junction 5 Jun (ph. TH) and in Whitehorse 11 & 20 Jun (PSi). A male Harris's Sparrow singing on a wide-ranging treeless territory at Herschel I. 18-24 Jun provided the Yukon's 2nd photographically documented record (AK, CK, ph. CE, DR); this species was reported without details from Herschel I. in 1987. Reports of lost Dark-eyed Juncos included one at Herschel I., n. Yukon 8 Jun (DR) and one in Iqaluit, Nunavut 3-8 Jul (ph. MC).

Ten Smith's Longspurs at Surfbird Mt., km 97 on the Dempster Hwy., cen. Yukon 4 Jun were enjoyed by a group of visiting birders on a tour (ph. SF et al.). The C.W.S. shorebird survey near Ft. Simpson, NWT found that Rusty Blackbirds showed up at the study plot 20 May and were seen regularly for the next several days but disappeared as Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles arrived 25 May, with the latter two species remaining through the season (PSm). A female Red-winged Blackbird on Herschel I., n. Yukon 18-21 Jun (AK, ph. CE) was just the 2nd of its kind to wander to that Arctic island.

Three Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches were seen on Keno Hill, cen. Yukon 7 Jul (MOD). Two fuzzy juv. Common Redpolls in downtown Whitehorse, s. Yukon 26 Jun (PSi) indi-

cated lowland nesting this year for this species. A rich White Spruce cone crop yielded an explosion of breeding White-winged Crossbills across s. and cen. Yukon in Jul (m.ob.). A pair of House Sparrows, a species not previously known to breed in the Yukon, was found nesting in Whitehorse 19 Jul (ph. CE); by 22 Jul, all 4 young had fledged and were being fed by the ads. (ph. CE). A lone female House Sparrow was seen in Carcross, s. Yukon through Jul (DK).

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## Prairie Provinces



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Spring and early summer rains, combined with cool temperatures, created lush conditions across the southern

Prairie Provinces that lasted into July. Water levels remained high throughout the period. Extremely hot and generally dry but humid weather followed, spreading eastward from Alberta. Greg Krätzig described July in Saskatchewan as a "blast furnace." Needless to say, birding activity during that month was limited. Judging by the number of early fall migrants in southern Manitoba, it appears that passerines had a productive summer.

### GEESE THROUGH CRANES

A Ross's Goose at Pelican L., MB 16 Jun was record late for spring (WC, RS, MW, m.ob.). Two Brant 6 Jun and 2 Dusky Canada Geese 11 Jun were good finds at Churchill, MB (RK, CNSC). Trumpeter Swans were finally found breeding in se. Manitoba, where a pair with 8

cygnets was seen 24 Jun near Bissett (ph. CA). Elsewhere in the province, 4 were at Oak Hammock Marsh 1 Jun (RK), and one, banded in Aug 2005 at Green Camp, OH, remained at St. Malo from 12 Jul into Aug (F&JM, LV, m.ob., ph.). Nesting Tundra Swans returned to Patience L., SK, far s. of their usual range; 4 juvs. were near fledging by mid-Aug (PH, m.ob., ph.). Other notable waterfowl included a northerly Wood Duck at Churchill 2 Jun (BC), a male Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler hybrid at Whitewater Lake W.M.A., MB 10 Jun (BDL) and 3 King Eiders at Churchill 10 Jun (BC, m.ob.).

Unexpected in summer in the s. were single Red-throated Loons at Rafferty Dam, SK 25 Jun (JL, ph.) and Clear L., near Stavely, AB 8-22 Jul (BW, m.ob.). A Yellow-billed Loon