

NWT/NUNAVUT BIRD CHECKLIST SURVEY NEWSLETTER MAY 2006

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



NEWS FROM THE SURVEY

Checklist Returns were down this year. Only 289 checklists were turned in for 2005. This is down from ~580 returned in 2004. Take the checklist challenge and help us increase returns this year! Your observations are important. In 2005 checklist data was used by: Parks Canada, Species at Risk Assessment, NWT Species Infobase update, environmental contractors, and birders.

Checklist Challenge: The theme of International Migratory Bird Day for 2006 is "The Boreal Forest – Bird Nursery of the North". In honour of IMBD focusing on the boreal - we challenge you to fill out as many checklists as you can in 2006. The winners (top five) will receive an IMBD poster or t-shirt.

Noteworthy records from 2005:

- Pileated Woodpecker near Yellowknife (Dec 2005)
- Common Goldeneye near Yellowknife (Dec 2005)
- Hatch-year Swainson's Thrush near Igloolik (December 2004)
- Western Kingbird & Western Meadowlark near Fort Liard (June 2005)
- Spotted Towhee in Arviat (June 2005)
- Barn Swallow and American Tree Sparrow near Baker Lake (June 2005)
- Marsh Wren and Yellow Rail at Nahanni National Park (June 2005)

NORTHERN BIRDER PROFILE: JIM RICHARDS



Photo: Mike Tobin

This year, we are featuring Jim Richards. Although not a northern resident, Jim has spent a lot of time working and watching birds in the Arctic. He has been surveying birds from Churchill MB, to Nunavut since 1983. He is co-author of an annotated checklist for the birds of Nunavut. If you would like a copy, you can contact Jim via email: jmr.naturepix@rogers.com. Jim plans to bird in Cambridge Bay and Yellowknife this summer.

(1) How long have you been birding?

"I have been interested in birds and their nests since childhood and have been active in the field since 1956. It is my quest to photograph nests, eggs, and adults of all Canadian bird species."

(2) What is your favourite bird observed in the north?

"Of all the great birds I have seen in the Arctic, I guess my favorite would have to be my first Long-tailed Jaeger in 1990, and I never get tired of seeing them. This is my favorite Arctic species. The first one I ever enjoyed was in 1990. It was hanging almost motionless in an updraft, about three meters off the ground, in perfect lighting and about five meters in front of me. What a great way to witness a life bird."

(3) What is your most memorable northern birding moment?

"That would have to be a moment from 2000. After searching Victoria Island every summer for five years, we found a Red Knot nest. To top it all off we found a Yellow-billed Loon nest on the same day."

Jim birding at his favourite northern location – Cambridge Bay, NU. He likes it because of the variety of species found there, and all of the friendly people.

TEST YOUR NORTHERN BIRD IDENTIFICATION SKILLS



Bird identification can be difficult - even for experienced birders. Sometimes you only get a quick glance of a flying bird, or weather conditions fog up your optics. Families like gulls (Laridae) are particularly challenging to identify. However, if you have an idea of what characteristics to look for, it can help you narrow your search within your field guide. Here are some tips that will help improve your birding skills no matter what level of birder you are:



Tip 1: Study your bird book

By studying your bird guide, you will be able to discern the different groups of birds. Familiarize yourself with the silhouettes and sizes of the different families. Some easy families to start off with are: waterfowl, raptors, gulls, flycatchers, warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers, finches, grosbeaks, and shorebirds. Can you tell which families the silhouettes belong to? *Answers on last page.*



Tip 2: Narrow your field of search

There are over 800 species in most North American bird books. Depending on where you live in the NWT or NU, you can narrow your search for common species substantially based on bird ranges. Keep in mind that rarities do occur sometimes.



Tip 3: What to look for

Characteristics like bill shape and size, wing shape, body size, coloration, and habitat where the bird was observed will all help you describe and later identify a bird.



Tip 4: Keep a field book

Having a field book to write down your observations is not only handy for identifying birds that stump you in the field, but it is also a great way to keep track of your birding memories. You can sketch a picture and take notes about the bird to refer back to later.



Now you can test your birding skills. Here are some pictures and descriptions of some birds from NWT and NU. The answers are on the next page. Good luck and good birding this summer. *Answers on last page.*



Photo: Craig MacIntosh

2. I am a permanent resident below the tree-line in the NWT. I am bigger than a chickadee, but smaller than an American Kestrel. I am not really afraid of people, and have a reputation for taking food from them any chance I can get. You might not know it – but I store food for the winter by covering it with saliva and sticking it to trees.



Photo: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada



Photo: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada

5. Most of my relatives come out to hunt at night, and are depicted as being very wise by popular culture. Lemmings are my favorite meal. I'm the heaviest one in my family - the extra insulation comes in handy in the cool north where I spend most of my life. I love hiding in the snow – my feathers blend in perfectly.

6. I am a small, stout, Arctic-breeding shorebird. When I'm flying, you can tell me apart from other shorebirds by (i) my white back, rump, and upper tail-coverts, (ii) my wing-bar and patch on my inner wing contrast with my dark upperparts, and (iii) my orange legs. During breeding season, males of my species have a distinguishable black and white head and bib, and a beautiful black and chestnut-coloured back.

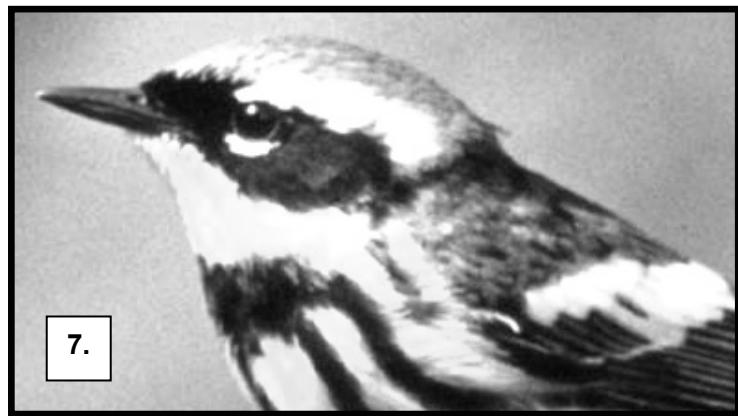


Photo: Craig Machtans

WHAT IS A BIRD CONSERVATION REGION?

Who? Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) are part of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABI). NABI's purpose is ensuring long-term health of North America's native bird populations. This involves co-operative conservation strategies among governments, NGO's, and citizen science programs in Mexico, USA, and Canada.



What? BCRs are areas defined by ecological regions (i.e. grassland, forest, or tundra) rather than political boundaries. So conservation efforts can be focused on specific groups of habitat-dependent species (i.e. tundra nesting birds in the Arctic Plains & Mountains BCR).

Where? The map on the left shows the boundaries of BCRs in Canada. In NWT/NU, there are four BCRs: Arctic Plains & Mountains (#3), Taiga Shield & Hudson Plains (#7), Boreal Taiga Plains (#6), and the Northwestern Interior Forest (#4) (occurs in the MacKenzie Mountain region).

To learn more about BCRs, go to:
<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/international/bcrmain.html>

2005 CHECKLIST BIRDERS HALL OF FAME

Thanks to everyone who submitted checklists for 2005. We extend our appreciation by devoting this part of the newsletter to listing persons who submitted data in the past year. Only primary observers are listed.

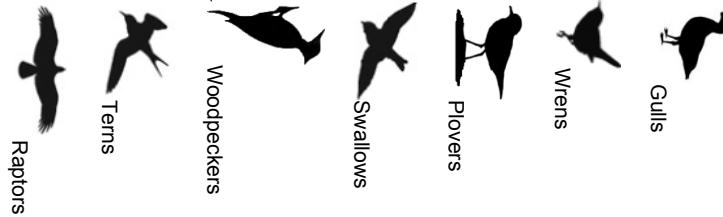
Lindsay Armer
Kieth Brady
Bob Bromley
Susan Bryan
Michael Bryan
Suzanne Carriere
Lynne Dickson
J.F. Dufour
Kyle Elliot
Alan Fehr
Martin Gebauer
Bill Gundlach
Patricia Handley
Todd Heakes
Billy Jacobson
Eileen Jacobson
Greg Kubica
Norman Kudlak Jr.
Ian MacDonald
Elise Maltin

Chad McCallum
Erica Nol
Joachim Obst
Roger Pilling
Richard Popko
Jennie Rausch
Bob Reid
Rand Rudland
John Staudinger
Tasha Stephenson
Doug Stern
Doug Tate
Richard Thomas
Jeff van den Scott
Lisa-Jo van den Scott
Alasdair Veitch
Dave Wilderspin
George Wright
Brian Zawadski

THE CHECKLIST CENTURY CLUB

Congratulations to observers that have submitted over 100 checklists to the program since its inception!

- Christian Bucher
- Sam de Beer
- Anthony Gaston
- Martin Gebauer
- Grant Gilchrist
- James Hawkings
- Todd Heakes
- Vicky Johnston
- D.J. Karasiuk
- Burke Korol
- LGL Ltd. Environmental Research
- Craig Machtans
- Steve Moore
- Robert Montgomerie
- Joachim Obst
- David Penner
- Jim Richards
- Paul Smith
- Doug Tate
- Philip Taylor
- Eric Tull



Answers for Silhouettes:

Answers to Bird ID Quiz:
(1) Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*
(2) Gray Jay, *Perisoreus canadensis*
(3) American Tree Sparrow, *Spizella arborea*
(4) Brant, *Branta bernicla*
(5) Snowy Owl, *Nyctea scandiaca*
(6) Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*
(7) Magnolia Warbler, *Dendroica magnolia*

QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT US!

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