



# NWT/Nunavut Bird Checklist Survey Newsletter

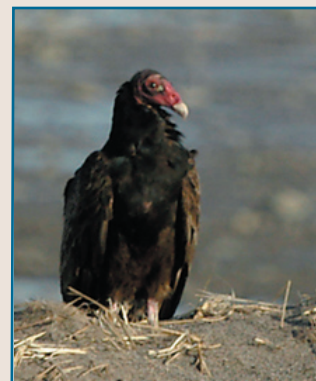
Spring 2008

A program coordinated by Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service since 1995

## News from the Survey

### Noteworthy records from 2007

- Black Guillemot (found deceased) at Cambridge Bay (October 2007)
- Belted Kingfisher at Cambridge Bay (September 2007)
- Hermit Thrush at Cambridge Bay (July 2007)
- Brown-headed Cowbird and Barn Swallow on Bylot Island (August 2007)
- Turkey Vulture in Arviat (July 2007)
- Eastern Kingbird in Rankin Inlet (July 2007)
- Northern Flicker at Whale Cove (September 2007)
- Mourning Dove in Yellowknife (October 2007)
- American White Pelican at Trout Lake (August 2007)
- Piping Plover on Akimiski Island, James Bay (August 2007)
- Possible Brown Creeper at Fort Smith (July 2007)
- American Dippers (eight spotted) at Doris Creek (March 2007)
- Mountain Bluebird at Meadowbank Lake (June 2007)



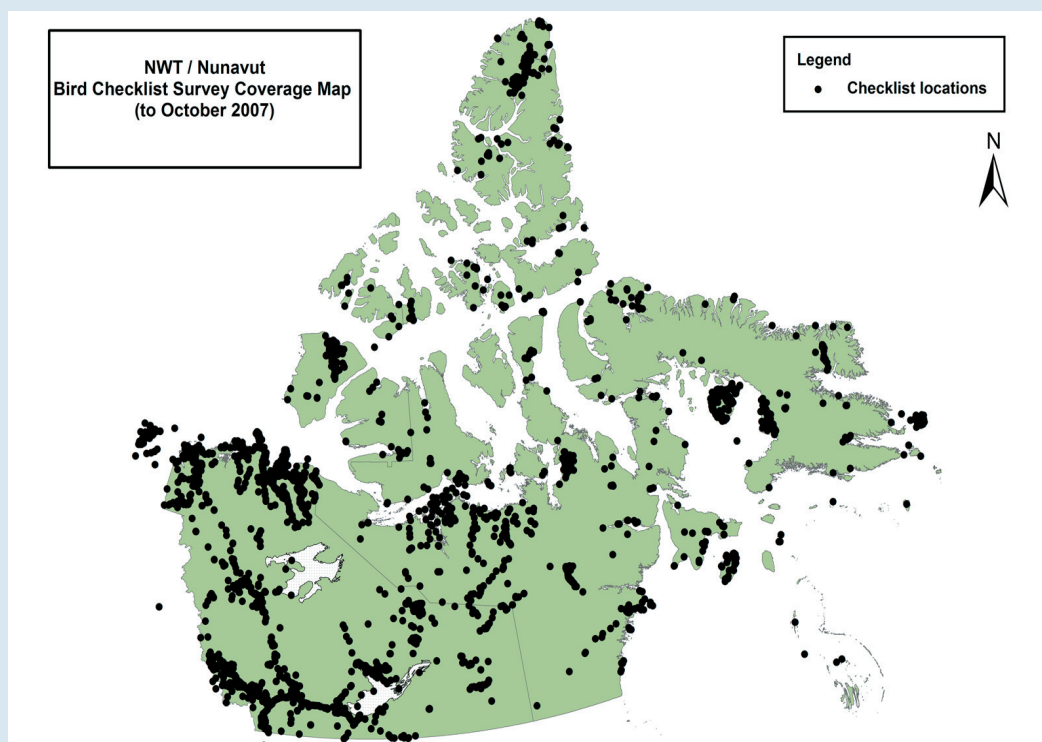
This Turkey Vulture was observed in Arviat last July.  
(Photo: Lynne Rollins.)

### Map of Checklist Survey Locations

Here is a current map of Checklist survey observations from across the North. We would like to thank all of the dedicated researchers and citizen scientists that have gathered these data over the last 13 years. With your help, we will fill in the blank areas over the next 10 years.

#### Quick facts:

- Over 4 million birds have been tallied on checklists since 1995
- 493 observers have submitted 10,143 checklists



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## NORTHERN BIRDER PROFILE: Doug Stern

### Checklist tip:

Remember that in order to confirm rare bird observations in NWT/NU, you must submit either:

photographic evidence (no matter how blurry)

OR

a descriptive sketch.

**D**oug is a frequent "Checklist" who calls Cambridge Bay home, and has spent summers on northern Ellesmere Island working with Parks Canada. He has also shared many interesting observations with us over the years and has had so many experiences that he toys with one day publishing a collection of his intriguing wildlife stories.

### (1) How long have you been birding?

"Since experiencing camping and canoe trips as a teenager in Ontario."

### (2) What is your favorite bird observed in the North?

"There are two: First, a juvenile Gray-crowned Rosy Finch in 1994, 20 miles from the mouth of the Hood River, Bathurst Inlet. In the low angle 'alpenglow' that evening, I thought it looked like someone's lost canary! Second, of the northern birds I see every year, I'd have to say the male king eider is my favourite. It's the most eye catching, does a great courtship dance and croons really well too. Fred Astaire in feathers. What more would a female eider want?"

### (3) Doug's advice to northern birders:

"You have to fish to catch a fish. The same applies to interesting bird sightings. Get out there and do it. You might help extend known ranges for certain species, document strange sightings on a far off trip or in your own backyard. Who knows, perhaps you will witness a rare extra-limital observation like the Belted Kingfisher in Cambridge Bay last fall..."



Doug must have seen a great winter bird from the smile on his face. (Photo courtesy of Doug Stern)



**Snow Goose nest with a view.** One of Doug's observations from last year was of this nest and five others on and near a 900-foot spire on Ellesmere Island. The nests were situated below an active Gyrfalcon nest. One of the geese (pictured above right) had a neck collar from a marking project on the St. Lawrence River estuary (Photo montage: Doug Stern).



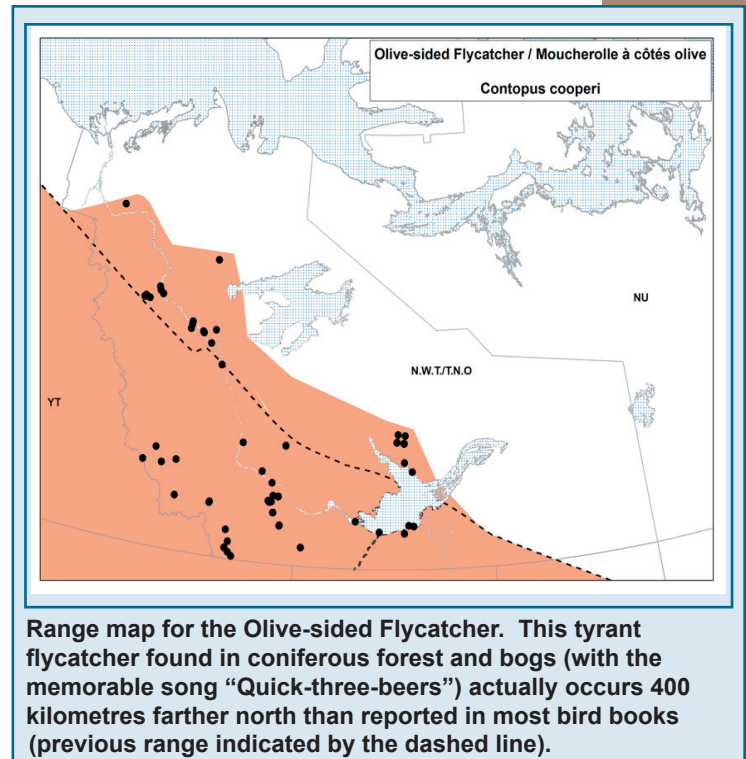
## Changing Ranges

### Checklist data helps scientists prepare accurate northern range maps

Have you ever wondered how range maps in your bird guide are made? It actually takes a lot of effort from many individuals and organizations. Authors of bird books can use methods that include examining satellite imagery for suitable habitat, contacting experts on particular species, or by asking programs like the NWT/NU Bird Checklist Survey what evidence is available for certain regions.

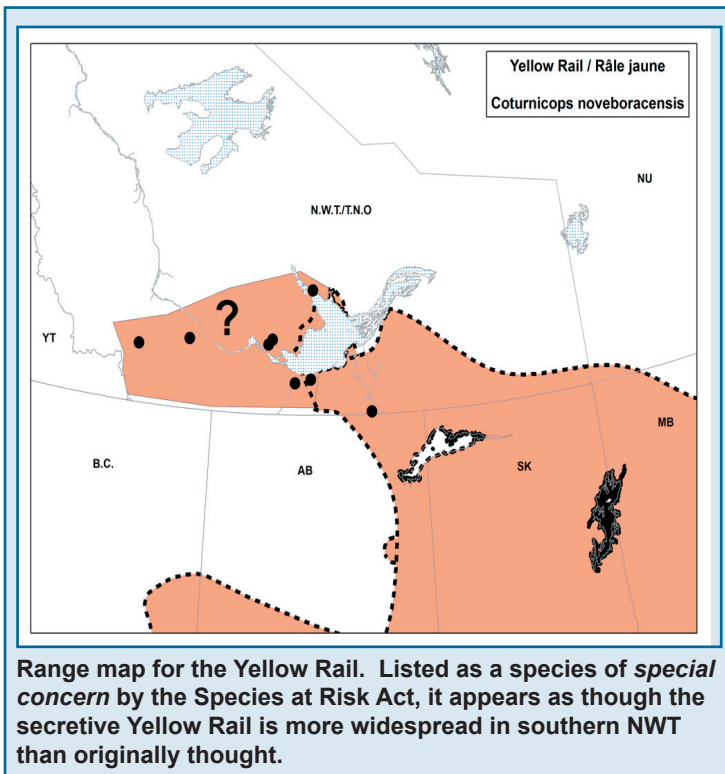
It is very difficult for ornithologists to determine where species occur in vast, sparsely inhabited areas such as the NWT and Nunavut. For the most part, species range maps in the NWT and Nunavut were based primarily on habitat types and historical observations. They are educated guesses. But as we glean more and more observations for the Checklist database, we are able to determine bird distribution in the North with greater precision.

Recently we reviewed the northern ranges of over 250 birds from data provided by NatureServe ([www.natureserve.org](http://www.natureserve.org)). We identified many new confirmed breeding areas using a combination of Checklist observations provided by volunteers, and historical data that we have entered into the database. Some species' ranges only required minor changes, while some maps did not even show species occurring in the NWT or Nunavut. These data will eventually be shared through NatureServe's updated releases of ranges of birds for the western hemisphere.



We have included a few of the most interesting range changes made from Checklist observations, the Yellow Rail and the Olive-sided Flycatcher. The shaded area outside of the dashed line depicts the newest species occurrence, the black circles are observations from the Checklist survey, and the dashed line indicates the old, previously identified range of the species.

Accurate ranges are very important for environmental assessments for protected areas or industrial activity, North American-wide bird conservation planning initiatives like bird conservation region plans, and enforcing federal legislation like the Species at Risk Act. Range maps are also helpful to those working at territorial and federal parks, and for the average naturalist attempting to identify a bird in their backyard.





This male Marsh Wren was seen east of Checkpoint, NT in 2007 (Photo: Craig Machtans)

### Checklist Challenge for NWT bird-watchers:

#### Marsh Wren

Since the early 1990s there have been many observations of this species in southern NWT. So far, breeding has only been confirmed in Nahanni National Park (2005).

We challenge you to find and take photos of a Marsh Wren nest with eggs or fledged young in 2008.

## 2007 Checklist Birders Hall of Fame

Thanks to everyone who submitted Checklists in 2007. We extend our appreciation by devoting this part of the newsletter to listing persons who contributed Checklist data in the past year. Only primary observers are listed.

Jason Akearok  
Lindsay Armer  
Aulavik Park Staff  
Auyuittuq Park Staff  
Patricia Baldwin  
Olivier Barden  
Jon Bart  
Rae Braden  
Valery Braden  
Keith Brady  
Susan & Mike Bryan  
Bob Bromley  
Bill Carpenter  
Suzanne Carriere  
Nicole Chatel  
Lisa Chirrey  
Sarah Dauncey  
Lynne Dickson  
Rian Dickson  
Craig Dockrill  
Kyle Elliott  
Alan Fehr  
Charles Francis  
Alain Fontaine  
Martin Gebauer  
Ryan Greig  
Bill Gundlach  
Glen Guthrie  
Siu-Ling Han  
David Haogak

Hendrik Herfst  
Brad Heath  
Reid Hildebrandt  
Jason Hudson  
Sharon Irwin  
Sara Jaward  
Brian Johns  
Vicky Johnston  
Robin Johnstone  
Ludovic Jolicoeur  
Fred Jumbo  
Andrew Keenainak  
Daniel Kilabuk  
Richard Knapton  
Joe Kudlak  
Alicia Korpach  
Nicole Lights  
Carmen Lishman  
David Livingstone  
Craig Machtans  
Nancy Makpah  
Mark Mallory  
Aaron Marshall  
Kevin Martee  
Mike Matou  
Laurie McGregor  
Steve Moore  
Rachel Munday  
Rod O'Brien  
Robert Odear

Damian Panayi  
Richard Popko  
PRISM volunteers  
Jennie Rausch  
Garnet Raven  
Robert Reid  
Lynne Rollins  
Mike Rosen  
Carl Savignac  
Nathan Senner  
Sue Shirley  
Krista Sittler  
Cyndi Smith  
Paul Allen Smith  
Wayne Starling  
Doug Stern  
Doug Tate  
Nathan Tigullaraq  
Jeff van den Scott  
Lisa-Jo van den Scott  
Mario Villemure  
Leslie Wakelyn  
Western Arctic Parks Unit  
Hugh Westheuser  
Dave Wilderspin  
Rick Wilson  
Credence Wood  
Brian Zawadski



Photographs of notable observations from 2007: [Left] This Mourning Dove was observed in Yellowknife last October. (Photo: Reid Hildebrandt); [Right] A Brown-headed Cowbird was observed on Bylot Island in August. It is the northern-most observation of a Cowbird to date. (Photo: Ludovic Jolicoeur)

### Questions? Suggestions? Contact Us!

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#### Our Partners

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