



NWT BIRD CHECKLIST SURVEY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1998

A program coordinated by the Canadian Wildlife Service since 1995

CONTINUED SUCCESS AND A BRIGHT FUTURE

The Checklist Survey continues to be successful. We have received 298 checklists so far for 1997, including substantial contributions from Parks Canada. It is NEVER too late to send us completed checklists for any year.

THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOUR

Everyone's effort is starting to pay off. Our database currently contains nearly **10 000 records from 1221 checklists**. Two-hundred and six species have been recorded so far! Though this includes vagrants, compared to the approximately 243 birds that probably breed in the NWT, we think that 3 years of work has produced fantastic results for such a huge area! The map on the back of the newsletter highlights just how well the Checklist program is doing at gathering data

from all across the NWT.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS *"I still have checklist that were filled out two years ago. Do you still want them?"* Absolutely!

Completed checklists can be submitted at any time.

"My data is not in the right format for the Checklist Survey, but I have some interesting observations. Do you have any use for this information?" Yes. If you have

lists of bird observations for a given area (presence/absence), or observations of unusual or rare bird species, please send them in separately to CWS (address on back cover of this newsletter).

"I have a bunch of blank checklist forms here from previous years. Can I still use them in 1998?" Yes. Checklist forms received in previous years can still be used in 1998 and beyond.

"I distribute checklists to my guests/ visitors/ clients, but I have no idea how many actually

WE'RE ON THE WEB

It seems like you can find almost anything on the internet these days, and now you can find us! Visit our brand new site at www.NWTChecklist.com The site gives a bit of background on the program, allows you to download your own copies of the checklist form, and has an electronic version of our newsletter. We will also be putting interesting snippets of current information on the site in the Quarterly News section. One really useful link on the site leads to the Canadian Bird Checklist Program. At that website, you can enter your data onto a form for the NWT/Nunavut and it will be emailed directly to us. Check it out!

get filled out and returned to CWS. Is there an easy way to keep track of this?" We suggest that you stamp the back of each checklist with the name of your establishment. We will keep track of these checklists and report back to you.

SOME ODD BIRDS

Not every record we get is for those archetypal arctic bird species. This year we received well documented accounts of a Lazuli Bunting near Tulita from Dave

Wilderspin and a record of a Brown Thrasher on Coats Island from David Hussell. John MacDonald sent us a note with this year's checklists describing a Brown-headed Cowbird that he photographed on Devon Island in 1985. Janice Roosdahl and Mike Fournier of Yellowknife found one Lonely Marsh Wren that was desperately, but ultimately unsuccessfully, trying to attract a mate northwest of the city.

THE REGULARS AND NOT-SO-REGULARS

You are probably familiar with the birds that are “regulars” where you live in the NWT or in the areas you visit. But, can you guess which birds are most commonly reported in the Checklist Survey? On the right are the 10 most often reported birds (the most numerous would be those outrageous colonial seabirds!) and 18 others that have been reported only once. Some of those “rare” ones are truly rare or vagrant. Others are not uncommon, they are just not often recorded. Conversely, some of the most reported birds are certainly not the most common in the NWT!

10 MOST COMMONLY REPORTED SPECIES

<i>Snow Bunting</i>	<i>Common Raven</i>
<i>Lapland Longspur</i>	<i>Herring Gull</i>
<i>Glaucous Gull</i>	<i>Arctic Tern</i>
<i>Oldsquaw</i>	<i>Red-throated Loon</i>
<i>Long-tailed Jaeger</i>	<i>Canada Goose</i>

SPECIES WITH ONLY 1 RECORD TO DATE

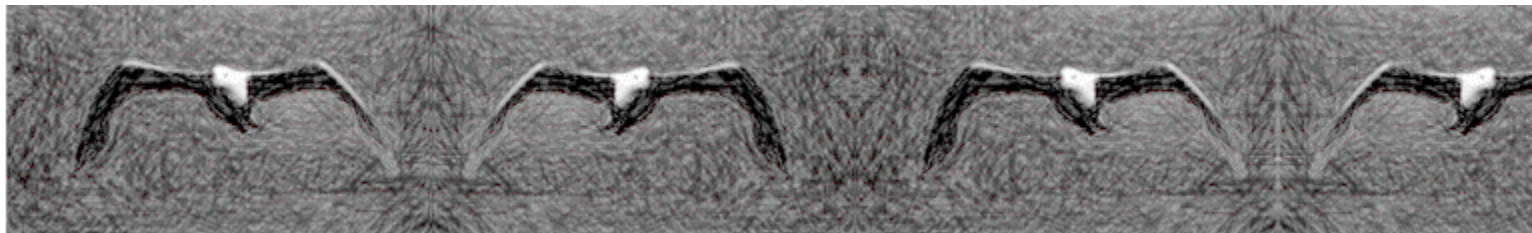
<i>Black-billed Magpie</i>	<i>Lesser Black-backed Gull</i>
<i>Bay-breasted Warbler</i>	<i>Mourning Dove</i>
<i>Black-backed Woodpecker</i>	<i>Northern Hawk Owl</i>
<i>Black-capped Chickadee</i>	<i>Pine Siskin</i>
<i>Brown-headed Cowbird</i>	<i>Short-billed Dowitcher</i>
<i>Blue Grouse</i>	<i>Surfbird</i>
<i>Brown Thrasher</i>	<i>Three-toed Woodpecker</i>
<i>Cedar Waxwing</i>	<i>Violet-green Swallow</i>
<i>Great-horned Owl</i>	<i>Yellow-headed Blackbird</i>

MANAGING THE DATA

This year we were busy with the data management aspect of running the Checklist Survey. We developed a windows-based database that allows us to consolidate all of our electronic information into one complete source. We are also finalizing a new version of our Birdlist software which anyone can use to enter their data electronically and send it to us. This version runs in Windows95 and is more user friendly. Contact us if you would like a free copy - it allows you to keep a database of your sightings, and helps us out by reducing the time spent entering cards into the master database.

FINAL NOTE

We reprinted our Checklist cards this year and, hopefully, fixed the parts that were confusing before.



IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN THE NWT

Thanks to a special Checklist Survey initiative, we are improving the quality of bird data that is available for environmental assessments. In 1997 we began collecting historical bird data for entry into the checklist survey database. By extending our bird data baseline backwards in time, we may be able to make *some* comparisons with present and future data. This type of comparison is often used in environmental assessments. The following major datasets (by geographic location) are being added to the database:

- Sarcpa Lake,
Melville Peninsula
- BHP Ekati diamond mine site,
Slave Province
- Diavik proposed diamond mining project,
Lac de Gras
- BHP Boston gold project site near
Bathurst Inlet
- Coats Island
- Contwoyto Lake

Numerous smaller datasets were also added, and we have a list of good historical data that still needs to be entered. This project should continue into 1998.

HATS OFF TO OUR CORPORATE CONTRIBUTORS OF HISTORICAL DATA

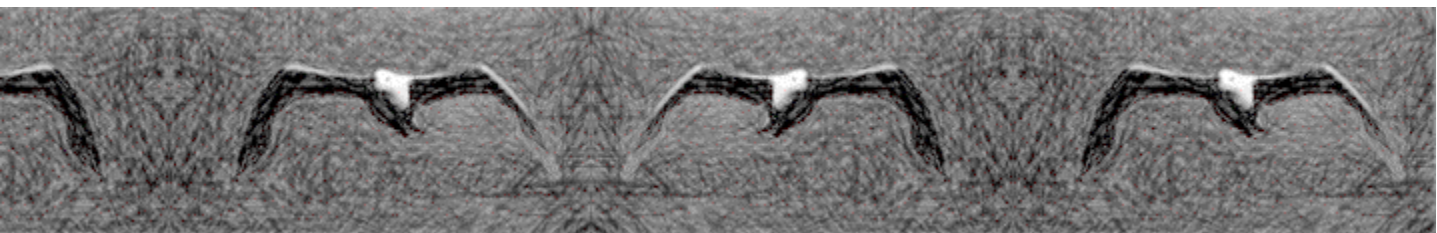
- BHP Diamonds
- Diavik Diamonds
- Canamera Geological
- ResCan
- Golder Associates
- Quest International Resources
- Penner and Associates
- BHP Minerals
- Lytton Minerals

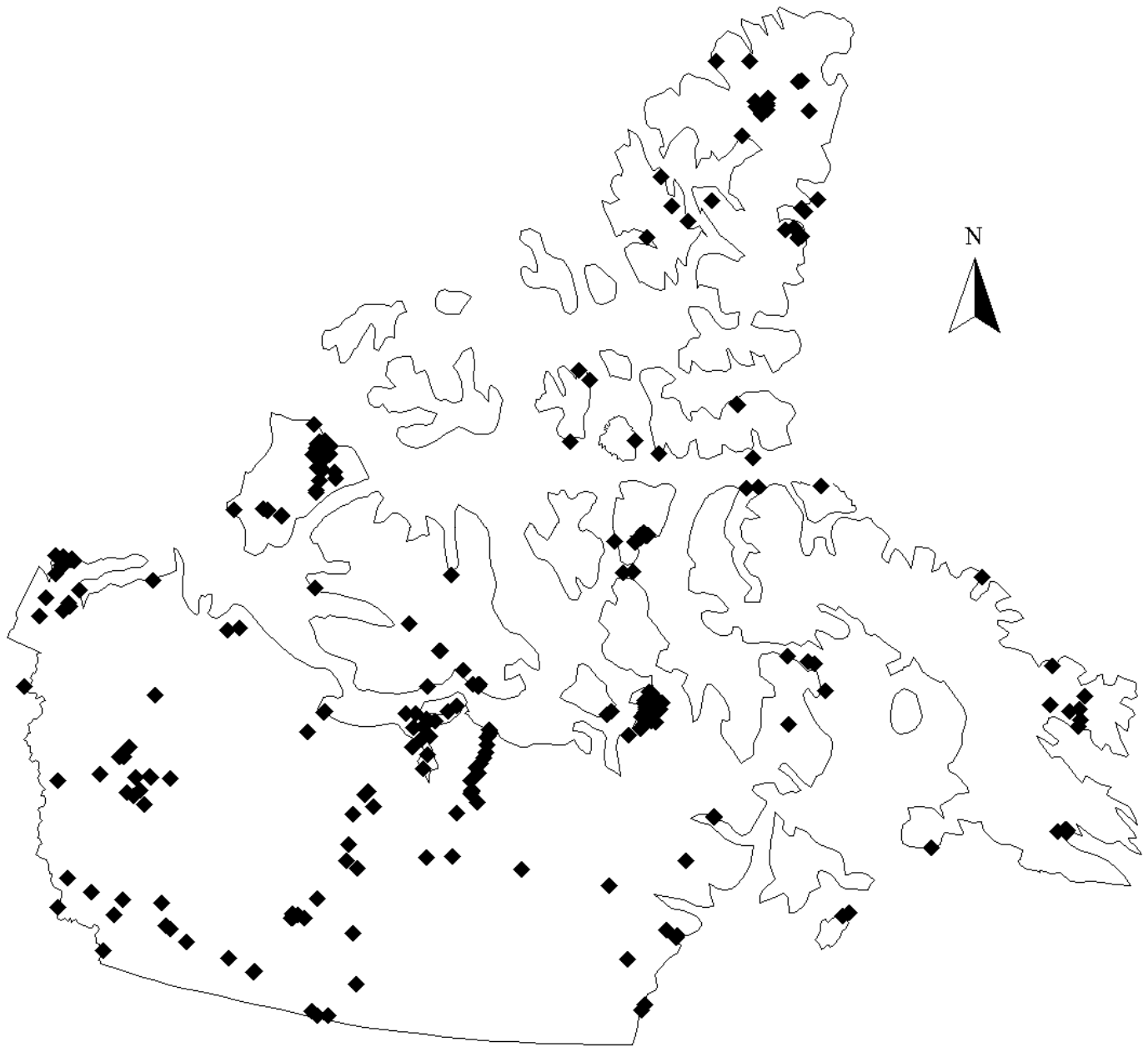
WANTED! WANTED! YOUR OLD BIRD DATA!

If you have historical data that may be suitable for inclusion in the Survey database, please contact us (address on the back of the newsletter).

COMMON PROBLEMS AND SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Every year we get a few checklists that we (sadly) can't include in the database because of the way the data were collected. Usually the problem is that the data were collected for longer than 24 hours. Although we appreciate receiving complete species lists for an area, for the Checklist Survey it is vital that your observations be broken into 1 day (or shorter) time periods so we can use the data. Other common problems are that either no breeding codes were listed or no abundance was listed (or a verbal descriptor like 'many', 'lots' or 'few' was used). The best we can do with this information is put an 'X' in the database indicating the bird was seen, but without any of the breeding criteria listed on our cards. For the 'many' and 'lots' entries, we are forced to record "1" as the abundance. This information is useful for mapping bird distributions, but we won't be able to use it for much else. Please try to record the total number of birds seen and some type of breeding code, even if it is just an "H" for habitat!





This map shows all locations for which we have received data since program inception in 1995.



QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT US!



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